LEARNING METHODS AS MICRO-LEVEL ORIGINS OF DYNAMIC MARKETING AND R&D CAPABILITIES IN YOUNG AND ESTABLISHED ENTREPRENEURIAL FIRMS (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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Principal Topic

Firms with strong dynamic capabilities (DCs) are intensely entrepreneurial and more effective in configuring and reconfiguring their portfolio of entrepreneurial competences in changing environments (Teece, Pisano & Shuen 1997). Scholars agree regarding the influence of DCs by micro-level origins, defined to be a driver of entrepreneurial behavior and heterogeneity in general (Abell, Felin & Foss, 2008). The evolution of a firm’s DCs depends on learning processes, seen as micro-level origins of DCs (Zollo & Winter 2002). Micro-level origins of DCs have not yet been empirically analyzed in an entrepreneurial context and research about the link between DCs and micro issues helps to understand the evolvement of DCs in entrepreneurial firms (Easterby-Smith, Lyles & Peteraf 2009).

This study empirically examines the influence of certain learning methods (learning from experience, learning through improvisation, learning by experimentation, trial-and-error learning, learning through imitation) as micro-level origins on dynamic marketing and dynamic R&D capabilities in young and established entrepreneurial firms.

Method

The findings are based on a survey of small- and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in Germany with 230 qualified responses. We analyzed the fit of our research model by using a confirmatory factor analysis and applying the maximum likelihood procedure with AMOS 17.0 software. A moderated multiple regression analysis was used to test the validity of our hypotheses.

Results and Implications

Active and spontaneous learning methods with a real-time and short-term learning effect, such as learning through improvisation and trial-and-error learning, have a significant impact on dynamic marketing and dynamic R&D capabilities. Whereas learning methods based on a past or a long-term view, such as learning from experience or learning by experimentation, have no influence on the development of DCs apart from the significant influence that learning by experimentation has on dynamic R&D capabilities.

The positive effect of learning through improvisation and trial-and-error learning is stronger for young entrepreneurial firms than for established firms especially when the use is low. Improving the active and spontaneous learning methods of young firms will help them to continue to exist by developing DCs.

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