

Uncovering/solving causal ambiguities in alternative strategies

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Abstract

Drawing on relevant studies in the extant strategy and marketing literatures, this study proposes the interconnectedness of characteristic and linkage ambiguities heighten versus dampen firm's market performances. The research incorporates findings from an empirical survey of 571 firms, which assesses the practical relevance of the proposed theoretical framework. The empirical findings indicate characteristic and linkage ambiguity conditions (i.e., multiple switches of high/low combinations) function as distinct barriers/expressways to imitation, enabling firms to secure competitive advantage, achieve high market performance, or result in performance disasters. The study underscores the importance for executives of managing alternative forms of causal ambiguity as an inherent organizational planning and response activity—doing so is a key to nudging the firm into becoming the highly reliable organization (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2105)—capable of handling a rich set of ambiguous combinations of characteristic and linkage ambiguities.

Track: Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix