THE EMERGENCE OF TESCO.COM: A STUDY OF CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP (SUMMARY)

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**SUMMARY**

**THE EMERGENCE OF TESCO.COM: A STUDY OF CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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**Principal Topic**

In order to compete effectively and maintain their competitive position many large companies recognise the need for entrepreneurial endeavour within their organisations, however they often lack the ability to create the necessary conditions or stimulate this type of behaviour which is generally known as corporate entrepreneurship. Indeed they may be constrained by their existing corporate structure and culture; the very thing that defines and embodies their singular corporate identity. The literature confirms the enduring importance of this topic for both theory and practice.

Tesco plc has become the UK market leader in grocery retailing and operates a highly successful niche business, a home delivery service known as Tesco.com. This study is concerned with finding a theoretical explanation for the emergence of this new venture from conception and inception in the mid 1990’s to becoming a fully incorporated and profitable business over an eight year period. Recent work on a theory of entrepreneurial mechanisms informs the discussion and provides insight into the generic processes which involve three interlinked concepts. The first is emergent properties, the second is the production of order at multiple levels and the third is the social situatedness of these processes.

**Method**

The methodology includes a semi-structured interview with a Tesco senior executive in 2003 who was involved in the emergence; originally in a functional capacity as Director of Corporate Strategy and for a time operationally when he became Chief Executive of the new venture. Analysis of the data employs techniques and procedures from grounded theory and the research, data collection and analysis is ongoing.

**Results and Implications**

The analysis and interpretation of the results articulate an argument demonstrating the possibility of a link between complexity science and entrepreneurship; new venture formation is seen as an order-creating activity occurring at varying levels in a hierarchical model through the social interaction of a community of agents. The implications of the work will be relevant to researchers and educators because of the potential contribution to the field and to practitioners because of the detailed explanation of the process of emergence of a high profile new venture and the implicit opportunity for the practice of corporate entrepreneurship.

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