

6-10-2017

FROM PASTIME TO PRODUCT IN THE CRAFT BREWING INDUSTRY: BRICOLAGE AND CO-OPETITION IN ACTION (SUMMARY)

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Recommended Citation

Ofstein, Laurel F.; Lepisto, Douglas A.; and Flanagan, David J. (2017) "FROM PASTIME TO PRODUCT IN THE CRAFT BREWING INDUSTRY: BRICOLAGE AND CO-OPETITION IN ACTION (SUMMARY)," *Frontiers of Entrepreneurship Research*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 9 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol37/iss9/7>

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≈ SUMMARY ≈

FROM PASTIME TO PRODUCT IN THE CRAFT BREWING INDUSTRY: BRICOLAGE AND CO-OPETITION IN ACTION

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Principal Topic

Strategic alliances are commonplace in most industries today, both formal and informal in nature. By sharing resources, cooperating firms will benefit, as long as each respects the terms of the agreement. This cooperation amongst competitors is traditionally examined by looking at the industry leaders – larger firms (c.f. Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996), but what about in small businesses facing liabilities of newness? Small, fledgling entrepreneurial firms often engage in bricolage during the start-up phase. Nascent firms also engage in co-opetition, characterized by informal cooperative agreements, with more to lose than large firms due to the lack of formal enforcement mechanisms.

This paper examines how firms built through bricolage, also rely on co-opetition as they grow. We research bricolage and co-opetition in young entrepreneurial firms, and propose that bricolage is an effective antecedent for co-opetition, forming a network that, while competing, also support each other through cooperative behaviors. This paper contributes to the body of literature by extending both the bricolage and co-opetition literature streams, while also proposing a new linkage between these constructs through qualitative research findings.

Method

This research was conducted using semi-structured interviews, developed in to six case studies of brewery founders from a small Midwest community where craft breweries have become a major tourist attraction, and have gained strong support from local consumers. The interview process followed a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The interviews covered how the founders construed their relationships with other breweries, and if, how, and why they cooperated with one another, and the benefits or costs of these cooperative behaviors.

Results and Implications

Results revealed that nascent craft breweries used bricolage to build their businesses into viable enterprises and co-opetition to sustain growth. We also coded a variety of different kinds of collaborative behaviors. We observed consistently similar bricolage and cooperative behaviors across brewers. These results offer guidance to practitioners as to how bricolage and collaborative competition can be leveraged to counteract liabilities of newness and to foster growth in small business such as the craft brewers studied.

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