

THE EFFECT OF COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE ON MARKETING CAPABILITIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The marketing and strategic management literature is well-documented regarding the drivers of competitive intelligence (CI) and how they are gathered, its organization, and dissemination through the organization. However, the impact of CI upon the development of other organizational capabilities including marketing capabilities and the performance of organizations has been neglected and very scarce through the literature. Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the impact of CI categories including market intelligence, competitor intelligence and technological intelligence on marketing capabilities (i.e. market-sensing capability and customer-linking capability), as well as the organizational performance. To this end, structured questionnaire was applied and a survey of 225 persons involved in sales and marketing affairs of insurance companies in Iran was administrated. Results showed that CI categories have direct and significant effect on marketing capabilities and the organization's performance.

Keywords: Competitive intelligence, Marketing capability, Organizational performance, Market intelligence

JEL Classification: G14, L25

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, firms are seeking to cultivate their ability to respond promptly and appropriately to changes of various environmental factors along with heightened competition in the business environment (Tahmasebifard, Zangouinezhad, and Jafari, 2017). Economic, social, political, and industrial environment have recently undergone numerous and rapid changes. Inevitably, those organizations which do not adapt with these growing changes will fade away soon or late. To handle ever-increasing factors regarding businesses, CI (CI) was introduced in early 1980s as a new approach to gain competitive advantage (Fleicher, 2004; Nasri, 2011).

CI is not merely marketing research (Bose, 2008) or scanning business environment. It is, in fact, the process of knowing the nature of competition. Therefore, collecting information around all aspects of competitive environment and applying the obtained information in short-term and long-term plans of the company enables that organization to take the lead in competition and be one step ahead of others (Jourdan, Z., Rainer, R.K. and Marshal, T.E, 2008; Wright, S., Pickton, D.W. and Callow, J., 2002). CI is the main instrument for gathering information for marketing activities, adapting with the market (Patton and Mckenna, 2005) and maintaining competitive advantage (Strauss and Du Toit, 2010).

Despite the fact that literature on the drivers of CI its organization and dissemination within the organization, there is scant research on outputs of CI which empirically show that whether these activities have any effects on the organization's performance or not (Adidam, P. T., Banerjee, M. and Shukla, P., 2012). Moreover, limited studies which investigated the consequences and outcomes of competitive advantage have mainly focused on organizational performance and the impact of CI on other organizational capabilities is very scarce.

Further, most of the researches on CI are descriptive and anecdotal case studies reflecting the activities of specific organization that limited the generalizability and reliability of such studies' result (Saayman *et al.*, 2008; Yap *et al.*, 2014). Also, the effects of CI's sub-categories on different aspects of the organization's performance is neglected through the literature that could provide new insights for determining emphasis domains in gathering information. Specifically, in current economic situation that companies are condemned to act efficiently and effectively, the result of this investigation could be a great contribution for companies.

In an attempt to fill aforementioned gaps, present study seeks to answer these questions. Whether CI activities affect the organizational performance or not? Does CI lay impact on other marketing capabilities of the organizations? If so, how is this impact and how does CI's sub-categories contribute to the organizational performance?

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Competitive intelligence

Primary researches of Porter (1980) on the competitive analysis, which focused on pursuing the competitors' activities and connecting them to strategy formulation, are considered as an origin of the CI concept. The main reason is the explosion and accessibility of information, various and sudden changes of micro and macro environment, an increase in the pace of trade, number of competitors, and severity of local and global competition in recent years (Viviers *et al.*, 2005).

From the strategic and marketing management perspective, strategy formulation is closely related to CI as the foundation for gathering and processing information (Dishman and Calof, 2008). Obviously, CI plays a significant role in strategic marketing management since it acts as the first chain of environment perception and enables the organization to adapt quickly with its environment. Literature demonstrates that companies which emphasis on knowledge generation as their competitive advantage, adapt more easily with the environment in comparison with those that focused on their tangible resources, and also can benefit paucity opportunities in business environment and achieve competitive advantage by begetting greater value for customers and improve their own strategic position in comparison to competitors (Nasri, 2011; Tahmasebifard *et al.*, 2017).

Calof and Skinner (1998) have defined CI as a practicable recommendation generated from a systematic process of planning, gathering, analyzing, and disseminating information about the opportunities of external environment or all aspect that could affect competitive position of one company or country.

CI entails the capability of an organization in accessing to market knowledge not only from competitors but from all aspects of business environment including customers, suppliers, technologies, environments, and potential commercial relations. CI is designed to warn before happening and it enables companies to predict the behavior of competitors, customers, and important players of business environment (Gilad, 1989).

Accordingly, since the focus of CI is not merely on competitors rather whole business environment, it has a broad definition addressing various aspects considered as sub-categories of CI including competitor intelligence, market intelligence, technological intelligence, social and strategic intelligence, and structural-organization intelligence (Deschamps and Nayak, 1995; Rouach and Santi, 2001; Wright and Calof, 2006; Zangoueznezhad and Moshabaki, 2009).

Marketing Capabilities

Market-oriented organizations are aware of changes in target market, know and analyze their current and future customers and establish effective relations with them (Day, 1994b; Kropp, *et al.*, 2006). Day (1994) stated that market-oriented organizations are ahead of their competitors in sensing the market and their links with customers. Therefore, they can predict changes of the market faster and respond to them. Like previous studies (e.g. Fung *et al.*, 2014), this research have considered marketing capabilities consist of market-sensing capability and customer-linking capability.

Market-sensing capability refers to the ability of an organization in accessing to market knowledge and applying that to predict future trends of the market (Day, 1994b; Foley and Fahy, 2004). In other words, market-sensing capability entails constant control over changes of the market and determining the opportunities and threats of foreign market. Once an organization gets systematically and dynamically aware of changes in customers, competitors, and macro-environment, it can utilize this valuable information and exploit market opportunities (Morgan, N., Slotegraaf, R. and Vorhies, D., 2009a).

Customer-linking capability refers to the capability of the organization in establishing and maintaining effective relations with customers after identifying needs of target market (Day 1994; Theoharakis *et al.*, 2009). This capability could be achieved through developing interpersonal relations and access to information such as personality type and customers interest (Hooley *et al.*, 2005). In this way, organizations will be able to know present and future customers (Slater and Narver, 1998).

Effective linking with customers means enough access to their information (Homburg *et al.*, 2000), awareness of their needs and interests and harmonizing the organization with these needs (Armario, J., Ruiz, D. and Armario, E., 2008). Access to such information demands effective relations with customers (Gronroos, 1996). Since establishment of stable and long-lasting relations are usually considered the main objective of marketing (e.g. Sheth and Parvatiyar, 2002; Shi *et al.*, 2009), such capability creates competitive advantage for the organization and strategically is of high importance (Hooley *et al.*, 2005).

Market intelligence and marketing capabilities

Since the domain of CI is whole business environment, multitude sphere addressed as sub-categories of CI involving competitor intelligence, market intelligence, technological intelligence, social and strategic intelligence, and structural-organization intelligence (Deschamps and Nayak, 1995; Rouach and Santi, 2001; Wright and Calof, 2006; Zangouinezhad and Moshabaki, 2009). Deschamps and Nayak (1995) have defined market intelligence as knowledge that maps current and future trends in needs and preferences of customers, new markets, creative segmentation possibilities, and major changes in marketing and distribution.

Focused on market intelligence, companies can predict capricious needs of customers, design appealing and appropriate marketing mix for them, and respond quickly to them (Zhou *et al.*, 2009). Market intelligence provide companies with better perception of the market and marketing process through obtaining correct and reliable information about changing needs of customers (Ciappei and Simoni, 2005). Knowledge obtained about needs and preferences of customers, market trends, and changes in consumption patterns enables companies to sense target market appropriately and create products compatible with target market needs and maintain their relations with customers (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater 1990).

H1: Market intelligence has a positive and significant impact on market-sensing capability.

H2: Market intelligence has a positive and significant impact on customer-linking capability.

Competitor intelligence and marketing capabilities

According to Deschamps and Nayak (1995), competitor intelligence includes assessment of changes in competitive strategies, structure of competitors, new alternative products, and newcomers to the industry, their strategies and services over the time. Competitor intelligence focus on the analysis of competitive behavior and face to face competition of competitors in which each organization makes an attempt to win out by predicting tactics of their competitors, showing appropriate reactions, and applying complicated approaches (Zajac and Bazerman, 1991).

With providing knowledge about competitors, their strategies, objectives, research activities, and their strengths or weaknesses, CI enables companies to perceive their positions in the competition environment and endow their customers with equal or higher values. In fact, competitor intelligence generates a vivid comprehension of weaknesses and strengths of the organization. Therefore, companies will be able to identify unique opportunities through better understanding of the market (Day, 1994) and therefore they can provide their customers with higher values. Companies which have enough knowledge about their competitors can create distinctive value for their customers (Tseng, 2009) and establish more appropriate relations with their customers. Therefore,

H3: Competitor intelligence has positive and significant impact on market-sensing capabilities

H4: Competitor intelligence has positive and significant impact on customer-linking capabilities.

Technological intelligence and marketing capabilities

Technological intelligence is focused on cost-benefit analysis of advantages and disadvantages of new technologies and estimating the outdating of technologies in future (Rouach and Santi, 2001). The quality of gathered data about current and future trends of technologies has fundamental effect on effectiveness of technology management within organizations (Iansiti, 2000). Moreover, complexity and dynamism of technology development prevents creation of a database of technology trends. These necessitate engagement with a systematic approach to monitoring changes and technological development for identifying existing technological threats and opportunities of the environment (Kerr *et al.*, 2006).

Tanev and Bailetti (2008) concluded that there is a strong relationship between technological intelligence and improvement of innovation in the organization. New processes, methods, and technologies help the company to identify new opportunities in the market, have a better perception of it, and by creating suitable new products exploit these opportunities faster than their competitors (Chen *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, technological intelligence facilitates obtaining knowledge of customers through information systems of the organization (Paiva and Goncalo, 2008) and it will improve customer-linking process.

On the other hand, applying new technologies influences on the way of gathering data, and disseminating within the organization. Therefore, new technologies can even affect CI performance. Manifestly, applying proper technologies without precise analysis of technological trends and relevant costs and benefits is not feasible.

Accordingly, following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Technological intelligence has a positive and significant impact on market-sensing capabilities.

H6: Technological intelligence has a positive and significant impact on customer-linking capability.

Market-sensing capability, customer-linking capability and organizational performance

Morgan *et al.*, (2009) argued market-sensing capability of an organization influences on its revenue. Those organizations in which this capability is high are able to recognize new opportunities of the market faster than competitors and have bigger chance to produce products or to offer service to ignored or dissatisfied segments of the market (Slater and Narver, 2000). This information helps the organization to identify its potential customers and plan to attract them so as to gain bigger market share and income (Morgan *et al.*, 2009b).

Market-sensing capability refers to the ability of the organization in shaping market behaviors through development and fulfillment of potential customers (Jaworski, B., Kohli, A. and Sahay, A., 2000). Consequently, following hypotheses are postulated:

H7: Market-sensing capability has a positive and significant impact on the organizational performance.

In today's competitive and changing business environment expanding long-term relationship with customers is vital and necessary for the success and survival of producers (Mirabi *et al.*, 2015). Once an organization develops its relations with customers and partners, it can specify customers' needs precisely and improve its performance (Day 1994; Hooley, G *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, maintaining effective relation with outsiders accelerates gathering and developing information pertinent to final consumers (Kale *et al.*, 2000) and results in higher innovation and creativity within the organization (Theoharakis *et al.*, 2009).

H8: Customer-linking capability has a positive and significant impact on organizational performance.

Research model is therefore as follows:

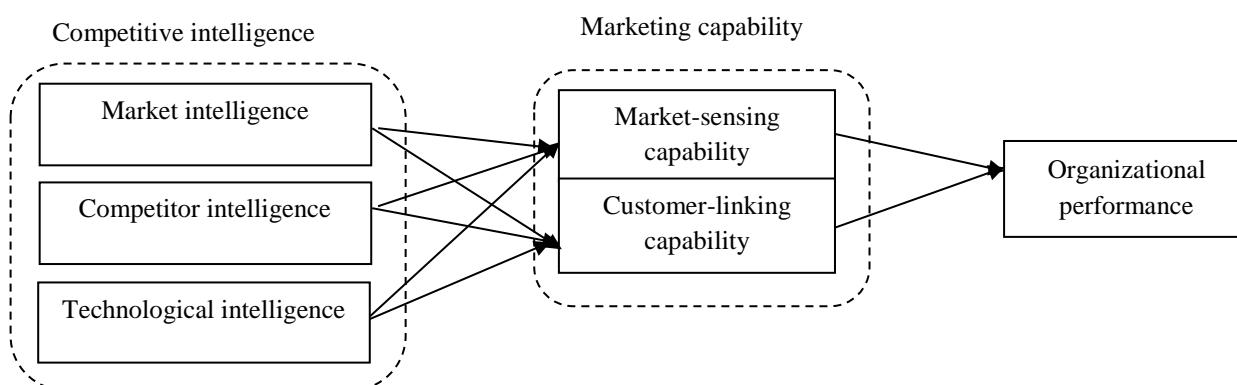


Figure 1- Research model

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data is gathered through survey method. To this end structured questionnaire was used. The questions were measured by five points Likert-type scale anchored from “completely disagree” to “completely agree”. Questions and their resources are presented in table 3. Statistical population consists of marketing department staff of insurance companies' headquarters of Iran. According to information inquired from human resources departments of 29 companies, there were 543 employees involved with sales and marketing affairs who comprised the statistical population of this research.

For the sake of source limitation (time, cost, etc.) we decided to sample from the population. When the research population is heterogeneous and various groups and categories of different percentage exist within in, simple random sampling is applied. Regarding the size of the research population (543 persons), Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used to define sample size (225 persons) and afterwards questionnaires were distributed.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Normality of data and adequacy of sample

SPSS 19 and LISREL software 8.80 were applied for data analysis and hypotheses testing. Initially, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was used for examining the normality of data. When significance level of variables (Sig) is higher than 0.05, data is normal. Test results are summarized in following table. According to table 1, data related to all variables is normal. So, it could be concluded that sample is representative of population and parametric test could be utilized for hypotheses testing.

Table 1: Significance Levels of Kolmogorov-Smirnov

Constructs	K-S statistics	Sig
Market intelligence	0.833	0.491
Competitor intelligence	1.161	0.135
Technological intelligence	1.271	0.079
Market-sensing capability	1.400	0.040
Customer-linking capability	1.265	0.081
Organizational performance	1.231	0.09

To examine sample adequacy for factorial analysis, Bartlett test and KMO index was used. If significance level of Bartlett test is lower than 0.05, factorial analysis for identifying factorial model is appropriate. Table 2 shows the value of KMO, Bartlett value, degree of freedom, and sig of the test. Since KMO value is 0.929, sample size is suitable for factorial analysis and path analysis with structural equation modeling. The sig of Bartlett test is lower than 0.05 which representative of the fact that factorial analysis is suitable for determining the structural model analysis.

TABLE 2: KMO Index and Bartlet Test Result

KMO	Bartlett's test statistics	Degree of freedom	Sig
0.929	2.622	378	0.000

a. Reliability and Validity

Reliability of questionnaire is tested through Cronbach's alpha. This method is used for examining internal consistency of measurement instruments including questionnaires or tests that measure different traits. Estimated Cronbach's Alpha of each variable is presented in following table. Cronbach's alpha of all research variables was over 0.7 which is indicative of appropriate reliability of research constructs.

Research validity was as well examined through confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA). If t-value in factorial analysis of each question (observed variable) with construct (latent variable) is over 1.96, necessary accuracy for measuring that latent construct is approved. Since obtained t-values were all over 1.96, questionnaire's questions were found valid.

Table 3: Factorial Loadings, t values, Cronbach's values

Construct	Dimension	Measures	Factor loading	t-value	Cronbach's Alfa
Competitive intelligence (Deschamps and Nayak, 1995)	Market intelligence	The intelligence pertained to current trends in customer needs and preferences are gathered and disseminated through the company	0.70	8.62	0.951
		The intelligence pertained to future trends in customer needs and preferences are gathered and disseminated through the company	0.79	10.25	
		Our company collects, analyzes, purifies and shares the information pertained to new market opportunities	0.83	10.93	
		Our company collects, analyzes and disseminates the intelligence pertained to new and creative segmentation opportunities	0.78	10.02	
		The intelligence pertained to new major shift in marketing and sales are collected and disseminated through our company	0.77	9.78	
	Competitor intelligence	Competitors strategies are continuously monitored and information about their competitive activities are disseminated through the company	0.81	10.52	0.939
		The intelligence pertained to competitors structure are collected and disseminated through the company	0.74	9.15	
		Our company gathers, analyzes and disseminates the information pertained to new product/services substitutes	0.79	10.11	
		The information related to new industry entrants are collected and disseminated through our company	0.79	10.20	

	Technological intelligence	Our company collects, analyzes and disseminates the intelligence pertained to current technologies and assesses its cost/benefit	0.76	9.40	0.893
		Our company collects, analyzes and disseminates the intelligence pertained to future technologies and assesses its cost/benefit	0.83	10.80	
		The intelligence pertained to future technological discontinuities are collected and shared through our company	0.76	9.55	
Marketing capability (Fang <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	Market-sensing capability	Our company tracks competitors' strategies and tactics	0.65	7.60	0.796
		Our company learns about the macro-market environment	0.77	9.52	
		Our company identifies and understands market trends	0.74	9.02	
	Customer-linking capability	Our company is good at maintaining and enhancing relationships with customers	0.82	10.76	0.917
		Our company establishes good relationships with key target customers	0.80	10.26	
		Our company is good at understanding what customers need and require	0.84	11.21	
		Our company is good at establishing relationships with customers	0.81	10.52	
Organizational performance (Fang <i>et al.</i> , 2014)		Compared with competitors', our revenue growth is high	0.78	9.52	0.894
		Compared with competitors', our profit margins are high	0.73	8.79	
		Compared with competitors', our customer retention rate is high	0.82	10.59	0.882
		Compared with competitors', our market share is high	0.80	10.25	
		Compared with competitors, we remain in a leading market position	0.76	9.52	
		Our company is often faster than competitors in marketing new products and Services	0.74	9.23	0.915
		Customers think we are better than competitors in implementing new ideas	0.84	11.22	
		Our company constantly introduces new methods in order to improve the service Process	0.86	11.66	
		Our company improves service contents and processes, based on customer Requests	0.81	10.59	

Hypotheses Testing

After testing validity of measures, the correlations of research constructs were tested. To this end, the model was implemented in LISREL software causal relationships between variables were tested via structural equation modeling. Initially, research hypotheses were tested through path analysis. Path analysis is a multi-variate regression that allows examination of causal relations between two or more variables. Standard coefficients of regression model (path coefficient) which are indicative of the direction and size of relationship between latent variables, as well as t-values are demonstrated in table 3. To reject null hypotheses and to support research hypotheses at the level of 0.05 of significance, t-value must be over 1.64 and at the 0.01 level of significance, it must be over 1.96 in one-tailed hypotheses. Results are summarized in table 4.

Table 4: Path Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

Path	Path coefficient	t-value	Result
Market intelligence → Market-sensing capability	0.3	2.06	Supported
Competitor intelligence → Market-sensing capability	0.50	2.73	Supported
Technological intelligence → Market-sensing capability	4.08	0.72	Supported
Market intelligence → Customer-linking capability	0.54	3.10	Supported
Competitor intelligence → Customer-linking capability	0.46	4.89	Supported

Technological intelligence → Customer-linking capability	0.40	3.79	Supported
Market-sensing capability → Organizational performance	0.61	5.18	Supported
Customer-linking capability → Organizational performance	0.37	3.89	Supported

As it could be concluded from table 4, t-value of all research hypotheses were estimated over 1.96. Therefore, null hypotheses were not supported at the 0.95 level of confidence. Since these coefficients were both significant and positive, all research hypotheses were supported.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Academically, prior studies (Ghoshal and Westney, 1991; Trim and Lee, 2008) have indicated that intelligence gathering is a necessity for strategic planning. This assists organizations in moving toward market opportunities and avoiding problems, as well as monitoring and going through development cycles (Porter, 1985; Rouach and Santi, 2001). Although there is narrated evidence regarding the relationship between CI and performance, the empirical evidence indicating the impact of CI activities on development of other organizational capabilities and performance (Hughes, 2005). Therefore, present study explores whether CI (including market intelligence, competitor intelligence, and technological intelligence) impacts upon development of marketing capabilities or not. How about the performance of the organization? If the answer to this question is positive, how are these relationships?

From practical and managerial point of view, the results of present study have stressed the significance of CI and demonstrated that CI activities leave direct and positive impact on organizational performance. Furthermore, studying the impact of sub-categories of CI on development of marketing capabilities, provides new insight about the contribution of these categories (market intelligence, competitor intelligence, and technological intelligence) on the development of marketing capabilities (market-sensing capabilities, and customer-linking capabilities). This proved that companies can develop their marketing capabilities and perform better if they stress on activities of CI.

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