

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

THE AGE OF TEMPORARY ADVANTAGE?

Submission Due Date: October 1, 2008

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Special Issue Purpose

The aim of this special issue is to develop theory and empirical evidence about *whether* and *why* competitive advantages may be becoming less sustainable and how organizations can successfully compete using a series of temporary or dynamic competitive advantages. We believe an important outcome of the special issue would be an enhanced ability to address the following question: What are the implications for the field of strategy if the *sustainability* of competitive advantage was very rare or nonexistent?

Background

Over the past decade and a half, two literatures have challenged the concept of sustainable competitive advantage, suggesting that firm-specific advantages are not sustainable and more temporary in nature due to endogenous and exogenous reasons. These two literatures are: 1) the literature on hypercompetitive, high-velocity, hyper-turbulent, and chaotic environments; and 2) the studies on competitive dynamics that focus on speed and aggressiveness of firm actions that may undermine the effectiveness of a firm's position and movements. Together these literatures have found numerous endogenous and exogenous competence-destroying strategies, disruptions and discontinuities. Additionally, they have suggested that product positioning-, knowledge-, resource-, barrier to entry-, and deep pocket-based advantages have been deteriorating more quickly, due to revolutionary new business models, disruptive technologies, fast diffusion and access to information, as well as increased emphasis on growth through innovation versus maintaining margins and stability. Taken together, these literatures call into question the core tenet in the strategy field that firms should seek out sustained advantages.

Yet the vast majority of strategic management scholarship has continued to assume that sustainable competitive advantage exists and should be the focus of strategic thinking. Indeed, considerable effort is still being dedicated to defining and empirically demonstrating the existence of sustainable advantages. The field's most current response to the challenges to unsustainable advantage is "dynamic capabilities"—again assumed to be a sustainable advantage that enables continuous strategy innovation necessary in disruptive environments. However, others point to the dearth of evidence that dynamic capabilities are sustainable over extended periods of time and in different contexts, and many suspect that firms can either become exhausted by continuous transformation and innovation or get complacent by success.

Research Questions

The analysis of temporary and dynamic advantage can be partitioned into three main parts: (a) causes or antecedents, (b) management of temporary or dynamic advantages, and (c) consequences of temporary advantage. We seek studies of the many causes of the erosion of advantage including studies that focus on the following questions: What are the endogenous and exogenous antecedents of various kinds of temporary or dynamic advantages? Are controllable or uncontrollable causes more important? Answers to these questions are necessary to understand whether there are ways to slow the accelerating depreciation of advantages and which strategic solutions or strategies are possible.

We are also seeking articles on how to manage a series of temporary or dynamic competitive advantages. Specifically, we seek papers on: How do companies develop strategies to actively manage luck? How does organizational structure, culture, compensation, and processes vary to enable the concatenation a series of short-lived advantages? How is organizational decision-making and firm resource configurations different in a world of temporary or dynamic advantages?

Finally, we are looking for papers that answer how firms achieve high performance where advantages are fleeting? Do they intentionally cannibalize old advantages and transition to new ones to pre-empt the competition? If so, when and under what conditions? Is there logic to the sequence and timing of moves deployed or is it a “random walk”? Do firm shift to advantages designed to reduce risk or increase growth at the expense of profitability? As the pace of change and disruption accelerates, will other forces arise to create stability/instability in markets? What economic, societal and collaborative actions and strategies, if any, are emerging to dampen the escalation of strategic turmoil, rivalry and fleeting advantage associated with dynamic, hypercompetition, high velocity and other chaotic environments?

In sum, we are looking for papers that examine the formulation and execution of very short-term dynamics of strategy, the use of temporary advantages in hyper-competitive environments.

Deadlines and Submission Instructions:

The deadline for submission of papers is October 1, 2008. Please submit your papers online on the *Strategic Management Journal* website and make sure to follow the Submission Guidelines available at: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/2144/home/ForAuthors.html>.

Review Process and Special Issue Conference: The Guest Editors are seeking reviewers for this issue and are soliciting nominations and volunteers to participate in the review process. Reviewers are invited to contact the guest co-editor Giovanni Battista Dagnino, who is responsible for preparing the list of potential reviewers. Papers will be reviewed following the regular *Strategic Management Journal* double-blind review process. After the second round of reviews, the authors of the most promising submissions will be invited to a Special Issue Conference on “The Age of Temporary Advantages,” to be held at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth in September 2009.

More Information

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