กลยุทธ์ความเป็นเลิศทางการตลาดของโรงแรมบูติคในประเทศไทย : การตรวจสอบเชิงประจักษ์ปัจจัยด้านสาเหตุ

MARKETING EXCELLENCE STRATEGY OF BOUTIQUE HOTEL BUSINESSES IN THAILAND: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE ANTECEDENT FACTORS

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทดสอบผลกระทบของตัวแปรสาเหตุได้แก่ ภาวะผู้นำเชิงรุก ความสามารถการเรียนรู้การแข่งขัน ความพร้อมของทรัพยากรทางการตลาด และความผันผวนของสภาพแวดล้อม ต่อตัวมิติของกลยุทธ์ความเป็นเลิศทางการตลาด ได้แก่ การแลกเปลี่ยนผู้ขายกับลูกค้า การสื่อสารการสร้างสรรค์ทางบริการ การวิเคราะห์ความสามารถของคู่แข่ง และศักยภาพการขับเคลื่อนตลาด ในการวิจัยนี้ โรงแรมบูติคในประเทศไทยจำนวน 252 โรงแรมเป็นกลุ่มประชากรในการวิจัย ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ภาวะผู้นำเชิงรุกมีอิทธิพลเชิงบวกต่อการแลกเปลี่ยนผู้ขายกับลูกค้า การสื่อสารการสร้างสรรค์ทางบริการ และศักยภาพการขับเคลื่อนตลาด นอกจากนี้ ผลยังชี้ให้เห็นว่าความสามารถการเรียนรู้การแข่งขันมีอิทธิพลเชิงบวกต่อการสื่อสารสร้างสรรค์ทางบริการ และ ศักยภาพการขับเคลื่อนตลาด ผลวิจัยยังชี้ให้เห็นว่า ความพร้อมของทรัพยากรทางการตลาดมีความสัมพันธ์เชิงบวกต่อการสื่อสารสร้างสรรค์ทางบริการ ต่อการวิเคราะห์ความสามารถของคู่แข่ง และ ศักยภาพการขับเคลื่อนตลาด ในขณะที่ ความผันผวนของสภาพแวดล้อมมีอิทธิพลเชิงบวกต่อศักยภาพการขับเคลื่อนตลาด ดังนั้น ผู้บริหารทางการตลาดสามารถสร้างความเป็นเลิศทางการตลาดได้แต่ละมิติ ด้วยการมุ่งเน้นให้ภาวะผู้นำเชิงรุก ความสามารถการเรียนรู้การแข่งขัน ความพร้อมของทรัพยากรทางการตลาด และ ความผันผวนของสภาพแวดล้อม ประโยชน์เชิงทฤษฎีและการบริหารจัดการ สรุปผลการวิจัย ข้อเสนอแนะและแนวทางการวิจัยในอนาคตได้มีการนำเสนอในการวิจัยนี้ด้วย

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์ความเป็นเลิศทางการตลาด ภาวะผู้นำเชิงรุก ความสามารถการเรียนรู้การแข่งขัน ความพร้อมของทรัพยากรทางการตลาด และ ความผันผวนของสภาพแวดล้อม

Abstract

This study examines a conceptual model of how marketing excellence strategy’s dimensions (seller-customer exchange, service creativity communication, competitor competence analysis, and market-driving capability) can be affected by its antecedents including proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence. This research examines 4 hypotheses by testing 252 boutique hotels in Thailand. The result shows that proactive leadership has a significant positive effect on seller-customer exchange, service creativity communication, and market-driving capability. Moreover, it also indicates significantly positive relationship between competitive learning competency and service creativity communication, and between competitive learning competency and market-driving capability.

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Additionally, market resource readiness has positive effect with service creativity communication, competitor competence analysis, and market-driving capability while the relationship between environmental turbulence and market-driving capability is also positive significance. Thus, a marketing manager would create each marketing excellence strategy’s dimension by focusing on proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence. Theoretical and managerial contributions, conclusion and suggestions and directions for future research are also highlighted.

**Keywords**: Marketing excellence strategy, proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence

1. Introduction

By reviewing the literatures, previous research shows that the objectives of businesses can be divided into two main objectives namely financial and marketing objectives (Doyle, 1992). Based on Doyle’s study, a firm needs to meet the financial and the marketing objective to become an excellence firm. In other words, to reach an excellence firm position, a firm must focus on financial and marketing excellence. In this research, we concentrate only on the marketing excellence because our literature reviews indicate that the marketing excellence encourages a firm to become a financial excellence (Day and Fahey, 1990; Higgins and Bannister, 1992; Parnell and Wright, 1993).

Also, a number of studies show that the positive information can signal the stakeholder to react to the firms’ action whereas the signal constructs may create a compelling need for a firm to foretell its future intentions regarding a wide range of possible actions to target audiences (Calantone and Schatzel, 2000). Evidently, there are studies in the signaling research which shows that effective communication of corporate strategy can also enhance shareholder satisfaction (Higgins and Bannister, 1992) and build employee morale as well (Burgi and Roos, 2003). Unfortunately, to reach the positive information, a firm would need to perform the marketing excellence strategy because it could link with the positive relationship. Therefore, the purpose of the general research paradigm is to determine stable equilibrium signaling positions among actors to reach excellence position (Banks and Sobel 1987; Cho and Kreps 1987; Engers 1987, Engers and Fernandez, 1987). However, previous researches are most concentrated on the consequence of the marketing excellence strategy to create a firm value. But, none of research studies indicates how the marketing excellence strategy can be affected by simply looking at its antecedents. Hence, our research’s objective is to examine our conceptual model with the sample of boutique hotels in Thailand to confirm the linkage between marketing excellence strategy and its antecedents. The result of the research could be used for a marketing manager. It can encourage a marketing excellence firm to be safe, to get positive information, and to survive in future position.

The population of this research is 252 boutique hotels in Thailand because these hotels have their own characteristics of their service while the hospitality and tourism industry also arose through the growth of capitalism, freedom and tentative relations to geographic areas, which
increased the needs for travel accommodations (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007). The boutique hotels are an exciting segment of the market, particularly within Thailand, since Thailand is most leading and interesting country for tourism. Thus, new investors are keen to enter the market and established hotel operators are fast expanding and developing new concepts to compete in this sector. Also, the boutique hotels industry have progresses as an outlet for travelers to dream of and fantasize about other lifestyles (Curtis, 2001) and represent the unique of individual marketing excellence strategies that boutique is not all about hotel decor and amenities but because the experience of boutique is active and conscious, which means customers’ opinions and feelings are part of it too (Bernstein, 1999). With the boutique hotel, guests increasingly want to feel recognized and like to feel part of a unique experience. Thus, the 252 boutique hotels are suitable for researching the unique and the personality of the marketing excellence strategies.

1. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

- Theoretical Foundation

Contingency factors or contingency characteristics were applied to test the effect on marketing and performance. In the contingency theory, organizational structure is viewed as a function of context that is simultaneously determined by the external business environment, history, and other organizational factors (Anderson and Lanen, 1999). Contingency factors also include strategy type, strategy deliverance, market orientation, size, technology, government policy, organization structure, and environment uncertainty. From the results of previous research that uses the contingency factor for testing, the contingency factors affect the structure, strategy, and system of the firm; moreover, they significantly impact firm performance (Sirmon et al, 2007; Sirmon and Hitt, 2009; Jokipii, 2010). These factors lead to establishment or improvement of organizational marketing that is appropriate with changed situations to obtain growth and survival (Chenhall and Langfield-Smith, 1998).

Hence, marketing structure is affected by contingency factors, and it brings survival to a firm. In this research, contingency theory is applied to explain the antecedents of marketing excellence strategy to encourage the relationships among each of four antecedents, and each of four dimensions of marketing excellence strategy. All hypotheses are provided as positive as shows on figure 1.

2.1 Marketing Excellence Strategy

The marketing excellence strategy can be concluded as a kind of the marketing strategy that a firm has to encompass superiority in understanding markets, making strategy choice, delivering value, and monitoring value greater than competitors (Ohmae, 1982; 1983; Peter and Waterman, 1982; Saunders and Wong, 1985; Doyle, 1992; Jagersma, 2006; Stuart-Kregar, 2006). To encompass superiority greater than competitors, a firm needs to demonstrate on these following dimensions which would encourage a firm to perform well on its marketing excellence strategy.
In general, marketing strategy is mostly the concentration of a firm to build a good relationship with customers. Buyer’s and seller’s relationship are normally built based on the exchange of information and create new knowledge and insight, called seller-customer exchange. Thus, in this research, seller-customer exchange can be defined as the transformation of the knowledge forward and backward between a firm and a customer (Plamer and Bejou, 1994; Leenders et al., 2007). To create marketing excellence strategy, a firm should have customer’s knowledge beyond competitors that it emphasizes information use and learning, and uncovers latent customer needs (Atuahenne-Gima, 1995).

- **Service Creativity Communication (SCC)**

  Communication is the means through which stores and disseminates information and increased level of communication makes cross-fertilization of ideas increasingly (Leenders et al., 2007). The role of service creativity communication is that communication plays a major role in creation, dissemination, and combination of knowledge and solutions in services (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001; Leenders et al., 2007) and creativity is seen as importance that is believed to encourage people to pay more attention (Rossiter and Danaher, 1998).
Competitor Competence Analysis (CCA)

Competitor analysis can usually reveal what move a rival. It is likely to allow a firm to prepare for the move. Thus, the analysis of competitive position strategy is defined as the description of how firms evaluate their competition and choose competitive moves (Miller, 1996). Therefore, once a firm is aware of a rival’s move, its attention then turns to competitor analysis and to considering both the motivation to act and the capability to act (Chen, 1996; Smith et al., 2001). To evaluate a competitor’s move, it can be done on the basis of the attributes of customers such as customer attitudes and behaviors (Day et al., 1979).

Market-driving Capability (MDC)

Market-driving capability refers to marketing’s contribution to overall firm aptitude to deliver superior customer service relative to the competition and achieve service advantage mainly refers to capability in effectively deploying and updating existing resources (Kaleka, 2011). Being market-driving capability in effectively deploying and updating resources, a firm is pertaining to market in formation acquisition, enabling the firm to learn what customers want and what alternative offers are available in markets (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000).

2.2 The Antecedents of Marketing Excellence Strategy

As mentioned earlier, marketing excellence strategy (MES) provides many benefits for a firm. Thus, it is important to find out what effect it has on MES. This study emphasizes the antecedents of MES as being proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence as shown in Figure 1.

Proactive Leadership (PRL)

Proactive personality refers to the enduring behavioral tendency of people to influence their environment (Bateman and Crant, 1993). The people with a stronger proactive personality seek to improve current circumstances, identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative, take action, and persevere until meaningful changes occur (Grant, 2000). Thus, proactive leadership should lead a firm to reach its marketing superiority in that it should be included as the antecedence of marketing excellence strategy. Also, the study provided by Levy and Zaltman (1975) defines marketing as a system where people or groups are inter-related are engaged in reaching a shared goal, and have patterned relationships with one another. Therefore, a firm seeks to develop ongoing relationships with their customers and move the nature of interaction (Gronroos, 1991). With this interaction process of buyer and seller exchange, PRL would improve the efficiency of knowledge exchange because the PRL is the characteristic of a leader who sets goals for procedures or operations for concept changes which improves the current situation and constantly develops efficiency. Additionally, marketing communication proactiveness is a strategic process by communicating through different channels to produce one result which consists of integrating different entities...
working together to achieve a goal by producing and delivering a message to consumers with an effective attitude (Kliatchko, 2008; Mendez, 2009). Due to procedures and operations, PRL should lead the creation of marketing communication proactiveness that CCA is defined as the analysis of competitive structures (Hodgkinson et al., 1996). It could be implied that competitive structure relates to competitive positioning, the decision of the organization, the drive competition, and the perceptions of managers and other knowledge actors within particular industries. Due to the perceptions of the manager as leader, it could be effective for CCA. In other words, the perception of the manager as the PRL should drive competitor competence analysis for reaching a firm’s objective. Last, market-driving capability (MDC) refers to marketing’s contribution to the overall firm aptitude to deliver superior customer service relative to the competition, and achieve service advantage that mainly refers to capability in effectively deploying and updating existing resources (Kaleka, 2011). To have market-driving capability in effectively deploying and updating resources, a firm is pertaining to market information acquisition, enabling the firm to learn what customers want and what alternative offers are available in the markets (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Thus, PRL and MDC should be parallel because PRL will help a firm to pertain market information acquisition effectively. Hence, the proactive leadership could affect the marketing excellence strategy’s dimensions that the hypothesis can be proposed as follows:

H1: The higher proactive leadership is, the more likely that firm will gain greater; (a) seller-customer exchange, (b) service creativity communication, (c) competitor competence analysis, and (d) market-driving capability.

- Competitive Learning Competency (CLC)

Competitive learning competence should be linked to marketing excellence strategy because the signaling of excellence can deter the entering of competitors into the market segment in a competitive marketplace (Reinartz and Kumar, 2003). To achieve the goal in all situations, a firm needs to learn the competitor structure and this could imply that competitive learning competency has a direct effect on marketing excellence strategy. Also, trait competitiveness relates positively to learning effort (Wang and Netemeyer, 2002) and under a leaned orientation, a firm adopts, adapts, and has responses patterns wherein negative feedback information leads to persistence and determination in challenging achievement situations (Dweck, 1986). Thus, CLC should have a relationship with the learning process and this process should come from the knowledge exchange between the seller and buyer. Also, proactive creative communication plays a role in the creation, dissemination, and combination of knowledge and solutions (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001; Lenders et al., 2002). To improve successful service creativity communication, it holds for industries in which firms invest heavily in technologies such as mobile networks (Prins and Verhoef, 2007). Therefore, the quality of technologies should efficiently link to a communication so that it could be useful if a firm has a better technology than its competitors. In other words, CLC should support a firm to create a
useful tool or to select a creative technology beyond its competitors. Moreover, the competitiveness trait relates positively to learning effort (Wang and Netemeyer, 2002) that it is defined as the analysis of the competitive structure (Jodgkinson et al., 1996). Therefore, the efficiency of competitor competence is how much a firm is able to learn about the competitor and it encourages a firm to analyze competitor competence effectively. Additionally, market-driving capability (MDC) refers to marketing’s contribution to overall firm aptitude to deliver superior customer service relative to the competition and achieve service advantage that mainly refers to the capability in effectively deploying and updating resources, a firm is pertaining to market information acquisition, enabling the firm to learn what customers want and what alternative offers are available in the markets (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). By learning the customer’s needs beyond a competitor, a firm needs to know what a competitor is doing as to its competency. Hence, the CLC should link positively the marketing excellence strategy’s dimensions as following hypothesis.

H2: The higher competitive learning competency is, the more likely that firm will gain greater; (a) seller-customer exchange, (b) service creativity communication, (c) competitor competence analysis, and (d) market-driving capability.

Marketing Resource Readiness (MRR)
Marketing resource readiness (MRR) is also tied with MSE so that marketing resource refers to be attribute, tangible or intangible, physical or human, intellectual or relational, that can be deployed by a firm to achieve a competitive advantage in its market (Hooley et al., 2005). Therefore, marketing resource readiness is also the fruitfulness of both tangible and intangible factors to support the work of marketing process in achieving the corporate target market. Due to the supporting of the work in the marketing process, it could imply that MES should be the consequence of the MRR because marketing is defined as a system where people or groups are inter-related, engaged in reaching a shared goal, and have patterned relationships with their customers and moving the nature of interaction (Gronroos, 1991). Thus, MRR should provide a firm to be ready for seeking seller-customer knowledge. Furthermore, proactive creative communication also plays a role in the creation, dissemination, and combination of knowledge and solutions (Hoeqël and Gemuenden, 2001; Lenders et al., 2002). With MRR, it should help a firm to improve the successful service creativity communication that it holds for industries in which firms increase heavily in technologies such as mobile networks (Prins and Verhoef, 2007). Moreover, the competitiveness trait relates positively to learning effort (Wang and Netmeyer, 2002) because competitor competence analysis is the analysis of competitive structures (Hodgkinson et al., 1996). Therefore, for the efficiency of competitor competence analysis, a firm should have MRR to enable it to achieve its goal. Also, having market-driving capability in effectively deploying and updating resources, a firm pertains to market information acquisition, enabling itself to be what customers want and what alternative offers are available in the markets (Eisenhardt and Marim, 2000). Hence, market-driving capability (MDC) refers
to marketing’s contribution to overall firm aptitude to deliver superior customer service relative to the competition and achieve service advantage that mainly refers to capability in effectively deploying and updating existing resources (Kaleka, 2011). In other words, the market-driving capability is reached easier when a firm has MRR. Thus, MRR should positively support marketing excellence strategy’s dimensions that the hypothesis can be proposed as follows:

H3a: The higher marketing resource readiness is, the more likely that firm will gain greater; (a) seller-customer exchange, (b) service creativity communication, (c) competitor competence analysis, and (d) market-driving capability.

- Environmental Turbulence (ENT)

Environmental jolts surprise organizations and often drastically change outcomes of strategic actions (Meyer, 1982). Therefore, ENT associates with the level of resources in a particular environment (Dess and Beard, 1984; Randolph and Dess, 1984; Nystrom et al., 1976; Staw and Szajjkowski, 1975). Critically, it affects both firm growth and survival (Aldrich et al., 1979; Castrogiovanni, 1991; Dess and Beard, 1984; Wan and Hoskisson, 2003). Turbulence, in general, refers to an environment’s ability to support sustained growth of an organization. Research has indicated that ENT is positively associated with the range of strategy and organizational options available to firms (Brittain and Freeman, 1980; Lieberson and O’Connor, 1972; Tushman and Anderson, 1986). MES as well as ENT should positively associate with the range of MES that is available to a firm. Also, a firm with excellent practice is addressed. Customers need orientation and place a premium on understanding what opportunities and threats arise from the external environment. If a firm is able to seek for information of customers and understand their differences, needs and expectations can correctly respond to customers through a variety of products which increase competitive advantage. Customer learning shows a positive relationship to customer-based performance. Therefore, ENT should be associated with MES. Additionally, proactive creative communication plays a role in the creation, dissemination, and combination of knowledge and solutions (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001; Leenders et al., 2002). For the improvement of successful service creativity communication, it holds for industries in which firms invest heavily in technologies as tools and instruments (Prins and Verhoef, 2007). Thus, ENT should encourage a firm to gain seller-customer knowledge with proactive creative communication. Moreover, the fact is not all marketers are likely to be equally skilled at all tasks; it is one of the major points to be considered in initiating co-existence between strategic and competitive marketing behavior in a turbulent marketing environment (Ansoff, 1990). The sources available within an environment influence new firms to enter this environment (Randolph and Dess, 1984). Therefore, ENT should positively relate to competitor competence analysis. Finally, Aragon-Corra and Sharma’s (2003) contingent-resource-based framework specifically argues for the moderating role of the general business environment based on the relationship between organizational capabilities and environmental strategy, but their propositions have not been empirically validated. However, market-
driving capability in effectively deploying and updating resources including the effect of ENT in the market, a firm pertains to market information acquisition, enabling it to learn what customers want and what alternative offers are available in the markets (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Thus, ENT should affect marketing excellence dimension that they should be stated as in the following hypothesis:

H4: The higher environmental turbulence is, the more likely that firm will gain greater seller-customer exchange, (b) service creativity communication, (c) competitor competence analysis, and (d) market-driving capability

2. Research Methods

2.1 Data Collection Procedure

A questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was mailed directly to each of the marketing managers of the boutique hotels in Thailand since they serve as the marketing executives. The total number of questionnaires sent was 252 packages mailed in January 31th, 2016. After three weeks, to increase the response rate, a follow-up by telephone, e-mail, and postcard were used to confirm what had not yet replied. It was also to remind them to complete the questionnaire and to request them to cooperate in answering it. With regard to the questionnaire mailing, 12 surveys were undeliverable because some businesses had changed addresses to unknown locations or had closed down. Deducting the undeliverable from the original 252 mailed, the valid mailing was 240 surveys. After two months, 69 questionnaires were returned, and 1 of them was found incomplete. Thus, the useable questionnaires were 68. The effective response rate was approximately 28.33 percent. Based on Aaker et al. (2001), the response rate for a mail survey, without an appropriate follow-up procedure, if greater than 20 percent, is considered acceptable. However, even though the response rate is high and acceptable, we found that the 252 population may be small. Thus, to confirm that our questionnaire was usable, we had to also interview and discuss our questionnaire with ten marketing managers of selected boutique hotels.

The test of non-response bias is a way to protect possible response bias problems between respondents and non-respondents. Non-response bias corresponded to the test using t-test comparison of the demographics information of the firm such as business type, numbers of rooms services, and firm capital. If the results of the t-test have no significant difference between two groups, it implies that these returned questionnaires have no non-response bias problem (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). The result shows insignificant difference that indicates that the non-respond is not considered a problem in this research.

2.2 Population and Sample

The samples of this research were the boutique hotels in Thailand. They were chosen to be the samples of this research because these hotels had their own characteristics pertaining to their services. Hospitality and tourism industry also arose through the growth of capitalism, freedom and
tentative relations to geographic areas, which increased the needs for travel accommodations (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007). With the boutique hotels, guests increasingly need to feel recognized and like to feel as a part of a unique experience. Thus, the boutique hotels were suitable for this research due to their uniqueness as well as their marketing excellence strategies. Moreover, the population of this research was 252 firms of boutique hotels in Thailand; the database was drawn from the list of hotel in Thailand provided by the Tourism Authority of Thailand on www.thai.tourismthailand on October 22, 2015.

2.3 Measures
This research employed a questionnaire for data collection. All constructs in the model included multiple-item scales. Each variable was measured by five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The details of each variable were provided as follows:

SCE, the exchange process makes knowledge more valuable, can occur at any, and all, levels of the organization (Rowe and Widener, 2011). Gupta and Govindarajan (1991) define knowledge as “either expertise (e.g., skills and capabilities) or external market data of strategic value” while Schulz (2001) incorporates “insights, interpretation, and information.” Barney (1991) considers knowledge from the perspective of resource-based strategy and identifies human capital, or the skills and thoughts held by the firm’s employees, as a primary type of resource that firms can use strategically to establish and sustain their competitive advantage. Thus, the seller-customer exchange is measured based on the transformation of knowledge based on its expertise as resources and capabilities and market information as the possibility of attraction, the customers’ attitude and needs learning.

SCC is defined as the successful introduction of new goods, services and processes to the market. It is widely recognized as a major driver of long-term corporate growth (Buisson and Silberzahn, 2010). The service creativity communication is a kind of marketing communication related to the analysis of customer needs, the technology for communication, and the transaction cost of communication that it is measured by using five items and developed as a new scale based on its definition.

CCE is the analysis of competitive position strategy central to strategic marketing so that competitor competence analysis is refined as the analysis of competitive structures (Jodgkinson et al., 1996). Competitive structure relates to competitive positioning, the decision of an organization, and the competition drive, the perceptions of managers, and other knowledge actors within particular industries. The competitor competence analysis is measured by using five items and is developed as a new scale based on its definition.

MDC refers to marketing’s contribution to overall firm aptitude to deliver superior customer service relative to the competition and achieve service advantage. It mainly refers to capability in effectively deploying and updating existing resources (Kaleka, 2011). Market-driving capability relates to market information that enables a firm to lean on what customers want and what alternative
offers are available in the markets. This construct is measured by using five items and developed base on the studied by Narver et al.(2004).

For this research, proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence are antecedents of marketing excellence strategy. The measurement of each variable is based on its definition that can be discussed as follows.

PRL functions as the emerging view of proactive leadership of an individual highly involved and committed. It is an independent contributor with initiative, and a well-developed sense of responsibility (Lowe et al., 1996). Proactive leadership is measured using five items relating to strategic planning, strategies, quality improvement, and establishing and maintaining continuous operations in the long-term. This construct is measured by using four items. It is developed as a scale, based on studies by Rui et al. (2010).

CLC provides a framework for the accumulation and dissection of elements about competitor activities (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). It can also be viewed as an evolving process by which organizations appraise competencies and behaviors of their current and potential competitors to sustain a competitive edge. This construct is measured by using four items and is developed as a new scale, based on its definition.

MRR is the fruitfulness of both tangible and intangible factors to support the work of marketing processes in achieving the corporate target market (Hooley et al., 2005). Marketing resource readiness is measured by using four items that relate to the availability, the liquidity, and the continuity of resources. This construct is developed as a scale and is based on a study by Pansuppawatt and Ussawanitchakit (2011).

ENT is the level of resources in a particular environment (Dess and Beard, 1984). Environmental turbulence is measured by using four items which relate to technology, the wealth of resources, the changes of environment, and the continuity of changes in environment. This construct is developed as a scale based on the study by Davis et al. (1991).

- Control Variables

With regard to firm-specific determinants that might affect survival, we first consider firm size. Several studies provide evidence of a positive effect of size on the likelihood of survival (Audretsch and Mahmood 1995; Mata and Portugal, 2002). Two main arguments help explain the liability of smallness. First, the output levels of larger firms are more likely to be close to their industries’ minimum efficient scales. Second, compared with small firms, large firms have easier access to capital markets and a greater capacity to recruit qualified workers. Firm size is measured in a scale that is developed based on the study by Shalit and Sankar (1977).

Another important predictor of firm survival is age. Young firms are expected to have a higher risk of failure than older ones because they lack sufficient resources and capabilities, and have not yet established a stable set of relationships, both among internal members and with outside suppliers and buyers (Pittiglio and Reganati, 2014) In this research, the questions in questionnaire of
the requirement of number of operational years are divided into dummy variable which 0 means firm has the period of time in proceeding business lower than 10 years, and 1 means firm has the period of time in proceeding business equal or more than 10 years. Firm age is measured based on a scale that developed by Delmar et al. (2003).

Table 1: Results of Measure Validation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loadings</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Leadership (PRL)</td>
<td>.857 - .957</td>
<td>.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Learning Competence (CLC)</td>
<td>.868 - .932</td>
<td>.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Resource Readiness (MRR)</td>
<td>.887 - .944</td>
<td>.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Turbulence (ENT)</td>
<td>.917 - .969</td>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller-Buyer Exchange (SCE)</td>
<td>.708 - .897</td>
<td>.865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Creativity Communication (SCC)</td>
<td>.702 - .911</td>
<td>.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitor Competence Analysis (CCA)</td>
<td>.857 - .949</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market-Driving Capability (MDC)</td>
<td>.825 - .938</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Reliability and Validity

In this research, testing reliability and validity of a questionnaire as qualities of a good instrument were conducted from the pilot test of thirty marketing managers of boutique hotels in Thailand. This research employed evaluating reliability of measurement, and measuring marketing excellence strategy reliability by using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient which recommends that its value should be equal or greater than .70 as widely accepted (Hair et al., 2006). Table 2 shows Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient value which is ranged from .87 to .96. All values are greater than .70. Thus, this questionnaire is validity and reliability for collecting data. Additionally, this research examined content validity and constructs validity of questionnaire. Content validity is based on the extent to which a measurement reflects the specific intended content domain of the theoretical construct (Kwok and Sharp, 1998). This research requested two academic experts who have experience to review the instrument in order to ensure that the questionnaires used were appropriate. Wordings and all constructs are sufficient to cover the contents of variables. We also used factor analysis to examine the construct validity of data in the questionnaire as shown in table 2. The factor loading score is ranged from .70 to .97. As rule-of-thumb, the acceptable minimum cut-off score is .40 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994).

2.4 Methods

For data analysis, we employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques including factor analysis, variance inflation factors (VIF’s), correlation analysis and regression analysis. The model of the relationships is depicted as follows.
3. Result and Discussion

The descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for all variables are shown in table 2. The results indicate that there might be the potential problems relating to multicollinearity. The intercorrelation between explanatory variables exceeds 0.80 (Berry and Feldman, 1985). However, to avoid the multicollinearity problem, we have provided the variance inflation factors (VIFs). Table 3 shows the VIFs range from 1.10 to 5.56, well below the cut-off value of 10 as recommended by Neter et al (1985). It indicates that the independent variables are not correlated with each other. Thus, there is no substantial multicollinearity problems encountered in this study.

Table 3 represents the results for multiple regression which shows the relationship between the four dimensions of the marketing excellence strategy and its antecedents. The findings indicate that the antecedents as proactive leader (H1a: \( \beta_1 = .33, p<.05 \)), competitive learning competency (H2a: \( \beta_2 = .53, p<.01 \)), and environment turbulence (H4a: \( \beta_4 = .54, p<.01 \)) have a positive effect on seller-customer exchange. Hence, Hypotheses 1a, 2a, and 4a are supported; that is, proactive leader, competitive learning competency, and environment turbulence are positively related to seller-customer exchange. In contrast, Hypotheses 3a is not supported; that is, marketing resource readiness has significantly and negatively affected seller-customer exchange. Learning oriented individuals are usually more likely to invest more resources (i.e., cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) in a task and in problem-solving, and that they also develop a more positive attitude toward change and novel situations (Chen and Mathieu, 2008). However, the situation fluctuates over time in that marketing resources might not be stable and they should be changing under various situations. As result, marketing resource readiness may be out of control and possibly significantly unrelated to seller-customer exchange as unsupported by hypothesis 3a.

Also, the findings indicate that the antecedents as competitive learning competency (H2b: \( \beta_8 = .47, p<.01 \)), and environment turbulence (H4b: \( \beta_{10} = .26, p<.01 \)) have a positive effect on service creativity communication. Hence, Hypotheses 2b and 4b are supported; that is, competitive learning competency and environment turbulence are positively related to seller-customer exchange. In contrast, Hypotheses 1b and 3b are not supported; that is, proactive leadership and marketing resource readiness have insignificantly affected customer appreciation. The contrary effects of communication channels, such as personal meetings, phone, and email, advocate the selection of communication channels according to the nature of the competitors (Mahr et al., 2014). In other words, competitive learning competency may vary under the difference of communication channels in that it may determines the insignificance of the relationship with service creativity communication. Possibly, hypothesis 1b may have an insignificant relationship as a result. Also, in some situations, a firm may have resources outside of the firm’s boundaries in that these external resources cannot be controlled like internal resources, and may require distinct mechanisms for knowledge transfer, data protection, and incentivizing (O’Hern
and Rindfleisch, 2010). As result, marketing resource readiness, such as external resources may cause insignificance in its relationship with service creativity communication as being unsupported by hypothesis 3b.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>SCE</th>
<th>SCC</th>
<th>CCA</th>
<th>MDC</th>
<th>PRL</th>
<th>CLC</th>
<th>MRR</th>
<th>ENT</th>
<th>FRA</th>
<th>FRS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.347</td>
<td>4.335</td>
<td>4.053</td>
<td>3.918</td>
<td>4.033</td>
<td>4.070</td>
<td>3.879</td>
<td>4.243</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>.528</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>.835</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.759</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDC</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td>.593</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>.700</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>.730</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLC</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>.695</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRR</td>
<td>.470</td>
<td>.712</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>.691</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENT</td>
<td>.615</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.748</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td></td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRS</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.371</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .10

The results also indicate that the antecedents, as competitive learning competency (H2c: $\beta_{14} = .45$, p<.1), marketing resource readiness (H3c: $\beta_{15} = .31$, p<.1), and environment turbulence (H4c: $\beta_{16} = .36$, p<.01) have a positive effect competitor competence analysis. Hence, Hypotheses 2c, 3c and 4c are supported; that is, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness and environment turbulence are positively related to competitor competence analysis. In contrast, Hypotheses 1c is not supported; that is, proactive leadership has significantly and negatively affected competitor competence analysis. In reality, scholars are still unclear of the direction between proactive or reactive leadership when a competitor is involved with the outsourcing. When the wholesale price or the proportion of production outsourced to the contract manufacture is lower than a threshold value, both parties prefer proactive leadership and, consequently, play a simultaneous game in the consumer market. On the other hand, as the degree of homogeneity between the original equipment manufacturer and competitive contract manufacturer’s products increases, the more difficult it becomes to keep the contract manufacture as the reactive leadership and the more likely it is that a simultaneous game appears (Wang, Niu, and Guo, 2013). Therefore, the relationship between
proactive leadership and competitor competence analysis may not be valid in the case of the competitive outsource and caused the insignificant relationship between those two variables to be unsupported in hypothesis 1c.

Moreover, the finding shows that the antecedent, as environment turbulence (H4d: $\beta_{22} = .28$, $p<.05$) has a positive effect on market-driving capability. Hence, Hypotheses 4d are supported; that is, environment turbulence is positively related to competitor competence analysis. In contrast, Hypotheses 1d, 2d, and 3d are not supported; that is, proactive leadership, competitive learning competency, and marketing resource readiness have insignificantly affected competitor competence analysis. In an organization, providing employees with norms for learning about the market, is critical for the creation of superior value and for leading to organizational performance outcomes (Narver and Slater 1990; Slater and Narver 1995). Organizational culture and its underpinning values influences behavior and expectations of individual managers within a business (Jarratt and O’Neill, 2012). Thus, proactive leadership may not always affect market-driving capability because while an individual at an organizational interface can display effective support, and normative relationship behavior, it is the shared presence of this normative behavior within organizations that will support effective relationship management practice and affects market-driving capability more than just

### Table 3: Results of Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>SCE</th>
<th>SCC</th>
<th>CCA</th>
<th>MDC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Leadership (PRL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.331**</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>-.352*</td>
<td>.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Learning Competency (CLC)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.525***</td>
<td>.466***</td>
<td>.451**</td>
<td>.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Resource Readiness (MRR)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.667***</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.311*</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Turbulence (ENT)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.538***</td>
<td>.263**</td>
<td>.357***</td>
<td>.282**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm Size (FRS)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.303*</td>
<td>.671***</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm Age (FRA)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.534***</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.407</td>
<td>-.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust R-Square</td>
<td></td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>.629</td>
<td>.622</td>
<td>.585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durbin-Watson</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.967</td>
<td>2.394</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>1.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum VIF</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.559</td>
<td>5.559</td>
<td>5.559</td>
<td>5.559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p < .01$, **$p < .05$, *$p < .10$
depending on the whole form of proactive leadership. As a result, it may have an insignificant relationship between proactive leadership and market-driving capability under the condition of an individual relationship within an organization in that it is not supported by hypothesis 1d. Additionally, multiple authors adopted, adapted, and extended the ideas of core competencies. One of the most prevalent adaptations was to change “competency” to “capability” and apply a more general definition to the term (Stalk, 1992; Leonard-Barton, 1992; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). However, capabilities refer to a broad set of practices in which a company has proficiency and a market-driving capability which is the organizational ability to execute market-driving activities repetitively, efficiently, and predictably. In contrast, a competitive learning competency refers to a company’s ability to learn for improvement of its continuous performance. Thus, a firm may not always link competitive learning competency to market-driving capability because of the overlap relationship. As a result, there is possibly an insignificant relationship between two variables in that it is unsupported by hypothesis 2d. Furthermore, a firm may resource outside of the firm’s boundaries in that these external resources cannot be controlled like internal resources and may require distinct mechanisms for knowledge transfer, data protection, and incentivizing (O’Hern and Rindfleisch, 2010). It may not be able to transfer to market-driving capability. Therefore, there is an insignificant relationship between marketing resource readiness and market-driving capability in that it is unsupported by hypothesis 3d.

4. Contributions and Future research

4.1 Theoretical contribution

Based on the theoretical support namely the contingency theory, we have built our model based on the fundamental of the theory which examines strategies capabilities as a pool of internal resources strategically important for the creation of competitive advantages as mention earlier (Lorenzoni and Lipparrini, 1999; Pringle and Kroll, 1997). With research, our conceptual model is more specific and narrow on the antecedents and the dimensions of marketing excellence strategy. This empirical research indicates that the variables as marketing excellence strategy have been affected by their four antecedents.

4.2 Managerial contribution

Previous studies have shown that the marketing excellence strategy encourages the positive information and links to firm advantage. This research empirically confirms that marketing excellence strategy is affected by its antecedents. Thus, a marketing manager should pay attention to developing the creation of value for a firm by improving marketing excellence through all fours antecedents which are the proactive learning, competitive learning competency, marketing resource readiness, and environmental turbulence. Based on this result, if a marketing manager designs to encourage the marketing excellence strategy through seller-customer exchange, a firm would
concentrate on the proactive leadership, the competitive learning competency, and the marketing resource readiness.

4.3 Future research

The conceptual model is built based on the four antecedents of the marketing excellence strategy. The result of this research indicates that all four antecedents significantly affect marketing excellence strategy even though each of the four antecedents might not affect all dimensions individually. However, if the marketing manager would like to perform each of the dimensions of marketing excellence strategy, the result will provide an alternative on which antecedent they should focus. For example, if the marketing managers would like to perform the competitor competence analysis, they should focus on the marketing resource readiness. Furthermore, to strengthen the relationship between the antecedents and the dimensions of the marketing excellence strategy, future research should be investigated based on the moderator which would encourage the relationship. Additionally, market culture is a set of shared meaning that makes it possible for members of a group to interpret and act upon their environment (Schein, 1984). Specifically, the market culture is also conceptualized in market orientation under a culture view which defines culture as that which places interests through developing a norm for behavior to enhance and to respond to market knowledge (Slater and Naver, 1996). Hence, future research may examine how the market culture may affect the relationship between marketing excellence strategy and its antecedents as its moderator.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research extends to confirm our 4 hypotheses in the conceptual model of how the antecedents link to marketing excellence strategy. Based on the examination of four antecedents, the result shows that the proactive leadership significantly affected only seller-customer exchange. Competitive learning competency significantly influences seller-customer exchange, service creativity communication and competitor competence analysis, but it does not affect marketing-driving. Marketing resource readiness affects competitor competence analysis, but it does not affect the other three dimensions. Moreover, environmental turbulence has significantly influenced all four dimensions of marketing excellence strategy.

6. References


Pringle, Charles D. & Mark J. Kroll (1997) Why Trafalgar was won before it was fought: Lessons from resource-based theory. Academy of Management Executive, 11(4); pp. 73-89.


Stuart-Kregor, P. (2006). *Marketing masterclass — are pharmaceutical (or healthcare) companies achieving true ’marketing excellence’*? Journal of Medical Marketing, 6(1), 19-30


