

Comprehensiveness, Spontaneity and International Marketing Agility

Yoel Asseraf
Ruppin Academic Center
Itzhak Gnizy
Ono Academic College

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Abstract

International marketing agility (IMA), is a novel concept in contemporary business environments that denotes firms' ability to respond fast to major shifts in international markets. Recently, Asseraf, Lages, and Shoham (2019) found that both planning and flexibility drive IMA. In parallel, comprehensiveness and spontaneity have emerged as recommended approaches for international marketing decision-making styles (Nemkova et al. 2015). Nevertheless, an enhanced empirical investigation of IMA's decision-making determinants is still missing. Comprehensiveness describes the degree to which decision-makers are exhaustive in considering multiple alternatives, courses of action, and decision criteria in strategic decision-making (Slotegraaf and Atuahene-Gima 2011). In contrast, spontaneity describes the ability to undertake actions speedily or even immediately (Souchon et al. 2016). At first glance, these decision-making styles may appear to be dichotomous; the former is slower in nature, and the latter is much faster. Surprisingly, the international marketing literature offers only scant knowledge about whether and how these common decision-making styles relate to agility. This lacuna constrains scholars' and practitioners' understanding of how to develop IMA. Moreover, firms devote immense resources to developing new products (NPDs) that are the focus of their marketing strategy (Slotegraaf and Atuahene-Gima 2011). Decisions play a crucial role in the NPD process (Hult 2011). Consequently, both comprehensive (Atuahene-Gima and Murray 2004) and spontaneity (Souchon et al. 2016) may affect NPD performance. Furthermore, IMA is related to new products advantages (Asseraf, Lages, and Shoham 2019); thus, comprehensiveness and spontaneity may affect IMA and NPD performance, and in turn, IMA may affect NPD performance (See Figure 1). Accordingly, the current study seeks to address this gap in light of important unanswered questions, such as: Which decision-making style is more beneficial for developing IMA? What are the boundary conditions in the international context for the relationships between decision-making styles and IMA? Can we predict the performance of new products based on IMA's model? This study makes three contributions. First, whereas comprehensiveness and spontaneity are usually studied in isolation, growing academic interest in combining decision-making approaches has emerged (Nemkova et al. 2015). This study contributes to the dearth of theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence by examining these approaches simultaneously in an international context and examines the value of their usage in relation to IMA and NPD performance. Second, we contribute to research on drivers of NPD performance. In the current highly uncertain global environment, firms experience high rates of NPD failures (Dubiel et al. 2018) however, research concerning introducing new products in an international context has been scant. This warrants further scholarly examination of contemporary and agile frameworks for NPD performance. Finally, this study employs a novel approach to assess our model's out-of-sample prediction by using the PLSpredict algorithm. In doing so, we address long-standing calls for a stronger focus on predictive assessment (Shmueli et al. 2019). Given that by its very nature, fast decision-making can be expected to be a stronger beneficial driver of IMA than slow decision-making, our findings become especially important, as they shed light on the roles of comprehensiveness and spontaneity in the international context. Whereas the findings confirmed the positive roles of both comprehensiveness ($\beta = .60$) and spontaneity ($\beta = .18$) as IMA's drivers, it appears that comprehensiveness has now been revealed as being more important. This finding was also reflected in the comprehensiveness's substantial effect size on IMA versus spontaneity's weak effect size on IMA. This depiction became even clearer when analyzing the direct links between the two decision-making styles and NPD performance: Whereas the impact of comprehensiveness on NPD performance was positive and significant, the impact of spontaneity on this outcome was not significant. Another perspective was revealed upon examining the total effects (direct and indirect) of both drivers: Whereas the total effect of comprehensiveness on NPD performance was positive and significant ($\beta = .47$), the total effect of spontaneity on NPD performance was much weaker ($\beta = .15$). In addition, we found that IMA's impact on NPD performance was positive and significant ($\beta = .33$), confirming IMA's importance as a critical consideration in new product success. This means that agile firms are more likely to increase their prospect of attaining a high number of successful new products, shorten their time to market over their

competitors, and issue more innovative products. Hence, the current findings underscore IMA as a critical capability for international NPD performance.

Keywords: *Comprehensiveness; Spontaneity; Agility*

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