Towards competitive theorizing of strategy implementation process – empirical evidence from applying the RBV lens on implementation process

by

Muhammad Amjad

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire

May/ 2013

Student Declaration

Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards

*I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution

_____

Material submitted for another award

*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work

_____

Collaboration

Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative project, the thesis must indicate in addition clearly the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration. Please state below:

None

Signature of Candidate ....
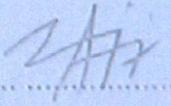
Type of Award ....PhD...

School ....Lancashire Business School........................

'Towards competitive theorizing of strategy implementation process – empirical evidence from applying the RBV lens on implementation process'

Abstract

This study identified the core knowledge gap of a lack of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation (SIMP) in the processual and resource-based views of strategy. This gap exists due to tactical perception and relative inattention to variety in strategy implementationprocess and related competitive implications. It is argued that strategy process and the RBV perspectives can provide complementary insights necessary to move towards competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. A grounded research is conducted to compare how strategy implementation patterns explain implementation success and how those patterns explain heterogeneity in resources management in different firm types – foreign and indigenous. Content analysis of the interview data revealed significant heterogeneity in the strategy implementation process patterns and achieved implementation success. These SIMP process patterns are categorised based on the approach towards strategy implementation as a strategic phenomenon, firm's type, and thrust of implementation process. Important sources of variations in implementation success emerged in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns.

Three resources management activities emerged from the data and revealed important distinctions for the heterogeneous implementing patterns. The Tactical implementing patterns showed preference of strategic actorsfor use of internally available resources and acquisition of ready-made resources. The Competitive implementing patterns showed a balanced approach towards resources management by pursuing optimization of resources.These resources management heterogeneities are shaped by the SIMP process pattern and revealed implementation process performance, action timing and resources optimization as the key sources of competitiveness from strategy implementation.The empirical findings refute the notion that the role of strategy implementation is only to complement as an operational process without much competitive gains.This empirically challenges the conventional conceptions of implementation to adopt and institutionalize strategy and extends to the contribution of SIMP for strategy refinements to gain competitive gains. These findings strongly support that competitive theorizing of strategy implementation is a worthwhile scholarly pursuit via using the complementary views of strategy. Future research should build on this agenda of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation using other firm types, research settings and more micro level analysis.

Key Words: Strategy implementation process, RBV, Competitiveness, Resources management, Competitive theorizing

List of Contents   **Page No**

Chapter 3 – The Resource Based View (RBV) research

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

Chapter 5 - Processual analysis of SIMP in different firm types
– Empirical findings and discussion

**Chapter 6 – Strategy implementation patterns, heterogeneous
            resources management and competitive implications
            - Empirical findings and discussion**

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

Acknowledgments

List of Tables   **Page No**

List of Figures

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The focus of this exploratory research is how strategy implementation contributes to the competitiveness of different firm types. This chapter introduces the research aim, focus and derived research questions. The chapter concludes with an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2. Strategy Implementation (SIMP) in business practice

Strategy implementation is recognized as a key management challenge (Dobni, 2003). However, despite this claimed importance, implementation is difficult for many managers (Noble, 1999b). It is long argued that well-planned strategies lead to superior performance, only when they are successfully implemented (Li et al., 2010). Effective implementation proves difficult due to the need for coordinated efforts of individuals across firms (Olson et al., 2005). This is, arguably, because of the lack of enough knowledge about strategy implementation than strategic planning (Hrebiniak, 2006; Alexander, 1991). Miller (2002) found that almost seventy percent of new strategic initiatives could not be implemented successfully and this highlights the difficulty of successful SIMP in actual business conditions. This gap between strategic planning and the implementation of planned strategies is sometimes referred to as the execution gap (Bossidy and Charan, 2002).

1.3. Limited attention to strategy implementation research

Overall, strategy implementation remains a comparatively under-researched area in the strategy literature (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). There have been consistent calls for more attention to strategy implementation issues but strategy planning and analysis attracted much more research attention in strategy literature (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Chebat, 1999). Additionally, existing research and conceptual literature positions strategy implementation as an operational phenomenon that is largely dependent on strategy planning, without much strategic contributions (Barney and Mackey, 2005). There is currently a renewed interest amongst strategy researchers to explore strategy –as- practice and strategy process issues (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2007). The Resource-based View

(RBV) literature does not provide much insight into the nature of strategy implementation and potential competitive contributions (Barney, 2001a). These issues are discussed in detail in the chapters two and three based on an extensive review of the strategy implementation, strategy process and the RBV literatures.

1.4. Research Aim and Derived Research Questions

Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) highlighted the need for empirical research into the performance outcomes of strategy implementation process. Similarly, Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) argued for the need of more processual research in the RBV. This research aimed to fill the research gap of the lack of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation by seeking complementary insights from strategy implementation process and resources management. This is based on the knowledge gaps related to a tactical view of strategy implementation in the extant SIMP literature, insufficient attention to implementation process heterogeneity and inattention to strategy implementation in the RBV (Li et al., 2010; Barney, 2001b). Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) have also emphasized that processual research needs to be well-grounded in the actual practice of firms.

In this context, this research examines a) how strategy implementation process patterns explain heterogeneity in implementation success and resources management and b) how this heterogeneity explains competitive gains from strategy implementation. Based on the identified knowledge gaps, the research aim is 'To explore the role of strategy implementation in competitiveness by bringing together the strategy process and the RBV perspectives.' This thesis applies the RBV lens on strategy implementation process in different firm contexts and explores the heterogeneity in SIMP process patterns and the role of SIMP process patterns as sources of resource heterogeneity and competitive performance. This study sets out to answer three main research questions derived from the relevant knowledge gaps as the literature review chapters two and three provide theoretical substantiation of the research aim, research focus and research questions:

1. How SIMP process patterns and underlying activities explain the differences in implementation success among the indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries?

2. How SIMP activities and process patterns explain heterogeneous resources management of the foreign multinational subsidiaries and indigenous firms?

3. How SIMP activities and process patterns contribute to competitiveness in the foreign multinational subsidiaries and indigenous firms?

1.5. Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters plus references and appendices and Figure 1.1 presents a broader overview of the thesis structure. *Chapter One* begins with a description of the importance of strategy implementation, followed by the research aim and the derived research objectives. The chapter concludes with a description of the thesis structure.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth and critical evaluation of the relevant SIMP literature. The relatively less attention to SIMP issues in the mainstream strategy literature highlights the fragmented nature of SIMP literature and the tactical, operational perception of strategy implementation. Different variance and processual conceptualizations of strategy implementation are critically reviewed and the lack of the RBV as a theoretical perspective in SIMP research is identified as an important gap. The consequences of a lack of theoretical focus and the operational view of strategy implementation process are outlined as key research gaps for understanding the strategic value of successful implementation.

Chapter three present the critical review of the RBV literature and identifies major inattention to strategy implementation issues in the RBV literature. The recent calls for adopting process approach in the RBV research are critically reviewed and the research gaps of inattention to strategy implementation and need for process research are used to determine the research aim, research focus and three derived research questions.

Figure 1.1: Overview of Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 - Introduction
(Research overview, derived research questions, thesis structure)

Literature Review

Chapter 2 - Strategy Implementation (SIMP) research

(Eclectic approaches to SIMP, Processual views and their treatment of strategy implementation, the need to use a competitive theory like the RBV for implementation research)

Chapter 3 - The Resource Based View (RBV) research

(Theoretical development of the RBV, the need Competitive theorizing via complementary-gains research: applying the RBV lens on strategy implementation process, derived research questions)

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

(Grounded Theory Approach, research design, qualitative content analysis, research quality and robustness)

Empirical Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5 –Processual analysis of SIMP in different firm types

(Heterogeneity in strategy implementation process, Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns – variations in implementation success, sources for variations in implementation success, discussion of key research findings)

Chapter 6 – Strategy implementation patterns, heterogeneous resources management and competitive implications

(Heterogeneity in resources management in the SIMP patterns, resources management and competitive implications of the SIMP process patterns, discussion of key research findings, competitive theorizing of SIMP)

Chapter 7 – Conclusions
(Research overview, contributions of the study –theoretical and practical implications of the thesis, limitations, future research directions)

Chapter four provides a commentary of the grounded theory foundations as adopted and used for this exploratory research. The inductive – qualitative approach is detailed for this research among the indigenous and foreign firms in Pakistan. The key issues in data collection are outlined and the qualitative content analysis of the research data is discussed. The measures taken by the researcher to improve research quality are also discussed.

Chapter five presents the empirical findings for the heterogeneity in implementation process patterns among the foreign and indigenous firms. A detailed analysis of these SIMP patterns is presented for the achieved levels of implementation success in the researched firm types. Different sources of variations in implementation success in different strategy implementation patterns are discussed. The key findings are discussed for their comparison with the relevant literature. The distinction for the identified Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns are substantiated and unique insights are established.

Chapter six presents the research findings for the heterogeneity in resources management in different strategy implementation patterns. The identified resources management activities are discussed for important distinctions in the Competitive and Tactical implementation patterns. The resources management heterogeneities and the implementation process as source of these heterogeneities are discussed in detail. The findings are then compared with the extant literature to establish important analytical pointers for the competitive theorizing of strategy implementation through complementary gains from processual and resources analysis of SIMP process patterns.

Chapter Seven begins with the research overview, followed by the discussion of the contribution of this study to knowledge. The theoretical and managerial implications are presented. This chapter concludes by identifying potential future research avenues and limitations.

Chapter 2 – Strategy Implementation (SIMP) research

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of the existing literature on strategy implementation. Initially, strategy implementation is located within the wider strategy literature. The issues of limited empirical attention towards strategy implementation and the eclectic approaches employed in the conceptualization are highlighted. The processual view of strategy and its variants – strategy process and recent strategy-as-practice, are reviewed for their orientations towards implementation. The processual thinking and its theoretical bases are discussed concluding the need to study implementation process and their micro details in a variety of firm contexts. The areas of agreement and insufficient knowledge in existing implementation literature are then summarised. The core gaps within the implementation literature are identified as the lack of conceptualising and theorizing within particular discipline perspectives; an overly operational view of implementation; and, insufficient attention to performance consequences of strategy implementation. This critique in turn establishes the need for adopting the RBV as an important theoretical lens to study the strategy implementation process and the performance implications. The chapter concludes by emphasizing the relevance of RBV for understanding implementation patterns and their underlying mechanisms, and linking the implementation process with firm's performance.

2.2. Strategy implementation

Strategy implementation is a complex process involving different actors and activities that are embedded in firm's context (Noble, 1999a, Nutt, 1998). Successful implementation is important to reap benefits from well-planned strategies. However, implementation of strategic decisions poses significant challenges (Bonoma, 1984; Ranft and Lord, 2002). Implementation remains difficult for many managers, arguably, because of the lack of enough knowledge about strategy implementation in comparison to decision making and strategic planning (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Alexander, 1991). Miller (2002) found that almost seventy percent of new strategic initiatives could not be implemented successfully and this highlights the difficulty of successful SIMP in actual business conditions. Effective

implementation proves difficult due to the need for coordinated efforts of individuals across firms (Olson et al., 2005). This gap between strategic planning and the implementation of planned strategies is sometimes referred to as 'the execution gap' (Bossidy and Charan, 2002) or a 'knowing – doing gap' (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2000).

2.3. Locating strategy implementation in strategy research

A number of different perspectives have been applied to the strategy research field, including the Institutionalist, Economic, Behaviouralist and Integrating perspectives (Jenkins, Ambrosini and Collier, 2007). The search for superior and sustainable competitive performance remains the core of much strategy research literature which may be broadly categorized into, three streams (Powell, 2001): (a) superiority in decision making and strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1990; Porter, 1994); (b) valuable and difficult to imitate resource heterogeneity amongst firms as drivers of strategic planning and competitive advantage (Barney, 2001a); and (c) organizational design and successful implementation (Noble, 1999a; Edmondson et al., 2001). Streams (a) and (b) are focussed on strategy formulation, whereas stream (c) is directed towards strategy implementation issues.

Strategy implementation is generally conceptualised as complementary to business success (Barney, 2001a). Implementation is considered more of an art as compared to planning (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006). Some strategy process scholars like Mintzberg (1978) and Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) have argued that strategy formulation and implementation are intertwined without much clarity of the start and end points or the two. Some scholars consider process related issues to be implementation oriented (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006), whilst others consider implementation and formulation to be too closely intertwined that it is futile to separate the two (Mintzberg et al., 1998; Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992). This suggests that the strategy process or a strategy formation process is an all-encompassing term, sufficient to cover everything. Therefore, the potential implementation-formulation dichotomy is irrelevant, although this does not mean that implementation issues should be ignored in strategy process research. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Noble (1999b) argued against black-boxing of strategy implementation in strategy process and emphasized the need for empirical research focussed on implementation.

However, the conceptual distinction between formulation and implementation, similar to the content-process dichotomy, remains evident in strategy process work (Floyd and Woolridge, 2000). There have been repeated calls in the strategy literature for the need to do more research on implementation issues from a broader perspective (Noble, 1999a), the strategy process perspective (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006), and the RBV lens (Barney, 2001a). However, these repeated calls have not received much empirical interest (Foss, 2011) and, sadly, strategy implementation continues to receive less attention than strategic planning in the strategy literature. Strategy implementation needs significantly more research to support conceptual development and rectify the imbalance in the wider strategy literature (Chebat, 1999; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006).

Such a proposal has received support from a number of sources, including the recent calls for more processual research in the RBV (Kraaijenbrink, 2010; Maritan and Peteraf, 2011), more attention to detail of micro-processes and micro-activities in practice (Johnson et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2005), and exploring the black box of micro-foundations of the RBV and competitive advantage (Foss, 2011; Barney, 2001a; Lippman and Rumelt, 2003). This may be seen as an important juncture in strategy research, providing a crucial opportunity to conduct theoretically important *yet* practically useful implementation research. Such developments provided the key motivation for this present research.

2.4. Eclectic approaches to strategy implementation

Strategy implementation does not have a shared conceptualization nor theoretical foundations since different scholars employing their respective sub-domains have adopted a more eclectic approach to strategy implementation (Noble, 1999a). Much of strategy implementation research has focussed on execution as an operational process with related outcomes, instead of linking strategy implementation with strategic competitive performance outcomes (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006; Sabherwal and Rubey, 1993; Dederichs, 2010).

A review of the extant strategy implementation literature shows that the approaches to implementation may be categorised into two broadly differentiated streams. These broad approaches are termed here as factor-oriented and process-oriented

implementation. This broad categorisation into factor or process orientation draws upon Mohr's (1982) popular distinction between variance and process approaches to research. It allows integrating the fragmented strategy implementation literature and situating it in the more mainstream strategy thinking. These two approaches further split into sub-streams based on their emphases on the types of factors or the nature of process being conceptualised for successful implementation (Skivington and Daft, 1991; Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2010).

One common theme across these two approaches is to view implementation from a problematic lens, either distilling success factors to avoid implementation barriers or to overcome the consequences of implementation barriers to achieve successful implementation. There has been considerable attention to the ostensive part of implementation although there remains a lack of attention to the performative details of strategy implementation activities and processes (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006; Feldman and Pentland, 2003). Table 2.1 outlines these broad approaches, sub-streams, and representative scholars to illustrate this diversity and fragmentation in the extant strategy implementation literature:

Table 2.1: Eclectic approaches in the strategy implementation literature		
Implementation approach	**Sub-stream**	**Representative scholars**
Factor-oriented implementation	• Structural factors • Interpersonal-behavioural factors • Integrated factors approach • Implementation barriers	Gupta (1987); Hrebiniak (2006) Nutt (1988); Dooley et al. (2000); Bourgeois and Broadwin (1984); Skivington and Daft (1991); Govindarajan (1988); Hambrick and Cannella (1989); Olson, Slater, and Hult (2005) Alexander (1985, 1991); Olsen et al. (1992); Heide et al. (2002); Kaufmann and Becker (2005)
Process-oriented implementation	• Rational-mechanistic implementation process • Incremental - Emergent process • Contingency oriented process	Andrews (1971); Hrebiniak and Joyce, (1984, 2005); Li et al. (2010); Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) Mintzberg and Waters (1985); Quinn (1988); Pettigrew and Whipp (1991); Van de Ven (1992); Hart (1992); Roth et al. (1991); Van de Ven and Poole (1995); Sabherwal and Robbey (1993); Andersen (2004); Jarzabkowski (2008)

2.5. Factor-oriented approaches

Much of the empirical strategy implementation research is factor or issue-oriented, attempting to address specific implementation factors and related issues. Factor-oriented approaches look at an individual factor or a collection of factors related to implementation success or failure. These approaches represent the wide variety of thinking in management research, even if they address the process dimensions as variables (Langley, 1999). Skivington and Daft (1991) and Noble (1999a) organised their literature reviews around such factors. Skivington and Daft (1991) identified

structural framework and process related factors. Noble (1999a) focussed on conceptual and empirical publications to discuss structural and interpersonal-process factors of successful implementation. He showed the fragmentation in the evolution of strategy implementation as a field of study. Noble (1999a) concurred with Skivington and Daft (1991) that strategy implementation success requires elements from different views and, consequently, implementation researchers need to consider elements from a broader perspective. In general, these approaches overlooked the important issues of the interaction of factors during the implementation process, their temporality, and their path or situational dependence.

2.5.1. Structural Factors

The structural factors view considers organizational structure, strategy content, authority, incentive mechanisms, control and monitoring as crucial elements for successful implementation (Hrebiniak, 2005). These factors suggest a mechanistic and administrative top-down approach towards strategy implementation, examining the more obvious issues in organizational design. Strategy implementation in this context is argued to involve top management, the middle management and down-the-line employees in a hierarchical manner (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984). The issues of managerial authority and control in line with organizational strategy - structure alignment, hold central importance for successful implementation (Drazin and Howard, 1984; Galbraith and Kazanjian, 1986). Task and functional formalization, organizational systems, authority centralization and integration within the organizational structure (Roth, 1992), also termed the 'organizational framework' (Skivington and Daft, 1991, p. 48), are argued to provide the media for successful implementation. Organizational systems such as budgeting, training and incentives help in resource allocation and provide a well-structured direction for staff members to pursue (Hrebiniak, 2005).

This mechanistic approach largely ignored interactions among human actors in strategy implementation. Instead, a rational logic is followed drawing on the earlier conceptualizations of Andrews (1971) and Ansoff (1965) suggesting a generic route for all firms. The contextual differences amongst firms that emanate from their resources and strategic choices are largely ignored (Dierickx and Cool, 1989; Collis, 1994). Similarly, the implementation-strategic planning interrelation is not as

straightforward as it would seem as evidenced in the implementation gaps in practice (Olson et al., 2005). The failure to reflect interpersonal issues led to research inclusive of interpersonal factors in strategy implementation.

2.5.2. Interpersonal- behavioural factors

The Interpersonal-behavioural factors view looks at interpersonal issues in top leadership (Nutt, 1983), consensus building (Dooley et al., 2000), strategy communication across the organization (Rapert et al., 2002; Hambrick and Cannella, 1989), and resource allocation (Cespedes, 1991). Skivington and Daft (1991) emphasised the importance of process modalities in addition to the structural issues by drawing from the works of Meyer (1982), Quinn and Cameron (1983) and Mackenzie (1986) on process dimensions related to the individuals involved in implementation. These interpersonal-process factors highlight the role of interaction amongst organizational actors, formal and informal communication and motivation in strategy implementation. Understanding information processing behaviours (Miniace and Falter, 1996; Daft and Langel, 1984) and managerial power associated with key decisions are considered important for successful implementation (Skivington and Daft, 1991). Implementation is considered to be an outcome of idea selling and support manoeuvring among top and middle management. Top management still retain the important driving force and implementation is driven by the tactics employed by senior management.

Interpersonal factors challenge the assumption of a shared common understanding of the organizational strategies throughout the firm during implementation. Skivington and Daft (1991) suggested that informal communication takes place horizontally in organizations and that there may well be differences in interpretation and understanding between members of the organization. Pfeffer (1981; 1992) and Frankwick et al. (1994) discussed political influences in firms and the skills needed by individuals to survive. These political dimensions in implementation are ignored by the structural factors view (Mintzberg, 1983). Autonomous strategic behaviours (Guth and McMillan, 1986), diffusionary processes (Leonard-Barton and Deschamps, 1988), appropriate leadership styles (Nutt, 1995) and strategic consensus (Rapert et al., 2002) are other important interaction factors.

Clearly, the interpersonal-process factors do not answer all the questions associated with successful implementation such as the achievement of fit between strategy and structure (Hoffman et al., 1992; Slater and Narver, 1995), governance (Dosi et al. 2008), inter-functional coordination (Shipley, 1994; Kim et al. 2003), and control systems (Chang and Taylor, 1999).

2.5.3. Integrated factors approach

Skivington and Daft (1991) and Noble (1999a) found that structural and interpersonal factors are generally presented in strategy implementation literature as extremes. However, those authors also recognized that both factors complement each other in successful strategy implementation, instead of being viewed as the opposite ends of a continuum. There are some authors, albeit limited, who have argued for a combination of structural and interpersonal-behavioural factors (Hambrick and Cannella, 1989; Olson, Slater, and Hult, 2005). Those authors represent an integrated factors approach that necessitates the generation of a more integrated conceptualisation.

Hambrick and Canella (1989) presented a framework in which successful implementation reflected the ability of top management to sell and champion the selected strategy, whilst ensuring the necessary substantive actions to implement the strategy. They argued for substantive actions associated with resource allocation, organizational structure, people appointments and selling activities upward, downward and across the firm are necessary to achieve implementation success. Their emphasis, however, remained on the presence of key factors with selling as the major activity to ensure successful implementation. Broad-based inputs and obstacle assessment associated with implementation were identified as starting factors. Olson, Slater and Hult (2005) identified four combinations of structure-behaviour types labelled as Management Dominant, Customer- Centric Innovators, Customer-Centric Cost Controllers, and Middle Ground.

Olson et al. also matched those four combinations with three of the Miles and Snow (1978) typology of strategies – analyzer, prospectors and defenders (low cost, differentiated). Olson et al. considered formalization, centralization, and specialization as key factors of organizational structure. Customer orientation,

innovation orientation, competitor orientation and internal/cost orientation were considered as behavioural factors. The combinations of structural-behavioural factors were matched with different strategies to arrive at configurations that may lead to successful implementation. This work is similar to Mintzberg's configurations (1979); however, Mintzberg's work is more processual in nature and Olson et al.'s work is more variance oriented. This integrated factors approach emphasizes the integration of different factors; the lack of attention to the processual nature of strategy implementation necessitates further work to explore temporality and path dependency in implementation processes. Furthermore the integration of implementation factors is presented more as a tactical arrangement and without any direct performance linkage. Similarly, there is no significant theoretical foundation adopted in this body of work and a major gap remains in terms of adopting a mainstream economic or behavioural approach within the variance-oriented implementation frameworks.

2.5.4. Implementation barriers approach

This represents the most voluminous part of the strategy implementation literature. Much of strategy implementation research has revolved around exploration of barriers impeding implementation in firms within different contexts. This approach generally seeks to focus on problems associated with successful implementation, identifying the potential barriers and then suggesting solutions to overcome them (Shah, 2005; Heide et al., 2002). Implementation is viewed as a difficult, challenging and operational level phenomenon with barriers management being the key. This focus on potential barriers and problems, as mentioned later, has been a major reason behind the current lack of insights into how implementation contributes to superior performance. The repetition in this body of literature suggests common types of barrier, involving both behavioural and structural dimensions, with researchers attempting to look either individual or collections of strategy implementation barriers.

Alexander (1985) found the key barriers to be the lack of employee capabilities, poor communication of strategy, exceeding the planned time, and unclear identification of tasks and responsibilities. Jauch and Glueck (1988) discussed the lack of sufficient executive time being given to implementation of a strategic decision as a major

barrier. Olsen et al., (1992) found that the lack of financial and human resources and insufficient allocation of resources contributed to implementation failures. Eisenstat (1993) mentioned that the lack of coordination, lack of employee capabilities, and insufficient leadership by line managers also acted as major barriers to implementation.

Al-Ghamdi (1998) found that ten strategy implementation barriers were most common among the UK firms. Those barriers, similar to Alexander (1985), showed that strategy implementation remained problematic due to barriers such as the distraction of management from the implementation of a strategic decision; more time taken for implementation than planned; lack of planning for any major problems during implementation; and poor information systems for implementation monitoring. Heide et al. (2002) conducted a case study in a Norwegian ferry-cruise company to probe barriers related to issues like resource allocation, organizational culture, learning, personnel management, and organizational structure and control systems. Alashloo et al. (2005) researched Iran's Higher Education (HE) sector and later categorized implementation barriers into four categories namely planning consequences, organizational, managerial and individual issues. They also found that the lack of exact planning and unsuitable training systems were the most important barriers, similar to the findings of Alexander (1985) and Al-Ghamdi (1998).

Shah's (2005) survey revealed that Indian managers perceive issues like inadequate management skills, ill-defined key implementation tasks, and lack of employee commitment as obstacles to strategy implementation. It is however, not possible from Shah's analysis to identify which implementation barriers are peculiar to the Indian business context. Kaufmann and Becker (2005) looked at barriers to Balanced Scorecards (BSC) implementation among foreign multinationals in Brazil. They found the lack of commitment, adverse support from consultants, lack of top management support, insufficient alignment of strategy, objectives and structure and lack of completeness as major barriers. This is consistent with the research on difficulties in BSC implementation (Voelpel et al., 2006).

Overall, this approach problematizes strategy implementation. This sub-stream of strategy implementation literature is occupied with finding different barriers without any disposition towards major strategic management theories like Transaction Cost

Economics or the Resource-based view (RBV). There is an emphasis here on barriers and their influence without much consideration of how those barriers came into being over time or how these barriers may hinder the change patterns and lead to ineffective and inefficient choices in firms. This highlights the need to consider competitive disadvantages resulting from implementation failures (West III and DeCastro, 2001). However, since the aim of this thesis is designed to research implementation success, such avenues will not be pursued further, since the preceding discussion is considered to be sufficient for the purpose of highlighting the variable nature of implementation barrier research.

2.6. Process-oriented implementation research

The processual view of strategy implementation has been influenced by scholars' conceptualisation of implementation within the strategy process (Sminia, 2009; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst 2006). The key issues associated with this approach are the intentionality and rational structuring versus the emergence of strategy and how distinct strategy implementation is considered in the strategy process (Chakravarthy et al., 2003). Much of this processual implementation literature has focused on strategic change and how change projects are implemented in different organisations. Jarzabkowski (2003; 2008) noted that there is a need to conduct implementation research for strategic continuity as well. The issues of organisational buy-in, management leadership, provision of the required culture, and strategy communication to the organisation became the focus of implementation process research (Li et al., 2010). Sminia (2009) considered change and continuity trajectories as important avenues for strategy research.

There is some disagreement among strategy scholars concerning how they view the strategy implementation and strategy process. For some scholars, like Shanley and Petaraf (2006) and Barney and Zajac (1994) strategy implementation is an issue of process. Those authors have considered strategy process as the embodiment of strategy implementation; for them process is implementation. There are others, who consider the strategy implementation process as one type of process that is a part of the wider strategy formation process (Sminia, 2009).

This distinctive assumption of whether *process is implementation* or *implementation is one of the process types* is an important issue. This represents another dichotomy, rarely identified in the SIMP literature, among other dichotomies of process vs. content and implementation vs. formulation. It is important to note that authors like Johnson et al. (2003) and Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) see implementation as a separate process to strategic decision making. Chakravarthy et al. (2003) looked at implementation and formulation as intermingled, similar to Mintzberg (1987), yet they also recognised that there are distinctive decisions and actions in both. Whittington (2007) criticised Mintzberg for his over-emphasis on emergence and yet suggesting configurations. Whittington (2007) argued that Mintzberg's work does not help managerial practice due primarily to the lack of clear practical guidelines.

Process-oriented implementation research looked at agency and structural issues in dynamic modes of transition and change (Barnett and Burgelman, 1996). There is a recent debate within the processual view of strategy as to whether looking at the whole process is more useful than looking at the micro-foundations in terms of constituent activities and their interactions in the process in the macro sense. This debate has led to the development of calls for looking at the processual dimension at the meso-level (Sminia, 2009) or micro level (Johnson et al., 2007). The Strategy as Practice view (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) is an attempt to look at practitioners, practices and praxis involved in strategic activities within organizations. There are some major differences in the details and emphasis between proponents of the strategy-as-process and strategy-as-practice views (Whittington, 2007) though there is an agreement that both share a processual view of strategy (Langley, 2007). Langley also agreed that process interactions and micro details therein do provide a more meaningful analysis of organizational and managerial practices. Different sub-streams in the process-oriented implementation research are discussed hereunder.

2.6.1. Rational- mechanistic implementation process

The Rational-mechanistic process views implementation as a part of a rational strategy process in which formulation distinctly precedes implementation (Andrews, 1971). This represents the classical strategic management process in which implementation is argued to seamlessly follow strategic formulation (Ansoff, 1965). A combination of structural and behaviour factors lead to implementation process

success (Olson, Slater, and Hult, 2005). However, implementation is still considered an outcome of good planning by top management and execution by other organizational members (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984, 2005). Some plans are needed for implementation to proceed as it is seen as a phase in the strategy process that logically follows formulation (Bourgeois and Broadwin, 1984).

This approach views strategic planning as the avenue of strategic decision making and implementation as the enactment phase with actions that realize those decisions. This approach has faced strong criticism from the emergent view of the strategy process for employing simplistic assumptions of rationality and linearity of process (Mintzberg, 1987). Hrebiniak and Joyce (2005) made a strong and passionate defence of the rational, linear strategy process with strategy implementation as a follower of strategic planning. They argued that it is not possible to implement anything, without knowing what to implement and thus the classical distinction of formulation-implementation. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Li et al. (2010) discussed some gaps in strategy implementation research and identified the rational-mechanistic approach for further implementation process research.

2.6.2. Incremental, emergent, evolutionary strategy process

Some scholars considered incremental and emergent strategy-making as distinct modes of strategizing (Quinn, 1988; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; and Idenburg, 1993). However, both incremental and emergent strategizing share a common perception of the sequence of thinking and action in strategy making (Canales and Vila, 2005). The incremental-emergent view perceives that strategy is not planned or rationalised; instead, firms may catch the 'reality in flight' (Pettigrew, 2003: 302). The incremental/emergent strategy process views that strategy formulation and implementation are intertwined in a broader strategy process (Mintzberg and Water, 1985; Bryson and Bromiley, 1993). Those authors argue that it is difficult and less appealing to explore either as separate processes due to neither being distinct. Strategy formation process simultaneously covers both formulation and implementation, though it is unclear what is implementation or when it is successful. Some incrementalists (for example, Quinn, 1988) view implementation as following

plans though some emergent choices may result in logical changes during the implementation process itself.

Others (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Van de Ven, 1992) were more interested in the overall strategy process being fuzzy yet focussed more on content emergence during the process (see Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). This approach challenged the rationality dialogue in strategy and argued for managerial agency being driven by other motives such as politics (March, 1994; Pettigrew, 1992) and managerial gains (Woolridge et al., 2008). There is also an argument of blurring of the content and process distinction in the firm's behaviour in practice (Reger and Huff, 1993). However, recently scholars have called for attention to micro activities and explore deeper in such blurring to understand how managers strategize (Johnson et al., 2003).

The incrementalists view posits a starting point in the strategy process where the organisational members initially decide on the major course of action but change the strategy in-flight. The implementation of strategy is intricately linked with the formulation of strategy. However, this is not clear in this conceptualisation of how and where implementation begins or ends. Similarly, there is a lack of clarity about the role of different actors in the strategy process. The implementation of strategy is conceptualized as intricately linked with the formulation of strategy. However, a lack of clarity remains as to how and where implementation begins or ends. Similarly, the role of different actors in strategy process remains unclear. The more extreme emergent view looked at the strategy process being completely emergent and without a clearly defined strategy. This issue of a lack of clarity relating to the process details is criticised by Whittington (2007) and Johnson et al. (2003).

There is a need to clarify how implementation is organised in the cases of emergent strategy without any goals as it defies a large part of the goal-oriented strategy literature and 'black boxes' strategy implementation issues in a larger process. It is important for strategy implementation research to be clear and not vague as implementation is about decisions and actions that enable strategic direction. It remains a poignant area for future strategy implementation research to explicate the complex details of how firms organize their strategy implementation process in incremental and emergent approaches. Similarly, there is a need to explore how

these processes and approaches to strategy implementation exist in different firm contexts (Li et al., 2010).

The micro-dynamics of emergent strategy remain largely unknown, even in the face of strategy-as-practice, and empirical research into middle manager's contribution to emerging strategy is very limited (Wooldridge et al., 2008). Whittington (2007) famously criticised Mintzberg (1994) for a lack of practical insight into managerial and organizational behaviours during emergence thus leaving strategy process as a black box with endless randomness. The level of randomness in strategy emergence has received critical attention from some other scholars like Chakravarthy and White (2002) and Lovas and Ghoshal (2000). They argue that firms find a way to guide the strategy evolution process around strategic intent. March (1994: 45; cited in Lovas and Ghoshal, 2000), for example, has explicitly discussed this possibility: 'The idea is not that any imaginable organization can be designed and built but that natural developmental processes ... can be affected significantly by relatively small, timely interventions. The engineering of evolution involves understanding those processes well enough to intervene in history and produce organizational effects.' However, it is not very clear how strategy implementation activities take shape during such evolution or how that impacts the change or consistency in strategy content (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

2.6.3. Contingency-oriented process and strategy implementation

This sub-stream looks at the variety of implementation process patterns and highlights the role of contingency in implementation success (Sabherwal and Robey, 1993; Andersen, 2004; Jarzabkowski, 2008). Firms arguably pursue either a single strategy process type i.e. rational-mechanistic, incremental or emergent or an integrated mix of different patterns depending upon contextual differences. Theoretically, this research stream does not lend itself towards supporting either the rational or the emergent extremes of strategy process (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005; Mintzberg, 1978). Furthermore, this contingency approach rejects the notion of a universally similar implementation process as suggested by Schultz et al. (1987), Kaplan and Norton (1996) and Bossidy and Charan (2002). There is an 'option-

theoretic' logic that underlies the contingency process stream (Bowman and Hurry, 1993: 760).

Interestingly, limited attention has been paid to the processual contingencies in implementation in comparison to the implementation factor contingencies. Strategic processes are viewed as the reflections of organizational context and the behaviours of strategic actors (Pettigrew, 1992; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Govindarajan (1988: 828) argued the need to recognise contingency as the 'most critical aspect of strategy implementation' in large organizations. However, his search of implementation factor contingencies, and not SIMP processual contingencies, is similar to much of the SIMP literature (see for example, Bryson and Bromiley, 1993). Govindarajan (1988) also emphasised the need to match administrative mechanisms with competitive strategy, either low cost or differentiation.

Hart (1992) discussed different strategy-making modes focussing on the roles and interactions of top management and other organisational actors during decision making. However, his conceptualisation relied more on the decision-making for strategic formulation with implementation being simply one task or middle managers. The argument for implementation was rationale-oriented and down-the-line actors were identified as subordinates with implementation responsibilities. Pettigrew and Whipp (1993) mentioned that firms start with intentions and then incrementally change their strategies. They identified implementation as a sub-process within a larger strategy process with the primary focus on change and strategy-making (Sminia, 2009).

Sabherwal and Robey (1993) used the strategic initiatives approach to explore patterns in implementation of information systems. They identified six archetypical patterns in the implementation process, depending upon the implementation approach of firms. Those patterns included textbook style, logical minimalist, traditional off-the-shelf, outsourced cooperative, problem-driven minimalist, and in-house trial and error. Sabherwal and Robey considered those archetypes as 'the alternative courses of events that may be followed during the implementation process.' (p. 571) However, they recognised that their classification was based on actions of firms without consideration of actors and no attempt was made to link implementation process pursued with implementation success. They identified the

need for future research to assess the link between different implementation process types and implementation success as defined by stakeholders.

Anderson (2004) adopted a variance definition of the strategy formation process and found that an integrated approach was better to develop effective strategy for firm's performance in a highly turbulent international environment, as compared to either the planning or the decentralized emergence approach. Anderson's work hinted implicitly, although lacking the detail, at the existence of different patterns of strategy implementation depending upon the strategy-formation mode adopted. This supports the need for processual studies of strategy implementation to analyze the SIMP patterns linked to implementation success. In a similar vein, Jarzabkowski (2008) looked at the variety in strategy process in the Universities within the UK. She found procedural, interactive and integrated behavioural approaches of strategy shaping by top management at those universities. Two patterns of sequential and simultaneous strategy shaping by top management in action and institutional realms were identified. This reflected the contingencies of strategizing behaviours and strategizing patterns in shaping strategy and structuring organisational realms. The simultaneous strategizing helped structure both strategy and actions supporting the on-going implementation of strategies.

Jarzabkowski (2008) highlighted that the integrative approach to strategizing via procedural arrangements and interactive dialogue helped in the implementation of on-going strategies. She further highlighted that strategic continuity and strategic change may require different behavioural approaches from top management thus needing more attention by researchers to variations in top management's strategizing behaviours. Her work remained focussed on top management and, while being useful in highlighting the role of process contingencies, the management's behaviour also needs attention in future implementation research. This is important as most strategy process literature identified middle managers with the responsibility for implementation (Wooldrige, Schmid and Floyd, 2008). Future research needs to look at both top and middle management behaviours in the strategy implementation of strategic continuity and strategic change.

2.7. Processual views and their treatment of strateg2y implementation

Strategy process (Van de Ven, 1992; Sminia, 2009) and recent Strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) both share processual thinking, albeit with a different focus. Whittington (2007) detailed the differences in those two views, whereas Carter et al. (2008) criticised strategy-as-practice for being fashionable yet lacking focus. It is important to look at the situation of strategy implementation research in the strategy-as-process and strategy-as-practice literatures to clearly establish the research gaps informing this present thesis. Initially, a critical analysis of implementation research in the strategy process literature is provided, followed by the same for strategy-as-practice. This is done in view of the theoretical position of this thesis being inclined towards strategy implementation as a process with activities, actors, and process trajectories as generative mechanisms (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Sminia, 2009). These and other generative mechanisms explain sequences in strategizing processes and may help explain outcomes at a particular time.

Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) critically reviewed strategy process literature and repeatedly highlighted a) relatively little attention to strategy implementation issues; b) the reduction of strategy implementation as an operational and tactical phenomenon; and c) the need for strategy process research to analyse implementation characteristics and their impact on strategic performance. Dederichs (2010) emphasised that strategy implementation needs research focus, distinct from other strategizing issues in the Strategy-as-Practice (S-as-P) literature. The limited research attention to strategy implementation in those processual views and inattention to organizational performance outcomes is discussed hereunder.

2.7.1. Strategy process and strategy implementation

The strategy process literature is full of different conceptualisations of strategy process, including rational, logical incrementalism, evolutionary, life cycle, teleogical and dialectic among others (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Das and Teng, 1999; Burgleman, 1983; Quinn, 1980). The strategy process literature is too descriptive and needs research that provides information for process patterns that help improve outcomes (Sminia, 2009). The strategy process literature can be divided into either

the type of strategy process undertaken by firms (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) or the cognitive processes pursued (Narayanan et al., 2011). Narayanan et al. (2011) recently highlighted the cognitive nature of strategy processes and identified strategy implementation as one of four strategic cognition processes; others included strategy formulation, strategic change, and organizational learning.

Sminia (2009) recognised two groups of scholars who either consider rational-decision making as the benchmark for strategy process (for example, Barney and Hesterly, 2008) or strategy process as an inconsistent, emergent process of strategy-making (for example Mintzberg et al., 2003). In those two conceptualisations, strategy implementation is either a separate process to strategy formulation or a part of the overall strategy-formation process. This is also clear in the recent literature reviews on strategy process (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006) and strategy implementation (Li et al., 2010). Burgleman (1983), however, argued that implementation may precede formulation in some cases thus raising doubts about the relevance of rationality in the strategy process.

Sminia (2009: 99) himself defined strategy formulation as a process of collusion between 'deliberate managerial intentions', 'subsequent implementation effort' and 'unanticipated emerging developments'. This unitary conceptualisation of strategy process has received some criticism from Strategy-as-Practice scholars (Johnson et al., 2003), arguing for the need to look at the micro details of processes. Overall, theoretical differences remain in: a) how distinct is implementation effort in the strategy process and b) how much deviation from intended strategy resulting from strategy emergence leads to changes in strategy implementation. It is a surprisingly honest observation by Sminia (2009: 114) following his review of the strategy formation process literature that 'What appears to be lacking is an elaborate answer to the 'how to' question.'

Whittington (2007: 1581) criticised the lack of guidance for managers within the emergent view of the strategy process (Mintzberg et al., 1999) as a consequence of the diminished value assigned to strategic practices and the detachment of organizational outcomes from strategic intentions. It is interesting to note here that

scholars in the other traditions of strategic management generally consider process research as concerned with actions and thus implementation (Barney and Zajac, 1994; Peteraf, 2005). However, strategy process literature reveals *a rather imbalanced attitude* towards strategy implementation as a research area.

Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) provided a detailed review of the strategy process literature and identified major shortcomings relating to strategy implementation. They repeatedly emphasized the 'one-sidedness' (p. 694) of the strategy process literature, suggesting that: "The small set of studies exploring implementation issues points to a strong disequilibrium concerning strategy-process research. It seems that research on implementation issues is seen as inferior compared with research on formulation issues. This is all the more incomprehensible because strategy implementation is a significant phase of the strategy process." (p. 694) Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst further highlighted the theoretical position of strategy implementation in the strategy process literature 'as a matter of operational detail and tactical adjustments.' suggesting that 'the potential of implementation as an important lever in strategy-process effectiveness, however, has largely been overlooked.' (p. 701). They also argued for future research to be aimed at exploring the links between implementation characteristics and outcomes whilst analysing the effect of strategy implementation on performance from a rational-mechanistic process view.

Edmondson, Bohmer and Pissano (2001) researched the strategic initiative implementation of technological projects in the context of hospitals. They found that successful implementers pursued a different process pattern involving collective learning for successful implementation. They identified a four-stage implementation process that includes enrolment, preparation, trials and reflection. Edmondson et al. provided a comparative analysis of successful vs. unsuccessful implementers in one industry. They highlighted the role of routines as generative mechanisms to create acceptance for change and later enable implementation, similar to Orlikowski (1993). Pentland (2003) introduced the concept of sequential variety in execution of work processes. He emphasised that understanding of the processual variations is currently limited and needed greater attention as to how the sequence of patterns may vary in different organizations. Pentland did not theoretically link sequential

variety to strategic outcomes and thus was more interested in the socialised variety in execution processes. Similarly, Becker (2005) argued that organizational routines required a human agency for strategy implementation and future research should explore agency influences on implementation of organizational rules and policies.

Narayanan et al. (2011:13) reviewed cognitive perspectives in strategy and conceptualised strategy implementation 'as an ongoing cycle of sense-giving by top managers, sensemaking by lower echelons, and issue selling specifically by middle managers.' They recognised intentions in sense-giving, subjective interpretations in sensemaking and emergence of new ideas in the implementation process (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). The sensemaking research owes a lot to Weick's (1995) work that looked at how plans are translated to give meaning for action via 'inter-recipient processes' (Balogun and Johnson, 2005: 1574). Narayanan et al. also identified that strategy implementation processes are likely to be different for different strategic directions such as mergers and acquisitions (Vaara et al., 2003) and spin-offs (Corley and Gioia, 2004). However, it remains unclear as to which implementation sequences would result in more successful implementation and how this may differ in different organizational contexts. This underlines the need for empirical research that extends the cognitive literature on strategy implementation by comparing implementation patterns in a variety of intra-organizational contexts.

Narayanan et al. (2011), whilst recognising the limited attention to strategy implementation in strategy cognition perspectives, they differed from Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006). They argued that strategy implementation is not a unitary process but a 'vibrant set of processes' (p. 32) and some implementation characteristics have started to slowly emerge in research on sensegiving, sensemaking and issue-selling. This recognition of variety in implementation patterns is more in line with the broader strategy process literature (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). However, Narayanan et al. failed to identify any existing research or suggest any future research direction linking implementation patterns with outcomes or competitive performance. This lack of activity is indicative of the prevalence of the more tactical image of strategy implementation among strategy process scholars, highlighted by Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006). This is an area of concern as well as opportunity for future research to link

implementation patterns and their underlying generative mechanisms like sub-processes and activities with organizational outcomes and competitive performance.

Floyd and Woolridge (2000) accept that the rational approach to strategy process with distinctions between strategy formulation and implementation remains the dominant perspective in strategic management. Hrebiniak and Joyce (2005) strongly criticised the notion that implementation can happen without preconceived intentions, something Mintzberg et al. (1998) and Burgleman (1983) would strongly argue against. This issue of intentionality vs. emergence remains unresolved and highlights the need to adopt a more contextualist approach (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993) towards strategy implementation research. Li et al. (2010) recently reviewed the broader strategy implementation literature, including the variety of definitions, and proposed a phase-wise process framework of SIMP from a rational view of the strategy process. Similar to Noble (1999a), Li et al. considered execution as synonymous to implementation as evident in sixty papers reviewed; they did not attempt to suggest future research for competitive performance consequences of strategy implementation. This is in line with the conventional perception of implementation as a support process for execution of planned strategies but without contributing to performance outcomes on its own.

Overall, the strategy process literature has identified phase-wise process frameworks, with limited attention to processual dynamics and pattern variation in different organizational contexts. Overall, strategy implementation is synonymous with the execution of strategies and there are differences among scholars as to whether implementation is purely intention driven or can happen without a preconceived rationale. More important is the lack of attention to link strategy implementation patterns in different organisational contexts with competitive performance (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

2.7.2. Strategy as practice and strategy implementation

Strategy-as-Practice (S-as-P) is a rather recent addition to the cognitive processual view of strategic management, with strategy being an activity comprised of what humans do compared to what firms possess. With its attention to what strategists do in terms of strategy making, there is an explicit inclination to demonstrate how

strategists use different practices for strategy shaping (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). The S-as-P focuses on micro activities of human actors and their interactions in the strategy process (Johnson et al., 2007). There are some scholars like Whittington (2007) and Chia and MacKay (2007) who strongly argued to position S-as-P distinctly from the processual views of strategy. However, there are others who recognise that S-as-P is a 'recent strand of strategy formation research' (Sminia, 2009: 110) and 'generally embodies processual thinking' (Langley, 2007: 272; Carter et al., 2008). S-as-P considered strategy as a combination of practices, practitioners, and strategy praxis that involves humans at different levels within a larger institutional context (Whittington, 2007). In essence, the S-as-P criticised the lack of managerial agency and human actions in the popular economic views like the RBV and the insufficient attention to micro details in the cognitive view of the strategy process (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Johnson et al., 2003).

A critical analysis of Strategy-as-Practice literature reveals that strategy implementation is viewed as a process with different routinized practices contributing towards successful implementation (Johnson et al., 2006). Whittington (1996: 619) included all 'activities involved in the deliberate formulation and implementation' as the praxis of strategizing. It is noted that S-as-P considers implementation as an inseparable activity from formulation (Jarzabkowski, 2005). However, there is a small number of S-as-P studies focussing on implementation related activities like Hoon (2007), Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007), Laine and Vaara (2007) and Dederichs (2010). Hoon (2007) looked at the practice of strategy committees and identified that middle managers used formal and informal communication activities in strategy committees to get the approvals for the implementation of their initiatives.

Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) identified the activities of strategy teams such asexecuting, initiation, coordinating, and reflecting during the strategic planning process. Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007: 108) looked at strategizing as the 'way strategic planning process was perceived, communicated and implemented'. This is a clear indication of conceptualising implementation as a subset of strategizing activities dependent upon strategy formulation processes. Implementation was rather implicit in the executing and coordinating categories of practices involved in the strategic planning process. Interestingly, they identified strategy team activities in

relation to the recursiveness or the concluding adaptations in the strategic planning process. This approach of looking at implementation from a planning process lens reflected a rather back-seat perspective of implementation as a subset within the strategic planning process. This implied stance is contrasted by Dederichs (2010), who focussed on implementation practices for the external growth strategy in a subsidiary of a multinational firm.

Laine and Vaara (2007) looked at activities during sense-making of strategies by different practitioner groups in a functional capacity (e.g. engineering), and how they pursued their subjective goals often in contravention to the organizational goals. However, the focus remained on the implementation of the strategy development process in a functional group praxis context. This is similar to Paroutis and Pettigrew (2007) who argued for implementation issues to be discussed in the area of strategy development. This is commendable for crossing the content-process divide but at the same time highlights strategy development as the core of strategizing activity, while strategy implementation remained a peripheral issue.

Dederichs (2010) conducted his PhD research on an intended corporate-wide external growth strategy implementation in the German subsidiary of a US multinational firm. He applied the S-as-P framework of practices and interactions among practitioners for implementation. He identified implementation as the execution of intended strategy (p. 158) and mentioned that 'Both conceptually and practically, the execution of intended strategy implies the existence of some kind of expressed strategic direction (Costanzo, 2004; Hrebiniak, 2006; Hrebiniak & Joyce, 2005; Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2002).' This is in line with broader strategy implementation literature that considers strategy execution as synonymous with strategy implementation (Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2010). An interesting finding of Dederichs' (2010: 160) is the recognition that 'Execution of strategy implies the existence of expressed strategic direction'. This showed the importance of rationality and intention in execution of strategies and supported Whittington's (2007) argument for intentionality in strategizing practices.

It is important to locate the theoretical nature of implementation within the broader S-as-P literature. Both, Johnson et al. (2007) and Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) considered strategy implementation as a processual issue. Johnson et al. (2007)

talked about the management challenge of implementing intended strategy as a 'process issue' that involves issues of process interactions between organisational systems and human actors and their activities. They also highlighted the need for researching the impact of such interactions on strategic outcomes. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009: 76) considered implementation of strategic direction as a meso-level phenomenon – strategy praxis at sub-organizational or organizational level. Matthiesen and Jarzabkowski (2009) discussed the role of conflict and its changing nature during strategy implementation. They found that conflict remains during implementation, though at reduced levels and thus patterns of conflict change over time.

Overall, S-as-P literature views strategy implementation as a processual issue, a managerial challenge, and highlights the need for identification of interactions and reciprocal relationships between humans and their strategy praxis. Socialistic tendencies have led to S-as-P defining outcomes differently to the conventional strategic management performance oriented outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Ambrosini, Bowman and Burton-Taylor (2007) have provided a more balanced study of inter-team coordination for customer satisfaction, showing that competitive performance can still find its place in S-as-P studies. However, it is clear that S-as-P literature, similar to strategy process, is limited for studies focussing on strategy implementation.

This supports the need for studies looking at the processual nature of strategy implementation and analysing the effect on strategic outcomes for firms with different organizational contexts. In line with Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), there is a need for implementation - focussed research to deal with details of strategy implementation process and the linkages with outcomes. Similarly, future research needs to evaluate implementation processes related to continuity and change in the strategic directions of firms (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006). There is a gap to explore implementation characteristics and conduct more box-exploring studies focused on strategy implementation processual issues (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

2.8. Theoretical influences in strategy implementation literature

There are different theoretical influences evident in the extant strategy implementation literature. These theoretical influences have led to an eclectic composition of the literature (Noble, 1999a) and includes influences such as agency theory (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000), expectancy theory of motivation (Guth and McMillan, 1986), organizational theory (Govindarajan and Fisher, 1990), contingency theory (Govidarajan, 1988; Sabherwal and Robey, 1993), and process and activity approaches (Edmondson et al., 2001; Dederichs, 2010). Li et al., (2010) argued that strategy implementation is a complex phenomenon that can be looked at from different theoretical positions. They further argued for a combination of theoretical perspectives to explore complexities in strategy implementation. However, such interdisciplinary examples are extremely rare, as Li et al. could only identify one example, Govindarajan and Fisher (1990) who combined agency and organizational theories. There is also a lack of competitive performance theories such as the RBV being employed as possible explanations for implementation patterns that exist in different firms. This reflects the perceived tactical and operational image of strategy implementation.

Conceptual clarity is needed in future research examining the nature of implementation as a research phenomenon. Floyd and Wooldridge (2000) conceptualised implementation as *one of the tasks* of middle managers, while initiative taking is linked to other roles like championing. Cognitive approaches viewed implementation as a process comprised of different sub-processes with clear roles associated with top management and middle management (Narayanan et al., 2011). Mintzberg (1978) argued that depending upon differences in strategy-formation patterns, implementation can be a distinct phase or can result in the emergence of strategies via feedback. Mintzberg's ideas are fairly broad and attracted criticism for the lack of details to guide managerial practice (for example, Whittington, 2007).

Pettigrew and Whipp (1992) and Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) considered implementation as the route firms take to bring change. Much of process literature has focused on strategic change and how change projects are implemented in different organisations. Daft (2009: 417) mentioned that "implementation of change is

often the most difficult part of the change." This is reflective of the perception that change is the only natural reality in social phenomena (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Jarzabkowski (2003) and Sminia (2005; 2009) did argue to look at both trajectories of continuity and change in processual research. Li et al. (2010) and Noble (1999a) have also highlighted the need for conceptual clarity due to the variety of theoretical positions within the strategy implementation literature. Overall, two major issues emerge: a) the need for conceptual clarity in implementation research; b) the importance of using multiple theories, such as the RBV, for strategy implementation research. Both issues will be analysed further in the light of the existing problem areas in strategy implementation literature in section 2.10.

2.9. Summary of the extant strategy implementation literature

It is evident from the preceding review of the strategy implementation literature that strategy implementation is yet to develop into an area of significant research. It is argued here that Chebat's (1999: 107) assertion that 'Research on Implementation Deserves as Much Attention as Strategy Formulation' is still valid and relevant. Some research attention has been paid to factors related to implementation barriers and implementation success factors but limited research into strategy implementation processes. Strategy process researchers have largely explored decision-making processes with little focus on strategy implementation (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

The recent interest in examining strategy through strategy-as-practice is admirable though examining the 'doing elements' tends to emphasise the execution of intended strategies couched in strategy-making traditions. The recent strategy-as-practice (S-a-p) approach is important in providing much needed attention to the doings of strategic actors and their strategy work (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). However, empirical research focussed on implementation-specific issues is currently limited in S-a-p and as mentioned earlier, mostly focussed on problematic issues in implementation. A recent example is the work on conflict in strategy tasks and how conflict impacts on the achievement of strategy tasks (Matthiesen and Jarzabkowski, 2009; permission to reference obtained from the authors).

This indicates that more attention is required to research different dimensions of the strategy implementation process. The calls by Noble (1999a) for a broader approach to implementation research and by Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) for more processual research into implementation process characteristics and their effects on performance are highly relevant. Table 2.2 provides the summary analysis of the significant issues within the strategy implementation literature, as discussed earlier. Those issues reflect the eclectic nature of the strategy implementation literature and the complex issues that need attention for theory development and empirical research.

Table 2.2: Summary analysis of the extant strategy implementation literature
• Strategy implementation is a dynamic and complex process with different sub-processes taking place over time. Strategy implementation is often considered as synonymous to execution of intended strategies and is deemed to include actions that achieve the enactment of plans. Actions and activities are important dimensions of strategy implementation success and highlight the significance of human agency in implementation.
• There are differences among scholars concerning the relevance of rationality and intentionality within implementation in the overall strategy process. Similarly, there are differences concerning the degree of distinctiveness between planning and implementation in the strategy process - drawing on major debates surrounding the rational and emergent views.
• This debate needs greater clarity and resolution as implementation often gets couched within formulation issues in emergent views, due to the focus on strategy-making. It is hard to find implementation related prescriptions for managers beyond the rational-mechanistic view of strategy.
• Strategy process research, despite its attention to decision making actions, has been unable to explore implementation actions in sufficient detail and depth.
• Both processual views - strategy process and strategy-as-practice, recognise that implementation is a processual phenomenon taking place at organizational and sub-organizational levels.
• Those processual views of strategy need more focus on the strategy implementation process and underlying activities to understand implementation characteristics and idiosyncrasies. There is an imbalance in strategy process literature as most studies look at decision making and planning processes, while only limited attention has been

given to strategy implementation.

- Strategy implementation literature is still fragmented without much theoretical developments beyond strategic cognition.

- Most SIMP studies have looked at the SIMP process from a planning and strategy-making lens.

- It is important to conduct processual studies focussed on strategy implementation. The inferiority perception that is attached to strategy implementation needs to change for improving the identity of SIMP as a worthwhile area of research in strategic management.

- The inattention to strategy implementation's consequences for competitive performance and outcomes, presents a major opportunity for future theory development and empirical research.

- Overall, this requires interdisciplinary research linking SIMP and competitiveness theories. Furthermore, conceptual clarity is needed in the future implementation research.

2.10. Critical evaluation of the core knowledge gaps in strategy implementation literature and its implications

A critical evaluation of the strategy implementation literature reveals three core problem areas that need attention in terms of theoretical developments and encouragement of implementation-focused future research. These problems were partially identified by Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) in their review of strategy process research, although they remain largely unresolved: a) inattention to the consequences of successful strategy implementation for competitive performance; b) relatively less attention to processual characteristics associated with implementation; c) inferior 'tactical' image of strategy implementation as opposed to senior management image. These problem areas are now analysed to establish the need to apply the RBV as a theoretical lens on the behavioural phenomenon of strategy implementation process. Table 2.3 identifies key research implications of each problem area[1]:

---

[1] Only those issues are highlighted here that are relevant to this thesis.

Table 2.3. Key implications of knowledge gaps in implementation literature for research		
Inattention to strategy implementation's consequences for performance	• Currently, Strategy implementation is conceptualised as either a phase in strategy process or a recursive activity in strategy process designed to execute intended strategy (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005; Anderson, 2004) • No studies to explicitly link implementation patterns with performance outcomes. • Mostly concerned with agency and organizational theories but not with competitive performance and strategic outcomes.	• An opportunity to apply competitive performance theories like the RBV as theoretical lens • A good source of original contribution by exploring complementary theoretical insights via linking strategy implementation process and theories like the RBV for research (Peteraf, 2005). • Allow to explore the performance contribution of strategy implementation patterns, thus address a major research gap (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). This will also contribute to address a longstanding call for the need to link strategic processes to outcomes (Pettigrew 2000; Chakravarthy and White, 2002; Langley, 2007; Sminia, 2009).
Less attention to processual characteristics of implementation	• Processual views of strategy have been more engaged with decision making and formulation issues. • Limited implementation research in strategy process research mostly adopted variance definition of process as collection of factors. Thus processual nature of implementation characteristics is largely unknown (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). 'How' different firms implement in their own contexts received little attention. • Box exploring studies with enough depth and focus on strategy implementation research are limited.	• Need implementation focussed studies looking at strategy implementation process dynamics (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). • Need to move beyond decision making as the focus of processual research. More attention is needed to sequential variety in implementation patterns that exists in different firm types. • There is a need to look at generative mechanisms in continuity and change trajectories of strategy implementation process. Continued…

| **Tactical and inferior perception of strategy implementation** | • Strategy implementation is largely considered an operational and tactical phenomenon (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006)
• This tactical perception does not attract leading strategy scholars. SIMP research is mostly descriptive of factors, heavily tilted towards strategy implementation being full of challenging barriers.
• Strategic drift from objectives is common during implementation and sometimes, strategic inertia is further endorsed (Noda and Bower, 1996; Gilbert, 2005).
• This problematizes the research question by placing resolution of implementation barriers as the main focus
• Strategy implementation is recognised to contribute by execution but beyond that it is not seen as contributing to performance with asymmetric possibilities. | • Strategy implementation needs research that links to performance outcomes
• This will require attention to processual outcomes as well as competitive outcomes
• This dilutes the value of implementation success as an area of major contribution to firm's competitive performance. Most of recent strategy implementation literature, barring cognitive process, is strongly linked to description rather than contribution.
• There is a need to look into contributions of good, successful implementation towards superior firm performance.
• This will require a move on from centrality of strategic decision-making to strategy implementation process research (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). |

2.11. Linking implementation process to outcomes and performance

It is argued here that the three problem areas in strategy implementation discussed earlier in table 2.3 can be addressed by pursuing more processual research that would connect the variety in implementation process patterns and managerial agency to performance. This would enable theoretical development by linking the processual phenomenon of strategy implementation to the more content elements of strategic management (Barney and Zajac, 1994). The tactical image and perception of strategy implementation is rooted in the view that implementation barriers pose significant challenges for managers (Li et al., 2010). Earlier conceptualisations of the strategy process (Andrews, 1971) and the treatment of strategy implementation remained highly tactical (Nutt, 1998). This was further compounded by strategic strategy-making gaining prominence in processual traditions (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

There is a major research gap relating to the examination of the linkages between implementation process characteristics and outcomes. Processual research has been long criticised for ignoring strategic performance issues. 'Process researchers have not generally included a strategy outcome in their studies.' (Chakravarthy and White, 2002: 184) Patterns of strategic implementation (e.g. rational and emergent) and their sequential variation have not been looked at in sufficient detail to assess the nature of any implementation variety and the relationship with performance consequences (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). Pettigrew (2000: 253) famously recognised that 'It is one thing to catalogue the interrelated factors that shape the fate of change initiatives. It is a much bigger and more intractable problem to argue that a particular pattern of change initiatives contributes to organizational performance' (Pettigrew, 2000: 253).

There is a need to identify the linkages between the implementation process, the generative mechanisms and their performance implications. Limited attention to strategic outcomes is evident in processual traditions of strategy and future research needs to explore those implications. It is important to be able to guide managerial

practice in firms and project strategy implementation as a phenomenon of performance contribution. 'Understanding the link between strategy process and outcome is important. Without it, process research is of little value to managers.' (Chakravarthy and White, 2002:182). Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst's (2006) emphasis on process-outcome research focussing on strategy implementation is similar to Barney and Zajac (1994). Overall, future strategy implementation research needs to look at processual parameters and their performance consequences. This should incorporate different patterns and variations relating to implementation associated with alternative broad approaches relating to continuity and change trajectories of strategic development.

2.12. The need to use a competitive theory like the RBV for implementation research

The current knowledge and understanding relating to strategy implementation research mandates the need for new thinking and approaches to answer the question of how firms implement their strategies and why they implement in a particular pattern. It is suggested here that it might be more useful to employ different theoretical lens to the strategy implementation process. This will allow greater synergies by utilising the different focus of different theoretical lenses. Strategy process research is deeply rooted in the cognitive behaviours of management agency and role of their acting within strategic management (Sminia, 2009). Most processual research is aimed at 'the topics of strategic change or strategic decision-making' (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006: 5).

It is increasingly recognised in other strategic management traditions that more attention is needed to understand how managerial actions influence firm performance (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006: 10). Strategy implementation literature has paid limited attention to variety in implementation process patterns (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst's, 2006). Similarly, there is a lack of research in the RBV on how the activities of strategic actors lead to heterogeneity in firm's resource positions (Peteraf and Barney, 2003). This is somewhat surprising given the prominence of the RBV in strategic management literature. This is partly due to scholars like Inkpen (2000) who

advised against the use of economic perspectives like the RBV when investigating the behavioural phenomenon of strategy process.

There is a need to explore temporal variations in generic or firm-specific effects in processual analysis (Burgleman et al., 2005). The core focus of the RBV is the attention to competitive performance and the link between firm resources and performance outcomes. Such focus is needed in processual research of strategizing processes (Sminia, 2009; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst's, 2006). This reflects an important research gap to link internal firm processes to internal and external competitiveness outcomes (Peteraf, 2005). Performance implications of a meso-level processual phenomenon like strategy implementation of strategic directions remain unknown (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). This attention to performance outcomes is central to resource-based thinking and will allow a critical evaluation of the activities in the strategy implementation process and potential contribution to superior performance.

The application of different theoretical lenses to the same phenomenon can contribute in two ways depending upon the approach taken. The research can evaluate the anomalies emerging from the application of different theoretical lenses to the same phenomenon (Gilbert and Christensen, 2005). Another approach is to explore complementary-seeking issues by synergizing different theoretical lenses (Peteraf, 2005). This complementary-seeking approach is argued here for the theoretical development of strategy implementation as a field of study. It is argued here that applying a competitive performance theory like the RBV within the strategy implementation process will contribute significantly, especially through the analysis of the variety of human and organizational activities and temporal patterns associated with superior performance.

This approach will also help analyse the previously unattended role of the implementation process in resource creation and development and how strategic actors influence resource management during implementation (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011; Sirmon et al., 2011). This emphasis will also address a longstanding gap in the RBV

literature which has largely excluded strategy implementation and downplays the managerial agency role in strategizing (Johnson et al., 2003; Helfat et al., 2007). This is discussed further later in sections of chapter 3 to highlight the potential theoretical gains from applying the RBV lens on the strategy implementation process.

Overall, there exists a major opportunity for the theoretical development of strategy implementation via complementary-seeking research associated with the processual nature of implementation and linking it with resource-based performance concerns. This will address the existing gaps resulting from the inattention to performance concerns in implementation and in doing so carve out an identity and distinctiveness for strategy implementation within the wider strategy development group of activities. The synergy of processual and resource-based lenses will provide insights into the dynamic, temporal, path-dependent nature of managerial and organizational processes. The nature of the RBV and the complementarities in applying the RBV to SIMP process are the focus of chapter three and will help establish the research aim and derived research questions guiding this research thesis.

Chapter 3 – The Resource Based View (RBV) research

3.1 Introduction

Strategic management research is predominantly interested in why some firms perform better than others. The Resource-based View (RBV) emerged as a firm-centred explanation for strategic success looking at the resources-side and not the product-market side (Wernerfelt, 1984). The RBV is mostly concerned with strategy formulation and content, while implementation issues are largely excluded (Barney 2001, Foss, 2011). It is important to understand key ideas and development of the RBV to appreciate possible complementarities in linking strategy implementation with the resource-based concepts. This chapter initially locates the RBV in the broader strategic management literature, followed by its development over time including the discussion of the different traditions in the RBV literature. The relevant gaps in the RBV literature are discussed and linked with gaps in the SIMP literature to clearly establish the research aim and research questions. The complimentary gains from applying the RBV lens on the SIMP process are identified helping to map out the research scope. The chapter concludes by summarising the broader research gap, the complimentary gains, and establishing the definitions of some key concepts guiding this research.

3.2. Importance of the RBV in strategic management

The RBV has become one of the most influential perspectives in strategic management with rapid diffusion throughout the strategy literature (Lockett et al., 2009; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). The RBV emerged as a swing back within strategic management literature to focus on internal organizational factors unlike the external market focus of Industrial Organization (IO) economics (Hoskisson et al., 1999). The RBV responds to the issues concerning inter-firm heterogeneity and has become one of the most influential perspectives in strategic management with the rapid diffusion throughout the strategy literature (Newbert, 2007). It builds on Penrose's (1959) emphasis that firms are bundles of resources that provide services for growth. Wernerfelt (1984) coined the term – the Resource Based View.

The RBV emerged to respond to the issues concerning inter-firm heterogeneity and (Newbert, 2007). The value chain analysis emphasized the importance of internal factors in the value chain (Porter, 1980); however, the IO view did not place idiosyncrasies at the core of strategic value. The RBV identified resources with major causal importance for the firm's performance (Wernerfelt, 1984). The RBV holds that the competitive advantage depends on the distinctiveness of its heterogeneous resources. There are two major shortcomings within the IO based frameworks that the RBV responds to: "(1) why do firms participating in industries with the same level of attractiveness post differing performances? (2) Why do firms participating in industries with different levels of attractiveness achieve similar performances?" (Olavarietta and Ellinger, 1997:560)

3.3. Theoretical development of the RBV

The RBV is an interesting theoretical lens to analyse the competitive performance of different firms and understand their relative competitive advantages. 'The RBV is a theory about the nature of firms' (Lockett et al., 2009: 10) and essentially revolves around path dependence and resource heterogeneity (Lockett and Thomson, 2001). Penrose (1959) is largely considered as the grand-mother of the resource-based view. Penrose (1959) has become a 'canonical' reference for the work on resources and knowledge-based theories (Pitelis, 2004). The focus on the heterogeneous firm-specific characteristics was a significant departure from the Neo-classical market based economics of the IO view (Mahoney and Pandian, 1992). A firm is considered as good as its resources and the rate of firm's growth is determined by managerial ability in utilising its resources (Dodourova, 2003). The competitive advantage potential of these resources depends on their value to the firm, rarity and competitive inimitability (Barney, 1991).

The RBV went through 'piecemeal development' (Makadok, 2001) over time through a series of papers like Wernerfelt (1984), Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), and Peteraf and Barney (2003). It is important to recognise that different approaches exist within the broader RBV literature including a) resource attributes and sustainable competitive

advantage (for example, Rumelt, 1984); Barney, 1991; and Peteraf, 1993); and b) dynamic capabilities. Table 3.1 summarises key issues in the different phases of development of the RBV as a major theoretical perspective in strategy literature:

Table 3.1: The development of the RBV over time - phases and key issues	
Phase of development	**Key issues**
Initial development	Attention to: - Resources heterogeneity and consequences - Resource attributes - Sustainable competitive advantage - Dynamic capabilities
Criticism and response	Criticism towards: - All-inclusive definition of resources - Tautology in the RBV concepts - Limited empirical research - Limited guidance for managerial practice - Inattention to managerial use of resources Responses: - Dynamism and Dynamic capabilities - Temporary competitive advantage - Distinctions in resources - Definitions of value and competitive advantage in market context
Recent developments and remaining gaps in the RBV	- Empirical testing of the RBV - Need for processual research - Continued inattention to strategy implementation - Resources management

3.3.1. Initial attention on resources heterogeneity, resource attributes and sustainable competitive advantage

Penrose (1959) theory for the growth of the firm talked about resources and managers as important sources of the firm's growth. Furthermore, her emphasis on heterogeneity later became a main tenet of the RBV:

"It is the heterogeneity… of the productive services available or potentially available from its resources that gives each firm its unique character" (p. 75).

There is clearly some space between Penrose and Wernerfelt (1984) when the RBV began to appear in the mainstream strategy literature. Wernerfelt (1984) coined the term 'Resource-based view' and presented a clear idea of resources as inputs into firm's growth. He also made reference to implementation as important for firms to achieve competitive advantages. His work though received little attention at the time, as recognised later (Wernerfelt, 1995).

Rumelt (1984) provided theoretical recognition of isolating mechanisms and rent searching. He also hinted towards the importance of productive use of accumulated resources, thus highlighting managers in resource use. The sustainable performance depends on rents that rely on uncertainty in entrepreneurial decisions and isolating mechanisms. The firms attempt to use isolating mechanisms to earn surplus against competition and hinder resource imitation. Barney (1986) discussed the theoretical details of the firm's resources and strategic factor markets. He argued that the imperfections in resource acquisitions for implementation determine performance differences. Looking inside, in Barney's opinion, firms should analyse skills and capabilities more than competitive environment for better expectations.

Dierickx and Cool (1989) grouped resources into asset flows and asset stocks. The asset flows are those resources that are changeable immediately and relatively easy to imitate, whereas the asset stocks are the resources that are created by flows and difficult to imitate by competitors. This classification, though not adopted in empirical studies, should be appreciated for its emphasis on process dynamism. It is, however, highly analytical in nature and therefore methodologically difficult for clear articulation to respondents and collect data. They also recognised that contextual differences are important for heterogeneity. Prahald and Hamel (1990) coined the term core competencies to describe the organizational skills of firms based on collective learning. Their work remained largely popular in the practice-oriented literature, but did not provide testable research propositions. Powell (1996), Wernerfelt and Montgomery (1988), and Rummelt (1991) have all shown empirically that the firm-level factors are

more important for financial performance than industry related factors, supporting the RBV reasoning.

Barney (1991) provided the most cited publication for the theoretical foundations of the RBV. He discussed theoretically the four major resource attributes necessary for sustainable competitive advantage: value, rarity, imitability, and non-substitutability. These four indicators are famously acronymed as VRIN (Barney, 1997, 2001). He defined resource value in terms of enabling opportunity exploitation and/ or threat neutralization, resource rarity as being rare among current and potential competitors, imitability as being imperfectly imitable by competitors, and Non-substitutability as being without strategic equivalents for the same resource. Barney further conceptualised the overall collection of firm resources as the Resources bundle. His conceptualisation of causal ambiguity being unknown even to organizational members was later criticised for being unrealistic in order to appropriate rents from resource (Priem and Butler, 2001). Barney (1991) used the all-inclusive definition of firm resources as suggested by Daft (1983), that "firm resources include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement their strategies" (p.101).

Grant (1991) regarded the resources as inputs into the production process and the basic unit of analysis, in contrast to Penrose (1959, p. 25) who suggested that not resources but their rendered services are the inputs into the production process. Grant (1991) also distinguished between resources and capabilities by defining capabilities as the capacity of resources to perform some activity. Leonard-Barton (1992) used the term 'core capabilities' as the resources that provide firms with competitive advantage. She argued that such capabilities are embedded deep within firm's skills, knowledge, systems and norms and this embeddedness makes them difficult to imitate by competitors.

Peteraf (1993) used an economic logic to identify a resource-based model with four underlying conditions that enable resources to provide sustainable competitive advantage. Those conditions included resource heterogeneity among firms within an

industry, imperfect resource mobility, ex post and ex ante limits to the competition. It is interesting to note that resource heterogeneity is a given for Barney (1991) and not a source of sustainable advantage. However, Peteraf (1993) considered heterogeneity as a major cornerstone for sustainable competitive advantage leading to Ricardian or monopolistic rents (Ricardo, 1817). She mentioned heterogeneity as 'the sine-qua-non of competitive advantage' (p. 185). Her argument was further detailed later by Peteraf and Barney (2003) as they mentioned 'different firms may possess different bundles of strategically relevant resources' (p. 317). Newbert (2008) further argued that individual resource value and rareness are not appropriate measures to investigate competitive advantage. Instead, resource combinations hold more promise for contribution than individual resources and capabilities.

Amit and Schoemaker (1993) analysed the roles of resource market imperfections and discretionary managerial decisions in resources and capabilities possessed by different firms. More importantly, they distinguished between assets and capabilities and linked them to decision biases of managers enabling them to earn differential rents. They provided a detailed commentary on the economic rents generated by resources and capabilities. They defined resources as "the stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm" and capabilities as "a firm's capacity to deploy resources usually in combination, using organizational processes, to effect a desired end." (p. 35). Several other authors have also adopted this approach of separating the capabilities from the resources (Nanda, 1996; Teece et al., 1997; Winter, 2000; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000, Helfat and Peteraf, 2003; Wang and Ahmed, 2007).

Amit and Schoemaker (1993) implicitly highlighted the important issue of resource endowments and resource deployment by categorizing resources and capabilities as the former and later subsequently. This emphasis on resources availability and relative inattention to rent appropriation is a major conceptual issue that often gets criticised due to a lack of dynamism in most of the RBV literature (Porter 1996; Priem and Butler, 2001a). Amit and Schoemaker (1993) considered implementation problems as impediments in transfer of resources and capabilities. This reflects a majority view among strategy scholars that implementation is filled with obstacles and constraints.

This problematization of strategy implementation further endorses the inferior perception as discussed earlier in section 2.10 of chapter 2. This will be explained further in a later section on gaps in the RBV pertaining to strategy implementation.

3.3.2. Dynamism and Dynamic capabilities

The concepts of 'capabilities' and 'dynamic capabilities' form a broader area of research that has a high degree of conformity to the main propositions of RBV. It is an area of much research potential, though not outside the conventional RBV scope (Helfat et al., 2007). Capabilities are argued as more strategic in nature than other firm resources and therefore remain higher in the order of analytical importance (Teece et al., 1997). The dynamic capabilities approach (Collis, 1994; Teece and Pisano, 1994; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Augier and Teece, 2007) emerged as a partial response to the criticism towards the static nature of mainstream RBV (Barney, 1991) and the lack of emphasis on two main areas: a) the role of development and reconfiguration of resources in achieving competitive advantage in the changing environments; b) recent theoretical emphasis on routines and processual activities (Zollo and Winter, 2002; Edelman et al., 2005). Makadok (2001) addressed this critique by analysing the rent creation mechanisms (resource picking and capability building).

Teece and Pisano (1994) and D'Aveni (1994) emphasised 'dynamic capabilities' and temporary competitive advantage due to hyper-competition and continuous change in external environments. Similarly, Teece et al., (1997) further endorsed dynamism and temporality of competitive advantage and discussed the nature of dynamic capabilities, while extending the RBV to dynamic markets. This emphasis on dynamic capabilities spurred a whole sub-set of research within the RBV literature that adopted a more dynamic approach towards adapting, integrating and reconfiguration of organizational resources. Teece and Pisano conceptualised managerial and organizational processes as a strategic dimension of firms that enable firms to select different prospective paths and existing resource positions and processes form the capabilities.

This approach proved a significant departure from the focus on sustainable competitive advantage based on resource bundles and their characteristics. However, the research

on dynamic capabilities remained largely variance oriented and needs scholarly attention for temporal evolution of dynamic capabilities (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). Collis (1994) and Winter (2003) have clearly linked dynamic capabilities with change as those capabilities lead to changes in existing resource bundles of firms. It is obvious from dynamic capabilities literature that change is considered as extremely important for the survival and competitiveness of firms in dynamic environments.

Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) further expanded the literature on dynamic capabilities and argued that dynamic capabilities contribute to competitiveness via resource configurations that they create. They also argued that dynamic capabilities are not always sufficient for competitive advantage due to possible duplication of their functionality among competing firms. The dynamic capabilities are important but not sufficient for competitive advantage in every market. Barney et al. (2001) appreciated the role of capabilities as more important in achieving competitive advantage, but at the same time recognized that the dynamic capabilities are "simply capabilities that are dynamic" (p. 630). Barney et al. also argued that dynamic capabilities are not necessary to achieve competitive advantage in mature and slow moving market environments. For example, it is not necessary to be flexible, nimble and quick in stable markets, whereas it is highly important in volatile and rapidly changing markets.

Barney (2001b) reviewed the RBV literature as it developed since 1991 and critically evaluated ideas borrowed from neo microeconomics and evolutionary economics in the RBV literature. He discussed the relevance of Barney (1991), Nelson and Winter (1982), and Dierickx and Cool's (1989) to the RBV development. Barney identified three conceptual streams within the RBV: a) search for firm vs. industry effects; b) search for specific sources of sustained competitive advantage; c) search for evolution of resources and capabilities linked with evolutionary economics. His identification of evolutionary research helped in broadening of research scope and provided some direction towards process-oriented RBV research. Similarly, Lockett and Thompson (2001) discussed the importance of economics in the RBV thinking and identified impediments such as the economists' reluctance to read beyond their field highlighted

the need for more RBV oriented research in economics and the use of Agency theory and Transaction Cost Economics theory in conjunction with the RBV.

3.3.3. Responding to the criticism against the RBV concepts

The RBV, similar to other strategy perspectives, is not immune to criticism and complex debates. The major criticisms of the RBV revolve around the issues of dynamism (McWilliams and Smart, 1993, 1995; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000), tautology (Priem and Butler, 2001 a, b; Barney 2001), resources' classification diversity (Ray and Ramakrishan, 2006; Fahy, 2000; Black and Boal, 1994) and methodological difficulties for empirical research (Lockett, 2005; Barney and Mackey, 2005).

Priem and Butler (2001a) strongly criticised the RBV for tautology and circular reasoning. They argued that value is externally created by firms and the RBV is limited in practical guidance. Priem and Butler strongly criticised the RBV for a lack of information on how firms use resources to generate competitive advantage as that remained a black-box. Priem and Butler further argued that researchers should look deeper into the mechanisms enabling the usage of resources and dynamic capabilities for the achievement of competitive advantages. Researchers often select their own preferred definitions, thus creating difficulties for other researchers to replicate those definitions in subsequent studies. The end result is 'an embarrassing profusion of riches in phrases' (Choo and Bontis, 2002: 626). It is a strong critique against the RBV, as often the exact meaning of key terminology used by the RBV researchers remains unclear (Priem and Butler, 2001a).

Priem and Butler (2001a) argued that most definitions of the RBV used by Barney (1991) are true by definition and not subject to empirical testing. It was the strongest critique of Barney (1991) and led to a spirited theoretical defence and subsequent theoretical development of the RBV by scholars such as Barney (2001a) Peteraf and Barney (2003) and Sirmon et al. (2007). Barney (2001a) counter-argued that it is possible to parameterize the 'resource value' for empirical testing by identifying the strategies and their value in the competitive market. Similarly, he argued that as long as firms have resources and their unique services that are available to only few

competitors disallowing the perfect competition, the resources could be considered non-tautologically rare. Barney (2001a) responded to Priem and Butler (2001a) and provided arguments in favour of the RBV to show that definitions of value, rarity and competitive advantage are not tautological. Barney (1991) highlighted that it is not the only major paper to understand theoretical boundaries of the RBV. He also highlighted strategy implementation as an area treated as 'a theoretical convenience' that remains inconsistent with much of strategic organization literature.

Foss and Knusden (2003) called for a major overhaul of the RBV to clearly identify value, provide a theoretically strong definition of competitive advantage and to focus more on dynamism issues. It is understood that the rent generation from resources involves the endowments, acquisitions and exploitation of those heterogeneous resources and also the development of future resource portfolios for competitive advantage (Day and Wensley, 1988; Wernerfelt, 1989; Teece et al., 1997). The issues of resource identification and heterogeneity have received much attention in the RBV literature. However, the issues of processes and 'How?' of value generation by resources is yet to receive much attention in the RBV literature (Sirmon et al., 2007: 273).

The continuous rent generation from these firm resources is also important for sustainable competitive advantage (Conner, 1991). The term 'sustainable' has remained debateable within the RBV due to its implied timeframe for competitive superiority. It is now more of an agreement that sustainability refers to the lack of duplication of the competitive advantage by a competitor and not to a certain time frame (Fahy, 2002). This, however, remains contentious in hyper competitive environments, where faster competitive imitations quickly erode competitive advantages (D'Aveni, 1994; Teece et al., 1997).

Peteraf and Barney (2003) discussed customer value as the key determinant of value and highlighted the need to look at competition in relative terms. This corresponds well with Priem and Butler's (2001b) argument that value is generated external to firms. Peteraf and Barney also argued that the Resource-based Theory (RBT) is

simultaneously a theory of rents and sustainable competitive advantage. This identification is necessary, in their opinion, to legitimize the RBT for its firm-level, factor-oriented, efficiency based nature. Helfat and Peteraf (2003) introduced the concept of capability life cycle with founding, development and maturity stages that identified temporal evolution of capabilities. They argued for the need to look at capabilities over time and the need for studying dynamism in a temporal context in an increasing recognition that most of the RBV work needs to embrace ideas related to dynamism and temporal changes in resource base.

Baker and Nelson (2005) provided empirical evidence of entrepreneurial management of resource constraints and the creation of resource bricolages. They also highlighted the need for interaction with respondents to understand their resource environments and decisions. Lockett (2005) argued that Penrose's (1959) central premise - path dependency and firm heterogeneity for competitive superiority- does make the RBV non-tautological and researchers should consider the historical decisions affecting current resource endowments (p.93). Similarly, Pitelis (2007) argued that the RBV based on Penrose's version (1959) of knowledge and innovation leading to growth and managerial actions are testable propositions.

However, limited scholarly attention has been given to Priem and Butler's (2001a) criticism about the lack of information about the mechanisms of competitive advantage generation. This is further complicated due to poor understanding of causation in strategy research with confusion surrounding competitive advantage (Durand and Vaara, 2009). Wernerfelt recently highlighted the need to start research with somewhat homogenous firms and then critically investigate important heterogeneities between those firms (Lockett et al., 2008). The RBV still lacks enough attention to managerial judgments and mental models that affect the resource base of firms (Kraaijenbrink et al. 2010). Recent attempts at resources management (Sirmon et al., 2007) and asset orchestration (Helfat et al., 2007) are important recent developments but empirical attention to temporal issues is still missing. This is further discussed in the section 3.3.4.1 on empirical research in the RBV.

3.3.4. Recent developments and theoretical gaps in the RBV

It is significant to link the preceding discussion with recent theoretical developments in the RBV literature. These recent developments were aimed at addressing major criticisms of empirical testability, tautology, definitional clarity, and dynamism. However, strategy implementation remained largely unattended in the RBV literature (Foss, 2011). Growing calls for researching the origins of heterogeneity have remained largely unanswered other than normative responses and more empirical research is needed. Furthermore, there are growing calls to adopt processual thinking for future RBV research (Helfat et al., 2007; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Maritan and Peteraf, 2011). Table 3.2 summarises the recent developments and the core research gaps that still remain in the RBV. Those issues relevant to this research thesis are critically analysed to establish the research gaps within the RBV literature.

Table 3.2: Recent developments in the RBV and current research gaps		
Core issues	**Recent developments**	**Research gaps**
Empirical testing of the RBV	More empirical research (Newbert, 2007); still focused on more observable resources (Lockett et al., 2009); mostly relevant to heterogeneity as an outcome; relative inattention to implementation and managerial issues (Foss, 2011; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010)	More empirical research needed into origins of heterogeneity and embedded resources (Lockett, et al., 2009); limited implementation related research in the RBV (Foss, 2011), the RBV continues to use the variance approach and positivistic research; temporal, dynamic elements remain underexplored (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011)
Inattention to Strategy implementation (SIMP) in the RBV	Limited attention; reductionist approach to strategy implementation skills to coordination and configuration (Parmigiani and Holloway, 2011); Tactical-complementary theorizing of strategy implementation in the RBV	SIMP is a theoretical convenience in the RBV (Barney, 2001a); often overlooked due to non-strategic, tactical theorizing of strategy implementation; Competitive advantage implications of strategy implementation skills, activities and processes remain unknown (Barney and Mackey, 2005); the role of SIMP process as a source of resource heterogeneity is unknown; no research on categorization of SIMP activities according to their competitive advantage contribution
Managers and resource management	Recognised proactive and adaptive managerial influences(Lockett et al., 2009); resources management and asset orchestration concepts emerged (Sirmon et al., 2011)	Strategy implementation as a source of resource heterogeneity lacks theoretical or empirical insights; attention needed for cognitive frames of managers in strategizing (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010)
Processual research in the RBV	Some attention has been given to value creation; some recent calls for adopting processual approach in the RBV research, however remain normative; resource management attracted some research, albeit with variance conceptualisations of process issues	Strategy implementation process remains unaddressed; role of SIMP process as source of capability development, acquisitions and deployment of resources need research; resource management need fine –grained processual research to address how and why questions in resources management (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010; Maritan and Peteraf, 2011)

3.3.4.1. Empirical testing of the RBV

Barney and MacKey (2005) identified the examples of empirical testing of the RBV tenets in response to the criticism concerning the limited testability of the RBV. They also downplayed the strategy process scholars' contention that the RBV is largely non-testable. They identified strategy implementation as an issue related primarily to organization. It is important to note that Barney and MacKey recognised the inattention given to strategy implementation in the RBV as compared to strategy formulation. They reasoned that this inattention is possibly due to the potential complementary contribution of strategy implementation skills. This clearly deprived strategy implementation research of considering much of the competitiveness consequences, in line with the earlier discussion in section 2.7 of chapter 2. This issue is further explained in the next section 3.3.4.2.

Newbert (2007) provided a thorough coverage of the empirical research within the RBV literature. He found that resource combinations better explain performance differentials rather than individual resources. Similarly, empirical research within the RBV did not provide all-conclusive evidence of resource-performance linkage. Lockett et al. (2009) identified the methodological challenges and stressed that resource-based empirical research has mostly investigated observable resources. The important issue of causal ambiguity points to less observable resources that are more likely to influence firm performance.

Ketchen et al., (2007) stressed that empirical RBV research can be non-tautological by analysing strategic actions that convert resources into performance. Lockett et al. (2009) also underlined that the RBV researchers should adopt methodologies enabling research of the more embedded resources and managerial perceptions of resource functionality, arguing the need for more empirical attention as "it is not the resource type per se that matters, it is the functionality of the resource and how the resource is employed" (p. 13). However, most of the empirical RBV research is still conducted with tautological definitions and without in-depth analysis of how strategic resources are developed, refined, divested and deployed.

3.3.4.2. Continued inattention to Strategy implementation

The RBV still lacks sufficient coherent research relating strategy implementation issues and the consequent competitive advantage implications (Foss, 2011). It is rather obvious that strategy implementation is taken-for-granted in the RBV literature. Barney (2001a) noted that the RBV literature has considered strategy implementation as a 'theoretical convenience' that would automatically follow superior decision-making. Barney and Arikan (2001: 175) even termed this theoretical convenience a "remarkably naïve view". The RBV literature mostly placed strategic planning and decision-making as the drivers for superior resources that lead to competitive advantage. Overall, "Strategy implementation has received less attention in the resource-based empirical literature." (Barney and Mackey, 2005: 229) This is rather surprising since the earlier conceptualizations of RBV openly admitted, albeit insufficiently, the role of resources in the implementation of competitive strategies (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991). However, this emphasis swiftly turned towards strategic planning and functional issues.

Strategy implementation is largely an issue of 'organization' for the RBV scholars who consider it subservient to other socially complex and causally ambiguous resources (Barney and Clark, 2007; Amit and Schoemaker, 1993). Barney and Clark (2007) argued that some studies on architectural competence and dynamic capabilities may, arguably, be termed as implementation research (for example, Henderson and Cockburn, 1994; Teece et al., 1997). However, Barney (2002) was very dismissive pointing out that strategy implementation requires 'complementary resources' that may be important for organizational support but are not a source of competitive advantage by themselves. Barney and Clark (2007) stressed that the primary reason for inattention in the RBV literature is the complementary nature of the resources involved in strategy implementation.

This obviously contradicts with the strategy researchers' interest in sustainable competitive advantage. This is an important issue as it represents an as yet unresolved conflict in the research focus of the RBV. If the RBV is primarily concerned with resources that have competitive heterogeneous implications, then clearly strategy

implementation cannot get the required attention and focus within the RBV research. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006: 701) recognised that strategy process research has somewhat overlooked strategy implementation as a topic of operational detail and tactical manoeuvring. This presents a major research gap as the *tactical-operational* image in strategy process literature coincides with this *complementary theorizing* in the RBV literature.

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) recognised that the implementation of strategic direction is a Meso-level phenomenon. This underlines the belief that individual micro activities, their interactions and evolution over time are important dimensions of the strategy implementation process. Those dimensions require more critical investigation in future within processual strategy implementation research. Furthermore, strategy implementation needs *competitive theorizing* that would incorporate cognition and behaviour that evolves over time with performance consequences. The RBV has as yet failed to provide meaningful and practical insights into those significant implementation issues.

Sirmon and Hitt (2009), Lin and Hsieh (2010) and Parmigiani and Holloway (2011) are all recent, albeit limited, examples of the use of some RBV concepts for implementation oriented research. Sirmon and Hitt (2009) explored the impact of managerial decisions in a variance-oriented research for resource deployment and resource leverage on firm performance. They found that the congruence between those two decision types was positively related to performance. However, their work leaves the question of how resource deployment and resource investment actions evolve as something of a black-box. The element of action-taking is missing in their research with definitions conceptualising actions as decisions. It is recognized elsewhere that cognition *does not* automatically equate with action (Gavetti and Rivkin, 2007; Barney, 2001a). This reflects the fallacy in much of the strategy research that understanding how to take action would automatically equate with action itself. This contrasts with the strategy implementation literature that strongly argues the need for execution (Noble, 1999a; Bossidy and Charan, 2002; Li et al., 2010). Furthermore Sirmon and Hitt's (2009) work suffered from the variance in the conceptualisation of process (Langley, 2007). This may be because

processes like implementation are challenging to study (Parmigiani and Holloway, 2011).

Lin and Hseih (2010) analysed the fit between operational capabilities of coordination and configuration, procedural justice and subsidiary roles for implementation of international strategy. Their results suggested that a higher fit was positively related to subsidiary performance. Similar to Sirmon and Hitt (2009), Lin and Hseih's research also suffered from a conventional reduction of capabilities to variables, thus leaving actual actions in a black-box. Therefore it remains unclear as to how those capabilities are developed or actually deployed during implementation. Such reductionism leads to tautological interpretations within the RBV (Priem and Butler, 2001b) and highlights that unless actual strategizing is critically investigated, simplistic references to capabilities and process will lead to tautological interpretations. Clearly, more critical appraisal is needed to understand the competitive performance implications of strategy implementation (Barney, 2001a; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

Similarly, Parmigiani and Holloway (2011) investigated the corporate parent's implementation capabilities in the franchising industry. Their results indicated parent implementation capabilities as more important for performance than governance mode fit. However, their study suffered from variance in their conceptualizations and a high degree of reductionism. They only considered the operating experience and coordination via collocation as the significant implementation capabilities. This attempt to reduce implementation to certain limited capabilities does not significantly extend either the RBV or the strategy implementation literatures. The lack of attention to dynamism, temporal issues and managerial cognition placed this in the same criticism of being tautological, thus hampering the development of the RBV (Lockett et al., 2009). It is important to critically examine temporality and timing as "Better understanding of the temporal dimension of the action–performance relationship is important for theory and practice." (Bridoux et al., 2013: 928) Unsurprisingly, the static orientation in much of the RBV research has received criticism with arguments for the need to consider dynamism and explore how resources are managed to achieve competitive advantage (Helfat et al., 2007; Cepeda and Vera, 2007).

The RBV recognizes managerial influence on resource use and the functions provided by different resources and dynamic organizational processes (Peteraf and Bergen, 2003). This recognition, however, largely remains generalised and normative without much insight into how managers assess the resource functionality prior and during resource usage. Simply recognizing that managers may be poor in their resource use assessment is not sufficient response to the criticism. This remains "a fundamental weakness of the RBV literature" (Lockett et al., 2009: 24) highlighting the need to research how resources are used. It is argued here that not only decision-making but implementation activities which can also be relevant as in one earlier study successfully implementing hospitals pursued qualitatively different learning processes (Edmondson et al., 2001).

The identification of temporal managerial actions without sequencing leaves the temporal evolution of managerial cognitions, motivations, conflicts, and action-taking as a black-box in the process (for an example, see Bridoux et al., 2013). This also highlights the positivistic inclinations of hypothetico-deductive research in much of the RBV literature. Van de Ven (2007) and Langley (2007) have stressed the need for inductive, process-based research for understanding of insights into how managers decide and act in different processes. Future research into the strategy implementation needs to account for both processual dimensions and competitive implications to address core gaps within the strategy process and the RBV literatures. Similarly, more research is needed to critically examine why some firms may not be able to imitate the seemingly imitable resources that are used for strategy implementation (Barney and Mackey, 2005: 10).

This points to another gap in understanding how managers understand resource functionality during different phases of strategy implementation process. Relatively little is known about how strategy implementation may contribute to competitive advantage in different firm types – family firms, private firms, indigenous, and foreign multinational subsidiaries. This presents significant opportunities to critically investigate the "competitive implications of strategy implementation skills" (Barney and Mackey, 2005:

10). Additionally, it is not known how resource weaknesses are managed during strategy implementation (West III and DeCastro, 2001).

These and other related gaps remain in the RBV literature and need serious, consistent research effort. The RBV needs to embrace the dynamic and temporal issues in the strategy implementation process as calls grow for adoption of the processual approaches (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011). Barney (2001a), over a decade ago, argued that much more work was needed for analysis of strategy implementation from the resource-based view was necessary if the RBV were to develop as a useful theory and offer practical insights for managerial practice. Unfortunately, not much has changed between then and now.

3.3.4.3. Managers and resource management

There is strong criticism of the RBV that it overlooks managerial agency in achieving competitive advantages. Broadly, the RBV recognises the adaptive and proactive roles of managers in resource functionality, resource recombination, and resource creation (Lockett et al., 2009). Managerial perceptions play an important role in identifying the "most profitable usage of resources at their disposal" (p. 13). Managerial behaviours and perceptions are also influencers in the internal choice paths adopted by organizations (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). However, the RBV does not fully engage with the role of managers in the strategizing process. The recent push towards behavioural strategy perspectives like Strategy processes and Strategy-as-Practice has highlighted the need for empirical research that looks at how strategists do their strategizing work (Huy, 2011; Johnson et al., 2003).

There is limited theory regarding how managers manage resources and an even more limited body of recent empirical studies that connect specific practices to competitive advantage. The focus in those empirical studies has either been on activity within teams or variance conceptualisations of processes that were deduced from literature and not well-grounded in the actual practice. Ambrosini et al. (2007) provided a good example where they explored inter-team coordination activities as practised within two divisions of a service firm. Their results indicated that higher or lower customer satisfaction was

linked to different activity repertoires of inter-team coordination activities, thus different firm divisions performed differentially. Ambrosini et al. warned against becoming overly activity oriented without connections with broader strategizing work in firms. This hints towards the importance of Meso-level studies which would pay attention to micro-details as well as their interconnectedness over time (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

Sirmon et al. (2007) presented a normative framework of resource management process and distinguished three sub-processes: structuring, bundling, and leveraging. They argued resource management as a theoretical focus to address the criticism towards the RBV inattention to dynamism, environmental contingencies, and manager's role. It is noted here that Sirmon et al.'s (2007) work is a classic example of the variance approach to conceptualise process. While useful, their work did not pay attention to temporal evolution; instead change and environmental dynamism is conceptualised as variables. This approach is marginally useful in positivistic research but does not allow for empirically grounded theorizing with different process details.

The dynamic managerial capabilities literature also needs to broaden the role of managers in asset orchestration (Helfat et al., 2007). The dynamic managerial capabilities are needed in search, selection, coordination and configuration of the firm's resources. How managers undertake those engagements remains as a significant research gap in the RBV. The RBV scholars, who stress the importance of critical investigation of subjective issues, argue against conceptualising the process of managerial actions as capabilities and thus highlight the need to clearly distinguish capacity from action (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). This mandates subjective, context-grounded definitions of resource functionality, resource use and value as used by managers in strategizing processes.

Casson (2000) earlier considered rule implementation as routine, managerial and administrative while rule creation is entrepreneurial. Bridoux et al., (2013) used the Sirmon et al.'s (2007) framework to identify the resource management actions as described in normative literature. They found that bundling of resources was linked to longer lasting performance. However, Bridoux et al. did not attempt to look at action

sequences thus left the activity patterns over time, managerial cognitions, motivations, conflicts, and manoeuvring as a black-box in the process.

It is very important to gain fine-grained insights into how managers engage in implementing over time within different firm contexts. Similarly, how those implementing patterns and underlying activities compare in different contexts such as indigenous and multinational subsidiaries and with what competitive consequences? Such research questions highlight significant potential for theoretical developments in both the strategy implementation and the RBV literatures. Future research needs to integrate managerial actions, temporal patterns, and their competitive implications to gain deeper insights into the how and why questions related to strategy implementation (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). Furthermore, it will also open possibilities for more practical suggestions to improve strategizing practices in different contexts. Overall, human imagination and actions need to gain central importance in the RBV research (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010).

3.3.4.4. The need for a processual approach in the RBV research

The RBV is rather prescriptive in its approach, as competitive advantage can only be achieved through non-imitation of firm resources by competitors and the utilization of these resources in more efficient ways than competitors (Rumelt, 1991; Galbreath and Galvin, 2008). The RBV scholars have begun to acknowledge that resource possession does not generate competitive advantage by itself. Instead, resources need deployment and exploitation for competitive advantage (Newbert, 2007; Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). For example, Ray et al. (2004) highlighted the importance of efficient intermediary organizational activities and processes in generating superior firm performance.

Peteraf (2005) strongly argued for seeking complementary research by combining different theoretical lenses in strategy research, especially strategy process and the RBV. Peteraf also recognised that:

 "…while it is oriented primarily to questions regarding strategy content and formulation, there is the potential for much more work to be done on the process side." (p. 414)

She analysed the potential complementary gains from applying the RBV lens on the Resource Allocation Process (RAP). She briefly referred to implementation as a processual issue; however, Peteraf did not focus on SIMP as a separate issue. It is recognised elsewhere in recent strategy process literature that strategy implementation is not a unitary process but a set of sub-processes that need extensive research (Narayanan et al., 2011; also see section 2.4.1. for literature analysis).

The strategy process and dynamic capabilities developed as different and somewhat competing perspectives. Helfat et al. (2007) stressed that dynamic capabilities and strategy process lenses should be combined in future research for complementary gains and theoretical development. They recognised that processes are integral components of dynamic capabilities but existing literature has paid insufficient attention to processes of capability development and deployment. Easterby-Smith et al. (2009) highlighted that the utilization of resources and implementation of new processes by dynamic capabilities is still poorly researched. Similarly, the strategy process literature is generally focussed on processes as mechanisms for decisions and actions over-time with process related outcomes. There is huge potential in combining these two theoretical lenses as dynamic capabilities provide competitiveness focus and can provide a longstanding call to connect strategy processes to competitive outcomes (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Barney and Zajac, 1994).

Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) supported the need for more critical evaluation of the resource deployment processes and their contribution towards achieving competitive advantage. They argued for combining the variance and processual approaches for the empirical evaluation of the RBV, as only then "will we be able to understand which resources and capabilities are sources of SCA and how some firms are able to perform better than others" (p. 361). Maritan and Peteraf (2011) examined the heterogeneity arguments in the RBV literature and emphasised that the origins of resource heterogeneity are underexplored and underdeveloped in the RBV literature. Maritan and Peteraf also argued that accumulation and acquisitions could be think as building and buying mechanisms of resources management and should be bridged jointly for understanding of the creation of heterogeneous resource positions. They also stressed

the need to link resource acquisition and resource development in future research by adopting a process perspective in the RBV research. Overall, the RBV needs process-based empirical research for a thorough appraisal of the dynamic, temporal issues linked to the origins of resource heterogeneity and roles of managers in resource use related processes.

3.3.4.5. Processual Analysis – key considerations

It is important to understand some key considerations for a thorough processual analysis as discussed in key strategy process literature. Pettigrew (1992; 1997), Van de Ven (1992; 2007), Jarzabkowski (2008) and Langley (1999; 2007) have provided some important analytical pointers to guide the processual analysis of strategic issues. An initial definition of the term process will aid the understanding of the theoretical position of these researchers and their findings. Drawing from Van de Ven (1992), Pettigrew (1997) and Langley (1999; 2007), this research opted for *a processual definition* of process. The term process is viewed here as a series of events pertaining to strategy implementation and how they shape over time. This allows for temporal dynamics embedded in the process of implementing at the researched foreign and indigenous firms. This is different from the variance thinking commonly found in much of strategy literature that reduces different issues to variables. Unfortunately, much of the strategy process literature also suffers from variance thinking that 'reduces process to variable' (Langley, 2007: 272).

It is recognized here that strategy process research needs to be open to the exploration of *both,* patterns of change as well as continuity and recognize different strategic contextual issues facing firms (Jarzabkowski, 2008). This is an important recognition in understanding process patterns and the underlying heterogeneity in those process patterns and uses a processual approach to analyse process (Mohr, 1982). Langley (1999) identified the events, underlying activities, and related decisions as important issues in processual analysis to understand how and why strategic issues evolve over time in a certain way. Temporality and temporal ordering is an important part of processual analysis and used accordingly to explore temporal issues in strategy

implementation process at different firm types. Langley also recognised that phases in strategic process patterns should be viewed to understand the temporal location of events and activities.

Sminia (2009) and Tsoukas (1989) also discussed the need to analyse the generative mechanisms that drive process patterns and explore why firms behave in a certain way. Langley (2007) emphasized that processual analysis should recognize the interconnections between different levels of strategic actors and the firm. She further identified tracing back of events and activities as one of the useful approaches to understand processual complexities. Pettigrew (1997) discussed the need to explore the co-shaping nature of context and actions in strategic processes. Pettigrew recognised that actions alone do not explain strategic processes and the interchanges of actors, actions and their contexts are important considerations to understand change and development in processual analysis. This reflects a temporal and cumulative nature of action and context interchanges in strategic processes. Maritan and Peteraf (2011) went a step ahead and included managerial and organizational processes with temporal patterns of those processes to argue for a process perspective in the RBV research.

Sminia and de Rond (2012) and Steel (2004) discussed that process tracing is needed to explore and understand activities in process and their interconnections that lead to outcomes. Pettigrew (1997) and Sztompka (1993) reminded that process researchers should be open to potential heterogeneity and variety in strategy process patterns. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) identified that strategy implementation process characteristics and the heterogeneity have received limited attention in strategy process literature. Pettigrew (2012:21) argued for 'inductive pattern recognition' and identification of mechanisms that generate those patterns in strategic processes.

The comparison of variations in process patterns to understand variations in specific outcomes remain rare in strategy process literature. Pettigrew also emphasized 'the need for process scholars to go beyond the identification and explanation of patterns in processes and demonstrate in what way and to what extent processes can and do shape outcomes.' (p. 6) Langley (2007) highlighted that outcomes in process research

can be *outcomes as well as inputs* depending upon their temporal nature and accuracy of managerial decisions. It is thus important for processual analysis to remain open to teleogical, dialectic, evolutionary and life cycle style approaches towards change (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). Process studies analyse patterns of strategic actions at a meso-level and connect strategic actors, their actions and their firms (Klein et al., 1994; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

Overall, leading scholars have stressed the need for critical investigation of variety in process patterns, underlying activities and mechanisms, contextual details and linking of process patterns to processual outcomes. This attention to temporal dynamism and outcomes is missing in most strategy process literature (Pettigrew, 2012; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). It provides this research thesis with an opportunity to explore strategy implementation process and link SIMP process patterns to the outcome of implementation success.

3.4. Competitive theorizing via complementary-gains research – applying the RBV lens on strategy implementation process

Theory development is often driven by applying outside theoretical lenses (Peteraf, 2005). There are two ways in strategy literature to gain from applying a lens from outside the core theory. Some scholars have adopted the anomaly seeking route for theoretical development (Gilbert and Christensen, 2005). This leads to the development of core theory but reduces opportunities of gains from the external theoretical lens that is applied to core theory. Other scholars have argued for synergistic gains achieved via complementary-seeking research (Peteraf, 2005; Helfat et al., 2007). Shanley and Peteraf (2006) stressed the need for processual thinking to address longstanding issues in strategy research:

"Process thinking and research is not just needed to tackle new issues, it is needed to tackle longstanding theoretical issues appropriately and thoroughly, rather than through the overuse of assumptions" (p. 7).

The preceding discussion in chapter 2 and chapter 3 has clearly established that there are major knowledge gaps in the extant strategy implementation and the RBV

literatures. *A complementary-seeking research approach is supported here*: one which *will combine the implementation process approach with the Resource-based analysis.* It is argued here that this complementary-seeking research will contribute to major theoretical developments by applying the RBV lens on the strategy implementation process in different firm contexts.

One of the long-standing issues is the relative inattention in the RBV towards strategy implementation and its competitive implications. The RBV considered strategy implementation as a theoretical convenience without much attention to how resources are managed and actions are taken after strategy formulation (Barney, 2001a; Foss, 2011). The RBV argues that strategy implementation resources provide tactical and supportive contributions to performance due to their imitability and thus cannot contribute to competitive advantage (Barney, 2001a; Barney and Mackey, 2005). However, why some firms may not be able to imitate those imitable implementation resources is still unknown. Furthermore, the role of strategy implementation process patterns and underlying activities in resources management needs greater attention and empirical evidence from firms with different contexts.

The hallmark of the processual views of strategy are their attention to temporal dimensions, human actors, activities, their inter-connectedness and resulting patterns of continuity and change (Langley, 2007; Ambrosini et al., 2007). Those processual views need to focus more on implementation issues and improve the current imbalance of favouring decision-making processes as their research focus (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). The recent calls for attention to Strategy-as-practice have drawn attention to how strategists engage in strategizing, though strategy implementation activities still need more explicit and thorough treatment (Jarzabkowski et al., 2012). The implementation of strategic direction is an example of a Meso-level phenomenon that requires analysis of the interactions of people, their actions and implementing context for organizational directions (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). It is important to consider both continuity and changes in strategic activities over time for processual research (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Sminia, 2009). There are times when firms maintain their existing states to manage competitive challenges and on other occasions pursue

change. This has parallels with the concepts of operational capabilities and dynamic capabilities in the RBV literature (Helfat et al., 2007).

The RBV and the Processual views of strategy generally consider strategy implementation as associated with administrative activities and tactical value. The RBV can be used as a theoretical lens for strategy implementation to critically investigate the competitive implications of SIMP process patterns and underlying activities. This will provide a unique focus for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) argued for future research to critically investigate the links between strategy implementation process characteristics with strategic outcomes. The existence of any particular process pattern, activity, or routine should not be taken for granted. There is 'significant potential' in the choices that firms and managers have in adopting particular routines (Felis and Foss, 2009: 164). It is therefore essential to critically evaluate the origins of those process patterns that may lead to organizational capabilities.

Adopting a processual approach will enable critical investigation of how managers implement strategies over time and arrive at heterogeneous resource positions. The use of the RBV can contribute to strategy process theory by providing focus on 'organizational performance and strategic outcomes' (Helfat et al., 2007: 39). It is important that future empirical research embrace those two rather competing perspectives for theoretical development by addressing the research gaps in the strategy implementation and the RBV literatures. This will help modify the tactical-inferior image of strategy implementation and develop *competitive theorizing* by providing insights into the competitive performance implications and strategic outcomes of successful strategy implementation. It is relevant here to refer again to the section 2.8 in chapter 2, where the need for a competitiveness theory was established for strategy implementation research.

Furthermore, this application of the RBV lens will allow linking of strategy implementation process patterns and underlying activities with the heterogeneous resource positions of different firms. This complementary-seeking, competitive

theorizing will respond to the calls for exploring the performance consequences of strategy implementation process (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006), applying the RBV and strategy process lenses for the same research (Helfat et al., 2007; Maritan and Peteraf, 2011); the need for empirical research focusing on strategy implementation issues (Noble, 1999a; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Li et al., 2010); the need to link strategy implementation process and strategy content (Helfat et al., 2007; Barney and Zajac, 1994); and the need for adopting a broader approach for strategy implementation research (Noble, 1999a). This kind of research would also provide significant insights into the existing knowledge gaps for how implementation processes are linked to heterogeneous resource positions of firms (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011).

This approach is very distinct from the focus on either the identification of activities and processual patterns or analysing the sources of competitive advantage. This kind of research will provide a substantially different approach to strategy implementation in contrast to how strategy implementation is viewed in the Processual and the RBV perspectives. This approach will combine those distinctive research focuses and lead to a fine-grained analysis of strategic performance through competitive strategy implementation processes and activities. Overall, combining the processual and the RBV lenses for strategy implementation process will help answer the ever-important questions of how and why strategy implementation may help some firms perform better than others.

3.5.1. Derived research questions

The preceding review has provided a critical appraisal of strategy implementation and its treatment in the processual approaches to strategy (chapter 2) and the Resource-based View (chapter 3). The literature review analysed different theoretical developments in those literatures and established the major research gaps within those literatures. It is relevant to refer again to Table 2.3 and Table 3.2 to refresh the critical analysis of these different and rather competing literatures. Those research gaps revealed a significant potential for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation via complementary-seeking research.

Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Kraaijenbrink et al. (2010) have emphasised that processual research needs to be well-grounded in the actual practice of firms. However, paying attention to existing literature is important in conducting good quality grounded research to address identified research gaps (Suddaby, 2006). Figure 2.1 links the research gaps regarding strategy implementation with the research aim, the research focus and the derived research questions that enable this research thesis to offer a contribution to existing knowledge.

Figure 2.1: Linking the relevant research gaps in strategy implementation and the RBV with the derived research questions

Research gaps in Strategy implementation (SIMP) & Processual views of strategy

- The RBV is not used as a broader theoretical perspective for SIMP-focussed research.
- Inattention to strategy implementation's consequences for performance
- The relative imbalance in processual strategy views favouring decision-making with implementation being implicit under the process as a label
- Relative inattention to sequential variety in strategy implementation process in different firm types – indigenous and foreign multinational firms
- Tactical and inferior perception of strategy implementation as compared to strategy formulation and decision making
- A broader approach needed to embrace different dimensions of strategy implementation.

Research aim

To explore the role of Strategy Implementation in competitiveness by bringing together the strategy process and the RBV perspectives

Research focus

Application of the RBV lens on Strategy Implementation Process in different firm contexts to analyse the heterogeneity in SIMP process patterns and explore the role of SIMP process patterns as sources of resource heterogeneity and competitive performance

Research gaps in The RBV - Static and dynamic approaches

- Strategy implementation is a theoretical convenience; often overlooked due to non-strategic, tactical theorizing of strategy implementation;
- Competitive performance implications of strategy implementation skills, activities and processes remain unknown;
- Insufficient attention to processual characteristics of strategy implementation; existing work suffers from variance conceptualisations and reductionist research;
- The role of SIMP process as a source of resource heterogeneity is unknown;
- Processual approach is needed for fine–grained analysis of how and why questions in the role of SIMP process in resources development, acquisitions deployment, and resource use by strategizing actors over time.

Derived Research questions To explore:

1. How SIMP process patterns and underlying activities explain the differences in implementation success among the indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries?
2. How SIMP activities and process patterns explain heterogeneous resources management of the foreign multinational subsidiaries and indigenous firms?
3. How SIMP activities and process patterns contribute to competitiveness in the foreign multinational subsidiaries and indigenous firms?

70

Each research question is briefly discussed hereunder to clearly establish the boundaries for research and subsequent analysis.

RQ 1: How SIMP process patterns and underlying activities explain the differences in implementation success among the indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries?

This question responds to the calls of Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006) and Li et al. (2010) for attention to the processual nature of strategy implementation in different firm contexts. Limited research exists to understand the heterogeneity in how different firm types implement their strategies (Li et al., 2010). Comparative studies of strategy implementation in different contexts are lacking in the existing literature. Foreign and domestic firms differ in their managerial behaviours while competing in the same markets (Tsang, 2002; DiMagio and Powell, 1983). This is due to their attention to local customs and differences in the available resources due to their indigenous and foreign origins (Peng et al., 2008, Wright et al., 2005; Bellak, 2004). It is therefore, important to understand how implementation process patterns and underlying activities compare between indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries and why some process patterns are linked to successful implementation.

Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006), Langley (2007), and Bingham, Eisenhardt and Furr (2007) have highlighted the importance of understanding processual details and outcomes. All organizational and managerial processes have a role to perform and for strategy implementation that role is to achieve successful implementation. Unlike the extensive research on the success of decision-making processes (Nutt, 2008), the heterogeneity in strategy implementation is rarely compared in different contexts. Answering this research question will help understand the heterogeneity in strategy implementation process at different firm types and how SIMP process patterns and activities link to successful implementation in different firm contexts. This will enable a critical analysis of high performing implementation processes and their underlying activities that exist in indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries.

RQ 2 - How SIMP process patterns and underlying activities explain the heterogeneous resources management in the indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries?

There is limited attention to how processes may help in resource management in the form of mechanisms and how the processes and underlying activities may themselves act as resources (Sirmon et al., 2011; Helfat et al., 2007). This research question will respond to the calls towards the need to understand the role of processes as the origins of resource heterogeneity (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011). Sirmon et al.'s (2007, 2011) conceptualisations for resources management are useful but are variance-oriented and with limited attention to temporal patterns of managerial actions. There is no current research study with an explicit investigation of how strategy implementation process patterns and underlying activities link with how resources are managed in indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries. Maritan and Peteraf (2011) argued that the future research should analyse the paths and patterns of resources acquisitions and developments and see how resources are managed (p. 11).

It is argued here that this investigation will provide insights into how managers manage the resource acquisitions, resource developments and resource deployments during the strategy implementation process. The roles of managers will be analysed for their cognitions, action-taking and motivations that would explain heterogeneities in resources management. How strategy implementation patterns and resources management activities shape each other is a more important and relevant research gap. This will help address "the non-linear effects of action under complexity" (Langley, 2007: 273). Importantly, this will enable linking implementation heterogeneity with resources management heterogeneity in indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries. This represents an important opportunity to link strategy implementation with resources management as practised by indigenous firms and foreign multinational subsidiaries.

RQ 3 - How SIMP activities and process patterns contribute to or confer competitive gains in foreign multinational subsidiaries and indigenous firms?

The SIMP is seen as tactical-complementary activities which contribute to operational performance in both the strategy process and the RBV literatures (Barney and Clark, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). If strategy implementation were to acquire a more prominent, explicit position in strategy research, then it is vital to analyse competitive implications arising from SIMP process patterns and underlying activities in different firm contexts. Competitive theorizing for SIMP necessitates that a taken-for-granted approach is not adopted towards strategy implementation. Foss (2011) argued that it is a mistake to take-for-granted, the existence of any routine in firms. Arguably, it is even faultier to disregard strategy implementation of competitive contributions without thorough empirical research.

Barney and Mackey (2005) called for future research into why imitable resources used for strategy implementation are not imitated by firms that could clearly benefit from imitating or substituting those resources. There is a gap in the empirical studies looking at competitive performance contributions of SIMP activities and process patterns. It is expected that some SIMP process patterns and activities will result in better competitive performance than others. There is a need to analyse and categorise SIMP activities and patterns according to their nature as mechanisms and also as resources. It will be important to analyse the dimensions of process complexity, inter-connectedness and inter-temporality (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006) in SIMP activities and process patterns for their relevance to competitive advantage in different firm contexts. Overall, critical appraisal for this research question will help combine and categorise SIMP activities and patterns that result in successful implementation with competitive performance. This will respond to Barney's (2001) assertion that more empirical research should explore the competitive contributions of SIMP from an RBV perspective.

Answering those three research questions will help move towards a competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. This will combine processual dimensions, process performance and competitive performance implications of strategy

implementation process. This will lead to important insights and future research directions to refine and extend the SIMP research agenda that is neither only processual nor resource-based. Instead, this will lead to a complementary research agenda for significant theoretical gains to be achieved via strategy implementation focussed research.

Chapter 4 – Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to fulfil the proposed research aim and find answers to the derived research questions. The research aim is to explore the role of strategy implementation in determining competitiveness by bringing together the processual and the RBV perspectives of strategy. Initially, the chapter (section 4.2) discusses the relevance of grounded theory building and the associated underlying philosophical position employing Suddaby's (2006) work. Section 4.3 details the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research design used to investigate the variations in strategy implementation activities and process patterns and their implications for competitiveness. Section 4.4 provides the information regarding the research setting and access issues followed by the details of data collection methods in section 4.5. Section 4.6 discusses the details of the qualitative data analysis and how the data was coded and categorised. The validity, reliability and limitations of this research are discussed in the section 4.7 and the chapter concludes with an overall summary.

4.2. Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded Theory is one of the most cited qualitative research methodologies in the management research literature (Suddaby, 2006). Grounded Theory is defined as "a general methodology of analysis linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area" (Glaser, 1992:16). It is clear from figure-1 in chapter three that the current state of strategy implementation research literature supports strongly the need for more empirical research that critically investigates how firms implement their strategies. The research aim seeks to gain a greater understanding how strategic actors engage in implementing strategy in practice, explorlng why certain activities and process patterns are linked to implementation success and any implications for competitiveness in differing contexts.

The use of Grounded Theory (GT) has evolved in different ways and thus led to certain misunderstandings of the methodological foundations, even by those who

propose the use of Grounded Theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided the initial impetus by highlighting the need to "discover theory from data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 1). Such research is suitable in cases where hypothesis testing is not desirable due to lack of sufficiently developed theory. The issues inherent in the strategy implementation activities and processes in different firm contexts and their competitive implications have not been surveyed or explored to any significant extent. This makes the Grounded Theory methodology ideally suitable for this research thesis, seeking to evolve theory. However, Grounded Theory itself has elicited strong differences of opinion and views as expressed in the publications of scholars like Glaser (1992), Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2000). There are serious debates surrounding those differences and it is rather easy to misunderstand the key elements of Grounded Theory approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; O'Reilly et al., 2012).

Fandt and Sachss (2008) emphasized that it is important for researchers to clearly follow some key elements that are relevant to grounded theory building. Suddaby (2006) provided an excellent analysis of major myths that are generally present in management research using Grounded Theory. He emphasized the importance of adhering to good practices and attention to key issues of Grounded Theory in management research. Table 4.1 summarizes Suddaby's work to identify key issues and his suggested guidelines for rigorous grounded research. This table allows the use of Suddaby's work to systematically guide this research thesis and answer the research questions. Overall, this approach is highly suitable for theory building regarding the variety in strategy implementation activities, patterns and their competitive implications in different contexts. Important Grounded Theory tenets of constant comparison, theoretical sampling, category saturation, and theoretical sensitivity are used in the design of this research including iterative data collection and data analysis methods.

Table 4.1: Key issues in rigorous Grounded Theory – Suddaby's Guidelines *

Key issue: Grounded Theory Is Not an Excuse to Ignore the Literature

*Suddaby's guidelines***:**

- The extant literature should be searched and literature should not be ignored. Existing research gaps should be used to establish clear research questions to guide the research and theory building.
- "Draw from the several substantive areas that are frequently reflected in a given daily reality." (p. 635)
- In search for theory building, "achieve a practical middle ground between a theory-laden view of the world and an unfettered empiricism" (p. 635)
- "constantly remind yourself that you are only human and that what you observe is a function of both who you are and what you hope to see." (p. 635)

Key issue: Grounded Theory Is Not Presentation of Raw Data

*Suddaby's guidelines***:**

- Phenomenology and Grounded Theory share interest in subjective realities and human actors but there are important differences as well.
- Grounded Theory researchers "are less focused on subjective experiences of individual actors per se and are instead more attentive to how such subjective experiences can be abstracted into theoretical statements about causal relations between actors." (p. 635)
- Theoretical sampling is an important analytical tenet that guides further data collection based on on-going interpretations of emerging theoretical concepts.
- Unlike Phenomenology, for grounded theory researchers "the primary interest is not in the stories themselves. Rather, they are a means of eliciting information on the social situation under examination." (p. 635)
- The researchers should find a higher level of abstraction from the data. As new categories emerge from concurrent analysis while data is collected, further data is sought till no new information is available and thus category saturation is achieved (Strauss and Corbin, 1998)

Key issue: Grounded Theory Is Not Theory Testing, Content Analysis, or Word Counts

*Suddaby's guidelines***:**

- Avoid methodological slurring by developing congruence between research questions and research method.
- Avoid realist assumptions within interpretive ontology. Instead, seek subjective actions that are based on internal human perceptions and impact the external world. "Grounded theory thus should not be used to test hypotheses about reality, but, rather, to make statements about how actors interpret reality." (p. 636)
- Grounded theory looks "to elicit fresh understandings about patterned relationships between social actors and how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)." (p. 636)
- Grounded Theory is a systematic research methodology, while content analysis can be used to collect and analyze the data for grounded theory.
- Word counts in content analysis reflect positivist-realist ontology and thus "violate the interpretivist assumptions of grounded theory (Krippendorff, 2004)." (p. 637)
- Although literature, research method and findings may be presented sequentially as per norms in writing, Grounded Theory research uses an iterative and simultaneous data collection and analysis for constant comparison of emerging categories with on-going data collection. ***Contd…***

| | - | The researchers should clearly outline coding process with illustrative examples and recognise that the process is iterative with constant comparison. |

Key issue: Grounded Theory Is Not Simply Routine Application of Formulaic Technique to Data

Suddaby's Guidelines:

- "The key issue to remember here is that grounded theory is an interpretive process, not a logico-deductive one." (p. 638)
- It is important for researchers to not become overly mechanical in terms of coding without much theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978).
- The on-going interaction between researcher and data is important for rigorous grounded theory development and researcher interpretation of data and emerging concepts. The researcher is actively involved in providing data interpretation for grounded theory research.

Key issues: Grounded Theory (GT) Is Not Perfect; Grounded Theory Is Not Easy; Grounded Theory Is Not an Excuse for the Absence of a Methodology

Suddaby's Guidelines:

- The GT researchers need to find a difficult balance between following strict methods for data collection and achieving category saturation
- The GT researchers are humans and thus human imagination and analytical skills are needed to achieve optimum teasing of data to generate theory.
- GT needs simultaneous data collection and analysis thus induction and confirmation in constant comparison leads to an analytic induction (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).
- "In sum … researchers should try to avoid fundamentalist tendencies in how they approach and, more importantly, evaluate grounded theory research." (p. 639)
- The researcher needs to be aware of underlying meanings of the data and that requires constant immersion in data.
- The researchers also need to identify patterns within data and this requires higher analytical skills
- The GT researchers need to provide continuous reflection of their positions in the data collection, analysis and interpretation. The GT researchers need to better understand their research sites and spending more time at those sites improves their contextual understanding
- The GT researchers should describe methodological details that follow theoretical sampling and constant comparison. The GT researchers should indicate theoretical sensitivity and consistency between reality views, research questions and methods used for theory building.

* Source: Derived from Suddaby (2006) for this thesis

4.3. Research design

This research was designed to achieve the research aim and answer the derived research questions. Kuhn (1962: 20) defined research design as "A research design is a logical plan for getting from here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions." The research design helped this researcher in

establishing the priorities for different research elements, such as the nature of the research inquiry, the philosophical underpinnings, and research orientation towards theory (Bryman, 2008; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). It is important to have consistency between research questions and the research design used to answer those questions (Suddaby, 2006). The research design helped organizing the overall research for the collection of the implementation process data in different firm contexts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

4.3.1. Exploratory qualitative research

The research aim to explore the role of strategy implementation in the firm's competitiveness is a seriously underexplored research area in strategy literature. Similarly, the role of different activities and process patterns in successful implementation in a variety of contexts has yet to be researched in a comparative manner. There are different strategic actors that are usually involved in strategizing activities and processes (Johnson et al., 2003; Langley, 2007). An exploratory research is particularly suitable for the under-researched topics that lack established theoretical frameworks (Gulati, 2009).

Suddaby (2006) emphasized that Grounded Theory research does not attempt to test pre-defined hypothesis or theoretical constructs. O'Riley et al. (2012) also highlighted that Grounded Theory research is inherently exploratory in nature. Sousa and Hendriks (2006) argued that an exploratory approach is highly suitable for Grounded Theory research. There is insufficient theoretical guidance to inform this present research investigation as different theoretical lenses are yet to be utilised for strategy implementation process research. For example, the extant strategy implementation and the RBV literatures do not help compare the potential variety in strategy implementation process in indigenous and foreign multinational firms. Similarly, the tactical-inferior and complementary theorizing of strategy implementation in both processual and the Resource-based views of strategy further neglects any potential competitive contributions of SIMP. This made it necessary for this research thesis to adopt an exploratory approach to analyse the role of strategy implementation in competitiveness amongst different firms.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 8) pointed that the "word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency". Similarly, Cassell and Symon (1994) identified some important characteristics for the qualitative approach to research: "a focus on interpretation rather than quantification; an emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity; flexibility in the process of conducting research; an orientation towards process rather than outcome; a concern with context—regarding behaviour and situation as inextricably linked in forming experience" (p.7) There are unrivalled opportunities in qualitative research to provide in-depth investigation of social issues in different contexts (Mason, 2002). It was decided to use a qualitative, exploratory research approach that would enable an in-depth comparison of similarities and differences in a variety of firm contexts. The frequency-centred quantitative approach was deemed unsuitable as it was important to interact with strategic actors and understand their interpretations of strategy implementation process.

It is important for qualitative researchers to understand how social actors are being studied, and understand their reality (Bryman, 1988). Furthermore, the recursive nature of qualitative research methodology, flexibility in design and use of interpretive techniques to provide theoretical insights have also come under discussion in the literature (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Patton, 2002; Snape and Spencer, 2003; Schwandt, 1997). The focus of qualitative research is on the meaning of underlying processual concepts, instead of their frequency within the data (Silverman, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 2005). The interest of this research lies in how firms successfully implement their strategies and how strategy implementation links to competitive advantages. The frequency of a certain event happening was less important for the research; instead, the existence and underlying reasons for activities and patterns related to implementation success assumed prime importance.

The value of qualitative research in explaining dynamic issues is well recognized in the strategic management literature (Barr, 2004; Cepeda and Martin, 2005). It was imperative for this research to interact with the respondents and understand SIMP at local and foreign firms in Pakistan and how and why any similarities or differences

exist. The qualitative approach allowed for a data collection via in-depth interviews that helped in understanding the deeper issues in the variety in SIMP process (Patton, 2002; Pettigrew, 1997). The interactions with the social actors in the implementation process revealed the complexity, dynamism and path dependencies, inherent in how firms implemented their strategies (Snape and Spencer, 2003). It is emphasized here that such exploratory richness would have been lost during the research process, if quantification were attempted or too many prescriptions from the literature were imposed.

The qualitative strategy provided the flexibility in dealing with emerging issues during data collection that were related to the contextual differences based on firm type – local or foreign (Bellak, 2004). It was also consciously ensured to consistently match the appropriate research design choices with the philosophical considerations (Bryman and Bell, 2007). It is important in Grounded Theory research to achieve congruence between data collection and analysis methods with the philosophical positioning (Suddaby, 2006; Flick, 2009).

4.3.2. Need for Theory building in strategy implementation research

It is clear from the research gaps and research questions that researching for strategy implementation for its competitive implications is seriously under-researched. Suddaby (2006) stressed the need for Grounded Theory researchers to explore important patterns in data and provide fresh understanding of the phenomenon that is being researched. In this respect it is important to construct theory before its testing (Snow and Thomas, 1994). Bacharach (1989) defines a well-developed theory as "a statement of relationships among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints" (p. 496). However, the existing literature does not provide much insight into core strategy implementation issues.

In particular, the performance and competitive implications are seldom explored and are currently seriously under-researched. The research gaps and the derived research questions in section 3.4 clearly identify that this has led to a tactical-oriented and comparative inferior perception of strategy implementation. This perspective mandated that the present research should be orientated towards theory building and not theory testing. The theory-building was achieved through recursive

iterations involving data, emerging theory and the inclusion of the relevant SIMP, the RBV and processual approaches (Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice) literatures.

Bryman (2008: 6) highlighted that the meaning of theory is understood in different ways but mostly it means "an explanation of observed regularities". Snow and Thomas (1994) identified description, explanation or prediction as three purposes of theory that may coexist. There is insufficient conceptual or empirical evidence in the strategy implementation or the RBV literatures to provide insights into theoretical constructs for successful implementation in a variety of firm contexts. The use of two theoretical lenses (the processual approach and the RBV), for strategy implementation research is unique and thus without much prior empirical foundations. The exploratory nature of this research thesis is well suited to provide descriptions and explanations of how and why relating to SIMP issues in the scope of the research aim and the derived research questions.

This research thesis is aimed at explaining the empirical evidence related to strategy implementation activities and process patterns in the context of indigenous and foreign multinational firms to develop a starting point for theory construction (Siggelkow, 2007). It was recognized for this research that the initial reading of the Strategy Implementation, Processual approaches (Strategy Process and Strategy-as-Practice) and the RBV literatures helped in clearly establishing knowledge gaps and deriving research questions. However, the research questions were focussed yet did not pre-conceive any particular behaviour of firms or strategic actors for strategy implementation. To the contrary, the research questions favoured a processual approach and were justified by highlighting the dominant, reductionist and variance tendencies in the limited strategy implementation-focussed research. This helped avoid unconscious contamination of data collection and data analysis with pre-conceived ideas and enabled theory construction to be grounded in actual data.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) criticised attempts for grand theories in the research of social issues. Grand theories tend to be abstract and presented as rather universal, while the middle range theories are more detailed, testable and define the context for their relevance (Merton, 1967). Merton talked about middle-range in recognition of

the growing gap between theory and empirical proof (Bryman, 2008). Theory building is generally mid-range and an incremental process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). This research represents an incremental leap of middle range for critical investigation of the role of strategy implementation in the firm's competitiveness. This research describes and explains the heterogeneity in implementation activities and patterns and linked this heterogeneity to implementation success consequences and competitive performance in different firm contexts.

Constant comparison was required between the data and analysis for emerging issues related to implementation activities and how these affected process performance in different firms. Theoretical sensitivity was maintained via attention to processual issues and how they differ in indigenous and foreign firms with consequent performance implications. This approach contributes to moving the attention from tactical- inferior theorizing towards competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. It is argued later in the conclusions chapter that adopting such an approach will result in complementary gains and will help stimulate theoretical and empirical agendas for SIMP focussed research. Overall, this research attempted to move towards a more substantive theory construction and not the more generic or formal theory due to the qualitative data and the exploratory approach.

4.3.3. Philosophical underpinnings

Suddaby (2006) emphasized the need to be clear about the philosophical position of research aimed at grounded theory development. Easterby-Smith et al. (2002:27) highlighted some important benefits of understanding the philosophical underpinnings of research: a) clarifying the kind of evidence required and the methods of data collection and interpretation suitable for the research enquiry; b) choosing the right research design appropriate for the social phenomenon. Strategy researchers also need to clearly articulate their philosophical underpinnings for credible research (Ketchen and Bergh, 2004).

Healy and Perry (2000, P. 119) defined "ontology as the "reality" that researchers investigate external to social actors or as part of actions and interactions between social actors, epistemology as the relationship between that reality and the researcher and methodology is the technique used by the researcher to investigate

that reality." Different philosophical positions in social research include Positivism, Phenomenology, Realism, and Critical Theory (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2006). Positivism and Interpretivism are two extreme philosophical positions adopted by researchers (Bryman, 2008). The Positivist approach has dominated much of strategy literature with its objective view of reality as an external construct. This objective position is often criticised for inattention to the social construction of reality that is highly subjective due to the involvement of social actors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

Grounded Theory shares the social construction and subjective position of Phenomenology but the story narratives are not the primary focus. Instead, the social phenomenon under examination is the primary interest and narratives are a means of insights into that situation (Suddaby, 2006; Cassell et al., 2006). Recently, the interpretive approaches have gained popularity within management research due to their attention to how social actors interpret reality (Sandberg, 2005). Schutz (1962: 5) stated that "Strictly speaking there are no such things as facts pure and simple. All facts are from the outset selected from a universal context by the activities of our mind. There are, therefore, always interpreted facts, either facts looked at as detached from their context by an artificial abstraction or facts considered in their particular setting."

The philosophical stance of this research, in line with Suddaby (2006), is that the reality is subjective and socially constructed and it was important understand subjective interpretations of reality. This research appreciated that strategic actors and their actions are driven by how they interpret situations and take actions. It was important for the research to understand the perspectives of the strategic actors relating to the implementation strategies employed in their firms and how such implementation process issues affect the management of resources in indigenous and foreign multinational firms.

The Interpretive epistemology argues that the knowledge of reality does not exist as objective, law-like generalizations. Instead, reality depends on the beliefs and interpretations of respondents and researchers during the research process (Gummesson, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Accordingly, the interpretive epistemology of this research supported the assertion that "our theoretical analyses

are interpretive renderings of a reality, not objective reportings of it" (Charmaz, 2008: 206). This contrasted with Positivism and the objective distance between respondents and researchers was considered as counter-productive for exploration of complexities in the SIMP process (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

This research adopted Constructionism as the ontological position due to its recognition of the subjective reality due to the involvement of social actors in - research process and meaning-making (Saunders et al., 2003). Constructionism holds great potential to inform the research on strategy processes and make sense of strategic issues (Mir and Watson, 2001). Constructionism promotes the development of context-specific theory that appreciates and utilizes contextual knowledge and models to further empirical research (Von Glaserfield, 1995; Gummesson, 2006). This research considered it important to interact with strategic actors to understand their interpretations of the strategy implementation process. Constructionism allowed this interaction and the exploration of relevant contextual details embedded in the indigenous and foreign multinational firms. This constructionist position was also congruent with the Grounded Theory nature and the derived research questions to understand details of the strategy implementation process (Suddaby, 2006). Strategy processes are complex and fluid with a spread over time and space thus further supporting qualitative exploration of socially constructed reality pertaining to strategy implementation (Langley, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2008).

Conventionally, the research approaches are characterised as either deductive or inductive (Cepeda and Martin, 2005). The deductive approach uses existing knowledge to develop hypothesis about different concepts and variables for confirmation or rejection via data collection (Ali and Birley, 1999). The induction approach, on the other hand, seeks to explore and explain issues based on fieldwork data without much reference to existing knowledge (Glaser, 1992). Patton (1988) mentioned that researchers should not be expected to demonstrate the ideal characteristics of paradigms or approaches.

Suddaby (2006) recognised that grounded theory research does not follow pure induction. Instead, analytic induction suitably covers the nature of theory development from data as it represents constant comparison of induction from data

and deduction of emerging concepts via further data collection. This research followed used this analytic induction to explore the SIMP issues holistically among local and foreign firms in Pakistan. It was considered more useful to inductively explore SIMP in practice and compare them in different firm types, instead of data collection with pre-conceived assumptions. For example, the role and involvement of top management in strategy implementation at indigenous firms emerged as different from that in foreign firms and far exceeded what is usually expected from the strategy literature (Woolridge et al., 2008; Jarzabkowski, 2008). It emerged as an interesting theme, later discussed in empirical chapters 5 and 6, from the initial data collection and was later probed further in data collection at indigenous firms.

This analytic induction helped in category saturation via constant comparison of data from the indigenous and foreign firms and the emerging similarities and differences. This also helped keep the congruence between the iterative data collection and analysis with the philosophical underpinnings of this research thesis. It is also recognized here that this research thesis is written according to the conventional style of literature review first and findings later. However, the actual research process involved recursive iterations between data, emerging theoretical concepts and the relevant literature (Suddaby, 2006).

4.3.4. Comparative research with analytical generalization

There are different research designs used in strategy and management research. Particular designs strongly represent their philosophical positions and research aims (Bryman, 2008). The strategy implementation literature provides limited insights into the comparison of how strategies are implemented in different firm types (Li et al., 2010). Most of the SIMP literature presents generic approaches that focus on the execution of strategies, irrespective of firm types (Noble, 1999; Bossidy and Charan, 2002). However, this research believed that the research design should allow a comparison between SIMP at different firm types – indigenous and foreign multinational. The findings are essentially based on the interpretations of real practices by strategic actors and not on abstract reasoning or axiomatic truths, in line with Grounded Theory approach.

It was considered that adopting a generic view representative of both firm types would be clearly mistaken. This is in line with the existing literature that compares other management issues at local versus foreign firms (Bellak, 2004; Rasiah and Gachino, 2005), and the global strategy implementation for multinational firms (Roth et al., 1991; Dederichs, 2010). The absence of comparative research for indigenous and foreign firms in the extant SIMP literature further supported a comparative research design for a critical investigation of the similarities and differences in SIMP among those firm types. The design used for this research was cross-sectional comparative fieldwork (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). It was difficult to conduct a longitudinal or experimental study due to the lack of sufficient research funds and access difficulties for such research and thus cross-sectional design was used.

As discussed later in the chapters 5 and 6, this comparative design enabled this researcher to describe, explore and explain the how and why issues pertaining to the variety in strategy implementation evident from firm practices. Similarly, this comparison allowed exploration of how strategy implementation activities and process patterns affect competitive gains for indigenous and foreign firms. This comparison suitably provided the answers for the derived research questions and allowed for much stronger conclusions that provided a strong foundation for moving towards competitive theorising of strategy implementation.

The exploratory, qualitative and comparative nature of this research is not suitable for statistical generalizations to broader population of all firms types (Easterby-Smith et al. 2008). This research was designed to construct a middle range, data-grounded theory to understand the role of strategy implementation in the competitiveness of indigenous and foreign firms. It was appreciated that this research generated deeper insights into implementation heterogeneity that exist in those specific firm types. Those insights and the resultant theoretical interpretations for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation are analytically generalizable (Patton, 2002). It was appreciated that qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalizations as the frequency of an event was not considered as a criteria for data collection or analysis. Instead, the contextual importance of issues was considered for interpretation and identification of the similarities and differences in successful SIMP at indigenous and foreign firms in Pakistan. This research agreed with Levitas and

Chi (2002), as against that of Gibbert (2006), that generalization is a worthwhile objective for the RBV studies so long as both - resource heterogeneity and resource configurations are explored.

The analytical generalizations are based on the research findings (chapters 5 and 6) and used to address the identified research gaps as mentioned in chapter 3 (section 3.4). These analytical generalizations are grounded in the data and theoretically sensitive interpretations were developed via iterations between data, analysis and comparisons with the relevant SIMP, the processual strategy approaches and the RBV literatures. It is argued here that the identification of implementation heterogeneity as practised at different firm types and associated competitive implications should be considered as an important step towards substantive competitive theorizing of SIMP. This reflects that more future research will need to provide empirical evidence for statistical generalizability and more formal theory (Bryman, 2008; Suddaby, 2006).

4.4. Research Settings

The research settings yield significant value in generating insights into complex social phenomenon such as strategy implementation (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The research settings were selected to maximize the potential for access to strategic actors and their interpretations of issues surrounding the derived research questions. The issues of research location, sampling, respondent access and key informants are discussed henceforth.

4.4.1. Research location

Researchers should state their rationale for selection and appropriateness of their research locations in meeting the research aim (Berg, 2007). Pakistan was selected as the research location due to a lack of SIMP research in Pakistan. There has been inadequate research attention to strategic management issues (Malik and Kotabe, 2009). Pakistan integrated with the world economy in 1980s as a large developing country along with India, China and Bangladesh though foreign firms have been functioning there since the 1960s (Meyer, 2003). This researcher has previously worked in the food products industry in Pakistan making it possible to get access to relevant strategic actors. The possibility of comparing SIMP issues at foreign

multinational and local firms also influenced this decision. The timing was also ideal as 2006-2007 saw a major boost in the economic activity in Pakistan (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2009).

4.4.2. Sampling

Qualitative research does not share the objective stance of positivistic traditions and random sampling is not always desired (Bryman, 2008). Agriculture, Manufacturing and Services sectors are the most important contributors to GDP within the Pakistani economy, though the agricultural sector remains unorganised and without much regulatory control (Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2009). The qualitative nature of this research necessitated the adoption of a non-random sampling approach (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). Purposeful sampling was used to research a diverse mix of local and foreign firms operating in the major industries of Pakistan's manufacturing and services sectors (Ritchie et al., 2003). Medium or large manufacturing and service firms were preferred as they are known to have higher complexity and organizational development levels than smaller firms.

Malik and Kotabe (2009) recognized that many firms in India and Pakistan are hesitant to share any data and mail surveys face a much lower response rate. In this context, eighteen firms with good market reputations were contacted by the researcher for respondent access through personal referencing and snowball techniques (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Overall, ten firms agreed to provide access, whereas others declined the invitation; six of these were indigenous domestic firms and the rest were foreign multinationals operating in Pakistan. These firms represented a broad cross-section of manufacturing and services sectors in Pakistan - Pharmaceutical, Commercial Banking, Stationery, Textile, Retail Distribution, Baby Care and Food Products.

The interest of this research was the strategy implementation process which required an understanding of events unfolding over time (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005). The firms contacted have been operating in Pakistan for at least 15 years - a reasonable timeframe to understand the implementation of strategic directions. This also ensured that those foreign firms were selected that were actively competing in the Pakistani market and not just making market entries. Table 4.2 provides an overview

of the firms researched, their industries, duration of their operations in Pakistan and respondents therein:

S. no.	Firm type	Industry	Firm's size	Duration of operations	Respondents
Table 4.2: Overview of the researched firms					
1	Indigenous	Textile Yarn	Large	30 years	2 – senior managers (1 top and 1 middle management)
2	Indigenous	Food Products	Large	25 years	1 – top management
3	Indigenous	Stationery	Large	40 years	3 – (1 top and 2 middle management)
4	Indigenous	Baby Products	Medium	20 years	1 – middle management
5	Indigenous	Pharmaceuticals	Medium	17 years	1 – middle management
6	Indigenous	Terry products - Textiles	Large	35 years	1 – top management
7	Foreign	Commercial banking	Large	22 years	3– (2 top and 1 middle management)
8	Foreign	Distribution	Large	21 years	3 – (middle management)
9	Foreign	Islamic Banking	Medium	20 years	3 – (1 top and 2 middle management)
10	Foreign	Pharmaceuticals	Large	40 years	2– (1 top and 1 middle management)

4.4.3. Key Informants and respondent access

Key informants are very important in qualitative research due to their well-informed opinions and interpretations regarding the research questions (Marschan-Piekkari and Welch, 2004). The views of key informants are considered as realistic representations of a firm's situation and strategic performance (Olson et al., 2005).

Key informants do provide the interpretations of dominant reality that exist in firms (Isabella, 1990). Senior executives from top and middle management levels were considered as the key informants for a detailed analysis of SIMP issues. They were used as a result of their previously recognized roles in SIMP (Noble, 1999b; Kazmi, 2008), their understanding of firm's strategy, history, processes, culture, performance and their professional knowledge. The respondents were employed for at least three years in their respective firms and their individual professional experiences spanned between eight (minimum) to thirty years (maximum).

The snowballing technique allows the researchers to initiate the research with limited access and then snowball to other respondents using contacts and references by existing respondents (Bryman, 2008). The snowballing technique is recommended for exploration of sensitive issues or hard-to-reach respondents (Berg, 2007; Lee, 1993). Snowballing was used in this research to gain access to the key informants in the researched indigenous and foreign firms in Pakistan. It is noted here that getting access was very difficult at local firms in comparison to foreign firms, though foreign firms were not very cooperative either. Generally, firms were reluctant to identify names of any of their managerial staff or even provide access when contacted directly.

Initially, six firms – three each of local and foreign firms - were approached via personal contacts of this researcher within the Pakistani industries. Further contacts were explored with respondents once they became confident and at ease with the nature of research. This allowed the involvement to snowball from the contacts in one firm to the contacts in other firms and greatly helped in gaining access. The focus on similar contexts and limited reach are some limitations of this snowball sampling (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). However, this research overcame these limitations by including firms from different industries that allowed access to a variety of firm contexts. The firm types being local and foreign also helped achieve wider coverage and diversity in the research sample. The maximum number of firms in any industry was kept to two firms, to achieve a higher level of firm diversity and moderating analytical generalization (Payne and Williams, 2005; Rowley, 2002).

Every possible attempt was made to get access to multiple respondents in each firm. However, all foreign multinationals gave access to multiple respondents but only two indigenous firms gave access to multiple respondents. Two of the indigenous firms only gave access to their respective managing directors and the remaining two indigenous firms gave access to only one senior manager each. It was considered acceptable to collect the interpretations of those single respondents due to their in-depth knowledge of the firm's strategic history and implementation issues over time. This is in line with other processual studies in strategic management like Sutton (1987).

Each indigenous and foreign firm was used as the unit of analysis (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). The interpretations of senior executives were used to develop inferences regarding how strategy implementation was practised and how it linked with resources management and related competitive implications in those firms. Multiple SIMP process issues were investigated to develop a rather holistic picture of what went on in the researched firms and not just a few departments. This was also important in the RBV context because the RBV recognizes differences among firms due to path dependence and resources heterogeneity (Winter, 2003). This was also relevant as the implementation of strategic directions was considered a Meso level phenomenon involving multiple levels in firms (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009).

4.5. The Data collection

Qualitative techniques are defined as 'an array of interpretative techniques, which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meanings, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world' (Van Maanen, 1983:9, cited in Easterby-Smith et al., 2002). Patton (2002) recognized that the qualitative data collection is a rigorous and time consuming effort for both, respondents as well as researchers. Qualitative researchers collect data with some familiarization of the existing literature in their fields of study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The philosophical stance of the qualitative researcher also affects the level of interaction, flexibility and reflexivity during the data collection (Silverman, 2000). The interpretive and social constructionist position demanded that the present research necessitated more interaction with the informants. This helped in understanding their interpretations of the reality of strategy

implementation and the creation of socially constructed knowledge through data-driven interpretations (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005; Flick, 2009).

It is recognised here that although the details of data collection method precedes the data analysis method and empirical findings, the data collection was indeed part of an iterative process (Suddaby, 2006; Isabella, 1990). This iterative process involved constant comparison of data, emerging concepts and further data collection regarding implementation heterogeneity in the researched firms. It is also recognised that the data analysis went on for much longer in the research process than data collection as inferences were drawn in relation to the derived research questions, while remaining grounded in the data.

4.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing with key informants is popular within qualitative research and facilitates detailed explorations (Suddaby, 2006; Denscombe, 2003). Different interview types are used in qualitative research, namely structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Bryman, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection for this research and preferred over structured or un-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were preferred due to a) flexibility in the interview process; b) ability to allow the emergence of contextual issues without imposition of many pre-conceived ideas on respondents; and c) recognition that respondents may perceive realities differently and will have reasons to justify why they think that way (Bryman and Teevan, 2005; Berg, 2007).

In total, fifty in-depth interviews were conducted with twenty respondents. Multiple interviews were conducted with all respondents, except for three respondents who preferred one long interview with brief time breaks. Multiple interviews were needed for an in-depth exploration of complex and interconnected SIMP issues that required lengthy discussions. The details were overwhelming to cover in one meeting of an hour and a half. Additionally, the issue of respondent burnout was considered and thus multiple interviews were agreed in advance with the respondents.

4.5.2. Pilot interview and key lessons learned

It was considered important to pilot the interview questions before full-scale research and to understand how much time may be needed for in-depth interviewing. A pilot interview was conducted with a Senior General Manager at the local textile yarn firm. The pilot interview gave confidence for appropriateness of the research approach and data collection method (Baker, 1994; De Vaus, 1993). The respondent knew the researcher from previous professional contacts and thus the trust level was high and permitted a more candid and thorough discussion. The pilot interview lasted for three hours.

The pilot interviewing led to finer modifications in the interview guide and interview arrangements. Several refinements in the interview guide included: a) rephrasing of the questions to make them non-prescriptive and free of management jargon as respondents kept asking for clarification of terms such as resources or impediments in implementation; b) inclusion of separate questions for both implementation success and failures; c) an additional question to ask how firms implement strategy. It emerged that the respondent did not want to exclude any issues related to implementation success as marginally important. The researcher noted this to motivate other respondents and ask them to express their arguments for inclusion of different factors as important or relevant.

It also emerged that in-depth discussions of SIMP will need plenty of time for each respondent - at least two and a half hours, to understand the details and complexity in the implementation processes and develop thick descriptions (Holliday, 2007). This meant that interviews may be conducted in more than one meeting. Implementation failures were not easy to discuss; implementation success was relatively easy to discuss pleasantly thus probing was considered important to understand the role of both resource strengths and weaknesses in relation to SIMP success (West III and DeCastro, 2001). The pilot interview respondent was not comfortable talking openly within the firm's premises and thus arrangements were made to invite him into a cosy restaurant for the interview. The same practice was later adopted for any respondent who showed discomfort in talking within his/her firm's premises. The expenses for such arrangements were paid from the research fieldwork budget provided by UCLan.

4.5.3. Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide with open-ended questions to establish details of implementation process and firm's context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The questions attempted to explore strategy implementation activities in the context of firms being indigenous or foreign. The interviews aimed to explore the examples and the reasons for implementation success or otherwise among researched firms. The respondents were given a choice to talk either in English or Urdu (Pakistan's national language) based on their own comfort level. Most respondents preferred to talk in Urdu as well as English at different times during interviews; three respondents from the local firms preferred to talk in Urdu only.

The questions allowed probing of the implementation process using retrospective information as the respondents talked about how their firms implemented their strategies. Those retrospective accounts helped in finding details of implementation process and process data that has good potential for grounded theorizing (Langley, 1999). However, the interviews were aimed at how the strategy implementation process existed in the researched firms and what respondents argued about them; however, stories in themselves were not the key interest in data collection, in line with Suddaby (2006). Table 4.3 presents the interview guide used for the research:

Table 4.3: Semi-structured Interview guide used for this research
✓ **Introduction** – respondent and interviewer ✓ Research purpose and focus on SIMP ✓ Rapport building – informal chatting about respondent - own background, professional experiences in general and at the current firm
Interview Questions • Please tell me about your firm and its development over the years? • What is your firm's strategy? How successful is your strategy? Any reasons? • How strategy is implemented at your firm? Why this way – any reasons? • Please talk about one (ideally two) strategic initiatives that was/ were successfully implemented and involved whole firm (meaning more than three departments/ functions) • Please explain the reasons for successful implementation of this/ those initiatives. (Why and how?) • Please talk about one (ideally two) strategic initiatives that was/ were not implemented successfully and involved whole firm (meaning more than three departments/ functions) • Please explain the reasons for unsuccessful implementation of this/ those initiatives (Why and how?) **Interviewer note:** Use of why and how b/w questions 2 & 3 and 4 & 5 to develop detail understanding of different issues. Attention to respondent's opinions and interpretations of SIMP activities and process patterns, their role in resources management and any competitive implications. Probe respondent's interpretations for why and how. End interview with assurance of anonymity for the respondent and the firm. Also, where applicable, ask for future meetings for further clarification of emerging concepts.

Rapport building efforts were done at the beginning of the interviews to ensure that the respondents were at ease with interview settings and interview focus (Patton, 2002). Brief introductions were officially exchanged and the purpose of research was explained. The respondents were told that the interviews are for candid and open discussions of 'as is' situation and therefore no covering up or polishing was needed.

The respondents were told by the researcher that this is essentially an academic research, though it wants to capture the reality of SIMP; this helped establish openness in discussions. The use of the snowballing technique to gain access also helped in establishing personal trust and open dialogue during the data collection. It was useful for in-depth investigation of sensitive issues like implementation failures, owners' influence at local firms and organizational politics at foreign firms in Pakistan. Digital audio recording of interviews was done with explicit respondent consent at the beginning of interviews (Silverman, 1998). The respondents were assured of data confidentiality and anonymity of respondents and their firms to ensure valid responses (Patton, 1990).

The interviews were 'active' interviews as the 'meaning-making' exercise that involved both the respondents and the researcher for clearer understanding and explanations (Holstein and Gubrium, in Silverman, 2004). This approach rejected the positivist stance of pure, fly-on-the-wall type interviews. Instead, the respondents were encouraged by the researcher to explain in detail their understandings, opinions and accounts of events. The researcher probed and queried on emergent issues to understand the respondent interpretations, while retaining the focus on implementation issues. In order to minimize the researcher and the respondents' bias, the respondents were encouraged to discuss their opinions and were allowed to elaborate in detail on issues related to strategy implementation before making any probes (Silverman, 1998). Once the respondents opened up and got into-the-flow of discussion, it was an exhilarating, emotional and at times learning experience even for respondents themselves.

On a few occasions, the respondents told this researcher that they do this or do that but somehow do not talk much about this or that during strategy implementation. The probe types used by the researcher were 'uneasy silence', 'explanatory open-ended probes', and 'mirroring' and 'sounding back' the researcher's understanding of respondents' interpretations. However, it was consciously attempted at all stages to avoid leading the respondents and thus 'giving idea or suggestion' as a probe was avoided to ensure that reality of SIMP could be captured as seen by the respondents (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). 'How' and 'why' questions were used to achieve the

laddering to higher levels of understanding and explanations of complex SIMP process issues at local and foreign firms.

The researcher's tone of voice was kept neutral and the respondents were encouraged to be candid in their discussions and the interview questions were kept open-ended. However, it is unrealistic to expect complete removal of bias despite these attempts during the data collection because of the involvement of respondents and researcher (Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This research acknowledged that subjectivity in research process is not a curse; instead, it was a source of capturing reality that was socially constructed. This allowed the respondents to openly talk about sensitive issues and give their own opinions. It is argued here that such active interaction between the respondents and the researcher was a major strength of the research design enabling the achievement of verstehen (Weber, 1968).

Simultaneous, on-going analysis of the collected data revealed different emerging issues for example, the framing of strategy implementation in the SIMP process. This led to further data collection in different indigenous and foreign firms. The respondents were requested to talk about those emerging issues and this ensured that details were developed for category saturation in data analysis (Suddaby, 2006). Similarly, patterns emerged for how domestic and foreign firms implemented their strategies and this was an important recognition for further data collection. This resulted in better understanding of implementation activities around different time points of the SIMP process and was used to find their performance implications, similar to Ambrosini et al. (2007).

4.6. The Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative data analysis is time consuming, iterative and deals with large volumes of data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The grounded theory researchers simultaneously engage in data collection and data analysis for emerging theoretical concepts that lead to further data collection (Suddaby, 2006). This iterative cycling of data and emerging theory is important in achieving constant comparison, theoretical sampling and category saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The qualitative data is often textual in nature and this data can be interpreted during analysis in two ways: a) as a

proxy for experience; or b) as an object of analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, p. 771).

In line with Suddaby (2006), this research considered interview data as the proxy for strategy implementation experiences in indigenous and foreign firms. Conversation analysis, hermeneutics, or semiotics, were considered irrelevant for this research (Ryan and Bernard, 2000; Flick, 2009). It is important for the interpretive data analysis approaches to be rigorous and detailed to make the research transparent and trustworthy (Mir and Watson, 2001). The data analysis during the pilot study and the full-scale data collection led to refinements in data collection and thus both processes of collection and analysis took place iteratively. However, as per common practice and due to the fact that data analysis continued for much longer than data collection, its discussion follows data collection (Suddaby, 2006; Myers, 2009). "Evolving theory directs attention to previously established important dimensions while the actual data simultaneously focus attention on the theory's suitability as a frame for the most recent data being collected." (Isabella, 1990: 12)

4.6.1. Qualitative Content Analysis

Suddaby (2006: 638) highlighted that "Grounded theory is an interpretive process, not a logico-deductive one." It is important for the researcher to be actively engaged in the grounded theory research and provide interpretations of the data. Suddaby also emphasized that the researcher needs to have theoretical sensitivity towards emerging concepts and to draw higher level inference from the respondent interpretations. He also argued that content analysis can be used to infer meaning from data; however, word counting is not desired due to grounded theory's interpretivist assumptions.

Krippendorff (2004: xvii) pointed that "content analysis is an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent." This exploratory and empirical grounded nature of content analysis made it suitable to use for grounded theory construction in this research thesis. Word counting for frequency checking of different concepts is positivistic and quantitative thus less suited to the more exploratory and qualitative research designs (Bryman, 2008). Krippendorff (2004) argued that qualitative content analysis requires a somewhat

different approach from the researchers. He identified how qualitative researchers can use the major steps of unitizing and recording/coding in their content analysis.

George (in Krippendorff and Bock, 2009) highlighted that qualitative research uses non-frequency indicators for content analysis, unlike quantitative approaches. Krippendorff (2004: 87) emphasized that quantification of data is not an essential criterion for qualitative content analysis. Krippendorff also argued that qualitative researchers also sample the relevant data for analysis, use coding to unearth important concepts, and contextualise using relevant quotes and information to find answers for specific research questions. The concepts of unitizing and recording/coding were particularly relevant to the qualitative content analysis for this research thesis. Table 4.4 provides an overview of unitizing and recording/ coding as drawn from Krippendorff (2004) and how they were used in this research:

Table 4.4: An overview of important content analysis concepts drawn from Krippendorff (2004) as used in this research:		
S.no	Content analysis concept	As used in this research
1.	**Unitizing** • Sampling units • Contextual units • Defining of units	• Indigenous and Foreign firms as sampling units o Focusing on strategy implementation activities, process issues, resources management related to SIMP, competitive implications • Sentences to reflect the context of interviewee discussion. • Propositional and Thematic Distinctions for unitizing in line with the RQs
2.	**Recording/ Coding** • Recording • Coding • Inter-coder reliability	• Arrangements for audio recording • Verbatim transcription • Storage and deletion of audios • Creation of database • Administrative information • Following Isabella (1990) and Suddaby (2006), coded systematically, while retaining data immersion. • Coding instructions • Cognition in coding; verbal designations for codes • Open and theoretical • Attention to manifest and implied meanings in data • Non-frequency; concepts and their arguments more important; frequency in data irrelevant • Relevance of codes to research questions; subsequent categorisation • Following Krippendorff (2004) and Isabella (1990), an independent coder used

4.6.2. Unitizing

Krippendorff (2004: 83) defined unitizing as "the systematic distinguishing of segments of text-images, voices, and other observables-that are of interest to an analysis." The units for analysis are analysable wholes that are distinguishable as 'independent elements' (p. 97). There are different units of analysis that can be used

in content analysis: sampling units, recording/ coding units, and context units. Sampling units are defined as the "units that are distinguished for selective inclusion in an analysis" (p. 98). Sampling Units should be independent of each other to provide thorough in-depth analysis of social situations (Duriau et al., 2007).

This research considered indigenous and foreign firms as sampling units for content analysis. It ensured that the issues of strategy implementation process and related competitive implications were analysed for each firm separately. The use of firms as sampling units allowed organizing the data for each indigenous and foreign firm separately and independently. The comparative design to explore strategy implementation within the indigenous and foreign firms required that data units were not connected, avoiding bias In the researcher's interpretations. It also helped in organizing all relevant data for the analysis and ensuring that all relevant data was usable without any omissions.

Context units are "units of textual matter that set the limits on the information to be considered in the description of recording units" (Krippendorff, 2004: 101). These units do not need to be independent as they provide the context of different issues and thus they may overlap at times. Krippendorff recognised that the minimum contextual boundary is the sentence for recording of codes and sometimes a collection of sentences or paragraphs may be needed to clearly understand the context of those codes. This research used a collection of sentences as the contextual units in the data analysis. This was important in understanding the key issues that were discussed by senior managers and the complexity as different issues were interlinked.

It was recognised during data collection that the respondents discussed the issues related to strategy implementation success in detail. This resulted in them contextualising their interpretations of SIMP activities and their competitive implications in view of how implementation was done in their respective firms. Thus using words or even a single sentence was difficult to provide the necessary contextual details. Accordingly, a collection of sentences was deemed as the appropriate contextual scope for the on-going coding and categorization. The respondents freely used Urdu and English and thus it was important to clearly understand the context of key issues using a collection of sentences. It also allowed

setting the contextual unit large enough to be meaningful thus added validity, yet feasible enough and added to the reliability (Krippendorff, 2004: 102).

Krippendorff recognised that units of analysis are always dependent on the research objectives. Propositional and Thematic distinctions were used for unitizing of recording units in line with the research questions identified in chapter 3. No pre-conceived distinctions were imposed or expected; instead, the distinctions emerged from the data. Each of the research questions presented the broader frames for the analysis of strategy implementation activities and processes and their links to resources management and competitive implications at indigenous and foreign firms. This research recognised that different issues were distributed within the data. The search for their inter-linkages was important for enhancing the analytical value in this grounded analysis of strategy implementation.

The contextual units contained information about respondent interpretations regarding how SIMP activities interlink and how they influence competitiveness in the firms. The researcher's familiarity with the language and understanding of the respondents' contexts helped in subsequent coding and finding categories. The use of respondent's quotes for coding was in line with Krippendorff's suggestions for qualitative content analysis. The issues related to recording/ coding are discussed in the following sections.

4.6.3. Recording

Krippendorff (2004: 41) stated that "For efficiency's sake, researchers gain a considerable advantage if they can impose a structure on the data-making process so that the results are readily analyzable." Recording/ coding is an important methodological component of content analysis and arranges the data into an analysable format. It can be daunting to deal with large volumes of qualitative data and thus it is important to organize raw data into manageable work for data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ritchie et al., 2003). "Recording takes place when observers, readers, or analysts interpret what they see, read, or find and then state their experiences in the formal terms of an analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004: 126).

Clear recording instructions were developed for this research in conjunction with the PhD supervisors to ensure that data was recorded in full and subsequently used for

detailed coding. Those instructions included: a) complete transcription of interview audios will be done in English, translating data pieces from Urdu (if any); b) pre-conceived ideas will not be imposed upon the recorded data; c) the data will be recorded in a manner to facilitate qualitative, analysis grounded in empirical data; d) the researcher will do the recording, transcription and analysis; e) a PhD supervisor experienced in qualitative data analysis will act as an additional coder for interrater reliability; f) a computer database will be maintained containing interview transcripts, subsequent coding related documents and any reflexive researcher notes; g) the audio files will be deleted after verbatim transcription to ensure respondent anonymity.

The data was in the form of audio recordings of the interviews - approximately one hundred and twenty hours in total. This researcher developed verbatim transcriptions of the audio recordings and this improved rigour of the data analysis (Seale and Silverman, 1997). The interview transcripts facilitated the search and retrieval of important issues within the interview data. The digital audio and transcribed text files were kept under passwords for respondent anonymity and data confidentiality; the audio files were later deleted. Those parts of the interviews that were conducted in Urdu language were translated to English for transcription. Translation did not pose many problems due to the researcher's awareness of both Urdu and English languages and thus no meanings were lost during transcription (Larkin et al., 2007).

The interview transcription was a long and tedious yet crucial process as verbatim transcriptions provide validity to qualitative research (Morrison-Beedy et al., 2001; Whittemore et al., 2001). The transcripts helped in deeper familiarization with the data and later in coding and categorization enabling constant comparison and theoretical sampling based on emerging SIMP issues in different firm contexts. These transcripts were placed in a database for easy access under the pseudonyms for each firm and each respondent. The database was continuously updated with additional files as the coding and categorisation proceeded. Separate folders were maintained for indigenous and foreign firms to ensure that all data records were easily searchable and analysable for different firm types.

The researcher shared similar social sensitivity with respondents in Pakistan and had cognitive familiarity that facilitated the coding of SIMP issues in the researched

indigenous and foreign firms. The recording instructions diligently followed by the researcher as it was necessary to record information correctly given the constant comparison mandated recursive cycles of data collection and analysis. Administrative records were maintained containing the details of project name – SIMP among indigenous and foreign firms. The finalized version of the recording instructions was clearly marked and guided the interview recording and subsequent transcriptions. Each individual interview transcript was given a pseudonym for the respondent's anonymity and was saved with identifications for the firm it referred to. Serial numbers were given to the interviews where multiple respondents were interviewed in a firm. Serial numbers were also given to different codes and the related quotes from respondent interpretations. For example, the interviews were numbered from 1.1 to 10.3 reflecting the respondent being interviewed and the firm being researched. This made it easier to work within the large volume of data and keep references of interesting issues.

Master files were kept separately for each research question and the relevant recording units and respondent quotes; separate master files were maintained for indigenous and foreign firms. For example, how indigenous firms address resources management during strategy implementation was found to be very different from foreign firms. Those separate records enabled reliable and data-grounded comparisons with clear identifications of how respondents interpreted different SIMP issues. It also allowed the researcher to use different sections within the data and develop a grounded theory of strategy implementation process and related competitiveness implications. Records were kept throughout coding as constant comparisons were done with emerging theoretical concepts compared with further data collected.

4.7. The Coding and Categorization

Krippendorff (2004: 99) defined "Recording/coding units are units that are distinguished for separate description, transcription, recording, or coding." Codes are usually labels assigned to passages within the qualitative data to denote important concepts, phenomenon and themes of interest (Bryman, 2008). Coding is an important activity in qualitative data analysis and helps conceptualizing the data into meaningful themes and sub themes (Bowling, 1997). Different coding schemes have

been used by qualitative researchers (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Kibel, 1999). Suddaby (2006: 638) recognized that "a neurotic overemphasis on coding" should not drive grounded theory; instead, constant comparison and researcher's theoretical sensitivity should lead to grounded development of theoretical interpretations.

This researcher followed the guidance of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) and used the analytical steps of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The researcher recognised that this data-grounded coding was a fluid, somewhat tedious and long process that allowed in identifying important strategy implementation issues that differ in indigenous and foreign firm contexts. The coding process allowed the researcher to move from the issues of strategy implementation activities to the issues of SIMP process patterns and their linkages to resources management and competitiveness. The coding process involved constant comparison and theoretical sampling to analyse the relevant data, emerging theoretical constructs and achieve saturation in coding and categorization. The research questions were used as guides to record the codes as they emerged from several analytical iterations within the data (MacQueen et al. in Krippendorff and Bock, 2008: 214). This structuring of the coding using the research questions also helped maintaining research focus and organizing the codes for easy access.

The following sections provide details of the open, axial and selective coding as done in this research with illustrative examples of each and how the emerging theory was interpreted from the research data.

4.7.1. The Open Coding

The open coding started with reading the interview transcripts. Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasized the need for immersion in data for a rigorous grounded theory research. The researcher did the sentence-by-sentence reading repeatedly and identified the key concepts related to strategy implementation activities in the indigenous and foreign multinational firms. The open coding helped identify and saturate the properties and dimensions of SIMP activities in the data for the RQ-1, the resources management and linked SIMP process issues for the RQ-2, and the related competitive implications for the RQ-3.

Those codes emerged from the sentence-by-sentence reading of each interview and allowed to search for both similarities and heterogeneity in SIMP and its role in competitiveness at the researched indigenous and foreign firms. The description of concepts was used as the coding unit for analysis and generally comprised few words (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher recognized from the repeated readings that single words would provide an incomplete description and thus multiple words were used as the coding descriptors. Following Strauss and Corbin (1998), this research attempted to use as much as possible the in-vivo codes - the descriptors that the respondents used to explain the relevant SIMP concepts, their properties and dimensions. If no such descriptors were offered by the respondent's sentences, simple descriptive phrases were used by the researcher as the open codes.

The open coding progressed with the researcher's continuous attention to the similarities and differences within the open codes. The open codes that were very similar were coded with a single, identical code. For example, 'the involvement of top management', 'top management's involvement' and 'top management was involved' were all similar codes and thus they were identically coded as the 'top management's involvement'. In addition to the codes, this researcher also noted the interview's serial number and the page number for each code. This recording of relevant information with the open codes did help in easy retrieval and tracing back of codes to their specific firm contexts during the data analysis. It was recognised that all coding is interpretive and the researcher was actively engaged in interpretations of the respondents' interpretations (Bryman, 2008). The Table 4.5 provides the illustrative examples of the open coding:

Table 4.5: Illustrative examples of open codes regarding SIMP activities and process issues (RQ 1)

S. no. (firm type)	Respondent's quote	Open codes (concepts, dimensions, properties)
Example-1 (An indigenous firm)	"It was <mark>very important for us to have</mark> our director's confidence and also the CEO's confidence. <mark>Our (employee) job safety</mark> is <mark>tied to how both of them perceive our performance and communicate to us about it</mark>."	Employee's job safety (1.03-pg. 18) linked to top management's confidence in employee performance (1.03-pg. 18)
Example-2 (A foreign firm)	"Obviously, it <mark>motivated us</mark> as more revenues target was linked to our <mark>pay increments</mark>. <mark>Everyone</mark> here is interested to know if he does what he does then what is his benefit?"	Personal rewards motivate (6.02-pg. 33) Financial rewards for everyone (6.02-pg. 33)
Example-3 (A foreign firm)	"<mark>Clarity of roles and responsibilities</mark> is <mark>very, very important</mark>, when you are talking about hundreds of people working in the organization then it has to be very clearly defined … the roles, otherwise there may be breakdowns. <mark>And once</mark> there is clear identification of roles and responsibilities <mark>then it becomes easier for people to follow and implement their roles and their actions</mark>".	Clarity of roles and responsibilities (3.02-pg. 44) then it is easier for people to follow and implement (3.02-pg. 44) Clarity precedes implementation success (3.02-pg. 44) clarity reduces complexity in large firms (3.02-pg. 44)

The table 4.6 provides illustrative examples of the open coding for how SIMP and resources management interlink in the researched indigenous and foreign firms:

Table 4.6: Illustrative examples of open codes for SIMP and resources Management, competitive gains (RQ2 and RQ 3)

S. no. (firm type)	Respondent's quote	Open codes (concepts, dimensions, properties)
Example-1 (An indigenous firm)	"We developed an energy generation plant in our manufacturing unit and despite severe electricity breakdowns in the city we were able to meet our mark and volume targets; our competitors have been badly affected though."	Development of the required resource (5.01, pg. 25) Enabled to meet business performance objectives (5.01, pg. 25); implementation driven by competitive objectives (5.01, pg. 25); Competitive advantage via sales volumes and improved reputation (5.01, pg. 25)
Example-2 (An indigenous firm)	"We have a very good credit line established with some local banks and we are usually offered much better terms for short and long term loans; much better than our competitors due to our reputation of being good paymasters."	Access to local financial institutions (9.01, pg. 18) Helps in pursing short and longer term plans (9.01, pg. 18) reputation of being good paymasters helps in beneficial loan terms (9.01, pg. 18)
Example-3 (A foreign firm)	"We don't have access to knowledge systems neither to any training material for management development within the firm. This seriously affected us in the marketplace as our customers expected higher standards."	Access to resources at international head office (10.03, pg. 44) not always available at foreign firms (10.03, pg. 44) lack of internalised management development (10.03, pg. 44) affects organizational standards at foreign firms(10.03, pg. 44)
Example-4 (A foreign firm)	"Product formulations for different climatic conditions were shared by our overseas facility under the directives of international head office, thus we did not have to spend much time in development according to our local weather and climate. This allowed us to penetrate market and gain market share quickly."	Access to existing intra-firm resources at different geographic locations (3.01, pg. 22) reduced development time (3.01, pg. 22) implementation with better profitability and quality customization (3.01, pg. 22)

Example-5 (An indigenous firm)	"If, I see in our organizational structure that this person can do the tasks for our strategy, or this extra assignment could be covered by existing structure, or we could work on it while working on the existing assignments, then we do try to slot in the work."	Preference to use existing resource (9.02, pg. 19)
Example-6 (A foreign firm)	"We try to emphasize the use of our current people to get things done. It's our first priority to use them; we try to stretch current staff to be able to cover for activities as per our plans. However, this could be problematic as well when stretched too far, as it could affect our current implementation activities."	use existing resource (10.02, pg. 19) the problem of overstretching existing resources negatively affects implementation activities (10.02, pg. 19)
Example -7 (A foreign firm)	"We pursue our ideas in our quarterly meetings with our international top management team and also interact if something else comes up. Market opportunities like our generic drugs development don't last forever; therefore it was imperative to get into that market at *that* time."	Pursue ideas in Interim meetings with the international top-management team for implementation (3.02, pg. 41) getting approvals for strategic projects at the right time and pursue implementation (3.02, pg. 41) Opportunity lasting assessment (3.02, pg. 41)

4.7.2. Categorization of the open codes

Qualitative coding is about creating categories from the data interpretations (Charmaz, 1983: 111). There are differences within the grounded theory literature on the stages of coding. Strauss and Crobin (1998) argued for axial coding, while Charmaz (2000) argued for open and focussed coding. Axial coding has been criticised for closing the open coding too early (Bryman, 2008). The grounded theory in general relies on coding and categorization to develop data-grounded theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). The open codes represented initial abstractions of key concepts and were very detailed to enable capturing of strategy implementation activities and process patterns and their related resource management and competitive performance implications. It is important to identify, categorize and compare themes within the data (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

The open codes were reviewed several times along with their associated representative quotes from respondents. This led to the cataloguing of similar SIMP concepts together to form categories. This involved categorizing SIMP concepts together with their particular characteristics based on the respondents' interpretations of how strategies were implemented at their firm. The researcher searched for the significance in determining a concept for categorisation instead of counting their occurrences (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This helped in avoiding potential ignorance to some important concepts that may not appear frequently yet shed important light on the area of enquiry (Bryman and Burgess, 1994). This categorization involved constant comparison of the open codes and how they compared for the respondents within each of the research firms and also between the indigenous and foreign firms. It was a long and at times tedious process to compare the strategy implementation issues and analyse how they differ between the firm types. Those categories reflected the complexity of SIMP process and underlying activities that exist in practice.

The researcher's decision to use the research questions as frames for analysis helped in identifying heterogeneity in strategy implementation at the indigenous and foreign firms. This was important as the RQ -1 was about how those researched firms compared in terms of their SIMP activities and processes. This categorization led to the cataloguing of different SIMP concepts with their properties that reflected some important differences between different firm types for their SIMP activities. It is noted here that these categories at this stage highlighted the presence and significance of different concepts. The researcher intentionally did this to achieve depth in the data analysis at this stage and thus avoided missing out on important categories of concepts. The path dependence and timing issues were identified, though fully took shape later when categories were linked with each other in the category linking stage of the content analysis. The table 4.7 provides the illustrative examples of categories identification and the nature of the category, which is either similar or distinctive to the firm type:

Table 4.7: The illustrative examples of categories and the use of open codes to saturate those categories			
S. no	**Category**	**The open codes** (Highlights different sources)	**Nature of category** (similar or distinctive to the firm type)
1	**Policies Documentation**	Uniform policies manual (9.02, pg. 22); policies documented (3.01, pg. 17); updated the policies manual to facilitate uniformity in different departments (1.03, pg. 44)	Similar to both – indigenous and foreign firms
2	**Sufficient resources allocation**	Important to allocate enough resources (5.01, pg. 32); to act as per the plan (5.01, pg. 32); Allocation of resources required tough decisions (6.02, pg. 25)	Similar to both – indigenous and foreign firms
3	**Sufficient resources provision**	Easy to divert during implementation from resources allocations (2.01, pg. 19); Resources should be sufficient and not deficient (3.02, pg. 28)	Similar to both – indigenous and foreign firms
4	**Acquisition of organizational systems**	Acquire a system of product quality screening (5.01, pg. 29) to meet the European customers' needs (5.01, pg. 29) Acquired ERP system as per top management's directives for better process (10.1, pg. 52)	Distinct to some indigenous firms Distinct to some foreign firms *Table 4.7*

4.7.3. Linking Categories and sub-categories

It was important from the processual orientation of this research to explore the strategy implementation activities and their temporal linkages within the SIMP process in the researched firms. The attention to dynamism, multiple actors, temporal evolution, complexity and inter-connectedness is the hallmark of processual research (Langley, 2007; Shanley and Peteraf, 2006). This became evident from the interview data that SIMP activities were interlinked and spread over time to shape SIMP patterns and heterogeneity in resources management with different competitiveness implications. The categories of open codes reflected different characteristics that reflected them being clustered around some key themes in the SIMP process.

The inter-connections were identified between the different categories of strategy implementation process and coded to develop categorical codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Suddaby, 2006). The coding at this stage was done around the axis of categories and their processual interactions during the SIMP process. It emerged from the data that the heterogeneity in SIMP activities explained the SIMP patterns due to their existence and their inter-connections (Sminia, 2009). The earlier created categories of the open codes were linked to each other according to their temporal nature in the SIMP process. This linking of categories of important SIMP concepts led to the emergence of a broader structure of categories and sub-categories. In line with the research questions, those categories provided insights about the SIMP activities and process patterns, resource management heterogeneity and competitiveness.

The researcher continuously searched across the data to saturate these emerging sub-categories and their linkages. In some instances, particular respondents were again contacted to obtain further information and ensure that the emerging coding of those categories and sub-categories thoroughly covered the relevant SIMP issues. This theoretical sampling for emerging categories and their interactions was important in saturating categories (Suddaby, 2006). The differences in strategy implementation at the researched firms were of particular importance and interest for constant comparison and further data collection due to the comparative nature of this research. For example, the ad-hoc resource commitments in some indigenous firms

and knowledge transfers from the researched subsidiary to other subsidiaries in some foreign firms required further data collection to understand the related activity and causal interactions.

Similarly, the category of resources portfolio optimization emerged from different strategy implementation activities and partly explained the heterogeneity in resources management. Additionally, resource value assessment, resource acquisitions, resource development, and resources deployment emerged as important categories linked with the different SIMP patterns. The coding was done with attention to their temporal and activity dynamics for an in-depth processual analysis. Here careful consideration was needed as the limited extant literature on resources management (for example, Sirmon et al., 2007, 2011) did not conceptualize the temporal nature. It was therefore important for this researcher to recognise and record the temporal dynamics pertaining to resources management heterogeneity due to distinct SIMP patterns. Furthermore, attention was given to the involvement of different actors in the resources management. The coding at this stage also coded for the roles of different strategic actors and constantly compared the data to saturate the causal conditions and characteristics of different SIMP activities.

Interrater reliability is an important indication of the reliability of the coding process in content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Krippendorff and Bock, 2009). Suddaby (2006) identified Isabella (1990) as a good example of methodological rigour and description of research methods. Isabella used an independent coder to ensure the accuracy of coding at the categorization stage. She briefed the independent coder on the rationale for the representative examples of the data for her categories. She then asked the independent coder to code a random selection of 25 excerpts, resulting in the coder allocating 24 of these excerpts to the same categories. This was considered a strong representation of interrater reliability, both raters coding similarly for a igh proportion of the sample. Similarly, Jarzabkowski (2008) used a co-analyst to check the reliability of her coding and achieved more than 90% agreement after interrater coding checks.

This researcher followed Isabella (1990) and Jarzabkowski (2008) and worked with an interrater at the Lancashire Business School (Professor Robert Ritchie).

Professor Ritchie was briefed regarding the open codes and how categories emerged from them. The verbatim interview transcripts were shared with him to enable understanding of the contextual issues in the researched indigenous and foreign firms. This researcher discussed and agreed with the interrater that a random selection of 75 data excerpts will be sufficient to achieve interrater reliability of above 92%. After the initial iteration and a subsequent two-way discussion between the researcher and the interrater, 70 data excerpts were coded to the same categories thus achieving a 93% coding agreement. This was considered a 'reasonable verification of the accuracy of the coding procedure.' (Isabella, 1990: 13) The table 4.8 illustrates the emerging categories of SIMP activities, their sub-categories, their temporal nature, linkages and the firm type relevance.

Resources management category	Sub-categories of SIMP activities	Temporal issues, other characteristics	Linkages (activity, causal)	Firm type relevance
	Arrangements via International head-office	Precedes major initiatives initiation; head office top management involvement; access to large international financing institutions	Head-office interactions, Subsidiary top-management persuasion,	Foreign firms
	Search of resource markets	Overlaps with strategic formulations, initial stages of enactment, search of global markets	Resources' portfolio fitness, feedback to goal-setting,	Both indigenous and foreign firms
Resources Acquisition	Allocation of specialized staff for resource acquisitions	End stages of strategic planning, all stages of enactment	Resources allocation, Resources provision	Some indigenous and foreign firms
	Resource value assessment	Involvement of international head office management, subsidiary management determination, local needs assessment, overlap with later parts of strategic formulation, before enactment	Goal-setting, resources portfolio optimization, expectations management by subsidiary top management, expectation management by middle management at indigenous firms	Some indigenous and foreign firms

Table 4.8: The illustrative example of coding of a resource management category: Resource acquisition – SIMP sub- categories, temporal nature, linkages and firm type relevance

4.7.4. Theoretical interpretation from categorical codes – SIMP patterns as explanations of implementation success, heterogeneous resource positions, and firm's competitiveness

The theoretical coding was done to link the saturated categories of SIMP activities, their interactions and temporal dynamics with the SIMP patterns and their competitive implications (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This was, understandably, a difficult stage of data analysis due to the complexity of SIMP process issues. It also required the researcher's interpretation of all the open and category codes with their temporal issues, and activity and causal linkages. The researcher iteratively analysed the saturated categories and the interactions of activities and different strategic actors involved in the strategy implementation process at the researched firms. The coding here relied more on the researcher's interpretations of the open and categorical codes. The researcher made several iterative runs across the data for a thorough comparison of the indigenous and foreign firms and to ensure the robustness of the emerging theory of linkages between strategy implementation, heterogeneous resource positions and competitive outcomes.

The theoretical coding focussed on bringing the different codes together to understand how SIMP process patterns and underlying activities explain the resource positions and competitiveness of the researched firms. The coding at this stage proceeded in integrating the analysis together for each of the research questions (RQ1 - RQ3). The theoretical coding allowed the researcher to critically investigate the competitive implications associated with the strategy implementation process patterns exhibited by the indigenous and the foreign multinational firms. This led to the identification of four different SIMP patterns that explained the differences in strategy implementation success, heterogeneous resource positions and competitive performance of the researched indigenous and foreign firms.

The analysis initially involved the researcher clustering the categories and sub-categories of SIMP activities according to the emerging SIMP process patterns. Afterwards, the temporal interactions were used to develop the process frameworks for each of the emerging SIMP process patterns. Those SIMP process frameworks were then analysed for their explanations of strategy implementation success. Those

emerging SIMP patterns, their explanations for implementation success and the kind of competitive advantages were then linked and compared for different firm types.

This critical examination clearly established the finer details of each SIMP pattern and provided the data-grounded explanations for the competitiveness of each of the researched firms. This ensured that a rigorous process was followed for the theorizing of SIMP's contributions to competitive performance. The research findings were positioned against the empirical SIMP literature and major differences were identified, such as the existence of implementation differences between local and foreign firms. This highlighted the theoretical and practical inadequacies in the extant literature due to the presentation of rather generic ideas for SIMP. The researcher actively engaged with the existing literature on strategy implementation, processual strategy views, and the RBV. The research findings and the emergent theory were compared with the extant literature and used to refine the emerging theory and develop stronger conclusions. The conclusions summarised the empirical, data-grounded findings and their implications for the research gaps identified earlier and future research to refine and extend the emerging theory of SIMP process and competitiveness (Suddaby, 2006; O'Reilly et al., 2012).

The comparison of the research findings with the literature led to the establishment of conflicts with the existing literature and increased confidence in the analysis of the research findings and interpretation of the empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Each of the emerging SIMP patterns was then defined to clearly establish the major characteristics and distinguish from other SIMP patterns. Each of the codes was also defined in a code book for their key characteristics, temporal nature and relevance to the firm type. The variations that exist in the indigenous and foreign firms were also noted to enable a thorough comparison. The researcher reviewed all of the open codes, relevant data fragments, categories and their interactions to validate them and ensure their appropriateness of different SIMP frameworks. The research findings were positioned against the empirical SIMP literature and major differences were identified, such as the existence of implementation differences between the indigenous and foreign firms. This highlighted the theoretical and practical inadequacies in the extant literature due to presentation of generic ideas for SIMP. The inadequacies in brief literature on SIMP at multinational enterprises was

particularly identified to argue, how the research findings provide insights to overcome those inadequacies.

The table 4.9 provides an illustrative example of how SIMP patterns provided insights into the explanatory SIMP activities, key interactions, and linkages for resource heterogeneity and associated competitive outcomes:

Table 4.9: The illustrative example of integrating the SIMP pattern, heterogeneity in resource positions and competitive outcomes		
SIMP pattern (Firm type relevance)	**Explanatory SIMP activities, key interactions, and linkages for Resource Heterogeneity**	**Competitive outcomes**
Foreign Competitive-Proactive (Some Foreign firms – *Commercial Bank, Pharmaceutical Firm*)	• Early resource search in global and local resource markets • exploratory value assessment – out-of-box thinking, creative uses, • Interactive value assessment (subsidiary management and head office management interactions) • Realistic, yet stretch goal setting • Resources development through refinement due to time at hand; a balanced approach to resource acquisitions and developments, • Aggressive, but well calculated resource allocations • Resource allocations are translated into resource provisions; important to consider allocations as commitments • SIMP as a competitive capability • SIMP experience feeding-forward into the strategic formulations • Performance is managed holistically (individual, teams, subsidiary, strategic projects) • Consistent execution of resource management activities • Trust development across the firm for procedural justice and subsidiary top management's competence	• Sustained profitability • Sustained customer loyalty • Sustained employee performance • Sustained performance overall • Sustained SIMP success (Consistent achievement of SIMP goals) • Sustained competitive edge • Sustained loop of integrating performance gains for firm's development and growth • Sustained protection of existing market positions from competitive erosion • Improved corporate image among business partners (Financial institutions, distributors, suppliers, other intermediaries) • Successful local talent development • Internal knowledge transfers internationally • Improved subsidiary image

4.8. Research quality and robustness

The measures of research quality as viewed from the positivist and deductive stances are not suitable for application to qualitative research (Bryman and Teevan, 2005). The concepts of reliability and validity as adopted in quantitative research have long been criticised for their inability to account for epistemological and ontological underpinnings of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is agreed that credibility and rigour in qualitative research is vital to ensure good quality research. Suddaby (2006) recognised that constant comparison, theoretical sampling, researcher's creativity and a pragmatic approach are important factors for good quality grounded research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) placed a higher emphasis on trustworthiness of the research and suggested the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) argued for attention to the research process and method issues associated with data-grounded findings leading to more reliable, valid and rigorous emerging theory. The table 4.10 presents how this research achieved rigour and trustworthiness:

S. no.	Rigour and Trustworthiness issue	As achieved by this research
	Table 4.10: Research rigour and trustworthiness – as achieved by this research	
1	**Research process and data-grounded findings** (Suddaby, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998)	• The extant literature was thoroughly reviewed to establish the research gaps and then emerging theory was compared with the literature to establish the conflicts and similarities. • The data reflected respondent's interpretations and revealed intricate details and complex issues of SIMP in the researched firms. • The findings were data-grounded and emerged from detailed application of grounded theory method and analytical tools • The researcher thoroughly analysed the categories and sub-categories of concepts • This detailed analysis led to higher abstraction from the data to an emerging theory of SIMP patterns as explanatory for resources heterogeneity and competitiveness • The researcher remained pragmatic and undertook decisions regarding the iterative, constant comparison of data-emerging concepts-data-emerging theory. Furthermore, theoretical saturation was done for both the firm types to ensure rigorous comparison of SIMP activities and their competitive implications.

2	**Trustworthiness** (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)	• **Credibility** –
		  o In-depth, good quality access was gained to the respondents' experiences in both the indigenous and foreign firms. Informed consent was obtained for each of the research firms and individuals.
		  o The discussions were done with freedom of discussion, in line with the interview guide.
		  o In view of theoretical sampling, respondent access was gained on a number of occasions to ensure data collection in line with emerging concepts and theoretical saturation. **Contd…**

		o Well-established grounded theory methods were used for the data collection and analysis. The attention was consistently paid to constant comparison for emerging concepts.
		• Transferability –
		o The details of the research settings have been outlined. The details of research method are also provided for transferability in similar or research settings.
		o Multiple respondents and firms were researched to understand strategy implementation issues in the indigenous and foreign firms. Those firms were then analysed to develop a thorough comparison of the diversity in SIMP issues. The details of this analysis process are ideal for transferability in other research settings and firm contexts.
		• Dependability –
		o Purposive, theoretical sampling was used to gain the in-depth information regarding variations that exist at the indigenous firms. This allowed clearly establishing the boundaries of the research and its findings.
		o The findings were a result of rigorous and detailed content analysis of the respondent's interpretations. The analytical process of deriving the emerging theory from the respondents' accounts of SIMP in their respective firms also ensured reliability and dependability.
		o The researcher assured the respondents and the firms that their identities will remain anonymous for confidentiality. The recording of the content analysis process also ensured this aspect.
		o The coding was done in multiple stages with logical progression from the individual concepts in the data to their categorization around key themes and ultimately leading to the higher-order integration allowing the understanding of the competitive and resources management implications of SIMP activities and

			process patterns in a variety of firm contexts.
			○ A high interrater reliability of 93% was achieved using an independent coder, following Isabella (1990) and Jarzabkowski (2008). This was important to ensure that the data was coded in a rigorous and analytical way yet achieved reliability across different coders in the content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).
			• **Confirmability** –
			○ The interviews were transcribed word-to-word and efforts were made to check their accuracy via comparing with the audio recordings of the interviews.
			○ It was ensured to keep the data analysis focussed on the interpretations and the accounts provided by the respondents.
			○ The illustrative examples of the open and category codes were provided separately to ensure the data-grounding of the emerging concepts.
			○ The records were maintained for each of the interviews, transcripts, and the different codes.
			○ All information was easily traceable due to the proper records.

4.9. Conclusions

This chapter presented a detailed account of the grounded research methodology adopted for this research using Suddaby (2006) as the guide. The philosophical position of interpretivism and the research design decisions for sampling, access, data collection and data analysis were elaborated with the supporting arguments and the illustrative examples. It was recognised that this research followed the iterative cycles between the literature, data, emerging concepts, further data collection, emerging theory and literature comparison via theoretical sampling and constant comparison. However, in view of the normal conventions of thesis writing the literature review preceded in the thesis before methodology and discussion of the findings. The semi-structured interviews were delineated for data collection on implementation issues among local and foreign firms. The principles of unitizing and

recording/ coding were employed for the qualitative content analysis in line with Krippendorff's (2004) guidelines. The coding process of the open codes, categorization, and the theoretical interpretation from categorical codes was detailed with the illustrative examples. This resulted in the identification of emerging theory regarding the SIMP patterns as explanations of implementation success, heterogeneous resource positions and firm's competitiveness in the researched indigenous and foreign firms. The analytical aspects of constant comparison and theoretical sampling were discussed throughout with relevant examples. The chapter concluded by discussing the discussion of the rigour and trustworthiness as achieved by this research. This suitably leads to the discussion of the research findings and the emerging theory in chapters five and six, in line with the research questions that were established earlier in the chapter three.

Chapter 5 - Processual analysis of SIMP in different firm types – Empirical findings and discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings regarding the heterogeneity in strategy implementation process at the researched foreign and indigenous firms and how it explains the nature of achieved implementation success (RQ-1). The analysis and discussion of findings draw from guidelines in processual strategy literature as discussed earlier, in particular section 3.4.4.5. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the strategic contexts of the researched firms. The heterogeneity in behavioural approaches towards strategy implementation and SIMP process thrusts is explained and used to categorize the competitive and tactical SIMP process patterns. The phases and underlying activities in those SIMP process patterns are presented to understand their phase-specific and accumulated processual nature. The variations in those SIMP process patterns are discussed for how they affect implementation performance at the researched firms. The findings are discussed for their key implications for strategy implementation process literature to firm-up the implementation heterogeneity and implementation contextualization arguments for successful implementation. The figure 5.1 presents the broader structure of this empirical chapter:
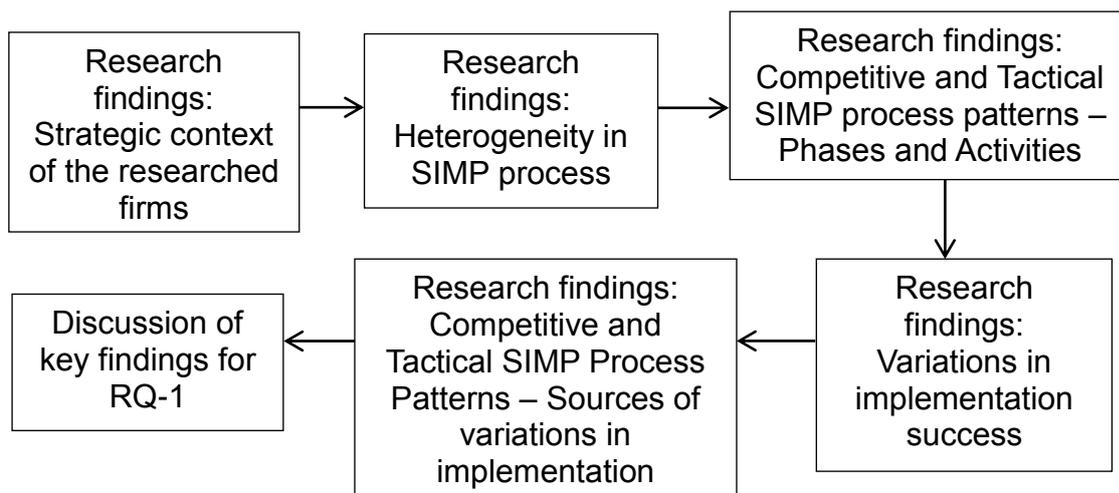
Figure 5.1: Broader structure of the empirical chapter 5

5.2. Strategic contexts of the researched firms

It is important to understand the firm's context for a thorough processual analysis of strategy implementation. In addition to the table 4.2, the Table 5.1 here provides key contextual information pointers about the researched firms, their ownership structure, and their strategic context of the intended strategic choices for implementation. Obviously, there is much more detail of the researched firms though for the sake of parsimony only the important strategic pointers are provided here.

Firm	Ownership structure	Initial Strategic situation and Intended strategic direction
Foreign Commercial Bank	Wholly-owned subsidiary	• Big market share in premium banking, high consumer satisfaction, Strong competitive advantages. Market reputation is that of a pioneer in providing new consumer banking services. • Saw opportunities in expanding into commercial banking sector for trade customers before other foreign banks and decided to establish commercial banking operations in Pakistan. • Systems development and integration with international head office also needed. Local competitors gearing up slowly to improve their organizational systems.
Foreign Pharmaceutical	Wholly-owned subsidiary	• Strong foreign multinational, big market share, high customer satisfaction, good competitive advantages. • Foreign Chief executive knowledgeable of local markets is appointed as the international head office wanted to have someone with knowledge of local market and the culture of multinational firms. • Proactively saw the need to compete with local competitors with new products or good margins and scientific prowess and new range of generic drugs.
Foreign Distribution	Split ownership (51% foreign, 49% local partner equity)	• Competing with very strong local competitor, modest market share. • The local managing partner lead the subsidiary • Distribution coverage and quality services needed to improve competitiveness as customer expectations are high. ***Contd…***

		• Proactively saw the need for ERP systems to outsmart major local competitor by providing higher levels of customer service and improve efficiency by system integration across the country and head office.
Foreign Islamic Bank	Wholly-owned subsidiary	• Weak foreign multinational, competing with very strong local competitor, new local and foreign competitors coming in. strong presence among trade customers. • Realized from the major local competitor's rapid growth planned to improve branch strength for customer coverage; • Also needed to respond to Central bank's requirements for systems development, market expansion and new financial products.
Indigenous Food Products	Family ownership	• Strong indigenous firm, competing with very strong foreign competitor, market leader in some product categories, follower in other categories, relies on quality differentiation. • Reacted to major foreign multinational competitor, Continuous differentiation in products and marketing effort, systems development to integrate organizational functions and resources, compete for market share.
Indigenous Baby Products	Group partnership	• Strong indigenous firm, competing with very strong foreign and strong local competitors, market leader in some product categories, follower in other categories, quality differentiation. • Reacted to major foreign multinational competitor, compete for market share, continuous differentiation in products and marketing, authority devolution with responsibility identification at different levels.
Indigenous Pharmaceutical	Group partnership	• Moderate presence in market, good reputation in one product category. • Reacting to competition, a balanced product portfolio needed for revenue generation, new product development in new category, sales team enhancement, investing in quality at good price image.
Indigenous Terry Textile	Family ownership	• Reputation for good quality among buyers, limited export market, product development and expansion both were difficult in the past. • Responding to customer needs in export markets, new product development, systems development, and improved customer management. ***Contd…***

Indigenous Stationery	Family ownership	- Reliant on limited product range, leader in one category but laggard in other product categories, legacy systems needed change, brand awareness at low ebb. - New product development, Improve quality systems, Brand equity renewal, Development of organizational systems to achieve quality and higher product margins.
Indigenous Yarn Textile	Family ownership	- Good reputation for quality among export customers, very low local domestic presence, Energy crisis causing hold up of large orders. Lack of local sales network. - Sales network development needed in the domestic market. Set up energy power plant for self-sufficiency; invest in high quality yarn products, systems development.

5.3. Heterogeneity in strategy implementation process

The data analysis revealed significant heterogeneity in how the researched foreign and indigenous firms implemented their strategies. The comparison of strategy implementation processes revealed that the researched firms implemented strategies in their own ways. It emerged that the strategy implementation process was shaped by how key strategic actors approached strategy implementation and the process thrust driving the implementation process at the foreign or indigenous firms. The following sub-sections explain those key shapers of SIMP process to categorize the identified heterogeneous SIMP process patterns.

5.3.1. Behavioural approaches to strategy implementation: Competitive or Tactical

It emerged from the research data that strategic actors at the researched firms approached strategy implementation differently as a strategic phenomenon. The critical investigation of those behavioural differences identified the *competitive or tactical* approaches to strategy implementation. This behavioural heterogeneity was rooted in how the strategic actors involved in implementation approached the strategy implementation process. It emerged that the top management and middle management drove this approach and influenced other implementers in their firms.

Some of the researched firms and their strategic actors approached strategy implementation as a process with importance for their strategic competitive success. Other firms approached strategy implementation process as a routine to implement their strategies without much linkage to competitive outcomes. These *Competitive or the Tactical implementing* behaviours were embedded in the used implementation process through the implementation activities undertaken by strategic actors engaged in strategy implementation.

The *Competitive implementing* refers to the behavioural approach of strategic actors and their firms who considered strategy implementation as a strategic process with important potential contributor to competitive performance of firms. 'Personal professionalism' and 'firm's competitiveness' emerged as key influencers in pursuing the Competitive implementing in some of the researched firms. Contrary to general expectations in Pakistan, not all of the researched foreign firms approached strategy implementation competitively. This highlighted that implementing behaviours were not universal; instead, the implementing behaviours reflected the strategic situations of the firms. The Deputy Managing Director of the indigenous food products firm said *"We took implementation as a serious opportunity to improve competitively and arrive at a competitive position and that eventually allowed us to move to the next level in our core hot drinks market."* Similarly, the Business Unit Manager, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm highlighted that *"For us strategy implementation is a major source of how we compete and deliver value to our customers. It has to be competitive for us; like how we do it and how we use implementation to improve and build further on our competitive strengths."*

In contrast to Competitive Implementing, the *Tactical Implementing* refers to the behavioural approach of strategic actors and their firms who considered strategy implementation as a routine mechanism for firms to implement their strategies. This highlighted the general perception about the nature of strategy implementation being centred on middle management and their implementation tactics. This also emphasized that managerial activities were aimed at getting things done as planned or intended. There was significantly more emphasis by strategic actors on following the script in their action plans and thus execution emerged as the key issue to drive SIMP process. The Chief Executive Officer of the indigenous stationery firm

mentioned that *"Implementation is a process through which we execute our strategies. It allows us to successfully implement our planned initiatives."* Similarly, the Manager Finance of the foreign distribution firm mentioned that *"Strategy implementation here is a mechanism to allow implementing our strategy. It is operational and involves how different people and departments interact to execute the plans."*

These implementation approaches significantly affected how strategic actors engaged in SIMP process at the different firms. Additionally, the data also revealed the influences of implementation process thrust for how implementation process unfolded over time. Those SIMP process thrust issues are presented hereunder.

5.3.2. Strategy implementation Process thrust: Proactive or Reactive

The research data showed that strategy implementation process did not initiate from same strategic position for the different firms in their respective competitive markets. The strategic actors engaged in implementation either proactively in view of future opportunities or as a reactive response to different market situations. The process thrust provided insights into the motivations, action priorities, and initial process options guiding strategy implementation process. Those distinctions were labelled as *Proactive or Reactive* process thrusts that were linked to the strategizing behaviours in the researched foreign and indigenous firms.

Proactive SIMP process thrust refers here to initial thrust in implementing process due to proactively devised strategic plans in view of future market opportunities. For an example, the foreign pharmaceutical firm foresaw the future competition in generic drugs and realized that they need to engage in implementation of generic drugs ideas of their own and decided on some related strategic initiatives. Simultaneously, there was a need to innovate with cutting edge drug molecules to ensure market leadership and this subsequently led to different implementation phases and activities. This required the strategic actors at the firm to stay proactive for how to ensure continuity and change for different product ranges.

Managing Director of the indigenous terry textile company said that *"We saw opportunities in export markets, if we could develop new products with better cloth*

finish. So it was discussed, negotiated and agreed that we will pursue those opportunities in a methodical way."

Reactive SIMP process thrust refers here to initial thrust in implementing process due to proactively devised strategic plans in view of future market opportunities. For an example, the foreign distribution firm realized that customer expectations from a foreign firm were much higher and it had not been able to deliver superior distribution services. It led to firm's reaction to search and attempt to implement a world-class ERP system to allow integration and efficiency in distribution services. Similarly, Chief Executive Officer of the indigenous stationery company mentioned that *"We realized that we need to compete on cost in two-three product categories as competitors had launched good products supported by good marketing efforts. We did not have that clout at the time to go for higher pricing so we looked for lower cost in long term."*

Those process thrusts were found to be shaping the processual nature of strategy implementation process in the different firms. For example, the indigenous food products firm pursued competitive implementing due to reactive process thrust and thus exhibited the initial phase of realizing the need for improvements in existing strategic initiatives. However, the foreign Islamic banks pursued tactical implementing with a reactive thrust and exhibited the initial phase of reviewing the existing strategic situation and subsequently pursue planning. These processual distinctions in SIMP process phases are presented later in section 5.4.

5.3.3. Categorizing Heterogeneous Strategy implementation Process Patterns

A categorization of those heterogeneous SIMP patterns emerged from the distinctions in behavioural approach towards implementation and the thrust of implementation process at the foreign and indigenous firms. Using a 2 x 2 matrix, five distinct SIMP process patterns were categorized from the empirical data for the researched foreign or indigenous firms. The table 5.2 presents this categorization of *heterogeneity* in the SIMP process patterns evident at the foreign and indigenous firms. The foreign firms used either the competitive-proactive or tactical-reactive implementing patterns. Similarly, the indigenous firms used either the competitive-proactive, competitive-reactive or tactical-proactive implementing patterns.

Additionally, there were also distinctions between the competitive-proactive SIMP patterns at the foreign and the indigenous firms.

Table 5.2: Research Findings - Heterogeneous SIMP Process Patterns		
Strategy Implementation Behaviour	**Process thrust**	
	Proactive	**Reactive**
Competitive	**Competitive - Proactive implementing** **Foreign** – Commercial Bank, Pharmaceutical **Indigenous** – Yarn Textile, Baby Products	**Competitive - Reactive implementing** **Indigenous** – Food Products
Tactical	**Tactical - Proactive implementing** **Indigenous** – Stationery, Pharmaceutical Terry Textile	**Tactical - Reactive implementing** **Foreign** – Islamic Bank Distribution,

This issue of implementation heterogeneity is supportive of the contingency-oriented process approach to implementation issues (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Sabherwal and Robey, 1993). The implementation heterogeneity between the firm types clearly rejected the idea of a generic, broader approach discussed in much of strategy implementation literature (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005; Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2010).

5.4. Competitive and Tactical SIMP Process Patterns – Phases and Activities

The empirical data revealed the processual nature of SIMP process patterns and, in view of the research aim, these patterns are labelled hereafter as either competitive or tactical implementation processes. The processual nature of SIMP patterns revolved around the SIMP phases and the activities undertaken in those phases. The data also showed that *different levels of strategic actors* engaged in SIMP process at different time-points. Those actors included TMT (Top Management Team) in Indigenous firms, LTM (Local Top Management) in Foreign firms, IHO (International

Head Office Management staff) in Foreign firms, SMM (Senior Middle Managers), MM (Middle Managers), FLM (Front Line Managers/ Supervisors) and external partners like consultants, and suppliers of products and services. For an example, the role of International Head office staff in strategy implementation was distinct to the foreign firms. Similarly, the role of family members in owner top management team was distinct to the indigenous firms. It was also clear that the roles of strategic actors changed during different phases in SIMP process:

"Our head office superiors were actively engaged at the time of discussing the resources needed for the setting up of trade/ business banking. They worked with our local top management and our senior management" (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical Company)

…

"Top management's role changed in different phases of implementing; they moved from being a negotiator in early stages to coordinator in the middle and then became reviewer in the later phase." (Director Exports and Sales, Indigenous Yarn Textile firm)

Those strategic actors engaged in different implementation activities that were distributed not only across levels of actors but also temporally distributed at different time-points in SIMP process. For an example, Chief Executive Officer of the indigenous stationery firm *"We acted at different times for different activities. Some activities like execution and monitoring went on throughout but others like negotiating for resources, action planning, engaging with external consultants all this happened at specific times during implementation."*

5.4.1. Phases in the SIMP Process Patterns

SIMP process phases referred to the time-periods in strategy implementation process as strategic actors engaged in different implementation activities to achieve phase-related goals. Those phase outcomes reflected the accumulative nature of implementation success in SIMP process patterns. Group Product Manager of the foreign pharmaceutical firm mentioned that *"We moved from one phase to the other to get our strategy implemented. We did set goals for each phase and worked towards successfully implementing new product developments and generic drugs strategy. In the beginning, we also had to convince international head office that we could do it and it would be worthwhile to start local manufacturing."*

The tables 5.3 and 5.4 present the overview of the phases found in the competitive and tactical SIMP process patterns. The phases in SIMP are outlined from the initial phase of implementation process to the point where implementation is deemed as successful or unsuccessful by the respondents. It is also noted here that the Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns show differences in how implementation success is viewed and used in the process, as discussed later in section 5.6. This provides the foundation for a detailed comparison of the sources of variations in implementation success achieved via competitive and tactical SIMP process patterns. [Please also refer to the appendix for further details of the SIMP patterns, phases and underlying activities and an example case study showing details of temporal evolution of implementation at the case firm]

Table 5.3: Research Findings - Phases in the Competitive Strategy Implementation (SIMP) Process Patterns		
Indigenous Competitive-Proactive	**Foreign Competitive-Proactive**	**Indigenous Competitive-Reactive**
1. Sensing [TMT assessed recent implementation performance and organizational expectations simultaneously. TMT searched for competitive opportunities for proactive competitive action. TMT acknowledged competitive opportunity. SMM, MM and FLM continued executing existing strategic initiatives. TMT clearly understood existing implementation skills and weaknesses.**]** **2. Negotiating [** Intra-TMT negotiations took place over new strategic initiatives, their competitive potential, and implementability. TMT agreed on the competitive initiatives with willingness to match implementation with opportunity**]** **3. Proacting [**TMT sensegiving to SMM and MM and link competitive gains with implementation choices and plan to enable firm to implement successfully **]** **4. Mobilizing [**SMM, MM, FLM enacted implementation choices and TMT ensured to provide firm-level support and kept implementation synergized with competitive goals. TMT actively kept implementation synergized with competitive goals as per new strategic priorities. SMM, MM and FLM executed enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives.**]** **5. Reinforcing [**TMT reviewed implementation performance and competitive gains. TMT reinforced by rewarding good implementing and highlighted achieved competitive gains. TMT, SMM and MMs refined and searched for new strategic initiatives. SMM, MM and FLM executed enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives**]** **6. Refining [**TMT, SMM and MMs engaged in reaping rewards from implementation success to refine and proact for new strategic initiatives.**]**	**1. Sensing [** SMM and LTM sensed competitive opportunity as they assessed recent implementation and performance. LTM acknowledged opportunity as achievable at subsidiary level. SMM and LTM built argument to convince the IHO. SMM, MM and FLM.**]** **2. Negotiating [**IHO, LTM, and SMM negotiated new strategic initiatives, their competitive potential and implementability. IHO agreed for support to strategy content and implementation actions. Strategic ideas were adjusted by LTM and SMM for firm's international gains in addition to subsidiary's competitive gains.**]** **3. Proacting [** LTM and SMM engaged in contextualized formulizing of strategy content and implementation actions. LTM, SMM, MM thoroughly analysed implementation requirements and existing SIMP skills. LTM and SMM linked implementation actions with competitive gains and prioritized at subsidiary level. SMM, MM and FLM continued executing existing strategic initiatives.**]** **4. Mobilizing [**LTM and SMM authorized resource provisioning and MM, FLM executed implementation in line with competitive prioritizes and action plans IHO provided access to international resources.**]** **5. Reinforcing [**LTM, SMM, MM, FLM reviewed implementation performance and competitive gains. LTM and IHO reinforced good implementation and highlighted competitive gains both at subsidiary and international levels. Good implementation practices transferred to other subsidiaries.**]** **6. Refining [**MM and SMM identified refinements in current strategic initiatives at the subsidiary level, building on implementation success. SMM and LTM engaged in outlining new strategic initiatives for competitive gains.MM and SMM identified refinements in current strategic initiatives at the subsidiary level, building on implementation success.**]**	**1. Realizing [** TMT realized strategy content and recent implementation performance mandated change and improvements for market competitiveness. Inaction was not an option. **2. Reacting [** TMT engaged with the middle management in identifying the appropriate strategy content and implementation actions**]** **3. Action Integrating [** The firm integrated new initiatives, new action plans with existing initiatives and work arrangements to ensure smooth implementing of a new portfolios of strategic initiatives and projects**]** **4. Reinforcing [** The top management ensured to reinforce the on-going implementation efforts and ensure middle managers and their staff are rewarded for good implementation**]** **5. Refining [** Top management and middle management engaged in refining existing strategic priorities and implementation performance issues. Key learnings from strategy implementation performance were considered a source for competitive improvements**]**

Table 5.4: Research Findings - Phases in the Tactical Strategy Implementation (SIMP) Process Patterns

Indigenous Tactical -Proactive	Foreign Tactical-Reactive
1. Sensting [TMT assessed recent implementation performance TMT Sensed new opportunities for competitive gains. Intra-TMT negotiations for opportunity options and investment. Agreed on competitive initiatives.] **2. Planning** [TMT involved in functional planning over agreed strategic initiatives. TMT engaged with MM in functional planning. TMT clearly communicated expectations to MM for execution of implementation choices. MMs and FLM engaged in detailed action plans.] **3. Enacting** [TMT provided firm-level support through functional leadership roles. MMs engaged in implementation actions in line with action plans. Execution becomes central activity. Resource provisions provided –some sufficient some insufficient. Inconsistent management of interrelated strategic initiatives.] **4. Routinizing** [Implementation success is used by TMT and MM to routinize good implementation behaviours like teamwork, inter-functional coordination, and time management. Partially implemented initiatives are attempted for execution of remaining initiative tasks.]	**1. Reviewing** [LTM assessed recent implementation performance and discussed with SMM to emphasize need to respond to subsidiary's competitive situation. IHO concerned with regular earnings in existing settings.] **2. Planning** [LTM negotiated and discussed strategic initiatives options, Established strategic ideas and their boundaries. LTM informed MM about broader plan. MMs were not engaged in strategic planning and thus remained unclear on firm's competitive priorities to guide implementation actions.] **3. Implementing** [MMs engaged in building work schedules around broad plan. Existing strategic initiatives and new initiatives got messed up in time scheduling and work distribution. Interrelated strategic initiative projects were poorly managed. MMs resisted wherever they could leading to delays and inter-departmental conflicts.] **4. Reviewing** [Unsuccessful implementation leads to inability to reap market potential. LTM assessed recent implementation performance and discussed with SMM to emphasize need to respond to subsidiary's competitive situation. IHO unwilling to invest in subsidiary expansion.]

5.4.2. Implementation activities in the SIMP process patterns

A wide range of SIMP activities were identified in the competitive and tactical strategy implementation processes. The table 5.5 presents the definitions of those SIMP activities and identifies the linked competitive and tactical implementation SIMP patterns. The temporal activity distribution varied significantly in those patterns and some implementation activities were specific to some of the identified SIMP patterns. For an example, *forward-feeding* was seen only in the Competitive- Proactive SIMP patterns at the indigenous and foreign firms. Similarly, *Feeding in* during the reacting phase was evident only in Competitive-Reactive pattern at the indigenous food product firm. *Implementive holding* was also used only in the Competitive-Reactive SIMP pattern at the indigenous firm.

"We made sure to feed in our realization that it was necessary to develop small pack options in the hot drinks to achieve competitiveness and gain market penetration. We ensured that we planned for it and allocated necessary budget for it. It proved critical later." (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products firm)

Competitive linking and prioritization of strategy implementation actions were also evident only in the Competitive SIMP patterns. Similarly, argument building for negotiating with the IHO for the implementation of some distinct strategic initiatives at the subsidiary level was evident only in Competitive-Proactive pattern at the foreign firms. Similarly, *international aligning* of strategy implementation actions and *task piloting* was only evident in the Competitive-Proactive SIMP pattern at the foreign firm. This reflected the distinctive implementation context at the foreign commercial bank and the foreign pharmaceutical firm. The use of task piloting also revealed an attempt to better manage implementation efforts and country specific risks.

"We wanted to manufacture one of our expensive products here in Pakistan, although it was only manufactured in one place globally. Our head office had this as a stated policy. But to be competitive in terms of cost, and affordability we needed to manufacture here. We believed that we had the necessary skills and infrastructure to do it. However, to convince and negotiate with international head office management we needed to develop a strong argument based on facts to get their trust." (Group Product Manager, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

Table 5.5: Research Findings - SIMP Activities, definitions, and linked SIMP Patterns

SIMP Activity	Definition	SIMP Pattern
Executing	Enactment of agreed tasks by SIMP actors	All SIMP patterns
Sensing	Actively engaging in seeking competitive opportunity	Proactive patterns
Argument Building	Proactive developing of argument at proactive foreign firms by LTM and SSM in competitive foreign firms using ideas and supporting information for discussion at IHO level	Competitive proactive pattern – foreign firm
Assessing Implementation Performance	Assessment of recent implementation performance by top management to understand current implementation skills and weaknesses	All SIMP patterns
Negotiating	Discussion of implementation ideas by implementers at different levels to arrive at decisions to guide implementation actions	All SIMP patterns
International Aligning	IHO's alignment to ensure subsidiary strategy content and implementation actions meet firm's international strategy guidelines and international implementation standards	Competitive proactive pattern – foreign firm
Idea Adjusting	Adjustments in subsidiary strategy and implementation choices by LTM and SMM to enable future international gains for the firm	Competitive proactive pattern – foreign firm
Feeding in	Activity in reactive implementing to utilize learning from assessment of recent implementation performance in shaping strategy implementation process	Competitive proactive patterns
Competitive Linking	Linking of implementation actions clearly with some specific competitive gains expected by the firm	Competitive patterns
Competitive prioritizing	Prioritizing of implementation actions according to the competitive strategy and potential gains	Competitive patterns
Implementive Holding	Holding of some strategic initiatives' implementation by top management to enable reactive implementation effort	Competitive reactive pattern-indigenous firm
Prioritizing	Setting the new strategic priorities by top management to adjust implementation efforts	Competitive and tactical proactive patterns
Contextualized Formulizing	Development of contextualized plans for strategic content and implementation	Competitive patterns
Implementive Preparing	Top management's preparation to ensure realistic expectations in implementation planning *Contd…*	Competitive reactive pattern-indigenous firm

SIMP Activity	Definition	SIMP Pattern
Contingency Planning	Deliberations to identify potential implementation contingencies and appropriate SIMP actions for competitive gains in such circumstances	Competitive patterns
Resource Allocating	Top management's allocation of resources to enable implementation in line with new strategic priorities; Middle managers allocation according to functional needs at departmental levels	All SIMP patterns
Action Planning	Plans made by middle managers and project teams to clearly identify implementation actions, timing and related staff.	All SIMP patterns
Goal-setting	Efforts by top management, middle managers and front line supervisors to identify and agree task objectives and performance goals for individuals, project teams, and organizational departments	Competitive SIMP patterns
Implementability Assessment	Top management and middle managers thoroughly assess the implementability of planned strategic initiatives and action plans	Competitive SIMP patterns
Authorizing	Top management's approvals of action plans and departmental plans	All SIMP patterns
Task Piloting	Piloting of implementation tasks for different strategic initiatives before full-scale implementation	Competitive pattern - foreign
Resource Provisioning	Top management approval to release the agreed resources at agreed timings to enact action plans	All SIMP patterns
Systematizing	Collaboration of external consultants, top and middle management to systematize operational procedures and policies	All SIMP patterns
Simplifying	Conscious effort by top management to keep implementation details simple and clear	Competitive SIMP patterns and Tactical–Proactive indigenous
Adjusting	Adjustments made by SIMP actors to ensure work patterns reflect new strategic priorities in reactive implementation thrust	Competitive reactive-indigenous
Management Developing	Top management engages in developing implementation skills of top management team and some middle managers	All SIMP patterns
Accounting	Top management holds SIMP actors responsible for their implementation performance	All SIMP patterns
Forward Feeding	Activity in proactive implementing pattern to utilize learning from assessment of recent implementation performance in shaping next	Competitive SIMP patterns

	phase of strategy implementation process	
Highlighting	Top management engages with middle management to highlight implementation achievements and good implementers	Competitive proactive SIMP patterns
Rewarding	Top management rewards good implementation performers	All SIMP patterns
Reviewing	Top management and middle managers engage in reviewing existing implementation performance and competitive gains	All SIMP patterns
Refining	Top management uses key learnings from performance assessment to refine strategic priorities and middle managers refine their implementation routines for competitive gains and operational effectiveness	Competitive SIMP patterns
Feeding in	Top management ensure to use key learnings from performance assessment for refining strategic content and implementation	Competitive proactive SIMP patterns
Managing Performance	Management of performance as defined in terms of performance goals during SIMP process*.*	All SIMP patterns
Implementation Monitoring	Observation of staff throughout the firm to check the implementation progress throughout implementation process	Competitive and Tactical - proactive SIMP patterns
Implementation Controlling	Interventions by top management and middle managers for corrective actions during implementation process	All SIMP patterns
Intra-functional Coordination	Interaction and coordination between functional staff for strategy implementation	All SIMP patterns
Time Management	Management of time in implementation activities to ensure schedules are followed in line with strategy	All SIMP patterns
Timing Management	Management of timing of implementation activities to ensure competitiveness	Competitive proactive SIMP patterns
Knowledge Management	Acting to capture, store, share and utilize implementation knowledge during the implementation process	All SIMP patterns
Learning from Competitors	Acting to learn from competitors' implementation experiences	All SIMP patterns
Communication	Actions to communicate strategic priorities, top-down and bottom-up	All SIMP patterns
Interlinked Project Management	Management of different strategic initiative projects that are interlinked *Contd…*	All SIMP patterns

Learning Utilization	Consistent Utilization of the accumulated learning to improve strategy implementation and potentially, strategic bases of competitive advantage	Competitive proactive SIMP patterns

The next section 5.5 presents the findings related to the competitive and tactical SIMP process patterns and their explanation implementation success achieved by the firms pursuing those implementation patterns.

5.5. Competitive and Tactical SIMP Patterns - variations in implementation success

Detailed examination of the competitive and tactical SIMP patterns revealed significant variations in the achieved strategy implementation success in the foreign and indigenous firms. Overall, three levels of implementation success emerged from the data, including successful, partially successful, and unsuccessful implementation. Those variations reflected that the competitive SIMP patterns were consistently linked to successful strategy implementation, whereas the tactical patterns were linked to either partially successful or unsuccessful implementation. These three levels of implementation success were based on the clear differences in how the respondents explained their firm's achieved implementation success. The table 5.6 presents the implementation success level linked with the SIMP process patterns in the researched foreign and indigenous firms:

Table 5.6: Research Findings - Strategy Implementation Patterns and Implementation Success	
SIMP Pattern and corresponding firms	**Implementation Success**
• Indigenous Competitive - Proactive Implementing Process *(Yarn Textile, Baby Care Products)* • Foreign Competitive - Proactive Implementing Process *(Commercial Bank, Pharmaceutical)* • Indigenous Competitive - Reactive Implementing Process *(Food Products)*	Successful
• Indigenous Tactical - Proactive Implementing Process *(Stationery, Pharmaceutical, Terry Textile)*	Partially Successful
• Foreign Tactical - Reactive Implementing Process *(Distribution, Islamic Bank)*	Unsuccessful

The Competitive SIMP process patterns emerged as *successful* and enabled achieving the desired implementation outcomes and deemed as successful by all strategic actors in the respective firm. Business Analyst of the foreign pharmaceutical firm said *"We have been consistently very successful in implementing our strategy of differentiation through new product molecules, and generics drug line in Pakistan."* Similarly, Deputy Managing Director of the indigenous food products firm emphasized that *"Obviously we were highly successful. Our strategies were implemented successfully. Everyone recognizes that."*

The Tactical-Proactive implementation process at the indigenous firms was linked with *partially successful implementation*. It enabled achieving some intended implementation outcomes; however, some significant implementation failures also exist and implementation was viewed as partially successful by strategic actors in firm. For an example, Manager Procurement of the indigenous stationery firm highlighted that *"Yes we managed to implement ERP and quality management systems but other initiatives*

like brand revitalization and human resource refinements were not implemented successfully. Obviously we did not achieve as much as we should have."

Similarly, the Tactical - Reactive SIMP pattern at the foreign firms revealed *unsuccessful implementation* due to lack of achieving desired implementation outcomes and SIMP was viewed as unsuccessful by strategic actors in firm. For an example, Banking Compliance Advisor of the foreign Islamic bank said that *"No, sadly we have not been able to implement our strategic ideas in a broader sense. We are mostly relying on remaining present in the market but without much growth; unsuccessful implementing of branch network expansion and new financial products has hurt us badly over the past few years."*

5.6. Sources for variations in implementation success - Competitive vs. Tactical Implementation Patterns

Critical comparison of the competitive and tactical SIMP process patterns revealed the sources of variations in strategy implementation success at the researched foreign and indigenous firms. These sources highlight the complexities embedded in the processual context of the researched foreign and indigenous firms. It is important to note that these sources of implementation success variations The issues related to resources management in implementation process are explained in the chapter 6 in view of RQ-2. The figure 5.7 presents these sources and the underlying key issue that explain the variations in implementation success:

Table 5.7: Research Findings - Sources for variations in implementation success	
Source of variations in implementation success	**Key issue(s)**
• Nature of Implementation Success	• Criteria for implementation success; Implementation success as process outcome
• Qualitative differences in SIMP activities	• Comparison of activity performance in SIMP patterns
• Strategy Implementation Process Competitiveness	• Competitiveness of SIMP process
• Strategy Implementation Process Thrust Matching	• SIMP phases and activity matching
• SIMP Process Thoroughness	• Preparing for implementation in detail and rigour
• Firm- type Distinctions	• Foreign and indigenous firm type issues for Strategy Implementation
• Synergizing	• Integration and balance in Strategy Implementation process

5.6.1. Nature of Implementation Success

The Competitive and Tactical implementation patterns revealed that the nature of implementation success varied in the firms pursuing those patterns. The ***criteria of implementation success*** used by the strategic actors *and **implementation success as a process outcome*** emerged as the key issues for nature of implementation success. The Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns revealed important distinctions in the criteria of implementation success.

The Competitive SIMP patterns revealed that the strategic actors - top management, middle management, and front line staff judged the success of strategy implementation

from not only the process efficiency in strategy's implementation but also the effectiveness in improving competitive strategy outcomes. The competitive SIMP patterns showed that the strategic actors therein, considered implementation as strategic because it helped in implementing and improving the competitiveness of strategy. The Competitive SIMP pattern is found to be empirically linked to highly successful implementation of strategies in different firm contexts. For an example, Country Treasurer of the foreign commercial bank said that "For us implementation is not just about executing the strategy. We also need to be futuristic in implementation. We have cultivated this thinking in our people from top to bottom that implement and improve; in particular, the strategic choices at every level when timing is right."

The Tactical implementation patterns showed that the strategic actors judged process of strategy implementation from the level of implementation achieved. Implementation is considered strategic because it helped in implementing strategy and SIMP Process success is judged by process efficiency and effectiveness in implementation. This criterion of implementation success in the Tactical SIMP patterns is empirically linked to partially successful or unsuccessful implementation of strategies in the researched foreign and indigenous firms. Managing Director of the indigenous terry textile firm said that "strategy implementation's success means that we managed to implement strategy as per our devised plans and within the identified resources". This reflected an operational conceptualization of strategy implementation success, consistent with the Tactical behaviour towards SIMP process.

There were further distinctions as to how the Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns conceptualized **implementation success as a process outcome**. The Competitive SIMP patterns revealed implementation success as an accumulated, incremental outcome achieved during SIMP process and subsequently utilized in the SIMP process to establish new or improved strategy. Implementation success emerged as an outcome that symbolized institutionalization and adoption of firm's strategy, as well as a processual input *in* SIMP process to rectify or refine strategic content choices.

For an example, Deputy Managing Director of the indigenous food products mentioned that *"We arrived at a point where we were happy to have successfully implemented our key strategic initiatives like new products, new packaging plant, HR systematization, our increased capacity program and utilization etc. But it was time to use our implementation learnings and use them to refine our strategic options and improve bases for our competitive edge. So we engaged in 'tea-pot' meetings throughout the firm and arrived at our recent programs that we are implementing such as new plant set up for increased capacity, new soft drinks, etc. So for us it was not just being there at successful implementation! but also to use that to improve, refine and adapt our strategies. You can say we adapted looking at our implementation success sort of midway, not as the end point."*

In contrast, the Tactical implementing patterns showed that the top and middle managements considered implementation success as a processual outcome that symbolized institutionalization and adoption of strategy by the firm. This highlighted the synoptic, accumulated nature of implementation success as an outcome *of* SIMP process. The research data showed that strategic actors engaged in the Tactical SIMP patterns to institutionalize the strategy within their firms. The implementation success was considered as a synoptic outcome that the firms arrive at as a result *of* implementation process. The phases of enacting and review in the Indigenous Tactical-Proactive and implementation in the Foreign Tactical – Reactive patterns revealed this synoptic nature of implementation success. Chief Executive Officer of the indigenous stationery firm said "obviously, implementation success is about adoption of our strategy and institutionalizing it at different levels."

5.6.2. Qualitative differences in SIMP activities

Significant qualitative differences emerged from the empirical data in the implementation activities performed in the Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns. Those qualitative differences heavily affected the level of implementation success achieved by the research firms pursuing different SIMP patterns. For an example, *execution* was consistent to the needs of SIMP process phases in the competitive SIMP

patterns. However, execution was inconsistent for interrelated projects in the tactical SIMP patterns at the indigenous and foreign firms. Interestingly, in some local firms the top management's desire for 'perfectionism' caused 'inevitable time losses' and significantly 'impeded' the execution of planned activities. Such firms included local stationery firm and local textile terry firm as 'overly zealous' perfectionism did not allow them to pursue effective marketing strategies.

Corporate Banking Regional Head of the foreign Islamic bank highlighted this issue of lack of responsibility in execution of implementation tasks. He said "*It is about how important it is considered within the firm, to take actions as per the plans and also how responsibility is owned or assigned in the cases of non-action. In the past it was possible to not take actions due to our work culture, since people could get away due to not many consequences attached to such behaviour. We are still facing this problem and we need to bring in this approach, otherwise we will continue to struggle with our implementations.*"

Similarly, the *allocation of resources* was not consistently sufficient throughout in the tactical SIMP patterns. This was more acute in the tactical-reactive SIMP pattern at the foreign firms. It was clear that allocation was more in line with the top management's perceptions rather than based on thorough assessment of implementation requirements. On the other hand, competitive SIMP patterns revealed that resources allocation was done with a thorough assessment of strategy implementation requirements and implementation potential. This was important in understanding the 'demands' and 'pressures' on the firm arising during the implementation of strategic initiatives.

Furthermore, this thorough analysis was necessary in understanding 'what kind of resources would be needed to implement the strategy' and 'insights into resource allocation decisions'. The Sales Manager of the foreign distribution firm mentioned that *"The allocation of sufficient resources… is necessary for any work, because if there aren't enough resources then you cannot complete the work… and here the main word is 'sufficient' in each area. Resources should be sufficient and not deficient. If deficient*

then that area will be in problems. We are facing this problem in investment needed for improving account receivables, and now ERP implementation."

5.6.3. SIMP Process Competitiveness

The Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns showed differential levels of attention to SIMP process competitiveness beyond the SIMP process efficiency. The SIMP activities like *competitive linking and prioritizing of implementation actions, contextualized formulizing, performance management, managing the interlinked strategic initiative projects, and learning utilization* emerged as important contributors towards increasing the competitiveness of SIMP process. Clearly, the firms pursuing the Competitive patterns showed 'detailed' and 'spirited' engagement in consistently addressing the SIMP competitiveness. However, the Tactical implementing firms did not show much engagement in the competitive linking and prioritizing, forward-feeding or feeding-in.

The Competitive implementing patterns revealed a strong emphasis on ***competitive linking of implementation actions*** with competitive gains as a result of strategy implementation at the foreign and indigenous firms. This enabled those firms to analyse the potential suitability of different implementation options in view of competitive gains. This was consciously driven by the strategic actors and required 'clarity of purpose' among top management and middle managers to devise appropriate implementation actions. This was achieved by developing agreed ***performance goals*** at different levels of organization and those performance goals were 'synthesized' with firm's strategy.

For an example, the indigenous yarn textile firm was working on establishing local market in Pakistan for better production capacity utilization and competitive advantage over other foreign firms in Pakistan. The firm decided to not utilize wholesalers as the main distribution vehicle for small traders and firms, and thus went against the norm in textile industry in Pakistan. Instead, the firm realized that wholesalers could not communicate effectively about higher quality of yarn provided by the firm. The Managing Director and Senior Middle Management agreed that sales potential and customer

confidence would be much higher in developing own sales force than using wholesalers.

"When we were thinking it through, it was evident that we had two options whether to go for wholesalers or our own sales force and distribution network to reach different geographic zones in Pakistan. Using wholesalers would be similar to competitors and thus dilute our differentiation of high quality, international standard yarn. So we selected our own sales team option, although it cost more and required more efforts. Looking back, we are happy to do that as it made us distinct in the local market." (Director Export and Sales, Indigenous Yarn Textile Company)

There was an emphasis on **competitive prioritizing of implementation actions** in the Competitive implementation patterns. This competitive prioritizing of implementation actions was linked to **contextualized formulizing** and reflected that implementation actions were not only well-thought out but also prioritized in significant detail to guide the implementation effort. The detailed consideration of firm's competitive and internal contexts in strategy formulation helped in establishing the competitive priorities to guide implementation process towards implementation success. The top management and senior managers actively engaged in setting priorities for which actions would precede and will be implemented at what time. This aligned implementation actions with intended strategy and also helped in understanding the intended competitive aims among implementers. This also allowed implementers to prioritize their actions in SIMP process and made implementation a worthwhile effort with contributions to 'competitive value'.

"We prioritized our production, marketing, quality assurance, human resources, even our logistics according to the timing, quality and different variations of new cardiovascular and pulmonary drugs that we wanted to launch. This allowed us to bypass usual managerial conflicts as this was more in line with our strategic priorities." (Group Product Manager, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

This competitive linking was particularly helpful in **managing the interlinked strategic initiative projects** as TMT and MM recognized need for a 'clear identification of priorities' for each project. This prioritization was based on their competitive linkages and specific competitive aims were identified clearly, thus adding more 'substance' and made implementing them more 'meaningful'. Those competitive linkages and priorities

were used to guide managerial actions in managing the pace and progress of each project.

For another example, the successful implementation of multiple projects at the foreign commercial bank such as differentiated relationship marketing, information data separation of commercial banking and investment banking, negotiations for financial leverage over deposit securities with the State Bank of Pakistan were possible because clear responsibilities and 'limits' were established and communicated. The overall leadership was provided by the local top management acting as 'facilitators' and keeping the 'follow-up' of each project thus achieved 'synergies in objectives, resources and outcomes'.

"We pursued different projects simultaneously as our overall strategy dictated. We want to provide differentiation in our services as compared to our competitors, so there were projects for relationship marketing, customer services, our treasury… but it is important to be able pull everything together and thus we need to keep track of these different projects." (Country Treasurer, Foreign Commercial Bank)

The Tactical SIMP process patterns did not reveal such competitive linking or prioritizing of implementation actions. This resulted in inconsistent management of interrelated strategic initiatives at tactical indigenous firms (stationery, terry textile, and pharmaceutical). The top management at those firms engaged in setting broader strategic priorities for departmental actions though competitive priorities were not provided for those initiatives. For an example, the indigenous stationery firm launched strategic initiatives like quality management systematization, new production moulds buying, ERP systems acquisition, and brand equity transition. Each strategic initiative was broadly considered in TMT's discussion for potential performance gains; however, departmental and managerial actions for each of those interrelated initiatives were not prioritized for their competitive linkages.

The top management's preference for world class ERP and quality management systems was seen as priority by middle managers despite the largely internal nature of those projects. There was limited attention and resource provision for brand equity transfer activities during implementation process. This firm purchased used production

moulds from an old European Stationery firm despite the need for new, more modern product designs in its competitive product market. This happened because more attention was paid to implementation tasks without much competitive linking and implement strategic actions with limited competitive sensitivity.

"It was not clear as to which project was more important for our competitiveness, and we ultimately ended up pursuing ERP implementation much more diligently then new product development or branding rejuvenation. This meant inconsistent management of those distinct but very much interrelated initiatives. We saved some money through the completed initiatives but we lost much on the market potential to our competitors. We are playing catch-up in the past three years due to that." (Manager Production, Indigenous Stationery Firm)

The tactical reactive implementation at the foreign Islamic Bank and Distribution firm did not show competitive prioritizing to guide the implementation process. There was a '*laissez faire*' attitude among subsidiary top management and middle management was frustrated as they had to face the customer interface. For an example, the branch network expansion was an important competitive issue at the foreign Islamic bank but due to a lack of clear competitive prioritizing, the implementation never picked up steam.

The Competitive SIMP process patterns revealed strong attention to **performance management** during strategy implementation process as an important recurring SIMP activity. The competitive SIMP patterns showed that both - top and middle management engaged in managing performance at the competitive SIMP indigenous and foreign firms. The existence of 'conscious' and 'active involvement' by TMT and MM ensured that managerial and employee actions remain 'performance driven' and 'goal oriented' for successful SIMP. Strong 'performance orientation' was a core reason behind the 'timely completion' of different implementation tasks. The data reflected on both 'action related' and 'control' dimensions of performance management during the implementation process. The practices varied in the extent of 'managerial intervention' among different firms but the importance of managing performance for successful implementation remained unequivocal.

"You have to make people responsible for their actions. With measurement, you build in the responsibility and accountability. Where the control is coming from? It's coming from

the follow-up… things get done via control through meetings and follow-up; then in the end you get the implementation done." (Brand Manager, Indigenous Baby Care Products firm)

The Competitive SIMP patterns revealed performance management as a key responsibility for both, top and middle management due to their roles in managing performance at the indigenous and foreign firms. Performance management clearly demand 'conscious' and 'active involvement' to ensure managerial and employee actions remain 'performance driven' and 'goal oriented' for successful SIMP. However, the Tactical SIMP patterns showed that performance management was more 'control-oriented' and thus managers and staff engaged in 'top management pleasing' as top management's perceptions heavily shadowed the implementation. For an example, the indigenous terry textile showed top-heavy performance management guided by departmental functions:

"We, top management, monitor annual objectives on a quarterly basis. There is a striker team that we have developed in the organization. It is like an interdepartmental team of three members headed by HR Director, which goes and reviews the objectives of each department. We also review and audit to see if compliance is not there for our agreed task objectives; follow-ups are done to ensure things get done."

In the Competitive implementing firms performance task objectives were considered generally as 'performance pointers' and everyone attempted to achieve these objectives in 'their own professional interest'. For example, the product managers at the foreign pharmaceutical firm were assigned with implementation of a new sales call reporting system. The respondents recalled instances where different 'orientations were at conflict' with each other, due to 'personality differences' or 'technology friendliness' of some managers. However, each manager attempted to overcome these conflicts in order to achieve his own performance objectives. These task objectives varied in terminology used to identify them from firm to firm in terms of point of reference; most firms referred to them as 'task objectives', 'role objectives', 'action goals', 'performance indicators' or 'key objectives'.

In contrast, the foreign Islamic bank did not put much emphasis on objective setting at the task and individual levels. Instead, broad 'overall project objectives' were identified leaving the project's implementation to the 'interpretation of different people' involved. The 'lack of clear task objectives' for different staff members working in different departments and management levels resulted in a 'lack of relevant actions being taken' for the market expansion strategy. Clearly, 'responsibility identification' and managing performance became very difficult resulting in a '*laissez-faire*' attitude among some staff members. Such people got away by focusing on 'individualistic performance gains' that were, somehow, 'counterproductive' in the larger organizational context.

Learning utilization of accumulated learning about competitive reactions and firm's strategy implementation strengths and shortcomings also emerged as a key activity to enhance the SIMP process competitiveness. The influence on implementation success was evident in the Competitive SIMP patterns much more so than the Tactical SIMP patterns. The Competitive implementation patterns showed that both proactive and reactive strategy implementing used forward-feeding and feeding-in activities. This ensured that their key learnings for strategy implementation and their competitive consequences were considered during the strategy implementation. For an example, the intended strategy of local market penetration by the local textile yarn firm necessitated some special measurement arrangements. In order to ensure geographic coverage of the target market and customer satisfaction in Pakistan, the CEO worked with the Director Sales to evaluate and measure market response and feedback against the agreed plan. Some revisions in the 'sales targets' and 'sales team composition' were made as a result of 'random yet intentional' measurements.

"We arrived at a point where we were happy to have successfully implemented our key strategic initiatives like new products, new packaging plant, HR systematization, our increased capacity program and utilization etc. But it was time to use our learnings and keep refining them to establish new bases for our competitive edge in near future. So we engaged in tea pot meetings throughout the firm and arrived at our recent programs that we are implementing such as new plant set up for increased capacity, new soft drinks, etc. So for us it was not just being there at successful implementation, but also to use that to improve, refine and adapt our strategies. You can say we adapted looking at our implementation success sort of midway, not as the end point" (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products)

The Foreign commercial bank, for example, introduced some financial products for Pakistani commercial banking customers based on learning and experiences in 'Far-East Asian' and 'African' markets and successfully implemented 'customer analysis' and 'credit approval' procedures in quick time. The Competitive implementing patterns showed that the firms actively engaged in sensing, realizing or refining phases and the very nature of those phases reflected the utilization of key learnings from the past implementation performance, competitive context, on-going implementation efforts, and customers responses. The indigenous and foreign firms with the Competitive implementing patterns ensured that they not only capture process learnings but also utilize them during the SIMP process. For example, the need for calling back the newly launched drug from market was not planned in advance by the foreign pharmaceutical firm but on 'recognising the need to take corrective actions', product's recall was the only option and later further product development was ensued before the re-launch.

The Tactical implementing firms, however, showed that utilization of key learnings was slow and somewhat problematic. In contrast, the Tactical implementing firms were significantly less incremental in their learning utilization; instead, their synoptic approach to implementation success meant that the learnings were not utilized timely in the implementation process. This caused different issues related to inter-departmental conflicts, customer complaints and business partners' alienation. For an example, the strategic actors at the foreign Islamic bank knew that the branch network needed massive expansion and new financial products needed quick development. However, the top management and the middle management were unable to progress with the implementation regarding those competitive initiatives for several years.

Similarly, the indigenous pharmaceutical firm did not utilize its knowledge of the fact that newly hired sales team expected the 'promised remuneration benefits' before the massive sales push for new products. This failure to utilize knowledge combined with the inability to coordinate actions among different departments like HR, Finance and Sales resulted in loss of sales and some HR. Furthermore, the firm repeated same mistake again in the last financial year showing that learning utilization is significantly dependent on adaptive behaviour and a lack thereof leads to inertia.

5.6.4. SIMP Process Thrust Matching

The matching of implementation phases and underlying activities with SIMP process thrust emerged as another source of implementation success variation amongst the Competitive and Tactical SIMP patterns. The attention to process thrust was significantly higher amongst the strategic of the Competitive implementing firms (top management in the indigenous firms, and local top management and middle managers in the foreign firms). **Feeding-forward** was an important implementation activity in the Competitive - Proactive SIMP patterns. This involved utilization of learning from the assessment of recent implementation performance in shaping the next phase of strategy implementation process. For an example, the indigenous baby products firm realized that their new products in oral care were facing problems from some multinational competitors. The top management and middle management identified the lack of sales team's focus on oral care range and thus product improvements were combined with the sales team's focussed selling. The sales team's composition and workload were reviewed and thus specific focus was provided to sales teams with definitive structure and it helped in creating better sales results.

Similarly, the indigenous food products firm showed **implementive holding** in the reacting phase of the Competitive-Reactive implementing. The TMT decided to intervene based on the key learning in the realizing phase and engaged in implementive holding to put some of the existing strategic initiatives on hold for some time to better align future actions within available resources. Middle Managers and team members with poor implementation track records were relieved from their jobs. This set a precedent in the firm and signalled that strategy implementation is vital for competitive success of the firm in hot drinks market. Financial and executive approvals for hiring were put on hold by TMT as they geared towards reviewing the broader strategic options. The middle Managers and their line staff continued executing a reduced portfolio of strategic initiatives within the adjusted arrangements.

"We ensured that our new product plans were put on hold so that we could reassess our competitive situation and do not spend our resources on something not appropriate for our competitive gains. For example, we shelved some new product ideas of flavoured hot drinks." (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products)

The Tactical SIMP patterns did not show similar sensitivity to matching the process thrust with the implementation activities. This was reflected in the inattention to reactions needed for the foreign Islamic bank as the local top management and the international head office management continued with the status quo. This '*laissez faire*' approach trickled down to other management levels too. The bank failed to react in planning and implementation phases as there was no clear contextualized formulizing to guide implementation process. Similarly, the top management at the foreign distribution firm did not realize that ERP implementation was done without input from middle managers of finance, HR, and sales functions. Strategy implementation process was initiated due to a reaction to the customer demands of better service, and need to integrate the functional reporting. However, the firm did not contextualize plans to show how day-to-day activities will be affected as a result of distribution depth increase and ERP implementation. This caused serious disruptions in jobs of the distribution and finance staff and inevitably they struggled to adjust their work schedules in absence of guiding action plans.

5.6.5. Strategy Implementation Process Thoroughness

Implementation thoroughness varied among the Competitive and Tactical implementing firms. Implementation thoroughness revolved around the issues of *involvement of implementers in implementation planning, thorough analysis of implementation requirements, and thorough analysis of firm's implementation potential among firms, detailed action plans, and timing management.*

The ***involvement of implementers in implementation planning*** of top management, middle management, and other implementers led to a 'thorough assessment' for successful implementation. The involvement of all implementers facilitated a thorough analysis of implementation requirements and thorough analysis of firm's implementation potential among firms. The Competitive SIMP patterns in the foreign and indigenous firms revealed that implementers consistently engaged in implementation planning decisions emerged as a distinct resource to achieve the 'input of those who are supposed to implement' and 'commitment of those involved' in implementation even

below the middle management levels. For an example, the engagement of middle managers in developing information software for the commercial banking operation helped the foreign commercial bank in successfully addressing the implementers' requirements.

"When we discussed this with our middle managers, only then it became apparent that we needed to develop separate software for commercial banking, as compared to consumer banking. We also ensured to keep it customizable so that it could be used in other subsidiaries as well." (Country Treasurer, Foreign Commercial Bank)

This provided recognition of the role performed by 'people below the middle management levels' and the need to 'engage' people in implementation planning. Most respondents, particularly the middle managers emphasized the involvement of these people in implementation planning as it meant that the 'dialogue' over implementation options would have taken place 'before' implementation. Therefore, the middle managers were not required to regularly justify different decisions 'during' implementation. Middle managers involved their 'key staff members' in planning for implementation requirements before committing themselves to top management for different implementation actions. This was argued to generate 'managerial trust', 'refine minute details', and 'identify the comfort and commitment zones of staff members'. The Tactical implementing patterns did not reveal such engagement on a consistent basis and the implementation plans were mostly outlined in discussion between members of top management and with limited inputs from middle managers in terms of action selection.

"Every now and then we come across a peculiar situation and we have to sit down and come out with a solution. Incidentally, not everyone is geared in the organization to handle difficult situations or a change that may be put on his table." (Regional Head, Foreign Islamic bank)

The ***thorough analysis of implementation requirements*** was important in understanding the demands and pressures on the firm arising during the implementation of strategic initiatives. Furthermore, this thorough analysis was necessary for matching SIMP requirements with the implementation skills of firm. 'how all departments would be required to function together', 'setting the priority of different

activities during the implementation process', 'opportunity to be realistic - if done properly!', 'what kind of resources would be needed to implement the strategy' and 'insights into resource allocation decisions'. *Thorough analysis of firm's implementation potential* emerged as another key issue related to implementation thoroughness. This revealed a rather subjective side of the implementation planning as self-appraisals of firm's potential to implement a particular strategy could be significantly 'over rated' by top and middle managers.

The Competitive implementing firms showed much more **detailed implementation action plans** and thorough attention to **contingency planning**. These 'action plans' clearly outlined the actions for implementation along with departmental and individual responsibilities and timeframes. For an example, the indigenous baby products firm considered three contingent scenarios for their baby health products range due to the recent market launches of teethers and baby milk by a large competitor. This analysis needed to be 'thorough' and involve the assessment of 'all dimensions' of firm's implementation potential looking at the behaviours, skills, organizational processes, and other firm's resources. The detailed and obviously formal nature of these action plans 'allowed' for effective monitoring and follow-ups by managers during strategy implementation. Similarly, these plans were 'utilized' to assign tasks and to 'arrive at justifications' for different roles 'within' and 'across' the different departments. Also it involved 'negotiations between the top management and middle management' over the resources' allocations and the nature of 'departmental responsibilities'.

"Planning with the consideration of our existing implementation skills... when we design a new project, we first see this that whether we will be able to work with the existing team of people. We see our resources first, what we have or can have, and then we decide on our course of action." (Brand Manager, Local Baby care Products firm)

***

"At least, you work with a well thought out plan; you have seen it in detail. Obviously you prepare feasibilities; see it's important to identify roles and time frames and who will do what? This needs to be discussed and clearly agreed, it ensures that no one comes back at a later stage and say that this was not his work or whatever..." (Business Unit Head, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

In contrast, the Tactical implementing firms were not very thorough in terms of analysing the implementation requirements and implementation skills available in the firms. Also, the details of strategic actions to be implemented and strategic contingencies during SIMP process were not considered thoroughly. For an example, the local stationery firm did not pre-empt the launch of a competitive ball pen product that swept the market share away and became the leader in retractable ball pen category within a very short period of time. The firm was not prepared for this contingency and it took three years for the firm to come up with a similar product. The inability to come up with contingency plans and quick decision making with a consumer orientation led to remarkable market share loss. The indigenous stationery firm used external consultants for the implementation of ERP and Quality Systems and they ensured that implementation contingencies were addressed. This highlighted that the firm was not very successful in implementing new projects without involvement of external expertise to thoroughly address implementation requirements. This was reflected in the partial implementation success achieved by the stationery firm over the past several years.

The researched firms varied in their practices used to conduct the implementability assessments. The foreign commercial bank and foreign pharmaceutical firm used formal planning approaches such as departmental meetings and formal feasibility plans. Other firms like local stationery firm, local textile yarn firm and local baby care products utilized 'idea meetings' and 'project brief approvals' across the organization for implementation potential assessments. The local textile terry firm used the 'briefing from top management' on strategic initiatives and managerial assessments using the 'feasibility outlines'. The local pharmaceutical firm used the 'departmental plans' for implementation assessments, however it largely remained limited to the 'managerial assessment' and top management gave their feedback on those plans ensuring changes accordingly. These different practices were not found to affect the implementation success in different ways, instead how 'efficient', 'well refined' and 'embedded' were these practices made more impact as the 'previous experiences' seemed to help these firms in carrying out thorough analysis. The lack of effective contingency planning created difficulties in the times of market changes or competitive reactions.

"Every now and then we come across a peculiar situation and we have to sit down and come out with a solution. Incidentally, not everyone is geared in the organization to handle difficult situations or a change that may be put on his table." (Regional Head, Foreign Islamic bank)

Another very important finding was the importance of 'right timing' in taking actions, which is not synonymous to quick time. The **timing management emerged** as an important issue in implementation thoroughness as the respondents talked about the 'negative impact' of 'moving too fast' in implementing the planned actions. Similarly, these respondents talked of the need to understand the 'most appropriate time' for execution of planned activities and 'scan the competitor actions and reactions' before implementing some actions. For example, the foreign pharmaceutical firm could have launched the 'generic drugs' in Pakistan market much earlier than it actually did. Instead, the firm 'purposefully delayed' the launch for a year to allow other multinational competitors enter into the market and establish a precedent for foreign firms in this category of products.

The market perceptions for the foreign firm did not allow them to enter with ease as pharmaceutical market in Pakistan was accustomed to foreign firms only dealing in expensive and patented drugs with higher perceived brand image. So these non-patented, generic drugs were not easily appreciated in the market and local firms were preferred due to competitively lower pricing as well. This foreign pharmaceutical firm allowed the market to become receptive to generic drugs marketed by foreign firms and then made sure to launch only in selected categories, such as cardiovascular diseases, to allow the synergy with established product lines and the on-going implementation efforts therein.

On the similar lines, the local food products firm acted very swiftly to enter into a relatively lower priced packaging segment for one of its key products that was left open due to withdrawal of similar packaging range by a foreign competitor from the Pakistan market. This local firm learnt the need to move quickly in this case from one of its previous mistakes committed earlier by deleting a similar product from its product line and then lost significant market share. These contrasting cases of 'delayed' and 'swift'

actions reflected the significance of finding the right time for implementation actions and clearly the rush to get things done got firms into problems as well.

For example, the attempt to launch a retractable ball pen by the local stationery firm in order to quickly counter the newly launched competing products backfired significantly. The firm launched the product without much differentiation and a clear brand positioning that led to retailers' resistance towards the product and thus the product failed badly. The firm needed to take time in responding to competition by developing a suitable product with at least similar features and better brand positioning; instead it opted to rush-in. This 'rushed' approach to implementing decisions led to serious consequences in terms of poor product quality, lost market share, loss of market reputation due to a failed product and significant reduction in future market acceptance for this firm's products in this category. A 'pullover' effect was also found, as rushing during the implementation led to the strategic planning being rushed as well, both emerging and future plans.

It is an interesting finding, as even in a dynamic environment like Pakistan, firms and managers remained conscious of the risks involved in quick implementation and there was a clear behaviour showed by nearly all the respondents to take decisions and actions with 'conscious analysis and evaluation' in appropriate time. The 'fear of taking wrong actions' and 'not being able to recover later' and potential 'negative impact' on managerial and organizational performance were some other major concerns that necessitated time taking during implementation. It is very important to note, however, that the issue of time management was discussed strongly in the context of 'right' time and did not mean 'delays of any kind' once the right timing was identified and also meant a strong commitment to agreed time frames.

5.6.6. Firm - Type Distinctions

Empirically, the data strongly supported that the indigenous firms achieved implementation success via the Competitive – Proactive and Competitive- Reactive approaches towards SIMP. The foreign firms showed that the Competitive– Proactive

clearly led to successful implementation; however, the Tactical- Reactive implementing pattern was not successful for the foreign firms. This reflected that the foreign firms needed to compete at a higher level due to the expectation that the foreign firms bring more expertise, professionalism and better products/ services. This mandated that the foreign firms needed to be proactive as compared to indigenous and other foreign competitors in the market. However, the indigenous firms are not necessarily under the influence of such expectations. These firm type distinctions emerged from key implementation activities and issues that were embedded in the processual context of the researched firms.

The competitive and tactical implementing patterns revealed that the firm type issues - foreign or indigenous, combined with other distinctions to explain variations in implementation success. These idiosyncrasies revealed a complex nature of strategy implementation success in practice amongst these firm types. The competitive foreign firms showed more ***engaged and active international head office*** that regularly monitored and followed up during strategy implementation process. The Competitive implementing foreign firms also showed ***mutually developed strategic goals*** by local and international head office managements. Strategic targets and objectives, when pushed and 'insisted upon' by head office management were not 'accepted totally' by local middle managers and thus 'enough' implementation efforts were not there. This was the highlighted when the foreign commercial bank's international management team 'set very high revenue estimates' for Pakistan operations and 'overlooked' the stronghold of competing local banks over large commercial. There was 'resistance' among local relationship marketing and investment analysis staff that led to 'stifled efforts' and unsuccessful achievement of objectives.

The role of ***clear strategic guidelines by international head office*** was important in 'channelling' the implementation efforts in the right direction. These guidelines were argued to 'point the overall strategy' of the firm 'internationally' and 'strategic focus' of local operations. The respondents from the Competitive implementing foreign commercial bank and foreign pharmaceutical firm talked about the need for 'clarity' in how implementation actions 'contribute to firm's strategic objectives'.

"We get clear information from our international head office, where we are internationally and where we want to go. Other information also comes regularly so we interact to review our actions accordingly." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

The respondents from the foreign Islamic bank and distributor firms were 'not very clear' of their 'strategic direction' and 'how' their local operations 'fit and contribute' to their international operations. This was linked to the feeling of 'not contributing' and a lack of 'sense of future direction' leading to a 'shaky ground for action' and thus efforts were sometimes 'done routinely' to protect own job.

The overall performance management was improved during implementation at the foreign firms due to the **monitoring by international head office**. The strategy implementation faced problems in the cases of 'weak' or 'inconsistent' international monitoring, like the foreign distribution firm and the foreign Islamic bank. The failure in the ERP software's implementation at the foreign distribution firm was indicative of the lack of monitoring by the international head office. The situation 'dragged on for too long' and resulted in serious financial losses. This lack of monitoring also demotivated the staff since they 'could not do much' as the local top management was supervising the implementation. No other forum existed at the international level to report or to raise any concerns. In contrast, the foreign commercial bank clearly and visibly established a 'dual' or 'matrix' responsibility based hierarchy that involved local managers reporting to local top management and also 'working' with 'international-regional heads'. This 'ensured' that an 'appropriate monitoring mechanism' was established and regional heads monitored the 'whole process' via 'on-going reporting' and 'occasional information requests'.

"We communicated strongly in our annual reviews to engage in finalisation of goals, though we respected head office's 'say' too. Later, we gave our input into strategic priorities and managed to tone-down and tone-up for different divisions and types of customers, thus brought some realistic sense to everything." (Vice President Relationship Marketing, Foreign Commercial bank)

The Competitive implementing foreign firms also revealed more **reliable and professionally competent subsidiary top management** as compared to the Tactical implementing foreign firms. This facilitated in getting support of middle managers and respect for top management as the 'expert in firm'. The '**ability to effectively communicate with international top management**' also showed great importance at these foreign firms. The lack of effective communication by local top management with the international head office management in the Middle East, led to the 'lack of financial support' by international Head Office for a branch expansion strategy at the foreign Islamic bank. Clearly, the lack of branches was a major competitive weakness for this bank and 'resentment' among the local senior and middle managers was evident. There was a 'widespread belief' at this bank that it was not due to the idea being difficult; instead the local top management failed to communicate persuasively.

"If you have a successful leader with a successful past and also trust him, then implementation as per plans becomes normal." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical Firm).

Similarly, the Competitive – Proactive foreign firms showed their strength in utilizing organizational systems for successful implementation by putting in place well developed and **refined systems from international operations**. Similarly, the Competitive implementing firms utilized the **entrepreneurial qualities** of their **operationally competent managers**. The local manufacturing of a neuro-response drug in Pakistan at the foreign pharmaceutical firm was a relevant example. The local managers were operationally competent yet entrepreneurial and understood the market need to developed local solutions that were 'realistically implementable'. Local strategic plans were approved by international head offices based on 'usefulness of creative ideas' and their 'implementability' in the Pakistani context. After successful implementation in Pakistan, this idea was implemented in other countries as well like Nigeria and Thailand.

"We were more eager than usual to implement this local manufacturing strategy, because we were the initiators so it was our professional pride at stake." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

The Competitive implementing foreign firms offered more **comprehensive reward programs** than the Tactical implementing foreign firms and that 'drove the implementation effort'. The rewards 'did not just include salary' or 'yearly bonuses' like local firms but also involved other benefits such as 'growth opportunities across international markets', 'managerial development initiatives', 'vocational, on-the-job and offsite' international training programs, 'exposure and training of best practices', 'family health and education incentives' and 'group rewards'. These foreign firms, particularly the foreign commercial bank and pharmaceutical firm 'used' these rewards in linking them to the 'desired performance outputs'. The reward programs at the foreign Islamic bank were 'not very comprehensive' and it faced problems in achieving the desired results from their people due to 'not enough motivation' and 'competitive job offers being better' in the Islamic banking industry in Pakistan.

Task piloting was another distinct resource that foreign firms used for successful implementation as piloting the whole exercise was stated as helpful in 'minimising risk' and making 'refinements and adjustments' before the full-scale implementation. This showed that implementation was not a continuous stream or flow of actions; instead it was 'cyclical' and these foreign firms tend to move forward, then return, and then move forward with refined or improved 'actions'. Somehow, the indigenous firms did not show this use of task piloting and once approved by the local government the project was pursued 'in full' and local firms showed that they could not pilot the whole thing. Instead, the indigenous firms showed piloting of small activities and then went into 'full-flow implementation' due to the shorter 'patience levels' of owners [seth-in Urdu]. The entrepreneurial nature of those owners made them 'do things in full', seldom taking time or starting small in terms of project activity.

"We piloted how we wanted to reach new target customers of upto $5 million annual revenue. It was important, because we were committing to a risky move by deploying resources in a new market without much prior exposure. We later refined a few aspects to ensure successful execution." (Vice President, Foreign Commercial bank)

The lack of task piloting at the foreign distribution and pharmaceutical firms was related to some implementation failures:

"Clearly, we didn't pilot our product via test launch or 'trial run' from our facility to the market conditions. We should have done that but probably our quality control and manufacturing staff got overconfident." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

The Competitive implementing indigenous firms showed stronger emphasis on driving the firms through consistent **agreement of partners** as compared to the Tactical implementing firms. For an example, the baby products firm achieved balanced agreement for different strategic new products and financing arrangements. This enabled the firm to allocate the resources in a timely manner. On the other hand, the partners of the stationery firm were in agreement over technology and investment related strategic initiatives. However, the issues related to new HR and branding activities did not receive enough backing from all of the firm's partners.

"We need agreement at the board level to pursue company-wide plans as family members are owners and it is important that they come on-board. They also head our departments so it's even more important." (Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Pharmaceutical firm).

Similarly, the Competitive implementing indigenous firms showed **moderate authority** levels for middle managers in managing their implementation responsibilities. However, the Tactical implementing firms showed that middle managers were mostly task oriented with very specific action guidelines and policies.

"Owners being everywhere can feel like under-the-scanner all the time, but in broader sense it means everything is done according to the plan. Everyone remains on the charge and can't get lazy and they [top management] could keep a track of day-to-day activities and any changes could be initiated quickly." (Manager Supply Chain, Local Stationery firm)

The **need recognition among top management** for strategic options became relevant due to the significant role of top management in the family owned or group ownership indigenous firms. Top management's active engagement in implementation emerged as paramount for implementation success in the indigenous firms.

"His (CEO's) intervention was meant to emphasize that we do not sell our products on the basis of price but on brand reputation and quality. We were obviously under pressure due to less priced competitors willing to extend good market credit, but the CEO's involvement kept us focussed on quality differentiation. So we kept our sales targets 'real' and achievable." (Marketing Manager, Local Textile Yarn firm).

In general, there was significant reliance on **job security** for motivating managers during implementation process. It was considered important by middle managers at local to be seen as 'taking actions' and performing according to 'top management's intentions'. Job security surfaced as the 'main survival factor' for employees at the local firms to continue work and do not 'search around' much under the 'fear of losing job'. Top management at local firms were argued to 'reward loyalty' through pay increments as an assurance of job continuity. Unlike the foreign multinational firms, jobs were not slashed too much as the local firms 'considered' people and their families' livelihoods at a 'humanitarian level'. This was interesting to note that on one hand these local firms did not adopt modern HRM practices but on the other hand were 'generous' in cases of decisions like job termination.

"It was very important for us to have our director's confidence and also the CEO's confidence. Our job safety is tied to how both of them perceive our performance and communicate to us about it." (Manager Production and Quality Control, Indigenous Stationery firm)

5.6.7. Synergy in strategy implementation process

The issues related to synergy in strategy implementation process also emerged as key influencers for successful implementation. These issues pointed towards activities aimed at integration and balance in the strategy implementation process and achieve synergy of implementation actions to achieve performance gains.

The researched firms needed **inter-functional coordination** between organizational functions for successful implementation. . Some mechanisms that these firms used for inter-functional coordination included 'Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems', 'Inter-departmental progress meetings', 'Coordination teams', 'Coordination meetings', 'interoffice mail' and 'Heads of Departments' meeting'. Clearly, the Competitive implementing firms showed much more **integrated organizing** of organizational

functions and the top management. The Tactical implementing firms revealed the issues related to inter-departmental conflicts that were not resolved timely by top management. The foreign pharmaceutical firm and the indigenous food products went through restructuring for commercial banking and new product developments. The nature of jobs, hierarchies, work schedules, and responsibilities changed for senior and middle managers at these firms. **Strategy commitment and strong support for strategy** was provided by the top management and this resulted in managers being consistently focussed on implementing strategic roles.

The Competitive implementing firms worked with **realistic goals** and allowed **diversity of opinions** at different organizational levels. The Tactical implementing firms showed that diversity of opinion was limited to top management and occasional involvement of middle managers. The respondents at the indigenous stationery and terry textile firms mentioned that the top management would discuss most strategic issues within top management teams. Occasionally, aka synoptically at the time of planning they would seek opinion of senior managers with years of experience within the firm. This led to distance between top management and the ground realities, in areas such as sales, supply chain, development issues. This led to sometimes 'unrealistic expectations' and 'rushed thinking' in discussing strategic choices thoroughly. This led to partial implementation whenever, the top management expectations were realistic and they communicated ideas clearly. However, in other instances implementation was not smooth or complete.

"It's a combo of strong personalities and everyone is up for opportunities to make his/her mark, and managers have influences too. We recognize diversity in their opinions and deal with it because it's valuable in getting different options on the table." (Country Treasurer, Foreign Commercial bank)

<center>***</center>

"We could not get the issue of sales and finance coordination in time to pass on the agreed benefits committed with new sales team at the time of their hiring. It was demotivating for most of us. We would have suggested a slower recruitment drive." (Group Product Manager, Indigenous Pharmaceutical Firm)

The **clarity of roles and responsibilities** affected strategy implementation as it allowed the implementers to understand their roles in the implementation process. It also made people accountable for successful completion of their tasks and activities as outlined for implementation. The issue of clarity was related to 'blame shifting attitude' that emphasized the need for clarity in what people are required to do for successful implementation. Again, the Competitive implementing firms showed strong emphasis to clarify the roles and responsibilities for successful implementation.

"One has to be very clear and very sure of what is to be done. There should be no hanky panky [useless talk: sic] around… the roles and responsibilities of each department need clarification and the lines of action should be identified. Who is responsible to do what? Otherwise we would be running about without any coherence."
(Brand Manager, Local Baby Products Firm)

<center>***</center>

"Our Country Manager works with the Regional Head at our head office, to identify main targets and then roles are allocated to different people in line with the targets and objectives; these roles and objectives are then negotiated and agreed." (Assistant Vice President, Foreign Commercial Bank)

However, the unsuccessful Tactical implementing foreign Islamic bank was not very clear as to who should be responsible to ensure branch expansion. The guidelines from international head office were also not clear. This created frustration among some senior managers and they left the bank after trying to get clarity over roles.

Strategy commitment and strong support for strategy by the top management also emerged as a major resource to drive successful implementations across both firm types, local and foreign. The respondents argued that top management needs to be present during the implementation process and show 'their commitment' to the planned strategy by remaining focussed on the planned strategic directions and objectives. The respondents strongly argued that top management should commit to the planned strategies and 'not divert here-and-there'. It is important because the overall organization begins to move into the agreed direction and managers 'launch themselves' into different activities. It also provided confidence to the whole organization that the 'needed resources' will be 'provisioned as planned' enabling managers to strongly pursue the strategies. Top management's support, was also crucial beyond the

'lip service', to show real, tangible support towards the agreed strategies. The Business Analyst of the foreign pharmaceutical firm highlighted that:

"Once the strategy is formulated then I think that top management support is necessary ... because, there could be phases in implementing the strategy and there will be good times and bad times and people need guidance. Top management needs to show their support … that they also support the emerging requests, and they take strategic decisions accordingly for successful implementation."

5.6.8. Summary of the sources of implementation success variations

It is evident from the preceding sections of the research findings that strategy implementation process patterns are significantly heterogeneous. This heterogeneity is linked to different levels of implementation success. A detailed, critical analysis of the findings revealed major differences embedded in the some key SIMP process issues. The table 5.8 provides a summary overview of the research findings regarding the SIMP patterns and issues therein highlighting the broader reasons for variations in achieved implementation success.

Table 5.8: Summary Overview of Research Findings - the SIMP Patterns

Key SIMP issues	Competitive Implementing Patterns	Tactical Implementing Patterns
Approach to SIMP	SIMP as a process of competitive value enhancement through implementation and refinement of intended strategy	SIMP as a process of implementation of intended strategy
Level of Implementation Success achieved	Successful (Indigenous-Proactive and Reactive; Foreign- Proactive)	Partially Successful (Indigenous-Proactive) Unsuccessful (Foreign Reactive)
Nature of Implementation Success	Competitive and used to refine strategic choices *within* the SIMP process	Tactical and used to implement strategy as a result *of* SIMP process
SIMP Process Competitiveness	Strong and consistent enactment of SIMP activities aimed at competitive focus and refinement during SIMP process. Timing and speed of implementation actions match competitive requirements	Competitiveness is limited and strategy content and planning drives competitiveness. SIMP process is consistently operational. Timing and speed of implementation actions inconsistent (indigenous) or do not (foreign) match competitive requirements
SIMP Process Thrust Matching	Consistent matching of SIMP activities with the process thrust	Inconsistent (Indigenous firms) or non-existent (Foreign Tactical) matching
SIMP Process Thoroughness	Consistent and active engagement in SIMP activities aimed at increasing SIMP Process thoroughness. Learning utilization is timely throughout process.	Inconsistent engagement in SIMP activities aimed at increasing SIMP Process thoroughness. Delays in learning utilization
Firm-Type Distinctions	Significant attention and response to firm-type issues	Inconsistent attention and response to firm-type issues
Synergy in strategy implementation process	High levels of consistent synergy in SIMP process	Inconsistent (indigenous) or lack (foreign) of synergy

5.7. Discussion of Key Research Findings

The data findings for RQ-1 respond to Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006), Noble (1999) and Li et al. (2010) and critically explore the processual nature of strategy implementation and implementation success in different firm contexts. The data provides strong evidence that in practice, implementation process patterns differ significantly in the researched foreign and indigenous firms. The diversity that emerged provided support to some of the existing strategy implementation literature; however, some important differences also emerged and discussed hereafter.

5.7.1. Competitive and Tactical Strategy Implementation Approaches

The emerged approaches of Competitive strategy implementing and Tactical strategy implementing underlined the importance of the behavioural approach towards strategy implementation. These SIMP approaches highlight the role of processual contingencies that shape the strategy implementation patterns and link to different levels of implementation success. The Competitive strategy implementing and Tactical strategy implementing behaviours are significantly different from the structural, interpersonal, procedural or integrated broad approaches in SIMP literature (Noble, 1999, Anderson, 2004, Jarzabkowski, 2008). The Competitive and Tactical strategy implementing endorsed the need to explore the heterogeneity in how strategic actors approached strategy implementation in the different firm contexts.

The data revealed that all of the researched firms used integration of activities that addressed structural (for example job roles identification, HR, policies, systems) and interpersonal issues supporting Noble (1999) and Skivington and Daft's (1991). However, the key driving forces in the Competitive and Tactical implementing approaches was the heterogeneity in strategic actor's consideration of the potential contribution of strategy implementation process. This led to significant heterogeneity in the utilization of SIMP activities by top management and middle management in different SIMP patterns and firm types. The Competitive implementing patterns showed much more attention to SIMP competitiveness, thoroughness, and synergy in SIMP

process as compared to the Tactical implementing. The heterogeneity in SIMP process patterns also revealed the temporal variations in SIMP process due to heterogeneous activity distribution across phases in different SIMP patterns (Burgleman et al., 2005).

This is in contrast to the existing strategy implementation literature (for example, Li et al., 2010; Noble, 1999; Jarzabkowski, 2008), which does not identify the *differences in the role of SIMP as considered by strategic actors* in different firm types. The researched foreign firms pursued either Competitive-Proactive or Tactical – Reactive SIMP patterns; similarly, none of the researched indigenous firms used Tactical – Reactive SIMP pattern. The Competitive and Tactical strategy implementing process patterns showed that strategic actors select different implementation activities in SIMP phases depending on how they view the role of strategy implementation in their firms. The Competitive or Tactical implementing thus emphasize the need to understand behavioural differences in how strategic actors and subsequently their firms engage with a strategic phenomenon like strategy implementation.

The contextual contingencies like firm - type, SIMP approach and SIMP process thrust emerged to shape the implementation patterns and provide processual evidence for contingency orientation in strategy implementation (Govindarajan, 1988). The research findings reject the existence of either the rational or the emergent extremes in strategy implementation process patterns (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005; Mintzberg, 1978). The findings reject the notion of a universally similar implementation process as suggested by Schultz et al. (1987), Kaplan and Norton (1996) and Bossidy and Charan (2002). The heterogeneity in implementation patterns revealed the use of an option-theoretic logic by strategic actors in pursuing a particular SIMP pattern in the different firm types (Bowman and Hurry, 1993: 760).

This shows that the subjectivity of managerial agency played an influential role in adoption of a particular SIMP pattern and contextual contingencies like firm - type, SIMP approach and SIMP process thrust played key part in this adoption of SIMP patterns. The SIMP patterns revealed human agency for strategy implementation and the agency behaviour influences on implementation of firms' strategies (Becker, 2005).

5.7.2. Implementation Success and SIMP Process Performance

The research findings challenge the existing conceptualization of implementation success as an indicator of adoption and institutionalization of firm's strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2010). The research findings showed that the criteria and nature of implementation success differ significantly in the Competitive and Tactical implementing firms. The Tactical implementing patterns showed that the criteria used for implementation success was indeed adoption and institutionalization of firm's strategy. However, the Competitive implementing patterns showed that the competitive implementing firms considered implementation as successful when it enabled adoption *and* refinement of strategy for competitive gains. This issue of refinement of strategy's effectiveness through SIMP is an important part of the core of emerging implementation heterogeneity. This is evidenced by the process phases such as reinforcing and refining in the Competitive SIMP process patterns and routinization in the Tactical – Proactive SIMP pattern.

This questions the existing theoretical position of strategy implementation in much of the strategy process literature 'as a matter of operational detail and tactical adjustments.' (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006: 701) The emerged sources of variations in implementation success like SIMP process competitiveness, SIMP process thoroughness and synergy in SIMP process also emphasize that in practice strategic actors either adopt an operational – tactical view (Nutt, 1998) or a competitive view of implementation success. This heterogeneity is further substantiated through engagement in heterogeneous strategy implementation activities and their concurrent matching with the appropriate SIMP phases. The issues of implementive holding and argument building, idea adjusting, timing management and learning utilization in the Competitive SIMP patterns are good examples of the consistent competitive focus and related implementation efforts. This finding of the consideration of strategy implementation's contribution in improving strategy effectiveness is an important *extension* to existing conceptualizations of implementation success as an outcome of strategy implementation process.

The research findings also question the value of Rational - Mechanistic implementation process in achieving implementation success in different firm types. Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst (2006), Li et al. (2010) and Hrebiniak and Joyce (2005) have argued for a Rational – Mechanistic approach to strategy implementation research and implementation success. However, the synoptic nature of the Tactical implementing patterns was found to link to partially successful implementation in the indigenous firms and unsuccessful implementation in the foreign firms. The data for the Competitive SIMP patterns clearly showed that the SIMP process was not mechanistic; instead, the implementation process was very much a guided evolutionary process with visible and evolving strategic intentions (Lovas and Ghoshal, 2000).

The implementation process was incremental in the Competitive implementing as reflected by the implementation activities such as learning utilization, idea adjusting, and action integration in the Competitive implementing. The negotiated competitive priorities and competitive linking and detailed action plans provided the managerial guidance for the SIMP process. Clearly, implementation process provided an *active medium* to ascertain the strategy's effectiveness and led to adaptation and competitive refinements during the implementation process. It emerged that the Competitive implementing used implementation success as an incremental outcome in process and also utilised as an input during SIMP process (Langley, 2007). This highlights that implementation success as a process outcome is indicative of the temporal nature of SIMP process and the accuracy of managerial decisions. This supports Langley's assertions and further emphasizes the heterogeneities among the researched firms for the achieved implementation success and its role as a process outcome (Peteraf, 2005).

These distinctions in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns demonstrate the significant influence managerial agency in choice of the criteria of implementation success. This subsequently shaped the strategy implementation process, phases and implementation activities. The competitive implementing patterns better handled the managerial motives such as politics and personal gains during SIMP (March, 1994; Woolridge et al., 2008). Overall, this combined with the qualitative differences in SIMP process competitiveness, SIMP process thoroughness, phase-matching and synergy in

SIMP process all led to implementation success in the Competitive implementing patterns.

5.7.3. Strategy implementation process and Firm-type distinctions

The firm – type distinctions have emerged from the research findings and significantly affect how implementation patterns are shaped. The research findings showed emphasis on the corporate governance at the indigenous firms highlighting the role of competent successors within the owner family for strategic success at the indigenous firms in Pakistan (Zaidi and Aslam, 2006). However, implementation failures at the indigenous stationery firm show that family members in the top management can also create inertia due to learning failures and wishful thinking (Rumelt, 1995). Implementation success at the indigenous firms was strongly related to partners' agreement due to trust among family members, similar goal adoption, higher flexibility, tighter control at less transaction cost and focussed approach towards strategic objectives across functions.

This supports Carney (2005) and Habbershon and Williams (1999) as competent family personnel and partner agreements are crucial sources of higher efficiencies at lesser operational and transaction costs (Levering and Moskowitz, 1993; Aronoff and Ward, 1995). The Principal-Principal conflicts among the indigenous firms with family ownership can have serious negative impact on the organizational performance and therefore the indigenous firms with higher levels of partner agreements are surely in advantageous positions (Young et al., 2008). Both firm types approached human resources management differently as the indigenous firms relied on retaining experienced staff and offered job security to them. This led to the development of dedicated skills among staff due to their learning and experiences within the local firms (Klein et al., 1991) and a higher know-how of the firm's implementation capabilities and context thus lowered the cost of training and inefficiencies due to minimized hiring at different levels.

The foreign firms, on the other hand, relied on offering more rewards, human capital development and performance orientation to manage the human resources (Pffefer, 1994). This supports the dependence of learning and knowledge development within firms on the individuals in the firm (Mavondo et al., 2005). The indigenous and foreign firms differ from each other in their HR philosophies, policies and processes (Schuller, 1992). The indigenous firms approached human resources with more controlling attitude and put the development responsibility on to employees. Foreign firms showed a mixed response as firms with higher implementation success, commercial bank and pharmaceutical firm, considered the human capital development as a priority in their firms. However, both local and foreign firms showed emphasis on finding people based on job requirements and thus differ from Khilji's (1999) findings. On the other hand, salary increments based on seniority, less wages and rewards, and less scope for managerial input into strategic content at local firms concurs with findings of Khilji (2000) and Qureshi (1995) for HR practices among the local Pakistani firms.

The role of ownership and governance is very important for implementation success at the indigenous firms in an emerging economy in Pakistan. This goes beyond the strategy consistency between announced strategy and allocated resources (Schmidt and Brauer, 2006) and strategy implementation scorecarding (Siciliano, 2002). The involvement of owners exceeds these two dimensions and positively impacts the implementation success through partner agreement, clear communication of strategies and expectations and the involvement in implementation planning. Secondly, the local firms showed that local firms are closely held and the owners are not merely legal controllers of these firms; instead, they exert serious management control (Harris and Ogbonna, 2007) in Pakistan. This hints to the tilt of owners of the local firms in Pakistan towards McGregor's (1960) Theory X for employee motivation and engagement in strategy implementation. This is evident from top management's involvement and authority during implementation and the use of job security as the *carrot* to ensure that people keep working in the interest of the firm and according to owner-cum-top management's demands.

The change approach to implementation - hierarchical approach centred on top management for implementation – was more effective for implementation success amongst the indigenous firms (Bourgeois and Brodwin, 1984). In contrast, the collaborative approach – collaborative decision making by top and senior management, generating consensus on strategy and implementation actions, and allowing entrepreneurial managers to implement with top management monitoring – was more effective for implementation success amongst the foreign firms. Furthermore, better integration between their international head offices and subsidiaries resulted in timely involvement and approvals by international head offices of the Competitive implementing foreign. This extends Regner's (2003) concept of strategic activities in corporate centre and periphery in multinational firms to strategy implementation process. The important roles of guiding and facilitating during strategy implementation led to implementation success at the foreign Competitive-Proactive firms.

5.7.4. Strategy implementation: distinct process and substantive phenomenon

The research findings also showed that strategy implementation is a substantive phenomenon with clearly defined purpose, behaviours, requirements, actions and characteristics distinct from other strategic phenomena. It was evident from the respondents' comments that clarity was an important aspect of implementing process, though the researched firms had varying levels of implementation clarity. It was clear from the respondents' discussions that strategic actors and their firms took SIMP seriously, albeit with varying levels of implementation success. The strategy implementation was explained as a distinct substantive process that involved actors engaging in implementation specific activities and resources over time. Strategy implementation did overlap with strategy formulation of strategic content in some phases of heterogeneous process patterns. However, this *overlap did not continue* for the whole of the implementation process in any of the inductively identified strategy implementation process patterns.

Table 5.9: Examples of strategy implementation as a distinct, substantive phenomenon

- *'When we are implementing our strategy, it has to be very clear what we are going to do. We make sure that everyone involved is clear on what they need to do.' (Senior Vice President, Foreign Commercial Bank)*
- *'Negotiations for resources and action responsibilities are of different kind, when it comes to implementation issues. It is always more challenging and sometimes gets messy with emotions flying when it comes to implementation responsibility.' (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical Company)*
- *'Yes, it is somewhat overlapped when we are making strategic plans or review existing ones. Though, we try to clarify in our meetings that implementation actions need thinking of different kind. We try to encourage that.' (Chief Executive, Indigenous Stationery Company)*
- *'We implement with clarity of actions and responsibilities. Without that you cannot implement. Planning for our strategic projects and planning for implementation of those projects are interlinked but need to think them differently.' (Brand Manager, Indigenous Baby Products Company)*

The research findings also identified the interlinked nature of strategy implementation with strategic planning and showed some touch points where learning during the implementation process contributes to refine, improve, or even change the strategic contents of firms. These touch points, like top management's involvement in implementation planning provide empirical support for that implementation can contribute towards better and effective strategic formulation.

The heterogeneous firms and their implementation patterns concur with Hrebiniak and Joyce's (2005) assertions that formulation and implementation are distinct, albeit interrelated. Evidently, SIMP and formulation are intertwined at some time-points in the implementation process; however, the implementation roles and actions are identifiable in the different phases of SIMP process. This finding differs from the general opinion in the strategy formation literature that formulation and implementation are inextricably

intertwined throughout (Mintzberg, 1987; Sminia, 2009). This highlighted the issue of *scope of actions* in the strategy implementation process at the research firms. The scope of actions served as a cognitive indicator for the strategic actors to guide whether acting to decide on strategic direction or acting for how to implement the strategic direction in different phases of SIMP process. The empirical findings thus rejected the idea of strategy process as a larger process, in which formulation and implementation remain inexplicably intertwined. Instead, an attached-yet-distinctive nature of strategy implementation process was observed at the researched foreign and indigenous firms. This is an important recognition and a starting point for the discussion of heterogeneity that was identified in how the foreign and indigenous firms implemented their strategies.

The findings related to the Competitive and Tactical implementing demand a significant review of thinking beyond execution of strategy in successful strategy implementation. The processual issue of consistent execution emerged as a part of strategy implementation process and not synonymous with SIMP as often discussed in the extant SIMP literature (Singh, 1998; Bossidy and Charan, 2002). The presence of significant and complex detail in SIMP process thoroughness and synergy issues placed consistent execution as an important but one implementation activity. The issues related to the criteria and the nature of implementation success also reveal that strategy implementation is more purposive than execution of intended strategy. The utilization of achieved implementation success to achieve the necessary strategy refinements also affirms that in practice, strategy implementation process is broader and includes consistent execution throughout as an important activity.

This distinction emphasizes that the action components have a well-defined position within the implementation process. It is important to note such distinctions as usually SIMP is conceptualized as action (Waldersee and Sheather, 1996) or strategic action (Bourgeois and Broadwin, 1984), whereas the research findings reject such an overemphasis on action within strategy implementation. Instead, the research findings provided insights that implementation success relies heavily on implementation related planning and this exposes currently loose conceptualizations that consider execution and implementation actions as rational outcomes of the strategic formulation (Higgins,

2005). This also positions SIMP as a strategic process and not an operational nuisance (Narasimhan et al., 2004). In addition to execution, the research findings also provided support to the importance of cognitive processes within SIMP influencing the execution of action plans (Boynton and Zmud, 1987; Singh, 1998).

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter presented the research findings emerged from the empirical data regarding the processual explanations for level of achieved implementation success in the researched firm-types, foreign and indigenous. Overall, the research findings reject a simplistic, universal conceptualization of strategy implementation as a rational and mechanistic phenomenon (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005). The data revealed the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns with significant heterogeneity in implementation process at the researched firms. These differences were evident from the variety in implementation activities and phases during strategy implementation. The Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns demonstrated different perceptions among strategic actors regarding the contribution of strategy implementation as a strategic phenomenon.

The Competitive implementing emerged as the behavioural approach of strategic actors and their firms who considered strategy implementation as a strategic process with important potential contributor to competitive performance of firms. The Tactical implementing emerged as the behavioural approach of strategic actors and their firms who considered strategy implementation as a routine mechanism for firms to implement their strategies. The Competitive implementing patterns emerged as consistently successful in strategy implementation in both firm types. The Tactical – Proactive SIMP pattern emerged as partially successful in the indigenous firms. The Tactical – Reactive SIMP pattern was linked with unsuccessful implementation at the foreign firms. These implementation patterns revealed different sources of variation in implementation success. The nature of implementation success, SIMP process competitiveness, qualitative differences in SIMP activities, SIMP process thoroughness, SIMP process

thrust matching, firm type distinction and synergy in SIMP process emerged as the sources of variations in implementation success.

The research findings also question the value of Rational - Mechanistic implementation process in achieving implementation success in different firm types (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Li et al., 2010; and Hrebiniak and Joyce, 2005). The synoptic nature of the Tactical implementing patterns was found to link to partially successful implementation in the indigenous firms and unsuccessful implementation in the foreign firms. The data for the Competitive SIMP patterns clearly showed that the SIMP process was not mechanistic; instead, the implementation process was very much a guided evolutionary process (Lovas and Ghoshal, 2000). The research findings challenge the existing conceptualization of implementation success as an indicator of adoption and institutionalization of firm's strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2008; Noble, 1999; Li et al., 2010). The research findings showed that the criteria and nature of implementation success differ significantly in the Competitive and Tactical implementing firms. The processual heterogeneity in approach towards SIMP as a strategic phenomenon, heterogeneity in criteria and nature of implementation success and firm type distinctions are the most important empirical findings. These SIMP patterns are analysed and discussed for resources management and competitiveness implications in the next chapter 6.

Chapter 6 – Strategy implementation patterns, heterogeneous resources management and competitive implications - Empirical findings and discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings and discussion for how the Competitive and Tactical SIMP process patterns explain the heterogeneous resources management (RQ-2). The competitive implications emerging from the heterogeneity in SIMP patterns and resources management are also presented (RQ-3). The chapter begins by providing the findings related to the heterogeneity in resources management in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns. This is followed by the comparison of competitive implications emerging from the heterogeneity in implementation and resources management; the firm type distinctions are highlighted throughout. This is followed by the discussion of key findings in view of the related SIMP and RBV literatures. The chapter concludes by discussing the implications of research findings for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. The figure 6.1 presents the broader structure of this empirical chapter:
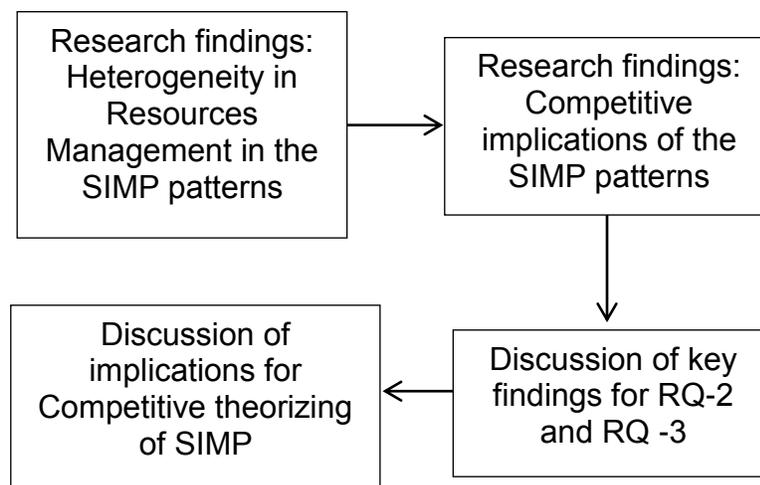
Figure 6.1: Broader structure of the empirical chapter 6

6.2. Heterogeneity in Resources Management in the SIMP patterns

This section presents the findings for the heterogeneous resources management in the different strategy implementation patterns discussed earlier in chapter 5. This heterogeneity in resources management added an important dimension to the level of implementation success. The data revealed that strategy implementation does not start and end with simple manoeuvring of the already available resources. Instead, the firms implemented their strategies in view of existing resources and future availability of other resources. The data revealed three core resources management activities that emerged as relevant to strategy implementation, and included *a) resources accumulation; b) resources acquisition; and c) resources leveraging*. These activities were significantly interlinked and required consistent attention from strategic actors during strategy implementation. The implementation heterogeneity emerged to link with significant differences in resources management at the researched firm types. The following sub-sections will detail the heterogeneity inherent in these resources management activities.

6.2.1. Resources Accumulation

The higher levels of existing resources were clearly important in successful strategy implementation. The accumulation of those resources relied on firm's performance in the near past and the nature of resources portfolio at firm's disposal. The existing pool of resources emerged to have faster cognitive recognition among top and middle management of the firms and often referred to as 'our resources' in the data. These resources ranged from financial, human, market oriented, intellectual and relationship resources. The table 6.1 identifies some key issues grounded in the resources accumulation during strategy implementation in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns:

Table 6.1: Research Findings – Resources accumulation in the SIMP patterns

Resources Accumulation issues	Competitive SIMP	Tactical SIMP
Utilization of existing resources	High stock of existing resources Balanced use of existing resources	Medium to low stock of existing resources Inconsistent or overuse of existing resources
Development of resources	Consistent internal development of resources Consistent refinements in existing resources	Inconsistent internal development of resources Inconsistent refinements in existing resources
Firm type distinctions	High level of firm's own equity *(Indigenous firms)* High access to local financial institutions *(Indigenous firms)* Resource slack at local level *(Foreign firms)* Access to resources at international head office *(Foreign firms)* Access to large financial institutions *(Foreign firms)*	Medium level of firm's own equity (Indigenous firms) Limited access to local financial institutions (Indigenous firms) Limited resources at local level *(Foreign firms)* Limited access to resources at international head office *(Foreign firms)* Limited-to-no access to large financial institutions *(Foreign firms)*

The ***existing stocks of available resources*** were argued to 'reduce the risk' during the implementation process. These current resources were available due to resource accumulation as a result of 'performance over time', 'purpose- driven' resource development or resource acquisition. The role of history also emerged as crucial for resource accumulation in implementation process. The firms accumulated key resources over time like knowledge, experience, learning, maturity of organizational systems, and the financial equity. It was argued that utilizing existing resources during implementation allowed to 'save time' by using the already known resources such as 'people', 'own financial equity', 'existing relations', 'our existing knowledge of the market', and reduce 'the risk of unknown behavioural responses of new team members'.

The utilization of existing resource stocks also helped keeping the cost low by minimizing the need for the acquisition of new resources.

The Competitive implementing firms like the indigenous food products and the foreign pharmaceutical firms exhibited attention to consistent accumulation through refinements and adaptation. *Successful implementation and adaptations via learning utilization* emerged as key influencers at the Competitive implementing firms. This was evident from their emphasis on training, and knowledge sharing that helped in accumulating resources crucial for successful implementation. In particular, the foreign commercial bank reflected most refined HRM staff among the whole sample of firms researched and there was a strong sense of pride among respondents from this bank for how they were 'supported by the HRM staff' and the 'training provided' for implementation effectiveness.

The foreign pharmaceutical firm improved the manufacturing skills at the local level in Pakistan and ensured to retain highly skilled staff. The idea for local manufacturing of a neuro-response drug in Pakistan was floated as the local managers were operationally competent yet entrepreneurial. They realized the market need to developed local solutions and believed that it was 'realistically implementable'. Local strategic plans were approved by international head offices based on the 'implementability' by Pakistani subsidiary. After successful implementation in Pakistan, this idea was implemented in other countries as well like Nigeria and Thailand.

"We relied on our previous success in local manufacturing and thus believed that we can do it. Obviously, we showed to international head office that we are prepared and it was locally implementable. This enabled to gain their trust." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

***

"We realized that we could capitalise on our good brand name and reputation for high quality in our export markets and penetrate the local Pakistani market. We needed to develop a sales team without which, it was not possible to succeed in this local Pakistani market. It took time obviously, but we remained consistent and developed it; now we are working on improving our sales systems in local markets." (Marketing Manager, Local Textile Yarn firm)

The Tactical implementing indigenous firms showed inconsistent resource accumulation. For example, the inability of the local stationery firm to develop new branding was primarily related to the top management's obsession for perfection and marketing staff leaving the firm as a result of continuous failure to move from the idea to its execution. Similarly, the foreign Islamic bank continued to suffer from a lack of market coverage due to insufficient funds for branch expansion and a lack of detailed action plans in the previous years. These examples highlighted that resources accumulation was important in shaping the implementation process and the managerial opinions. It also emerged that thorough and realistic assessment by managers of existing resource's potential over time was crucial in its proper utilization in implementation process.

Importantly, at the Tactical implementing indigenous firms the resource accumulation was inconsistent. For an example, the learning from the ERP implementations and the loss of human resources to carry out the branding revamping at the local stationery firm were occurring simultaneously.

"If, I see in our organizational structure that this person can do the tasks for our strategy, or this extra assignment could be covered by existing structure, or we could work on it while working on the existing assignments, then we do try to slot in the work." (Manager Procurement, Local Stationery firm)

The internally available resources emerged as more crucial for the indigenous firms due to their family ownership behaviour. The ownership in all the indigenous firms is kept exclusive to the founder or his close family members as partners, in an attempt to keep a tight management control over business activities of the firms. In other instances where there was a 'need, the usual pattern is to find someone 'after very careful selection' to the point where a large-dominant majority is still kept by the main owner. This kept the partnership limited for 'others' to the 'financial equity' and 'profit sharing'. The indigenous firms also tended to mostly rely on their existing resources, when planning strategies and relevant activities. The Chief Executive of the local terry textile firm said:

"Yes we are 100% equity financed. We reinvest percentage of our profits and only plan as much that we could invest for. Limitations do arise but we only plan according to our cash flow projections; not much future-based, instead …we believe more in present. We only plan of investment by thinking of and looking at already generated resources and keep ourselves within that limit."

The respondents were cognizant that utilising existing resources has 'limits' and may not be appropriate in situations where new knowledge, skills or funds beyond the available finance are needed. The potential inertia and 'status quo' attached with existing resources did pose problems for major change initiatives. It was also highlighted that relying solely on the existing internally available resources meant that 'opportunities were lost' and at times appeared to be an exercise of 'cutting corners'.

For an example, on one hand the indigenous terry textile firm successfully develop some new terry products for a North American customer. This firm tried to use its existing technical staff to develop a new range of terry products for a large European retail chain. However, after a long product development process the European buyers ended the contract since the developed samples could not meet their requirements. The reasons for this failed implementation included 'lack of staff with expertise in advanced colour dies', 'insistence on using current staff instead of looking to hire new staff with relevant skills' and 'insignificant employees' orientation towards research and development'.

The use of existing human resources also revealed instances when they were 'overburdened' with new activities alongside their current work. This led to 'tensions between staff and top management', 'emotional frustration', and lack of attention on the on-going activities. This created an implementation gap, as both new and current activities were complementary for successful implementation.

"We try to emphasize the use of our current people to get things done. It's our first priority to use them; we try to stretch current staff to be able to cover for activities as per our plans. However, this could be problematic as well when stretched too far, as it could affect our current activities." (Manager Financial Services, Foreign Distribution firm)

It is important to note here that the resource development was considered as a 'part of implementation' and 'implementation itself' and reflected that implementation is not

'linear' or a straightforward movement from point A to point B. Instead, it involved 'using resources' from existing portfolios, refining them to enable the implementation of strategies, 'development of some new resources' in line with the strategic objectives or 'even acquiring new' resources from 'external' sources. The indigenous firms utilized experienced human resource who had the experience of working on 'projects' similar to ones being implemented. The 'ability' of a person to deal with the 'owner culture' [Seth culture - in Urdu] prevalent at indigenous firms was a major consideration as the importance of 'person's cultural suitability' was repeatedly discussed for local firms.

Also, the ***availability of competent family personnel*** was another key resource for the indigenous firms to lead the firm and 'different functions' during implementation process in line with firm's strategy. This was also important for 'smooth transition in top management succession' and different 'functional lead roles'. For example, the local stationery firm had a collective family ownership and the transition took place in different functions as sons of owners were 'groomed over time' to take up their places in the 'top hierarchy' of the firm and formed an 'executive council' of directors. Each director was then appointed as the head of a separate function organized as a department and 'easily relieved' the old guard, while keeping the ownership 'intact' and 'within the family'. The lack of such competent family members was cited as a reason for lack of 'unrelated diversification' at these firms as top management was 'too occupied' in managing their firms.

Some of the indigenous firms (Baby Care, Textile Yarn, Pharmaceutical and Food Products) showed that due to their good market reputation, they had ***access to local financial institutions*** to manage 'financial liquidity' and 'investment' needs. Again, the Competitive implementing firms were much better in achieving good financial deals from these local financial institutions.

"We needed to setup a packaging unit to compete with our main foreign competitor in Pakistani market. Improved packaging was a key to fresh products in food markets and we purchased a new unit after getting loan." (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products firm)

These local banks, however, were not capable of providing loans for 'mega projects' such as 'overseas manufacturing' or 'developing multiple manufacturing sites'. This was mentioned as a 'limiting factor' as neither of six local firms researched had multiple manufacturing sites or plans to expand manufacturing in any export market.

"Our financial structure doesn't allow us to expand internationally; neither external financing is available to start manufacturing. We act as exporters but not like a multinational." (Manager Supply Chain, Indigenous Stationery firm)

The Competitive implementing foreign firms showed three key resources that helped them in resource accumulation and thus helped in their SIMP. These resources included *resource slack at local level, access to resources at international head office, and access to large financial institutions*. The availability of **resource slack at local level** significantly helped foreign firms as they were able to 'sort out responses' with their locally available resources and this included resources of different kinds. Unlike the indigenous firms, this involved more than financial and technical resources to drive implementation effort and was related to human, marketing and information technology resources according to foreign firm's requirements.

The Competitive implementing foreign firms also benefited more from their international scope of operations as it gave them an opportunity of **access to large international financial institutions**, such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other large commercial financial investor groups (some names could not be mentioned here due to confidentiality reasons). These large financial institutions helped in making significant investments at these foreign firms in Pakistan 'without restraint' and 'much pressure' on 'existing' finances. For example, a very large loan for multibillion Rupees project was financed by foreign commercial bank for setting up a new textile unit by a big local customer as this highly technology intensive needed huge capital investment. Funds were arranged via an international financial institution that allowed foreign commercial bank to cater more than one such customer in Pakistan. Provision of such a huge loan to big volume local customers allowed this bank to establish its name among such local customers and also shared learning from this arrangement with other colleagues in different countries.

"We have access to some large European financial institutions as we are currently planning to create another manufacturing facility in Pakistan. Our multinational status and current financial position is helpful." (Business Unit Head, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm).

Similarly, ***access to resources at international head office*** was crucial in successful implementation at foreign firms. Even when preference was given to 'self-reliance' at local level, it was 'not realistic' in all instances due to the 'profit sharing' structure of foreign firms as most of the profits were passed on to their international resource pool. For example, local operations of the foreign distribution firm did not show the existence of 'superior information technology' or 'best work systems' even at international level.

"We don't have access to knowledge systems neither to any training material for management development within the firm. This is important as we have to compete strongly with major local competitors in terms of service delivery." (Sales Manager, Foreign Distribution firm)

In contrast, the foreign commercial and the foreign pharmaceutical firm provided access to financial, human, marketing, technological, and information based resources available at their international head offices. The resources such as 'training manuals', 'credit assessment reports', 'product specialists', 'information databases', 'international patents' and 'product prototypes' were made available. These helped in adopting 'best practices' from around the world, which improved the 'process' and 'skills' of local operations and staff for successful implementation.

6.2.2. Resources Acquisitions

The 'efficient' resource acquisition was considered necessary for successful SIMP and a 'very strategic' aspect of resource management. The resource acquisitions to enable successful implementation showed significant idiosyncratic differences that are embedded in the specific contexts of the indigenous and foreign multinational firms. It was noted that the newly acquired resources were, either 'wholly owned' as a result of acquisition or 'contractually owned' due to agreements with external partners. The table 6.2 presents an overview of resource acquisition issues in the SIMP patterns:

Table 6.2: Research Findings – Resource acquisitions in the SIMP patterns		
Resources acquisitions issues	**Competitive SIMP**	**Tactical SIMP**
Basis of resources acquisitions	Implementation requirements matching Contextual relevance of resources Adjustment with existing resources	Top management's orientation towards development Somewhat unrealistic expectations
Involvement of strategic actors	High - Medium levels of middle manager involvement Active Top Management engagement	Low levels of middle manager involvement Top Management's over engagement
Firm type distinctions	Co-analysis of resources value *(Foreign firms)* Internal acquisitions *(foreign firms)* Access to resources at international head office *(Foreign firms)* Access to large financial institutions *(Foreign firms)*	Limited support from international head office *(foreign firm)* Limited access to international head office funds *(Foreign firms)* Off-the shelf, readymade resources *(indigenous firms)*

For example, in the case of the foreign Islamic bank the ***middle managers were not involved in the implementation planning*** of branch network expansion strategy and the local top management planned the strategy without much managerial input for implementing the strategy. Therefore, the issues such as the State Bank of Pakistan's permissions for branch expansion, land and property acquisitions, the availability of local human resources and the responsibility identification down-the-line were not dealt with at the time of planning. Those 'neglected' issues subsequently led to failed implementation as the bank was not prepared and managers were not clear on their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of expansion strategy. In contrast, the Competitive implementing firms showed much higher involvement of middle managers in resource acquisitions.

The involvement of middle managers in acquisitions planning motivated them and gave a 'feeling of being a part of the whole process'. This involvement of middle managers also helped them to clarify the expectations of top management and subsequently helped in successful implementation. This interpersonal element was achieved through 'interactive dialogue' and by giving responsibility and moderate to major authority to these managers for implementation planning:

"All those people that are involved in the project [due to the roles they need to perform], and whatever resources needed in that project... the human resources, their role in that project that should be known to them. And if people are not involved, then things don't get done and then you have to keep on running after the people." (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products firm)

The data identified two important issues, namely the **acquisition of organizational systems** and **top management's orientation towards systems**. It emerged that the owners of the Tactical implementing indigenous firms like stationery and textile yarn were more interested in 'acquiring off-the-shelf' systems to reduce the internal development cost and time. This was done in view of 'ready to use' approach to facilitate implementation; however, this came at a serious synoptic cost and thus only limited number of such resources were acquired. This combined with inconsistent resources development for accumulation became problematic as well as human skills needed enhancement and market conditions changed soon. It also emerged that not all 'off-the-shelf' resources were adaptable to future market needs and firms could not make repeated investments for such acquisitions.

"We had to develop a system of product quality screening to meet the needs of our European customers. A whole new set of testing equipment was purchased to cater for them and compete with other local competitors who were also approaching those customers." (CEO, Indigenous Textile Terry Firm)

The Competitive implementing firms showed a balance of acquisitions of off -the-shelf solutions and acquiring resources that were developed into more complex, and firm specific resources. The strategic actors placed emphasis on acquiring resources on the basis of their **matching with implementation requirements** and suitability for **adjustment with existing resources**. For an example, the foreign commercial bank

opted to acquire software package and then fully customized it to meet the need for commercial banking. The Country Treasure said *"We could have continued with existing software that we had but we realised after thorough analysis and discussion that existing consumer banking software could not meet the information requirements for commercial banking. We considered possible integration between the two softwares via sharing of database and reporting. This was a master stroke as we could now offer commercial services to some high investment individual customers."*

The issues of 'cost consciousness', 'work' and 'worker facilitation' at local firms emerged to be related to *top management's orientation towards systems*. This orientation led the indigenous firms to invest heavily in some areas like quality management, production infrastructure, and 'any area where they could save money by spending money'. This was evident, for example in the investments for 'buildings and construction', and 'energy plants for electricity needs' at the indigenous textile yarn firm and this not only enabled the firm to meet the large customers' orders without fail at a time when other competitors struggled due to persistent electricity shortages in Pakistan, but also provided 'stability' and 'long term cost savings'. In contrast, the failure in new terry product development was indicative of top management's unwillingness to invest in research and development for innovation, instead existing labs were used and they were not good enough. The reliance of the indigenous stationery and textile terry products firms on the 'equity of owner family' also limited investments for resource acquisitions such as 'machine and equipment for new assembly line' at stationery firm, and 'quality lab' development at textile terry firm.

The Competitive foreign firms demonstrated high levels of ***internal acquisitions*** of organizational systems for successful implementation by putting in place well developed and refined systems from their international subsidiaries. This reduced the development time and also ensured standardization within the foreign firm. a consistent pattern of 'using developed' systems that were already in use elsewhere in other countries. This provided consistency of work systems across different geographic locations, and ensured 'procedural' control for the purpose of 'audits' by international head office staff. This utilization of already refined systems significantly lessened training time, reduced

mistakes during work and saved money. The work systems in terms of work templates, procedural guidelines, training material and organizational policies were provided to these subsidiaries by their international head offices. The important role of **knowledge transfer** became apparent from these internal acquisitions as the firm needed less investment and time for utilization of such resources.

An example of internal acquisitions was the successful manufacturing of the 'neuro-response' drug in Pakistan for patients suffering from dementia and other nervous system disorders. It was achieved as managers were called to an international manufacturing facility and were trained in manufacturing and quality assurance issues. Additionally, different 'procedural manuals' were shared and a 'helpline' was setup between the Pakistani plant and the 'overseas facility' helping in a complete transfer of systems. Material for sales training was also handed over to the Pakistani marketing team with 'brand pointers' for target doctors' selection and promotional material development, thus saved time and effort to guide the 'going-to-market' efforts in Pakistan. The respondents openly 'recognized' and 'appreciated' the role of this contribution in making the whole implementation process 'easy' and 'less hectic'.

The Tactical - Reactive implementing foreign firms struggled to acquire important resources either from internal or external sources locally and internationally. For an example, Banking Compliance Advisor of the foreign Islamic bank talked about the struggle to find trained human resource from inside and outside of Pakistan. *"You have to terminate a few people...sometimes people leave as well. More options are now available to people, from competition and other firms. Fresh blood is needed in some areas also. For example, we currently need trained people to be able to open more branches across major cities in Pakistan and will have to hire them from the outside job market."*

In contrast, the Competitive implementing firms were able to conduct thorough evaluation of **implementation requirements – skills matching** in search for acquisition of resources. For an example, the foreign pharmaceutical firm had a mandatory requirement to have a foreigner as Country Head and given Pakistan's

volatile security condition, this was a difficult option. But, instead of finding someone from international operations, this firm managed to recruit a well experienced professional foreigner from a local competitor in Pakistan. This allowed for 'head office satisfaction', 'understanding of Pakistan market' and above all job requirement 'match with right person' enabling extensive interaction with international and regional head offices. In contrast, the local operations of the foreign Islamic bank were not generating enough revenues to support the market expansion strategy and new branches initiative. This bank was thus dependent on financial support from its 'parent' head office in the Middle East and when that did not materialize, the much touted and 'detailed strategic plan' never got implemented.

6.2.3. Resources Leveraging

Resources leveraging referred to the actions of strategic actors (top management and middle management) that allocated, provided and bundled in view of intended strategy. Two processual activities emerged from the data for resources leveraging during strategy implementation. These activities included resources allocation, resources provisioning. The resource leveraging was based on the intended strategy, the interventions and motivations of strategic actors, and the perceptions strategy's effectiveness and efficiency in resource leveraging.

The *resources allocation* relied heavily on the SIMP pattern pursued by the strategic actors in the researched firms. Specialization of human resources seemed to facilitate the resource allocation decisions across functions, and multiple projects simultaneously pursued by the firms. In addition to better resource allocation, the utilization of resources also became more efficient. Similarly, specialization also led to assignment of focussed human resources to specialized work areas thus improved implementation planning and implementation efforts.

"Now, I am focussing on specific types of drugs and also a separate team. This helped because implementation planning is easier now. For instance, if someone is specialized in cardiovascular products then it is easier for him to come up with related ideas and he also knows the sales team selling his products. Resource allocation is easier as well

due to specialized knowledge of products and markets." (Business Analyst, Foreign Pharmaceutical firm)

The **level of sufficiency** varied among the Competitive and Tactical implementing firms. The Competitive implementing firms were either consistent in their allocations or made necessary adjustments along the way through monitoring and learning utilization. The restructuring at the foreign commercial bank, the local manufacturing of neuro-response drug in Pakistan by the foreign pharmaceutical firm, and adjustment to focus on existing food products by the indigenous food products firm are prime examples where the strategic actors adjusted their resources allocations.

The word 'sufficient' emerged along with the phrases such as 'optimal', 'necessary', 'required', 'needed' or 'enough'. These key words pointed towards the recognition and assessment by the top management and middle management to allocate sufficient resources for successful SIMP. The interpretations of top management and middle managers for 'what is sufficient' emerged as an area of potential conflict but the Competitive implementing firms developed **'working agreements'** between strategic actors. The level of candour and embracing diversity of opinion contributed to keep resource allocations in line with agreed goals and performance levels. The Tactical implementing firms were again inconsistent in sufficient resource allocations. The Sales Manager of the foreign distribution firm mentioned that *"The allocation of sufficient resources… is necessary for any work, because if there aren't enough resources then you cannot complete the work… and here the main word is 'sufficient' in each area. Resources should be sufficient and not deficient. If deficient then that area will be in problems".*

The top management in the Competitive implementing indigenous firms engaged in 'moderate negotiations' as compared to top management in the Tactical implementing firms relying more on their personal aptitudes or within TMT discussions. It was argued by different respondents in both types of firms that these allocation decisions are not easy to make and require 'correct judgment' or 'good situational assessment' by the top management. The attitude to cut corners and save money was identified as a major resource allocation related 'obstacle' that hampered SIMP in the Tactical implementing

firms. Comparatively, the Competitive implementing firms demonstrated higher levels of ***resource allocation synchronization for with the intended strategy***. The thorough analysis of implementation requirements enabled such synchronization and allocation of sufficient resources. The Business Unit Head of the foreign pharmaceutical firm highlighted *"the allocations of enough resources are very tough decisions; tough decisions in the sense that you can come up with a strategy which is very much direction-oriented, but when it comes to implementation, then there is a tendency of the management to get the job done with minimum resources, and try to cut the corners as you say. so this should not be done, if they are committed and serious then they should be very open minded in terms of the allocation of resources, be it human resources, material, equipment whatever'.*

Thorough analysis of firm's implementation potential also helped in sufficient resources allocation. This revealed a rather more subjective side of the implementation planning. The self - appraisals and assessments of firm's potential to implement a particular strategy could be significantly 'over rated', even amongst the firms and managers that were perceived to be the 'best-of-breed'. This mandated some objectivity that was provided by agreed goals, action plans and performance objectives.

"Planning with the consideration of our existing implementation skills... when we design a new project, we first see this that whether we will be able to work with the existing team of people. We see our resources first, what we have or can have, and then we decide on our course of action." (Brand Manager, Indigenous Baby care Products firm)

The data showed that resource allocations, once agreed, were considered as *resource commitments* and therefore, ***resource provisioning*** during strategy implementation emerged as an important resources management activity. The sufficient resource provisioning required sensitivity for the timing of resources' availability and timing for implementation action. As discussed in chapter 5, the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns showed differences in timing management by the strategic actors. The foreign firms faced even more complex situation due to the involvement of the international head office in implementation planning and accessing internationally available resources on time. It was argued that provision of these resources needed

'communication clarity' for clear articulation of the 'quality and quantity' of the resources needed along with planned timings.

"Obviously, it is a commitment issue for top management and the firm. Managers expected that top management will deliver on the commitments. Timing of resources provision was important in our action integration phase as we were reacting and changing our product lines." (Deputy Managing Director, Indigenous Food Products)

In view of resource commitments, the Competitive implementing indigenous firms showed effective use of **ad-hoc approvals** for resources allocation and provisioning. 'Adhocism' in other aspects of strategy implementation was stated to be 'counterproductive' and 'unprofessional' but such approvals for financial resources were helpful as local firms remained 'vigilant' to respond to external market situations. This adhocism helped these local firms in Pakistan to 'capitalise' on emerging market opportunities within 'quick time' as these local firms kept their 'expenses' in a 'manageable cycle' with 'tight financial controls'. There was an 'explicit understanding' within these firms that strategies were 'not fixed in stone' and therefore 'minimum' financial commitments were made. This involved approvals by head of departments before 'confirmation of expenditure' such as orders for 'materials', 'advertising' and other expenditures of 'short term nature'.

"Sometimes adhocism means we can't be hundred percent sure if we will continue with some of our activities but this keeps us nimble footed and if anything needs a changed response we manoeuvre as well because we are mentally not too fixed." (Marketing Manager, Local Textile Yarn firm)

Overall, the Competitive implementing firms showed consistent and better resources management as compared to the Tactical implementing firms. The attention to implementive holding by the Competitive-Reactive indigenous food products firm is another example of the use of appropriate timing in resource provisions. Clearly, the data supports that Competitive implementing firms allocated resources and provided them at the right time in the SIMP process enabling firms to respond to process thrust related contingencies. The implementation process heterogeneity emerged as a significant source of heterogeneity in resources management in the researched firms.

6.3. Competitive Implications of the SIMP Process Patterns

A critical examination of the data revealed important competitive implications of the strategy implementation process patterns. These implications revolved around the implementation process performance, action timing and resources optimization within implementation process. These implications are presented hereunder.

6.3.1. Implementation Process Performance

Clearly, the Competitive implementing patterns emerged to lead to successful strategy implementation in both firm types – foreign and indigenous. The meso-level implementation process performance is consistent in the context of the researched firms. The successful strategy implementation in the Competitive implementing patterns linked not only to adoption of the intended strategies, either planned or emerged, but also enhanced the effectiveness of strategy itself. The Competitive implementing patterns revealed thoroughness in implementation and also ensured that SIMP process was competitive oriented and not operational focussed. The examples of adjustments in product line by the indigenous food products firm, the restructuring and proacting by the foreign pharmaceutical firm for development of generics medicine are all reflective of the nature of the Competitive implementing.

In contrast, the Tactical implementing patterns revealed inconsistency in achieving implementation success at the Tactical – Proactive indigenous firms. Additionally, the Tactical – Reactive implementing pattern led to unsuccessful implementation at the foreign distribution firm and the foreign Islamic bank. Clearly, the inconsistencies in implementation success are indicative of poor implementation process performance. The failure in branch expansion for several years at the foreign Islamic bank and the failure in improving customer service and ERP implementation are relevant examples of competitive losses at the firms pursuing Tactical implementation patterns.

6.3.2. Action Timing

Action timing emerged as a key competitive implication for the identified SIMP patterns in the foreign and indigenous firms. The Competitive implementing patterns revealed

that action timing was appropriately contextualized given the firm type and process thrust. For example, the proactive development of generic medicine range was not launched immediately by the foreign pharmaceutical firm. Instead, proacting phase and enacting action plans gave the firm sufficient time to assess market's response to generic medicine of other competitors. When the foreign pharmaceutical firm realized that market is ripe for its generic drugs, it immediately launched with required stocks and a well-focussed sales team. Similarly, the indigenous food products firm underwent realization phase and took corrective implementation actions. This allowed the firm to contextualize its strategic content using implementation process as a medium at the right time. This also led to capture of major market share when its main competitor removed a particular packaging from their product range. The action timing as facilitated by the Competitive implementation patterns is an important dimension for their competitive implications.

In contrast, the Tactical implementing patterns did not show consistent attention to timing of their strategic actions. More attention appeared to be given to operational issues and time management took priority. For an example, ERP implementation was done successfully in agreed time due to involvement of external consultant; however, brand equity rejuvenation initiative was dragged for over six years. Another example is that of the failure in branch expansion for several years at the foreign Islamic bank. Clearly, these firms faced negative competitive situation as a result of these implementation lapses and inconsistencies.

6.3.3. Resources optimization within implementation process

The data provided an interesting insight into resources management at the researched firms. The Competitive implementing firms and their strategic actors attempted to optimize the resources through resources management activities. The synergy in the implementation process was linked to this optimization as top and middle management tried to develop a balance between the use of existing or internally developed resources and new resources acquisitions to facilitate implementation success. For an example, the indigenous food products firm not only focus on internal systems and human skills

development but also attempted to acquire resources complementing existing resources and matching implementation requirements. The deletion of new hot drinks range was also in view of distributing sufficient resources across the main product lines. Similarly, the local manufacturing of neuro-response drug was a case of resource development at the local level.

However, the Tactical implementing firms demonstrated inconsistent attention to finding a balance in their resource portfolios. The cost cutting attitude and overuse of existing staff led these firms to ignore possibilities of combining existing and newly acquired resources in more competitive manner. For an example, the ERP implementation at the foreign distribution firm was done without the use of external consultant or consideration of existing staff's work commitments. This led to resentment among existing staff and they inevitably withheld the information needed for appropriate customization of ERP to be used in the firm's context. Overall, the Tactical implementing firms and managers therein approached resources management with a resource stretch viewpoint and inevitably struggled as a result.

6.4. Discussion of Key Research Findings

The key research findings for RQ-2 and RQ-3 respond to Barney (2001a) and Maritan and Peteraf (2011). These findings show that strategy implementation process is an important organizational process as a source for heterogeneity in resources management and does have serious competitiveness implications. These are discussed hereunder.

6.4.1. Balancing resources accumulation and resources acquisition in SIMP

The Competitive implementing process and the balance therein for the resources accumulation and acquisition supported Maritan and Peteraf's (2011) assertion that in practice firms pursue these activities in a complementary manner. The SIMP patterns offer interesting insights into the balance of resources accumulation and acquisitions during strategy implementation. The Competitive implementing firms were able to find the appropriate balance and therefore develop a more well-rounded resources portfolio

that would enable successful implementation. The Tactical implementing firms showed inconsistency and over reliance on resources accumulation with occasional resources acquisition. It is obvious that human agency in the SIMP process acted to work towards or against this balance in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns (Pettigrew, 2012; Noble, 1999).

This heterogeneity in resources management led to significant resource heterogeneity at the researched firms reflecting their implementation pattern differences (Peteraf, 1993). 'Analyzing investments in resources require an understanding of the intent of the investment—that is, knowing how the resource will be used.' (Maritan and Peteraf, 2011: 6). Furthermore, these heterogeneous resources resulted in heterogeneous interactions within the resource portfolios to impact the implementation success (Foss and Pederson, 2004; Venaik et al., 2005; Gao et al., 2006). The research findings suggest that the virtuous cycles from resources accumulation and acquisitions may not always be possible for firms due to their implementation pattern. The findings also suggest that virtuous gains from the resources management are only possible in implementation when there is synergy between resources management activities during implementation. Clearly, the successful implementation leads to different resource portfolios as compared to unsuccessful implementation and thus contributes to heterogeneous resources available for next cycle in implementation process.

Ricardian rents are also evident from this resources heterogeneity as both, the indigenous and foreign firms utilized differentially efficient resource portfolios for successful implementation (Peteraf, 1993). The average cost of implementation is therefore concluded to reduce significantly for firms with superior implementation success in comparison to firms with poor implementation (Colgate and Danaher, 2000). This contradicts the notion that strategy types are the major drivers of implementation actions (Waldersee and Sheather, 1996; Hrebiniak, 2005). Overall, the research findings suggest that the firms face difficult resource management decisions in strategy implementation and respond differently to improve the effectiveness of the strategy content, in addition to their process efficiencies.

6.4.2. Resources Optimization: a balancing approach for resources management

Maritan and Peteraf (2011) suggested resources accumulation and resources acquisitons as complementary mechanisms. The research findings suggest that human agency involved in strategy implementation process influences the complementary gains from resource accumulation and resources acquisition. The Competitive implementing patterns revealed that strategic actors attempted to optimize resources using accumulation, acquisitions and resource leverage. However, the strategic actors pursuing the Tactical implementing patterns emerged to subjectively influence resources acquisitions for cost saving and personal preferences for ready-made resources.

This challenges the rationality dialogue in strategy and provides empirical evidence that influence for resources management due to managerial agency is not always strategy driven. Managerial gains emerge as an important influencer in resources management activities during strategy implementation process (Woolridge et al., 2008). This reflects that an optimization approach to achieve synergy and performance gains from firm's resources is difficult and rare. The use of detailed action plans, agreed strategy oriented goals, accepting opinion diversity and matching with implementation requirements appeared as important implementation characteristics to facilitate resources optimization. It is argued here that resources optimization is a capability in itself as it allows firms to configure and reconfigure its resources during strategy implementation.

It is important to note that this resource heterogeneity was crucial in the context of each firm type and the inability to appreciate or build upon this heterogeneity was related to implementation failures (Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Heide et al., 2002; Rad, 2005). This is a clear indication of the importance of firm type and resource contingencies in successful SIMP and corresponds with the suggestion that the resource importance varies depending upon contingencies (Aragon-Correa and Sharma, 2003).

6.4.3. Resources intensity in strategy implementation

The research findings further revealed that strategy implementation is highly resource intensive in nature and the availability, allocation and timely provision of different resources are important for successful implementation. The resource management concepts are relevant here (Sirmon et al., 2007, 2011; Morgan, 2000; Finney et al., 2005). The findings highlighted two core resources management processes, albeit with the utilization of different resources amongst local and foreign firms: a) resource availability – based on path dependency, firm history and learning orientations (Barney and Clark, 2007; Lockett and Thompson, 2001); b) resource accumulation – based on the assessments of existing resources, the need to develop resources internally, the importance for implementation success and the cost of resource acquisitions from the factor markets (Barney, 1989); and c) resource leveraging – based on the strategic plans (intended or emergent) and strategy effectiveness orientation, efficiency orientation in resource allocations and bundling for successful implementation (Dierickx and Cool, 1989a,b).

These processes are relatively different from the conceptualizations of resources management by Sirmon et al. (2007) and Morgan (2000). The issue of positioning did not appear to be a distinct process or stage in resources management for implementation at either local or foreign firms. Similarly, the refinements of resources were observed during accumulation and bundling was done during resource leveraging processes of implementation. The data revealed these select resources management activities and thus future research opportunities exist in other firm contexts and types to explore other resources orchestration activities (Sirmon et al., 2011).

6.4.5. Strategy Implementation and Path Dependence

The findings show that path dependence in strategy implementation is high and heterogeneity in the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns influenced heterogeneous implementation resources in different ways. This supports the issue of path dependence for how resources develop and are used in different ways (Penrose, 1959; Teece et al., 1997; and Lockett and Thompson (2001). Important path

dependence issues emerged for the implementation differences amongst the indigenous and foreign firms. Some of these are related to organizational systems, human resources management, performance management, resources availability, and resource accumulation. For example, the inability of the local stationery firm to develop new branding was primarily related to the top management's obsession for perfection and marketing staff leaving the firm as a result of continuous failure to move from the idea stage to the execution stage. Similarly, the foreign Islamic bank continued to suffer from a lack of market coverage due to insufficient funds for branch expansion and a lack of detailed action plans in the previous years.

The important pointer here is the need to recognize the role that existing resource stocks play in determining the strategy implementation (Dierickx and Cool, 1989a). The role of history is found to be crucial for resource accumulation as the knowledge, experience, learning, maturity of organizational systems, and the financial equity are accumulated over time. However, the Tactical implementing emerged to overuse existing resources and thus resources stretched beyond their ideal potential. It is therefore concluded here that strategy researchers should explore the distinctiveness in how and why different firm types achieve implementation success. This is in contrast to conventional research focus on finding the universal rules associated with profitability from successful implementation.

Furthermore, it is argued here that the resources heterogeneity amongst local and foreign firms in Pakistan showed that the strategy process dynamics will be different for different firm types. The resources such as development human capital, systems development, experienced HR, and knowledge sharing from the international operations to subsidiaries or a lack thereof, showed that resources utilized in strategy implementation are at different stages of their lifecycles (Helfat and Peteraf, 2003). The research findings also highlight the importance of *right timing* in managing strategy implementation and necessitate the recognition of the temporal nature of resources and market needs in successful strategy implementation (Shu-Hui, 2004).

Action timing emerged as a key source of competitive gains via in Competitive implementing patterns as strategic responses are implemented at the right time. The issue of implementation speed is usually mentioned as an important requirement for successful implementation suggesting a linear transition from strategic planning to implementation (Judge et al., 1997). However, the research findings contradicted the extant literature to highlight the importance of managerial discretion in whether to speed up or slowdown during strategy implementation. The dynamic external environment in Pakistan, political instability or tough market competition, did not necessarily push firms into speedy implementation; instead, careful situational assessment by top and mid-level management determined the required increase or decrease in the implementation speed for implementation success.

The variance in implementation approaches also emphasizes the strategic value of timing, in addition to the time requirements of doing things right (Dooley et al., 2000). This provides an important insight into Dooley et al.'s observation of the need to know, why successful implementation means slow implementation. This gives credence to the argument that in addition to luck or chance, the timing of resource deployments and managing the speed of processes and routines according to the strategic context is vital (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Barney, 1986). Clearly, this temporal nature of SIMP decisions and resources adds to the complexity and dynamism that exists in strategic practice. This showed that resources could be lost or devalued as a result of implementation failures and successful SIMP may require managers to account for such dynamism in the implementation process. This discussion supports the importance of time in determining resource value and identifies the strategic timing as a dynamic processual issue in SIMP (Ancona et al., 2001).

6.4.6. Competitive implementing process as higher order capability

The Competitive implementing process emerged as a higher order capability due to its ability to *configure* (adoption of strategy) and *reconfigure* (refine strategy) for competitive gains during strategy implementation process. This corresponds to the characteristic of higher order capabilities as the Competitive implementing (Collis, 1994;

Winter, 2003). This directly contradicts with the assertions in the RBV literature that strategy implementation does not involve resources with competitive gains (Barney 2001a; Barney and Mackey, 2005). The Competitive implementing relies on superior implementation skills, process competitiveness, implementation thoroughness, and consistent synergy in implementation process. The ability to achieve these qualities in a strategic process with attention to contextual distinctions embedded in firm type and process thrust is rare and shows that only few firms are able to develop such higher order capability.

This higher order capability nature of the Competitive implementing patterns depended upon the processual nature of these patterns. The Competitive implementing involves implementation activities such as competitive linking, learning utilization, idea adjusting, and argument building. These activities resulted in adjustments in resources and the decisions regarding implementation speed, action choices, human and financial resources. Similarly, the Competitive implementing resulted in adjustments in strategic choices within the process and utilised the level of implementation success within implementation process. This virtuous cycle of institutionalization and refinements in strategy is an important indication of how the Competitive implementing affected critical resources, most importantly firm's strategy itself (Zahra, 2008). In contrast, the Tactical implementing did not result in changing of key firm resources on a consistent basis due to partial or unsuccessful implementation. The differences in the nature of implementation success between the implementation patterns at different firm types are important considerations in understanding the competitive contribution of strategy implementation.

Overall, the research findings reject the simplistic conceptualization of strategy implementation as a straight-forward, rational and sequential phenomenon (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984, 2005). These findings also reject Barney's (2002) argument that implementation is situated in organizing as evident from multiple and complex implementation resources and their path dependencies. Similarly, the SIMP process dynamism clearly shows that competitive advantages from resources exist at the process level with temporal and path dependent consequences.

6.5. Competitive theorizing of SIMP

The research findings for RQ-1, RQ-2, and RQ-3 have provided strong support to the Competitive theorizing argument as set out earlier in the section 3.4. It was argued to conduct complementary-gains research – applying the RBV lens on strategy implementation process. The research findings revealed that implementation heterogeneity exists among the researched firms. The Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns emerged from the data as implementation performance varied for different SIMP patterns and the firm types – indigenous and foreign. The data also revealed significant heterogeneity in resources management as evident in the different SIMP process patterns. Clearly, strategy implementation plays much more strategic role in the Competitive implementing patterns and thus contributes to competitive gains of growth, company trust levels, and improved financial performance.

It is thus concluded here that the current tactical and operational conceptualizations of strategy implementation are based on the tactical nature of criteria used for implementation success by the earlier researchers and some managers and their firms. The competitive theorizing of strategy implementation should look at implementation process heterogeneity and heterogeneity in resources management activities in implementation process. The competitive implications of how strategy is implemented and resources are managed for implementation reveal that strategy implementation involves socially complex and temporally distributed implementation activities. The results mandate that future strategy implementation research should explore competitive consequences of these patterns and activities in more firm types. The table 6.3 presents the synthesis from key findings regarding the competitive theorizing of strategy implementation:

Table 6.3 : Synthesis for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation	
Key issue	**Key pointers**
Heterogeneity in SIMP Process patterns and Implementation Process Performance	• Implementation heterogeneity is linked to how strategy implementation is approached by the strategic actors – Competitive or Tactical, and the firm's type – foreign or indigenous • Implementation heterogeneity also takes into consideration the process thrust of SIMP process • The Competitive SIMP patterns lead to successful implementation in both firm types • The Tactical – Proactive SIMP pattern leads to partially successful implementation in the indigenous firms • The Tactical – Reactive SIMP pattern leads to unsuccessful implementation in the foreign firms. • It is concluded that Implementation heterogeneity is strongly linked to process performance – implementation success. SIMP Competitiveness, Implementation Thoroughness, Synergy and Process thrust matching emerged as key sources for variations in implementation success. • These differences emerge from micro level implementation activities that are temporally distributed differently in the different SIMP patterns.
Heterogeneity in Resources Management	• Implementation heterogeneity explains heterogeneity in three resources management activities; resources accumulation, resources acquisition, and resources leveraging • Clearly, the Competitive implementing patterns reveal a resources optimization approach to balance resources accumulation and resources acquisitions in the strategy implementation context of firms. • Resources optimization approach is a simple yet powerful approach in bridging resources accumulation and

	resources acquisitions during implementation process.
	• The Tactical implementation patterns show inconsistent, and subjective approach to resources management
	• The over emphasis on accumulated resources and subjective resource acquisitions leads to sometimes imbalance in resource portfolio used to implementation strategies
Action Timing	• The Competitive implementing patterns exhibit consistent attention to strategic timing of actions.
	• Both of the Competitive implementing patterns, Proactive or Reactive, utilize continuous learning to implement at the right time
	• The Tactical implementing patterns did not show such meticulous attention to timing, as evident from implementation failures in some strategic initiatives
Implementation Success a source of strategy refinements and effectiveness	• The Competitive implementing patterns use achieved level of implementation success within implementation process to refine strategies.
	• The Tactical implementing patterns use strategy implementation process to achieve implementation and adoption of strategy. This does not involve strategy refinements based on implementation success in the process.

Overall, there is overwhelming support from the research findings that strategy implementation is highly competitive when implementation process patterns is competitive and includes strategy refinement potential in the criteria implementation success. However, Tactical implementing patterns are operational in nature and thus share the current tactical perception of strategy implementation. The Tactical implementing patterns give primacy to strategy adoption and thus competitiveness therein is dependent upon strategic choices. In contrast, the Competitive implementing

patterns give primacy to implementation as well as strategy improvements in the competitive context.

6.6. Conclusion

The research findings highlight that there are significant differences in implementation patterns and how they engage in resources management at the foreign and indigenous firms. These findings strongly support that strategy implementation contributes to competitiveness on its own when implementation success is measured from success in strategy implementation *and* improving strategy effectiveness in the different contexts.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This final chapter initially presents the research overview, followed by discussion of the original contribution of this research and the theoretical and managerial implications arising from this study. The gains from competitive theorizing of strategy implementation via a complementary seeking research are highlighted for investigating strategy implementation from a process and the RBV lens. The limitations and areas for further research are discussed to conclude the thesis.

7.2. Research overview

This research aimed to fill the gap for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation by seeking complementary insights from strategy implementation process and resources management. The indigenous and foreign firms were used as different firm types for exploration of the heterogeneity in the SIMP process. *Chapter one* briefly introduced the motivations behind the research, the broad research scope and the research aim, and research questions and concluded by presenting the thesis structure.

Chapter two provided an in-depth and critical evaluation of the relevant SIMP literature. The limited attention to SIMP issues in the mainstream strategy literature highlights the fragmented nature of SIMP literature and also the relative inattention to strategy implementation process was highlighted. The tactical operational perception of strategy implementation came to the fore of this literature review. Different variance and processual conceptualizations of strategy implementation were critically reviewed and the lack of the RBV as a theoretical perspective in SIMP research was identified as an important gap. The consequences of a lack of theoretical focus and the operational view of strategy implementation process were outlined as key research gaps for understanding the strategic value of successful implementation.

Chapter three reviewed the RBV literature and identified major inattention to strategy implementation in the RBV literature. The inattention to managerial agency in the resources management was also discussed in detail. Recent calls for adopting process

approach in the RBV research were critically reviewed and the research gaps of inattention to strategy implementation and need for process research were used to determine the research aim, research focus and three research questions.

Chapter four provided a commentary of the grounded theory foundations adopted from Suddaby (2006) for this exploratory research. The inductive – qualitative approach was adopted for this research among the indigenous and foreign firms in Pakistan. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection to understand strategy implementation amongst firms from a cross section of manufacturing and service industries in Pakistan. The principles of qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) were used for unitizing and recording/coding and led to a thorough analysis of the data for implementation process heterogeneity and implementation patterns as source of heterogeneity in resources management. The measures taken by the researcher to improve research quality are also discussed.

Chapter five presented the empirical findings for the heterogeneity in implementation process patterns among the foreign and indigenous firms. The Tactical and Competitive implementation approaches emerged from the data based on the firm type, strategic actors' approach towards SIMP, and process thrust. A detailed analysis of these SIMP patterns revealed that the Tactical - Proactive implementation was related to partial implementation success in the indigenous firms. The Tactical – Reactive implementation emerged as unsuccessful in the foreign firms. The Competitive implementing patterns (Proactive and Reactive) were found to be successful consistently in both the firm types. Different sources of variations in implementation success were identified and included nature of implementation success, implementation process competitiveness, implementation thoroughness, qualitative differences in implementation activities, process thrust matching, and synergy in implementation process. The competitive nature of implementation success emerged when the strategic actors and their firms expected implementation and refinements in strategy effectiveness as criteria for implementation success. In contrast, the Tactical implementing focussed on strategy's implementation only. The key findings are then discussed for their comparison with the

relevant literature. The distinction for the Competitive and Tactical implementing patterns are substantiated and unique insights are established.

Chapter six discussed the research findings for the heterogeneity in resources management in different strategy implementation patterns. Three resources management activities emerged from the data: a) resources accumulation; b) resources acquisition; and c) resources leveraging. These three activities revealed important distinctions for the Competitive and Tactical implementation patterns. The Tactical implementing patterns showed preference for use of internally available resources and acquisition of ready-made resources. The Competitive implementing patterns showed a balanced approach for resources management activities as resources optimization was identified to attempt optimization of resources portfolios. These resources management heterogeneities were shaped by the SIMP process pattern and revealed implementation process performance, action timing and resources optimization as key sources of competitiveness from strategy implementation. These findings were compared with the extant literature to establish important analytical pointers for the competitive theorizing of strategy implementation through complementary gains from processual and resources analysis of SIMP process patterns.

The findings refute the notion that the role of strategy implementation is to complement an operational process. The findings identified the Competitive implementing patterns that are rare and highly valuable due to the nature of their successful implementation, their action timing and resources optimization. The Tactical implementing patterns, however, do correspond to existing literature in terms of nature of implementation being operational for adoption of strategy. These findings strongly support that competitive theorizing of strategy implementation is a worthwhile scholarly pursuit. The findings also demonstrated the value of using the RBV for a social, processual phenomenon like strategy implementation as this led to complementary gains related to implementation performance, competitiveness, and implementation process as a source for resources heterogeneity.

Contributions of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to knowledge. The contribution covers a) theoretical implications for *competitive theorizing of strategy implementation* arising from this complementary seeking, exploratory research of the role of strategy implementation in competitiveness by using processual strategy and the RBV concepts; b) managerial implications arising from the research findings.

7.3.1. Implications for Theory

The theoretical implications of this research are significant and highlight the value of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation through complementary-gains empirical research combining the strategy process and the RBV concepts. The empirical findings also challenged some conventional ideas regarding strategy implementation in the literature.

This study identified the core research gap of the *lack of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation* in the extant SIMP and the RBV literatures and contributes to further this as a worthwhile future research agenda. This emerged from the knowledge gaps related to tactical view of strategy implementation, insufficient attention to implementation process heterogeneity and inattention to strategy implementation in the RBV (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Li et al., 2010; Barney, 2001b). This is an important and rare empirical study to combine strategy process and the RBV concepts for the exploration of the competitive implications of strategy implementation. This study argued that the Strategy as Process and the Resource-based views cannot separately enable deeper understanding of the competitive implications of strategy implementation. It is considered vital to utilize concepts from both of these distinct but potentially complementary strategy views and explore the role of heterogeneity in implementation process and resources management for competitive consequences in different firm types.

The empirical findings also highlight the value of *complementary-gains research* for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation and understanding the implementation

process and resources management heterogeneity. Drawing on the Processual strategy and the RBV views, this research used grounded analysis to explore implementation process patterns in the foreign and indigenous firms in Pakistan. This provided a rare empirical example of complementary gains research combining the processual and the RBV concepts (Shanley and Peteraf, 2006). Strategy process concepts of dynamism, temporality, and managerial involvement enabled deeper understanding of implementation process patterns and the underlying sources of pattern variations. Similarly, managerial involvement in resources management during strategy implementation process provided valuable insights into the role of managers from the RBV perspective. Overall, this complementary-gains approach provided a more fruitful and thorough analysis of the competitive consequences of strategy implementation in different firm contexts.

The empirical findings also emphasized the *value of embracing heterogeneity in SIMP research* as strategy implementation process patterns and underlying activities vary significantly. Different strategy implementation patterns emerged from the data depending on the approach of strategic actors towards strategy implementation as a strategic phenomenon, firm's type and thrust of implementation process. These SIMP patterns - Competitive and Tactical implementation, revealed varying levels of implementation success in a foreign and indigenous fims. The findings from these implementation patterns challenged some important ideas in the existing strategy implementation literature. The universal approaches suggested by Noble (1999) and Li et al. (2010) are not followed by firms in practice. Instead, significant heterogeneity exists in strategy implementation.

The data revealed that the different SIMP patterns – Competitive and Tactical are linked to *different levels of implementation success* in different firm types. The Competitive Implementation patterns led to successful implementation in both firm types - foreign and indigenous. However, the Tactical – Proactive pattern was linked to partially successful implementation at the indigenous firms and unsuccessful implementation at the foreign firms. The criteria and nature of implementation success also varied significantly between the Competitive and Tactical implementation patterns. These

findings point to significant heterogeneity in implementation process patterns and the resulting process outcomes. This empirically challenges the role of implementation to adopt and institutionalize strategy (Noble, 1999; Jarzabkowski, 2008). Instead, this empirically findings revealed the role of SIMP in strategy refinements for competitive gains. Clearly, the Competitive Implementing patterns involve the mandate to contribute towards strategy refinements; however, Tactical patterns confine strategy implementation to more conventional, operational role of strategy institutionalization. The empirical findings help in understanding the role and competitive implications of strategy implementation in different firm contexts.

This research also contributes to the RBV literature by identifying how strategic actors manage resources differently in the Competitive and Tactical Implementing patterns. The different implementation process patterns exhibited variations in resources management that linked to significant variations in implementation success and competitive consequences. This provides important empirical insights into the role of strategy implementation as a cause and source of resources heterogeneity in different firm types (Sirmon et al., 2011; Maritan and Peteraf, 2011). These findings reject the tactical perception of strategy implementation as an organizational process and thus call for more attention to competitive gains achieved by firms pursuing the Competitive implementation patterns and competitive losses as a result of partial or unsuccessful implementation.

Overall, this study presents an important departure from the universal approaches to implementation and implementation success and insufficient attention to strategy implementation process in the RBV. This research thus makes a significant theoretical contribution towards competitive theorizing of strategy implementation and provides initial foundations for future research directions as discussed in the section 7.4.

7.3.2. Implications for Managers

Clearly, the need to embrace the contribution and role of strategy implementation in refining strategy effectiveness is an important managerial implication. Managers need to recognize and appreciate their resource contexts and the resource's value of in that

context. This involves identification of resources with importance for implementation success and then managing those resources for superior competitive performance. More strategy implementation literature is needed to be derived from context-specific empirical research and identify practices improving implementation effectiveness and efficiency. There is a strong need for appreciating the strategic value of SIMP in generating competitive advantage and managers need to appropriate strategic rents during the SIMP process.

7.4. Future Research Directions and Limitations

There are some important future research directions as this research calls for attention to competitive theorizing and understanding of SIMP process patterns in a variety of firm contexts. Future research should further the agenda of competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. This is important so that strategy implementation could acquire more prominent position in strategic management literature. The competitive theorizing agenda needs attention to strategy implementation process patterns and their competitive implications in a variety of research settings. Arguably, this is possible using complementary-gains research to analyse the SIMP and resource heterogeneity among other firm types such as small firms (Davila, 2005), professional service firms (Morris, 2001), and technology-based ventures (Lee et al., 2001). It is important to make progress towards generalizable competitive theorizing of SIMP and understand the performance implications of different SIMP patterns.

The Resource-based view needs more research into resources management and resource optimization in strategy implementation process. Resource optimization emerged as an interesting finding of this research and future research should explore the details of this approach and competitive implications for strategic resources. It would be useful, for an example, to see if resource optimization characteristics remain same or change in different organizational and managerial situations. In line with Barney (2001b), future research should also explore the reasons why some competitors remain unable to imitate some crucial yet imitable implementation resources. Future researchers may focus on key managerial decisions, firm's history and their

implementation consequences. Resource development and deployment differences during the SIMP process among different firm types over time are potential avenues for future research (Montealegre, 2002; Nelson and Winter, 1982; Teece et al., 1997).

Similarly, more detailed micro level analysis of heterogeneity in implementation activities and their competitive implications is needed in different contexts. More research attention should be given to activities that are aimed at successful strategy implementation, in contrast to management of implementation barriers and problem resolution. This requires appreciation by future researchers that it is fruitful to critically investigate the managerial practices and interventions aimed at implementation success. Indeed, comparison of different levels of implementation success associated with different implementation patterns and underlying micro activities will provide thorough insights into linkage between SIMP activities and SIMP process outcomes (Pettigrew, 2012; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). Overall, this points to a research agenda with much potential to inform strategy implementation scholarship and practice.

This research, like others, also has limitations that are discussed here. The research focus was limited to resource strengths that lead to successful implementation among different firm types and the issue of resource rigidities (Arend, 2004) was not included in the research scope. There is a substantial body of research in the RBV literature focussing on resource strengths so this is normal of the RBV research. However, given the interest in implementation barriers future research needs to explore the resource weaknesses and their role in competitive disadvantages during SIMP process. The use of single theory for strategic management research is potentially limiting, as strategy is a multifaceted phenomenon. A cross fertilization of the RBV with other theories such as Transaction Cost Economics in future research (Jones and Hill, 1988) may help to better understand the strategy implementation process in different firm types. Future research may also combine other theoretical perspectives with the processual view of strategy.

The use of one country – Pakistan, is somewhat limiting for the generalizability of results to similar country contexts such as India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh; however, such research focussing on single country is common in the RBV literature (see for an example, Chan, 2005). Similarly, qualitative research limits statistical generalization but this research was exploratory in nature and qualitative research allowed for the analytical generalization for two firm types. Future research may be conducted in other countries to ascertain the relevance of the research findings to other countries and increase generalizability of the research findings. The use of a convenience sampling method posed limitations for the inclusion of different industries in the research sample and thus some industries such as telecommunication, pesticides, and leather industries in Pakistan were not included in this research. The diversity of industries researched, though, helped in exploration of implementation issues in a variety of industrial contexts for local and foreign firms in Pakistan.

Small sample studies have been argued to explore RBV issues (Galbreath, 2004; Rouse and Dellenbach, 1999). The access to more than one respondent at four local firms was attempted but only one respondent at each of those firms were available for interview. This created some inconsistency in the use of multiple respondents at each firm; however, using well-informed single respondents from top management is discussed as a strong alternative in the RBV research (Galbreath, 2004).

7.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter provided the thesis overview and reviewed main conclusions of the study, discussed the contributions of this research to knowledge with theoretical and managerial implications. The chapter concluded by discussing the limitations of the research. Overall, this research aimed to address the gap in strategy implementation and the RBV literatures for competitive theorizing of strategy implementation. Despite some limitations, this study provided valuable and interesting insights regarding the implementation heterogeneity, the role of implementation success and implementation as a source of resources heterogeneity. The competitive theorizing agenda for strategy implementation shall be pursued further in future research.

References

Alashloo, F.R., Castka, P. and Sharp, J.M. (2005) 'Towards understanding the impeders of strategy implementation in higher education (HE): A case of HE institutes in Iran', Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 13 (2), pp. 132-147.

Alexander, L. (1985) 'Successfully implementing strategic decisions', Long Range Planning, Vol. 18 (3), pp. 91-97.

Alexander, L.D. (1991) 'Strategy Implementation: Nature of the problem', International Review of Strategic Management, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 73-91.

Al-Ghamdi, S.M. (1998) 'Obstacles to successful implementation of strategic decisions: the British experience', European Business Review, Vol. 98 (6), pp. 322-327.

Ali, H.A. and Birley, S. (1999) 'Integrating deductive and inductive approaches in a study of new ventures and customer perceived risk', Qualitative Market Research: an international journal, Vol. 2 (2), pp. 103-110.

Ambrosini, V. and Bowman, C (2009) 'What are Dynamic Capabilities and are They a Useful Construct in Strategic Management?', International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol. 11 (1), pp. 29-49.

Ambrosini, V., Bowman, C. and Burton-Tayler, S. (2007) 'Inter-team coordination activities as a source of customer satisfaction', Human Relations, Vol. 60 (1), pp. 59–98.

Amit, R. and Schoemaker, P.J.H. (1993) 'Strategic assets and organizational rent', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 14, pp. 33–46.

Ancona, D.G., Goodman, P.S., Lawrence, B.S., and Tushman, M.L. (2001) 'TIME: A NEW RESEARCH LENS', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 26 (4), pp. 645-663.

Andersen, T.J. (2004) 'Integrating the Strategy Formation Process: An International Perspective', European Management Journal Vol. 22 (3), pp. 263–272.

Andrews, K. (1971) The concept of strategy, Homewood, IL: Dow-Jones Irwin

Ansoff, H.I. (1965) Corporate strategy: An analytic approach to business policy for growth and expansion, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Aragon-Correa, A. and Sharma, S. (2003) 'A contingent natural-resource based view of proactive environmental strategy', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 28 (1): pp. 71-88.

Arend, R.J. (2004) 'The definition of strategic liabilities, and their impact of firm performance', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 41 (6), pp. 1003-1027.

Aronoff, C. E., & Ward, J. L. (1995). Family-owned businesses: A thing of the past or a model of the future? Family Business Review, Vol. 8 (2), pp. 121–130.

Augier, M. and Teece, D.J. (2007) 'Dynamic capabilities and multinational enterprise: Penrosean insights and omissions', Management International Review, Vol. 47 (2), pp. 175-192.

Bacharach, S.B. (1989) 'Organizational theories some criteria for evaluation', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 14 (4), pp. 496–515.

Baker, T. and Nelson, R.E. (2005) 'Creating Something from Nothing: Resource Construction through Entrepreneurial Bricolage', Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 50 (30), pp. 329-366.

Baker, T.L. (1994) Doing Social Research, 2nd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill Inc.

Balogun, J. and Johnson, G. (2005) 'From Intended Strategies to Unintended Outcomes: The Impact of Change', Organization Studies, Vol. 26 (11), pp. 1573–1601.

Barney, J.B. (1986) 'Types of competition and theory of strategy: Toward an integrative framework', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 11 (4), pp. 791–800.

Barney, J. B. (2001a) 'Resource-based theories of competitive advantage: A ten-year retrospective on the resource-based view', Journal of Management, Vol. 27 (6), pp. 643-650.

Barney, J. B. (2001b) 'Is the resource-based "view" a useful perspective for strategic management research? Yes', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 26, pp. 41-56.

Barney, J.B. (2002) Gaining and sustaining competitive advantage, 2nd ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Barney, J. B. and Arikan, A. (2001) 'The Resource-based View: Origins and Implications'. In M.A. Hitt, E. Freeman and J. Harrison (Eds.) The Blackwell Handbook of Strategic Management, pp. 124-188, Oxford: Blackwell.

Barney, J.B. and Clark, D. (2007) Resource-Based Theory: Creating and Sustaining Competitive Advantage, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barney, J.B. and Hesterley, W.S. (2008) Strategic Management & Competitive Advantage: Concepts and Cases, 2nd Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall.

Barney, J.B. and Mackey, T.B. (2005) 'Testing resource-based theory'. In D.J. Ketchen and D.D. Bergh, (Eds) Research methodology and strategy and management, Vol. 2, New York: Elsevier.

Barney, J. B., and Zajac, E. J. (1994) 'Competitive organizational behavior: Towards an organizationally-based theory of competitive advantages', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 15, pp. 5-9.

Barney, J.B., Wright, M. and Ketchen, D.J. (2001) 'The resource-based view of the firm: Ten years after 1991', Journal of Management, Vol. 27, pp. 625–641.

Barney, J.B. (1989) 'Asset stocks and sustained competitive advantage: A comment', Management Science, Vol. 35 (12), pp. 1511-1513.

Barney, J. (1991) 'Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage', Journal of Management, Vol. 17 (1), pp. 99-120.

Barney, J. (1997) Gaining and sustaining competitive advantage, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Barr, P. S. (2004) 'Current and potential importance of qualitative methods in strategy research', In D. J. Ketchen and D. D. Bergh (Eds) Research Methodology in Strategy and Management, Vol. 1, pp. 165–88, New York: Elsevier.

Becker, M. C. (2005) 'A framework for applying organizational routines in empirical research: linking antecedents, characteristics and performance outcomes of recurrent interaction patterns', Industrial and Corporate Change, Vol. 14 (5), pp. 817–846.

Bellak, C. (2004a) 'How Domestic and Foreign Firms Differ and Why Does it Matter?', Journal of Economic Surveys, Vol. 18(4), pp. 483-514

Berg, B. L. (2007) Qualitative research methods for social sciences, New York: Pearson.

Bingham, Eisenhardt and Furr (2007) 'WHAT MAKES A PROCESS A CAPABILITY? HEURISTICS, STRATEGY, AND EFFECTIVE CAPTURE OF OPPORTUNITIES', Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Vol. 1, pp. 27-47.

Black, J.A. and Boal, K.B. (1994) 'Strategic resources: traits, configurations and paths to sustainable competitive advantage', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 15, pp. 131–148.

Bonoma, T.V. (1984) 'Making Your Marketing Strategies Work', Harvard Business Review, Vol. 62 (2), pp. 69–76.

Bossidy, L. and Charan, R. (2002) Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done, New York: Crown Business.

Bourgeois, L.J. and Brodwin, D.R. (1984) 'Strategic implementation: five approaches to an elusive phenomenon', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 5, pp.241-64.

Bowling, A. (1997) Research Methods in Health, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bowman and Hurry 1993 - STRATEGY THROUGH THE OPTION LENS AN VIEW OF RESOURCE INVESTMENTS INTEGRATED PROCESS AND THE INCREMENTAL-CHOICE, Academy of Management Review, Vol. 18 (4), pp. 760-782.

Boynton, A.C. and Zmud, R.W. (1990) 'Information technology planning in the 1990's: direction for practice and research', Management Information Systems Quarterly, Vol. 11 (1), pp. 59-71.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', Qualitative Research in Psychology, Vol. 3, pp. 77-101.

Bridoux, F. and Smith, K. G. (2013) 'The Management of Resources: Temporal Effects of Different Types of Actions on Performance', Journal of Management, Vol. 39 (4), pp. 928-957.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2003) Business Research methods, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) Business Research methods, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. and Burgess, B. (1994) 'Developments in qualitative data analysis'. In A. Bryman and B. Burgess (Eds) Analyzing Qualitative Data, pp. 1-17, New York: Routledge.

Bryman, A. (1988) Quantity and Quality in Social Research. London: Unwin Hyman.

Bryman, A. (2008) Social Research Methods, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. and Teevan, J.J. (2005) Social Research Methods, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryson, J. and Bromiley, P. (1993) 'Critical factors affecting the planning and implementation of major projects', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 14 (2), pp. 319-37.

Burgelman, R.A. (1983) 'A process model of internal corporate venturing in the diversified major firm', Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 28, pp. 223-244.

Burgleman, R., Grove, A., and Meza, P.E. (2005) Strategic Dynamics: Concepts and Cases, McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Canales, J.I., and Vila, J. (2005) 'Sequence of thinking and acting in strategy-making', Advances in Strategic Management, Vol. 22, pp. 93-116.

Carney, M. (2005) 'Corporate Governance and Competitive Advantage in Family-Controlled Firms', Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, Vol. 29 (3), pp. 249-265.

Carter, C., Clegg, S. R., and Kornberger, M. (2008) 'S-A-P zapping the field', STRATEGIC ORGANIZATION, Vol. 6 (1), pp. 107–112

Cassell, C., & Symon, G. (1994) Qualitative research in work contexts. In C. Cassell, & G. Symon (Eds.), Qualitative methods in organizational research (pp. 1-13), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Cassell, C.M., Symon, G., Beuhring, A. and Johnson, P. (2006) 'The role and status of qualitative methods in management research: an empirical account', Management Decision, Vol. 44, pp. 290-303.

Casson, M. (2000) 'An entrepreneurial theory of the firm', In N. Foss and V. Mahnke (Eds.) In Competence, governance and entrepreneurship, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cepeda, G. and Martin, D. (2005) 'A review of case studies publishing in Management Decision 2003-2004: guides and criteria for achieving quality in qualitative research', Management Decision, Vol. 43 (6), pp. 851-76.

Cepeda, G. and Vera, D. (2007) 'Dynamic capabilities and operational capabilities: A knowledge management perspective', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 60, pp. 426–437.

Cespedes, F.V. (1991) Organizing and Implementing the Marketing Effort: Text and Cases, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.

Chakarvarthy and Doz, (1992) 'Strategy Process Research: Focusing on Corporate Self-Renewal', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13 (Special Issue), pp. 5-14.

Chakravarthy, B. and White, R. (2002) Strategy Process: Forming, Implementing and Changing Strategies, In Pettigrew, A., Thomas, H. and Whittington, R., Handbook of Strategy and Management, London: Sage, pp. 182-205.

Chakravarthy, B., Mueller-Stewens, G., Lorange, P. and Lechner, C. (2003 Eds.) Strategy Process: Shaping the Contours of the Field, Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Chan, R.Y.K. (2005) 'Does the Natural-Resource-Based View of the Firm Apply in an Emerging Economy?', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 42 (3), pp. 625-672.

Chang, E. and Taylor, M.S. (1999) 'Control in multinational corporations (MNCs): The case of Korean manufacturing subsidiaries', Journal of Management, Vol. 25, pp. 541 - 565.

Charmaz, K. (2000) 'Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods'. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd ed. (pp. 509-535), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Charmaz, K., (1983) 'Loss of self: a fundamental form of suffering in the chronically ill', Sociology of Health and Illness', Vol. 5, pp. 168–195.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Strategies of qualitative inquiry (pp. 203-241), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chebat, J.C. (1999) 'Introduction: special issue on strategy implementation and assessment research – research on implementation deserves as much attention as strategy formulation', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 45 (2), pp. 107-10.

Chia, R. and MacKay, B. (2007) 'Post-processual challenges for the emerging strategy-as-practice perspective: Discovering strategy in the logic of practice', Human Relations, Vol. 60 (1), pp. 217–242.

Choo, C.W. and Bontis, N. (2002) 'Managing Organisational Knowledge by Diagnosing Intellectual Capital'. In C.W. Choo and N. Bontis (Eds), The Strategic Management of Intellectual Capital and Organisational Knowledge, pp. 621-642, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Colgate, M. R. and Danaher, P. J. (2000) 'Implementing a Customer Relationship Strategy: The Asymmetric Impact of Poor versus Excellent Execution', Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 28 (3), pp. 375-387.

Collis, D.J. (1994) 'Research note: How valuable are organizational capabilities?', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 15 (Winter special issue), pp. 143-152.

Conner, K.R. (1991) 'A Historical Comparison of Resource-Based Theory and Five Schools of Thought within Industrial Organization Economics: Do We Have a New Theory of the Firm?', Journal of Management, Vol. 17 (1), pp. 121-154.

Corley, K.G. and Gioia, D.A (2004) 'Identity Ambiguity and Change in the Wake of a Corporate Spin-Off', *Administrative Science Quarterly,* Vol. 49 (2), pp. 173-208.

Costanzo, L. A. (2004) 'Strategic foresight in a high-speed environment', Futures, Vol. 36 (2), pp. 219-235.

Daft (2009) Organization Theory and Design, Mason: South Western - Cengage Learning.

Daft, R. (1983) Organization Theory and Design, New York: West Publishing.

Daft, R.L. and Langel, R. H. (1984) Information Richness: A New Approach to Managerial Behavior and Organization Design, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Das, T.K. and Teng, B. (1999), 'Cognitive biases and strategic decision processes: an integrative perspective', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 36, pp. 757-78.

D'Aveni, R. (1994) Hypercompetition: Managing the dynamics of strategic manoeuvring, New York: Basic Books.

Davila, T. (2005) 'An exploratory study on the emergence of management control systems: Formalizing human resources in small growing firms', Accounting, Organization and Society, Vol. 30, pp. 223–248.

Day, G.S. and Wensley, R. (1998) 'Assessing advantage: a framework for diagnosing competitive superiority', Journal of Marketing, Vol. 52 (April), pp. 1–20.

De Vaus, D.A. (1993) Surveys in Social Research, 3rd ed., London: UCL Press.

Dederichs, J. (2010) 'STRATEGY-AS-PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING AN EXTERNAL GROWTH STRATEGY WITHIN A SUBSIDIARY', PhD Thesis, UNIVERSITY OF SURREY, United Kingdom.

Denscombe, M. (2003) The Good Research Guide: for small-scale social research

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2000) 'Introduction: the discipline and practice of qualitative research'. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research, pp. 1-28, London: Sage.

Denzin, N.K., and Lincoln Y.S. (Eds.) (2008) Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials, 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dierickx, I. and Cool, K. (1989a) 'Asset stock accumulation and sustainability of competitive advantage', Management Science, Vol. 35, pp. 1504 - 1511.

Dierickx, I. and Cool, K. (1989b) 'Asset stock accumulation and sustainability of competitive advantage: Reply', Management Science, Vol. 35 (12), p. 1514.

DiMaggio, P. and Powell, W. (1983) 'The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields'. In W. Powell and P., DiMaggio (Eds), New institutionalism in organizational analysis, pp. 63–82, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Dobni, B. (2003) 'Creating a strategy implementation environment', Business Horizons, Vol. 46 (2), pp. 43-46.

Dodourova, M. (2003) 'Industry dynamics and strategic positioning in the wireless telecommunications industry: the case of Vodafone Group plc.', Management Decision, Vol. 41(9), pp. 859-870.

Dooley, R.S., Fryxell, G.E. and Judge, W.Q. (2000) 'Belabouring the Not-So-Obvious: Consensus, Commitment, and Strategy Implementation Speed and Success', Journal of Management, Vol. 26 (6), pp. 1237-1257.

Dosi, G., Faillo, M. and Marengo, L. (2008) 'Organizational Capabilities, Patterns of Knowledge Accumulation and Governance Structures in Business Firms: An Introduction', Organization Studies, Vol. 29 (8-9), pp. 1165-1185.

Drazin, R. and Howard, P. (1984) 'Strategy implementation: a technique for organizational design', Columbia Journal of World Business, Vol. 19 (Summer), pp.40-46.

Durand, R. and Vaara, E. (2009) 'Causation, counterfactuals, and competitive advantage', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 12, pp. 1245–1264.

Duriau, V.J., Reger, R.K., and Pfarrer, M.D., (2007) 'A content analysis of the content analysis literature in organization studies: research themes, data sources, and methodological refinements', Organizational Research Methods, Vol. 10, pp. 5–34.

projects (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Easterby-Smith, M., Lyles, M. and Peteraf, M. (2009) 'Dynamic Capabilities: Current Debates and Future Directions', British Journal of Management, Vol. 20, pp. S1-S8.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Jackson, P (2008) Management research: theory and practice, 3rd ed., London: Sage.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R. and Lowe, A. (2002) Management Research: An Introduction, 2nd ed., London: Sage.

Easton, K.L., McComish, J.F. and Greenberg, R. (2000) 'Avoiding common pitfalls in qualitative data collection and transcription', Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 10 (5), pp. 703–707.

Economic Survey of Pakistan (2009) Available at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/survey%202008-09 [last accessed June 29, 2009]

Edelman, L.F., Candida, G. and Brush, T.M. (2005) 'Co-alignment in the resource-performance relationship: strategy as mediator', Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 20, pp. 359–383.

Edmondson, A. C., Bohmer, R. M. and Pisano, G. P. (2001) 'Disrupted routines: team learning and new technology implementation in hospitals,' Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 46, pp. 685–716.

Elsenhardt, K. M. and Graebner, M. E. (2007) 'THEORY BUILDING FROM CASES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 50 (1), pp. 25–32.

Eisenhardt, K.M. and Martin, J.A. (2000) 'Dynamic Capabilities: What are they?', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 21 (Special issue), pp. 1105-1121.

Eisenstat, R. (1993) 'Implementing strategy: developing a partnership for change', Planning Review, Vol. 21 (5), pp. 33-6.

Fahy, J. (2000) 'The Resource–based view of the firm: Some stumbling-blocks on the road to understanding sustainable competitive advantage', Journal of European Industrial Training, Vol. 24 (2), pp. 94-104.

Fahy, J. (2002) 'A Resource-based analysis of sustainable competitive advantage in a global environment', International Business Review, Vol. 11, pp. 57-78.

Fandt, J. and Sachss, W. (2008) 'Grounded Theory Method in Management Research: Users' Perspectives', Organizational Research Methods, Vol. 11 (3), pp. 430-455.

Faull, N. and Fleming, P. (2005) 'Turning intentions into outcomes: a quick scorecard to guide implementation', Measuring Business Excellence, Vol. 9 (3), pp. 5-12.

Feldman, M. S. and Pentland, B. T. (2003) 'Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change,' Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 48, pp. 94–118.

Felis, T. and Foss, N. J. (2009) 'Organizational routines and capabilities: Historical drift and a course-correction toward microfoundations', Scandinavian Journal of Management, Vol. 25, pp. 157—167.

Finney, R.Z., Campbell, N.D. and Powell, C.M. (2005) 'Strategies and resources: pathways to success?', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 58 (12), pp. 1721–1729.

Flick, U. (2009) An introduction to qualitative research, London: Sage.

Floyd, S.W. and Wooldridge, B. (2000) Building strategy from the middle: Reconceptualizing strategy process. London: SAGE.

Foss, N. J. and Knudsen, T. (2003) 'The Resource-based Tangle: In Search of Sustainable Foundations', Managerial and Decision Economics, Vol. 24, pp. 291-307.

Foss, N. J. (2011) 'Why Micro-Foundations for Resource-Based Theory Are Needed and What They May Look Like', *Journal of Management,* Vol. 37 (5), pp. 1413-1428

Foss, N.J. and Pedersen, T. (2004) 'Organizing knowledge processes in the multinational corporation: An introduction', Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 35, pp. 340–349.

Frankwick, G.L., Ward, J.C., Hutt, M.D. and Reingen, P.H. (1994) 'Evolving patterns of organizational beliefs in the formation of strategy', Journal of Marketing, Vol. 58, pp.96-110.

Galbraith, J. & Kazanjian, R. (1986) Strategy implementation: Structure, systems and process, St. Paul, Minn: West.

Galbreath, J. and Galvin, P. (2008) 'Firm factors, industry structure and performance variation: new empirical evidence to a classic debate', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 61, pp. 109-117.

Galbreath, J.T. (2004) 'Determinants of firm success: a resource-based analysis', PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology, Sydney.

Gao, G. Y., Pan, Y., Tse, D. K. and Yim, C. K. (2006) 'Market Share Performance of Foreign and Domestic Brands in China', Journal of International Marketing, Vol. 14 (2), pp. 32-51.

Gavetti, G. and Rivkin, J. W. (2007) 'On the Origin of Strategy: Action and Cognition over Time', Organization Science, Vol. 18 (3), pp. 420–439.

George, A. (2009) Quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analysis. In K. Krippendorff and M. A. Bock (Eds.). The content analysis reader (pp. 144 - 155), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gibbert, M. (2006) 'Generalizing About Uniqueness: An Essay on an Apparent Paradox in the Resource-Based View', Journal of Management Inquiry, Vol. 15 (2), pp. 124-134.

Gilbert, C. G. (2005) 'UNBUNDLING THE STRUCTURE OF INERTIA: RESOURCE VERSUS ROUTINE RIGIDITY', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 48 (5), pp. 741–763.

Gilbert, C.G., and Christensen, C.M. (2005) "Anomaly Seeking Research: Thirty Years of Development in Resource Allocation Theory." In Bower, J.L., and Gilbert, C.G., eds. From Resource Allocation to Strategy, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Glaser, B. (1992) Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs. Forcing, Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) The discovery of grounded theory, Chicago: Aldine.

Govindarajan, V. A. (1988) 'Contingency Approach to Strategy Implementation at the Business-Unit Level: Integrating Administrative Mechanisms with Strategy', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 31, pp. 828–853.

Govindarajan, V. and Fisher, J. (1990) 'Strategy, control systems, and resource sharing: effects on business unit performance', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 33 (2), pp. 259-85.

Grant, R. M. (1991) 'The resource-based theory of competitive advantage: Implications for strategy formulation', California Management Review, Vol. 33 (Spring), pp. 114-135.

Guba, E.G. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences', In N.K Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) The Sage handbook of qualitative research, 3rd ed., pp. 191-215, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Guba, G., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research'. In N. K. Denzin, and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds) Handbook of qualitative research, pp. 105-117, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gubrium, E. and Koro-Ljungberg, M. (2005) 'Contending with border making in the social constructionist interview', Qualitative Inquiry, Vol.11 (5), pp. 689-715.

Gulati, P. M. (2009) Research Management: Fundamental & Applied Research. Delhi: Global India Publications

Gummesson, E. (2003) 'All Research Is Interpretive!', Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, Vol. 18 (6/7), pp. 482-492.

Gummesson, E. (2006) 'Qualitative research in management: addressing complexity, context and persona', Management Decision, Vol. 44 (2), pp.167-179.

Gupta, A.K. (1987) 'SBU strategies, corporate-SBU relations and SBU effectiveness in strategy implementation', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 30 (3), pp. 477-500.

Guth, W.D. and MacMillan, I.C. (1986) 'Strategy Implementation Versus Middle Management Self-Interest', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 7 (4), pp. 313-327.

Habbershon, T.G. and Williams, M.L. (1999) 'A resource-based framework for assessing the strategic advantages of family firms', Family Business Review, Vol. 12 (1), pp. 1-25.

Hambrick, D.C. and Cannella, A.A. Jr. (1989) 'Strategy Implementation as Substance and Selling', Academy of Management Executive, Vol. 3 (4), pp. 278–285.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) Ethnography: Principles in Practice, London: Routledge.

Harris, L.C. and Ogbonna, E. (2007) 'Ownership and Control in in Closely-held, Family-owned Firms: An Exploration of Strategic and Operational Control', British Journal of Management, Vol. 18(1), pp. 5-26.

Hart, S. (1992). 'An integrative framework for strategymaking processes', Academy of ManagementReview, Vol. 17, pp. 327-351.

Healy, M. and Perry, C. (2000) 'Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm', Qualitative Market Research – An International Journal, Vol. 3 (3), pp. 118-126.

Heide, M., Grounhog, K. and Johanssen, S. (2002) 'Exploring barriers to the successful implementation of a formulated strategy', Scandinavian Journal of Management, Vol. 18, pp. 217-231.

Helfat, C. and Peteraf, M. (2003) 'The dynamic resource-based view: Capability lifecycles', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 24, pp. 997-1010.

Helfat, C. E., Finkelstein, S., Mitchell, W., Peteraf, M., Singh, H., Teece, D. and Winter, S.G. (2007) Dynamic Capabilities: Understanding Strategic Change in Organizations, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Henderson, R. and Cockburn, I. (1994) 'Measuring competence? Exploring firm effects in pharmaceutical research', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 15, pp. 29–44.

Higgins, J. M. (2005) 'The Eight 'S's of Successful Strategy Execution', Journal of Change Management, Vol. 5 (1), pp.3–13.

Hoffman, J.J., Cullen, J.B., Carter, N.M. and Hofacker, C.F. (1992) 'Alternative methods for measuring organisation fit: technology, structure and performance', Journal of Management, Vol. 18 (1), pp. 45–57.

Holliday, A.R. (2007) Doing and Writing Qualitative Research, 2nd ed., London: Sage.

Holstein, J.A. and Gubrium, J.F. (2004) 'The active interview'. In D. Silverman (Ed.), Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice, pp. 140-161, London: Sage.

Hoon, C. (2007) 'Committees as strategic practice: The role of strategic conversation in a public administration', Human Relations, Vol. 60 (6), pp. 921–51.

Hoskisson, R.E., Hitt, M.A., Wan, W.P. and Yu, D. (1999) 'Theory and research in strategic management: swings of pendulum', Journal of Management, Vol. 25 (3), pp. 417-445.

Hrebiniak, L. (1992) 'Implementing global strategies', European Management Journal, Vol. 10 (4), pp. 392-5.

Hrebiniak, L. and Joyce, W. (1984) Implementing Strategy, New York, NY: Macmillan.

Hrebiniak, L. G. & Joyce, W. F. (2005) 'Implementing Strategy: An Appraisal and Agenda for Future Research'. In M. A. Hitt, R. E. Freeman and J. S. Harrison (Eds) The Blackwell Handbook of Strategic Management, pp. 602- 626, Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Hrebiniak, L. G. (2005) Making Strategy work: Leading effective execution and change, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Hrebiniak, L. G. (2006) 'Obstacles to Effective Strategy Implementation', Organisational Dynamics, Vol. 35 (1), pp. 12-31.

Hutzschenreuter, T. and Kleindienst, I. (2006) 'Strategy-Process Research: What Have We Learned and What Is Still to Be Explored', Journal of Management, Vol. 32 (5), pp. 673-720.

Huy, Q. N. (2011) 'How middle managers' group-focus and emotion affect strategy implementation', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 32, pp. 1387–1410.

Idenburg, P. J. (1993) 'Four styles of strategy development', Long Range Planning, Vol. 26 (6), pp. 132 – 137.

Inkpen A. (2000) 'A note on the dynamics of learning alliances: competition, cooperation and relative scope', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 21 (7), pp. 775-779.

Isabella, L. (1990) 'Evolving interpretations as a change unfolds: How managers construe key organizational events', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 33, pp. 7–41.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2003) 'Strategic Practices: An Activity Theory Perspective on Continuity and Change', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 40 (l), pp. 23-55.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2005). Strategy as Practice: An Activity-Based Approach. London, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2008) 'SHAPING STRATEGY AS A STRUCTURATION PROCESS', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 51 (4), pp. 621–650.

Jarzabkowski, P. and Wilson, D. C. (2002) 'Top Teams and Strategy in a UK University', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 39 (3), pp. 355-381.

Jarzabkowski, P., and Spee, A. P. (2009) 'Strategy-as-practice: A review and future directions for the field', International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol. 11 (l), pp. 69-95.

Jarzabkowski, P., Le, J. K. and Feldman, M. (2012) 'Toward a theory of coordinating: Creating coordinating mechanisms in practice', Organization Science, Vol. 23 (4), pp. 907-927.

Jauch, L.R. and Glueck, F.W. (1988) Business Policy and Strategic Management, London: McGraw-Hill.

Jenkins, M., Ambrosini, V. and Collier, N. (Eds.) (2007) Advanced strategic management, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Johnson, G., Langley, A., Melin, L. and Whittington, R. (2007) Strategy as Practice: Research Directions and Resources, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, G., Melin, L., and Whittington, R. (2003) 'Micro strategy and strategizing: Towards an activity-based view?', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 40, pp. 3–21.

Jones, G. R. and Hill, C. W. L. (1988) Transaction cost analysis of strategy-structure choice, Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 9, pp. 159-172.

Judge, W.Q., Fryxell, G.E. and Dooley, R.S. (1997) 'The new task of R & D management: Creating goal-directed communities for innovation', California Management Review, Vol. 39 (3), pp. 72-85.

Kaplan, R.S. and Norton, D.P. (1996) Balanced Scorecard: Translating Strategy into action, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kaufmann, L. and Becker, A. (2005) 'Overcoming the Barriers During Implementation and Use of the Balanced Scorecard by Multinational Companies in Brazil', Latin American Business Review, Vol. 6 (3), pp. 39-62.

Kazmi, A. (2008) 'A proposed framework for strategy implementation in the Indian context', Management Decision, Vol. 46 (10), pp. 1564-1581.

Ketchen, D.J. Jr, Bergh, D.D. (eds) (2004) Research Methodology in Strategy and Management, Vol. 1, New York: Elsevier.

Ketchen, D.J., Hult, G.T. and Slater, S.F. (2007) 'Towards Greater Understanding of Market Orientation and the Resource-based View, Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 29 (9), pp. 961-964.

Khilji, S.E. (1999) 'An Empirical Study of HRM in Pakistan', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge.

Kibel, B. (1999) Success Stories As Hard Data: An Introduction to Results Mapping, Plenum.

Kim, K., Park, J-H. and Prescott, J.E. (2003) 'The global integration of business functions: a study of multinational businesses in integrated global industries', Vol. 34, pp. 327–344.

Klein, J. A., Edge, G. M., and Kass, T. (1991) 'Skill Based Competition', Journal of General Management, Vol. 16 (4), pp. 1-15.

Klein, J.A. and Hiscocks, P.G. (1994) 'Competence-based competition: A practical toolkit'. In G. Hamel, A. Heene (Eds), pp.183 – 212, Chichester: Wiley.

Kraaijenbrink, J., Spender, J.-C. and Groen, A.J. (2010) 'The Resource-Based View: A Review and Assessment of Its Critiques', Journal of Management, Vol. 36 (1), pp. 349-372.

Krippendorff, K. (2004) Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Kuhn, T. (1962) The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Laine, P. and Vaara, E. (2007) 'Struggling over subjectivity: a discursive analysis of strategic development in an engineering group'. Human Relations, Vol. 60, pp. 29–58.

Langley, A. (1999) 'Strategies for theorizing from process data', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 24 (4), pp. 691-710.

Langley, A. (2007) 'Process thinking in strategic organization', Strategic Organization, Vol. 5 (3), pp. 271-282.

Langley, A. and Tsoukas, H. (2010) 'Introducing 'perspectives on process organization studies', Process, sensemaking, and organizing, Vol. 1, pp. 1-26.

Larkin PJ, Dierckx de Casterlé B. and Schotsmans P. (2007) 'Multilingual translation issues in qualitative research: reflections on a metaphorical process', Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 17, pp. 468–476.

Lee, C., Lee, K. and Pennings, J.M. (2001) 'Internal capabilities, external networks, and performance: a study on technology-based ventures', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 22 (6/7), pp. 615–640.

Lee, R. M. (1993) Doing Research on Sensitive Topics, Newburry Park, CA: Sage.

Leonard-Barton, D. (1992) 'Core capabilities and core rigidities: A Paradox in new product development', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13 (summer), pp. 111-126.

Leonard-Barton, D. and Deschamps, I. (1988) 'Managerial Influence in the Implementation of New Technology', Management Science, Vol. 14 (10), pp. 1252-1265.

Levering, R. and Moskowitz, M. M. (1993) The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America, New York: Currency/Doubleday.

Levitas, E. and Chi, T. (2002) 'Rethinking Rouse and Daellenbach's rethinking: Isolating vs. testing for sources of sustainable competitive advantage', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 23 (10), pp. 957−962.

Li, Y. Guohui1, S., and Eppler. M. J. (2010) 'Making Strategy Work: A Literature Review on the Factors Influencing Strategy Implementation', In F.W. Kellermanns & P. Mazzola (Eds.), Handbook of Strategy Process Research, New York: Edward Elgar.

Lin, S-L. and Hsieh, A-T. (2010) 'International strategy implementation: Roles of subsidiaries, operational capabilities, and procedural justice', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 63 (1), pp. 52-59.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985) Naturalistic inquiry, New York: Sage.

Lippman, S.A. and Rumelt, R.P. (2003a) 'The Payments Perspective: Micro-Foundations of Resource Analysis', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 24 (10), pp. 903-927.

Lockett, A. (2005) 'Edith Penrose's Legacy to the Resource-Based View', Managerial and Decision Economics, Vol. 26, pp. 83-98.

Lockett, A. and Thompson, S. (2001) 'The Resource-Based View and Economics', Journal of Management, Vol. 27 (6), pp.723-754.

Lockett, A. O'Shea, R. P. and Wright, M. (2008) 'The Development of the Resource-based View: Reflections from Birger Wernerfelt', Organization Studies, Vol. 29 (08&09), pp. 1125–1141.

Lockett, A., Thompson, S. and Morgenstern, U. (2009) 'Reflections on the Development of the Resource Based View', International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol.11 (1), pp. 9-28.

Lovas and Ghoshal (2000) 'Strategy as Guided Evolution', Strategic Management Journal,

Vol. 21 (9), pp. 875-896.

Mackenzie, K.D. (1986) Organizational Design: the Organizational Audit and Analysis Technology, Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Kay, K. and Milstein, B. (2008) 'Codebook Development for Team-Based Qualitative Analysis', In K. Krippendorff and M. A. Bock (Eds.). The content analysis reader, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mahoney, J.T. and Pandian, J.R (1992) 'The resource-based view within the conversation of strategic management', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13, pp. 363-80.

Makadok, R. (2001) 'Toward a synthesis of the resource-based and dynamic-capability view of rent creation', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 22, pp. 387-401.

Malik, O.P., and Kotabe, M. (2009) 'Dynamic Capabilities, Government Policies, and Performance in Firms from Emerging Economies: Evidence from India and Pakistan', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 46, pp. 421–450.

March, J. G. (1994) 'The evolution of evolution', In Baum JAC, Singh JV (Eds.). Evolutionary Dynamics of Organizations, pp. 39-49, Oxford University Press: New York.

Maritan, C. A and Peteraf, M. A (2011) 'Building a Bridge Between Resource Acquisition and Resource Accumulation', Journal of Management, Vol. 37 (5), pp. 1374-1389.

Marschan-Piekkari, R. and Welch, C. (2004) Handbook of qualitative research methods for international business, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (2006) Designing Qualitative Research, 4th ed., London: Sage.

Mason, J. (2002) Qualitative researching, 2nd ed., London: Sage.

Matthiesen, J. K and Jarzabkowski, P. A (2009) 'The Role of Conflict in Strategy Tasks', Paper submitted to EGOS 2009 Conference.

Mavondo, F.T., Chimhanzi, J. and Stewart, J. (2005) 'Learning orientation and marketing orientation relationship with innovation, human resource practices and performance', European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 39 (11–12), pp. 1235–1263.

McGregor, D.M. (1960) The Human Side of Enterprise, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Co.

McWilliams, A. and Smart, D. (1993) 'Efficiency v. Structure-Conduct-Performance: Implications for Strategy Research and Practice', Journal of Management, Vol. 19 (1), pp. 63-78.

McWilliams, A., and Smart, D. (1995) 'The Resource-Based View of the Firm: Does It Go Far Enough in Shedding the Assumptions of the S-C-P Paradigm?', Journal of Management Inquiry, Vol. 4 (4), pp. 309-16.

Merton, R. K. (1967) On Theoretical Sociology, New York: Free Press.

Meyer, A. (1982) 'How Ideologies Supplant Formal Structure and Shape Responses to Environment', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 19, pp. 45-61.

Meyer, K. (2003) 'FDI Spillovers in Emerging Markets: A literature Review and New Perspectives', Copenhagen Business School, Working Paper No. 15.

Miles R, and Snow C. (1978) Organizational Strategy, Structure, and Process. McGraw-Hill: New York.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1994) Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miller, D. (2002) 'Successful change leaders: what makes them? What do they do that is different?', Journal of Change Management, Vol. 2 (4), pp. 359-68.

Miniace, J. and Falter, E. (1996) 'Communication: a Key Factor in Strategy Implementation', Planning Review, January/February, pp. 26-30.

Mintzberg, H. (1978) 'Patterns in strategy formation', Management Science, Vol. 24 (9), pp. 934-48.

Mintzberg, H. (1979) The structuring of organizations. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Mintzberg, H. (1983) Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Mintzberg, H. (1987) 'Crafting strategy', Harvard Business Review, Vol. 65 (4), pp. 66–75.

Mintzberg, H. (1990) 'Strategy formation: schools of thought'. In J.W. Fredrickson, ed., Perspectives on Strategic Management, chapter 5, New York: Harper Business.

Mintzberg, H. (1994) 'The fall and rise of strategic planning', Harvard Business Review, January-February, pp. 107-114.

Mintzberg, H. and Waters, J.A. (1985) 'Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent.', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 6, pp. 257-272.

Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B. and Lampel, J. (1998) Strategy Safari: A Guided tour Through The Wilds of Strategic Management, New York: The Free Press.

Mintzberg, H., Lampel, L., Quinn, J. and Ghoshal, S. (2003) The Strategic Process, 4th edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall publishing.

Mir, R. and Watson, A. (2001) 'Realism and constructivism in strategy research: Toward a Synthesis', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 22, pp. 1169-1173.

Mohr, L. B. (1982) Explaining organizational behaviour, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Montealegre, R. (2002) 'A process model of capability development: lessons from the electronic commerce strategy at Bolsa de Valores de Guayaquil', Organization Science, Vol. 13, pp. 514-31.

Morgan, R.M. (2000) 'Relationship marketing and marketing strategy: the evolution of relationship strategy within the organization'. In J. Sheth and A. Parvatiyar (Eds), Handbook of relationship marketing, pp. 481–504, Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE.

Morris, T. (2001) 'Asserting Property Rights: Knowledge Codification in the Professional Service Firm', Human Relations, Vol. 54 (7), pp. 819-838.

Morrison-Beedy, D., Cote-Arsenault, D., and Feinstein, N.F. (2001) 'Maximizing results with focus groups: Moderator and analysis issues', Applied Nursing Research, Vol. 14, pp. 48-53.

Myers, M.D. (2009) Qualitative Research in Business & Management, London: Sage.

Nanda, A. (1996) 'Resources, Capabilities and Competencies'. In B. Moingeon and A. Edmonson (Eds.) Organizational Learning and Competitive Advantage, pp. 93 – 120, London: Sage.

Narasimhan, R., Talluri, S. and Das, A. (2004) 'Exploring flexibility and execution competencies of manufacturing firms', Journal of Operations Management, Vol. 22 (1), pp. 91–106.

Narayanan, V. K., Colwel, K., Douglas, F. L. (2011) 'Building Organizational and Scientific Platforms in the Pharmaceutical Industry: A Process Perspective on the Development of Dynamic Capabilities', British Journal of Management, Vol. 20, S25–S40.

Nelson, S. G. and Winter, R. R. (1982) An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Newbert, S. L. (2008) 'VALUE, RARENESS, COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE, AND PERFORMANCE: A CONCEPTUAL-LEVEL EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE RESOURCE-BASED VIEW OF THE FIRM', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 29, pp. 745–768.

Newbert, S.L. (2007) 'Empirical research on the resource-based view of the firm: an assessment and suggestions for future research', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 28 (2), pp. 121–146.

Noble, C.H. (1999a) 'The Eclectic roots of strategy implementation research', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 45 (6), pp. 119-134.

Noble, C.H. (1999b) 'Building the strategy implementation network', Business Horizons, Vol. 42 (6), pp. 19-28.

Noda, T., and Bower, J. (1996) 'Strategy making as iterated processes of resource allocation', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 17, pp. 159–192.

Nutt, P.C. (1983) 'Implementation Techniques and Planning Process', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 8, pp. 600 - 611.

Nutt, P.C. (1993) 'Formulation processes and tactics used in organizational decision making', Organizational Science, Vol. 4, pp. 226 - 251.

Nutt, P.C. (1995) 'Implementation Style and Use of Implementation Approaches', Omega International Journal of Management Science, Vol. 23 (5), pp. 469-484.

Nutt, P.C. (1998) 'Leverage, resistance and the success of implementation approaches', The Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 35 (2), pp. 213-240.

O'Riley, K., Paper, D. and Marx, S. (2012) 'Demystifying Grounded Theory for Business Research', Organizational Research Methods, Vol. 15 (2), pp. 247-262.

O'Rilley, K. O., Paper, D. and Marx, S. (2012) 'Demystifying Grounded Theory for Business Research', Organizational Research Methods, Vol. 15 (2), pp. 247-262.

Olavarietta, S. and Ellinger, A.E. (1997) 'Resource-based theory and strategic logistics research', International Journal of Physical Distribution Logistics Management, Vol. 27 (9/10), pp. 559–587.

Olsen, M.D., Tse, E.C.Y. and West, J.J. (1992) Strategic Management in the Hospitality Industry, New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Olson, E.M., Slater, S.F. and Hult, G.T.M. (2005) 'The importance of structure and process to strategy implementation', Business Horizons, Vol. 48 (1), pp. 47-54.

Orlikowski, W.J. (1993) 'CASE tools as organizational change: Investigating incremental and radical changes in systems development', MIS Quarterly, Vol. 17, pp. 309-340.

Parmigiani, A. and Holloway, S.S. (2011) 'ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN MODES: ANTECEDENTS AND IMPLICATIONS OF PARENT IMPLEMENTATION CAPABILITIES ON BUSINESS UNIT PERFORMANCE', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 32, pp. 457–485.

Paroutis, S and Pettigrew, A. (2007) 'Strategizing in the multi-business firm: Strategy teams at multiple levels and over time', Human Relations, Vol. 60 (1), pp. 99–135.

Patton, M.Q. (1988) 'Paradigms and pragmatism'. In D. M. Fetterman (Ed.) Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education: The silent scientific revolution, pp. 116-137, New York: Praeger.

Patton, M.Q. (1990) Qualitative evaluation and research methods, 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patton, M.Q. (2002) Qualitative research and evaluation methods, 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Payne, G. and Williams, M. (2005) 'Generalization in Qualitative Research', Sociology, Vol. 39 (2), pp. 295-314.

Peng, M.W., Wang, D. and Jiang, Y. (2008) 'An institution-based view of international business strategy: A focus on emerging economies', Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 39, pp. 920 – 936.

Penrose E. T. (1959) The theory of the growth of the firm, New York: Wiley.

Pentland, B.T. (2003) 'Conceptualizing and Measuring Variety in the Execution of Organizational Work Processes', Management Science, Vol. 7, pp. 857-870

Peteraf, M. A. (2005) 'Research complementarities: A resource-based view of the resource allocation process model (and vice versa)', In J. L. Bower & C. G. Gilbert (Eds.), From resource allocation to strategy, pp. 409-426. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Peteraf, M.A. (1993) 'The cornerstone of competitive advantage: A resource-based view', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 14 (3), pp. 179–192.

Peteraf, M.A. and Barney, J.B. (2003) 'Unraveling the resource-based tangle', Managerial and Decision Economics, Vol. 24, pp. 309–323.

Pettigrew, A. (1992) 'The Character and Significance of Strategy Process Research', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13, pp. 5-16.

Pettigrew, A. and Whipp, R. (1991) Managing Change for Competitive Success, Oxford: Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A. M. (2000) 'Linking change processes to outcomes', In Beer, M. and Nohria, N. (Eds.) Breaking The Code Of Change, (pp. 243-265), Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Pettigrew, A. M. (2012) 'Context and Action in the Transformation of the Firm - A Reprise',

Pettigrew, A. M. and Whipp, R. (1991) Managing Change for Competitive Success. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A. M. and Whipp, R. (1993) 'Managing the twin processes of competition and change: the role of intangible assets'. In Lorange, P., Chakravarthy, B., Roos, J. and Van de Ven, A. (Eds), Implementing Strategic Processes (pp. 3–42), Oxford: Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A.M. (1985) The awakening giant: Continuity and change in imperial chemical industries. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Pettigrew, A.M. (1997) 'What is processual analysis?', Scandinavian Journal of Management, Vol. 13 (4), pp. 337-48.

Pettigrew, A.M. (2003) 'Strategy as Process, Power, and Change', In Cummings, S, & Wilson, D, Images of Strategy, (pp. 301-330), Blackwell Publishing.

Pfeffer, J. (1981) Power in organizations, Boston: Pitman.

Pfeffer, J. (1992) Managing with power: Politics and influence in organizations, Boston: Harvard Business

Pfeffer, J. (1994) Competitive Advantage through people: unleashing the power of the workforce, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Pfeffer, J. and Sutton, R.I., (2000) The Knowing-Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action, Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.

Pitelis, C. (2007) 'Twenty years resource-based view (or is it 50?): some (old and) new challenges and need for extensions', International Journal of Learning and Intellectual Capital, Vol. 4 (1/2), pp. 47 - 56.

Pitelis, C.N. (2004) 'Edith Penrose and the resource-based view of (international) business strategy', International Business Review, Vol. 13, pp. 523 - 532.

Porter, M. E. (1994) 'Toward a Dynamic Theory of Strategy'. In R.P. Rumelt, D.E. Schendel and D.J. Teece (Eds.) Fundamental Issues in Strategy, Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Porter, M. E. (1996) 'What is Strategy?', Harvard Business Review, November-December: pp. 61-78.

Porter, M.E. (1980) Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors, New York, NY: Free Press.

Powell T.C. (2001) 'Competitive advantage: logical and philosophical considerations', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 22(9), pp. 875–888.

Powell, T. (1996) 'How much does industry matter? An alternative empirical test', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 17 (4), pp. 323-334.

Prahalad, C.K. and Hamel, G. (1990) 'The Core Competence of the Corporation', Harvard Business Review, Vol. 68 (3), pp. 79-87.

Priem R.L. and Butler J.E. (2001a) 'Is the resource-based 'view' a useful perspective for strategic management research?', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 26 (1), pp. 22–40.

Priem R.L. and Butler J.E. (2001b) 'Tautology in the resource-based view and the implications of externally determined resource value: further comments', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 26 (1), pp. 57–66.

Quinn, J. B. (1980) Strategies for Change: Logical Incrementalism. Homewood: IL: Richard D. Irwin.

Quinn, R.E. (1988). Beyond Rational Management: Mastering the Paradoxes and Competing Demands of High Performance. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinn, R.E. and Cameron, K. (1983) 'Organizational life cycles and shifting criteria of effectiveness: some preliminary evidence', Management Science, Vol. 29 (1), pp. 33-51.

Qureshi, Z.I. (1995) 'Management in South Asia'. In D.M. Saunders and R.N. Kanungo (Eds) New Approaches to Employee Management, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Rad, A.M.M. (2005) 'A survey of total quality management in Iran Barriers to successful implementation in health care organizations', Leadership in Health Services, Vol. 18 (3), pp. xii-xxxiv.

Ranft, A. L. and Lord, M. D. (2002) 'Acquiring New Technologies and Capabilities: A Grounded Model of Acquisition Implementation', Organization Science, Vol. 13 (4), pp. 420-441.

Rapert, M., Velliquette, A., and Garretson, J. (2002) 'The strategic implementation process; evoking strategic consensus through communication', Journal of Business Research, Vol. 55 (4), pp. 301-310.

Rasiah, R. and Gachino, G. (2005) 'Are Foreign Firms More Productive and Export- and Technology-intensive than Local Firms in Kenyan Manufacturing?', Oxford Development Studies, Vol. 33 (2), pp. 211 - 227.

Ray, G., Barney, J.B. and Muhanna, W.A. (2004) 'Capabilities, Business Processes, and Competitive Advantage: Choosing the Dependent Variable in Empirical Tests of the Resource-Based View', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 25 (1), pp. 23–37.

Ray, S. and Ramakrishnan, K. (2006) 'Resources, Competences and Capabilities Conundrum: A Back-To-Basics Call', Decision, Vol. 33 (2), pp. 1-21.

Reger R. K. and Huff A. S. (1993) 'Strategic groups: a cognitive perspective', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 14 (2), pp. 103–124.

Regnér, P. (2003) 'Strategy creation in the periphery: Inductive versus deductive strategy making', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 40, pp. 57–82.

Ricardo, D. (1817) 'On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation'. In P. Sraffa (Ed.) The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo (1951), Vol. I, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ritchie, J., Lewis, J. and Elam, G. (2003) 'Designing and selecting samples', In Jane Ritchie & Jane Lewis (Eds.), Qualitative research practice. A guide for social science students and researchers (pp.77-108) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roth, K. (1992) 'International configuration and coordination archetypes for medium-sized firms in global industries', Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 23 (3), pp. 533–550.

Roth, K., Schweiger, D.M. and Morrison, A.J. (1991) 'Global strategy implementation at the business unit level: operational capabilities and administrative mechanisms', Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 22 (3), pp. 369 - 402.

Rouse, M.J. and Daellenbach, U.S. (1999) 'Rethinking research methods for the resource-based perspective: isolating sources of sustainable competitive advantage', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 20, pp. 487 - 94.

Rowley, J. (2002) 'Using case studies in research', Management Research News, Vol. 25 (1), pp. 16–27.

Rumelt, R.P. (1984) 'Towards a strategic theory of the firm'. In R.B. Lamb, (Ed.) Competitive Strategic Management, pp.566-70, Engelwood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall.

Rumelt, R.P. (1991) 'How much does industry matter?', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 12, pp. 167 - 85.

Rumelt, R.P. (1995) 'Inertia and Transformation'. In C.A. Montgomery (Ed.) Resources in an Evolutionary Perspective: Towards a Synthesis of Evolutionary and Resource-Based Approaches to Strategy, pp. 101-132, Norwell, Mass.: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Ryan, G.W. and Bernard, R. (2000) 'Data management and analysis methods'. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds) Handbook of qualitative research, 2nd ed., pp. 769-802, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sabherwal, R., and Robey, D. (1993) 'An empirical taxonomy of implementation processes based on sequences of events in information system development', Organization Science, Vol. 4 (4), pp. 548–576.

Sandberg, J. (2005) 'How do we justify knowledge produced within interpretive approaches?', Organization Research Methods, Vol. 8 (1), pp.41-69.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2003) Research Methods for Business Students, Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.

Schmidt, M. and Brauer, S.L. (2006) 'Exploring Strategy Implementation Consistency Over Time: The Moderating Effects of Industry Velocity and Firm Performance', Journal of Management and Governance, Vol. 10 (2), pp. 205-226.

Schuller, R. S. (1992) Strategic Human Resources Management: Linking the People with the Strategic Needs of the Business, Organizational Dynamics, Vol. 21 (1), pp. 18-32.

Schultz, R. L., Slevin, D. P. and Pinto, J. K. (1987) 'Strategy and Tactics in a Process Model of Project Implementation', INTERFACES, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 34-46.

Schutz, A. (1962) Collected Papers, (Vol. I) The Problem of Social Reality. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Schwandt, T.A. (1997) Qualitative Inquiry, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seale, C. and Silverman, D. (1997) 'Ensuring rigour in qualitative research', European Journal of Public Health, Vol. 7 (4), pp. 379–384.

Shah, A.M. (2005) 'The Foundations of Successful Strategy Implementation: Overcoming the Obstacles', Global Business Review, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 293-302.

Shanley, M. and Petaraf, M. (2006) 'The centrality of process', International Journal of Strategic Change Management, Vol. (1/2), pp. 4-19.

Shipley, D. (1994) 'Achieving cross-functional coordination for marketing implementation', Management Decision, Vol. 32 (8), pp. 17-20.

Shu-Hui C. (2004) 'A resource-based perspective on knowledge management capability and competitive advantage: an empirical investigation', Expert Systems with Applications, Vol. 27, pp. 459–465.

Siciliano, J.I. (2002) 'Governance and strategy implementation: Expanding the board's involvement', Business Horizons, Vol. 45 (6), pp. 33–38.

Siggelkow, N. (2007) 'Persuasion with Case Studies', Academy of Management Journal, vol. 50 (l), pp. 20-24.

Silverman, D. (1998) 'Qualitative research: meanings or practice?', Information Systems Journal, Vol. 8 (1), pp. 3-20.

Silverman, D. (2000) Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook, London: Sage.

Silverman, D. (2006) Interpreting Qualitative Data, 3rd ed., London: Sage.

Singh, D. T. (1998) 'Incorporating cognitive aids into decision support systems: the case of the strategy execution process', Decision Support Systems, Vol. 24, pp. 145–163.

Sirmon, D. G., & Hitt, M. A. (2009) 'Contingencies within dynamic managerial capabilities: Interdependent effects of resource investment and deployment on firm performance', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 30, pp. 1375-1394.

Sirmon, D. G., Hitt, M. A., Ireland, R. D., & Gilbert, B. A. (2011) 'Resource orchestration to create competitive advantage: Breadth, depth, and life cycle effects', Journal of Management, Vol. 37, pp. 1390-1412.

Sirmon, D.G., Hitt, M.A. and Ireland, R.D. (2007) 'Managing firm resources in dynamic environments to create value: looking inside the black box', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 32 (1), pp. 273–292.

Skivington, E.J. and Daft, L.R. (1991) 'A study of organizational framework and process modalities for the implementation of business level strategic decisions', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 28 (1), pp. 45-68.

Slater, S.F. and Narver, J.C. (1995) 'Market Orientation and the Learning Organization', Journal of Marketing, Vol. 58 (January), pp. 63-74.

Sminia, H. (2009) 'Process research in strategy formation: theory, methodology, and relevance', International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol. 11, pp. 97–125.

Sminia, H. and de Rond, M. (2012) 'Context and Action in the Transformation of strategy scholarship', Journal of Management Studies , Vol. 49 (7), pp. 1329 – 1349.

Snape, D. and Spencer, L. (2003) 'The foundation of qualitative research'. In J. Ritchie and J. Lewis (Eds) Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers, London: Sage.

Snow, C.C. and Thomas, J.B. (1994) 'FIELD RESEARCH METHODS IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY BUILDING AND TESTING', Journal of Management Studies, vol. 31 (4), pp. 457-480.

Sousa, C.A.A. and Hendriks, P.H.J. (2006) 'The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: The Need for Grounded Theory in Developing a Knowledge-Based View of Organizations', *Organizational Research Methods, V*ol. 9 (3), pp.315-338.

Steel, D. (2004) 'Social mechanisms and causal inference', Philosophy of the Social Sciences, Vol. 34, pp. 55–78.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994) 'Grounded Theory methodology: An overview'. In N.K. Denzin, and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds) Handbook of Qualitative Research, pp. 1-18, London: Sage.

Strauss, A.L. and Corbin, J. (1998) The basics of qualitative analysis: Grounded theory procedures and techniques, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Suddaby, R. (2006) 'What grounded theory is not', Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 49, pp. 633-642.

Sztompka P. (1993) The Sociology of Social Change. Oxford: Blackwell.

Teece, D.J. and Pisano, G. (1994) 'The dynamic capabilities of firms: An introduction', Industrial and Corporate Change, Vol. 3 (3), pp. 537-556.

Teece, D.J., Pisano, G. and Shuen, A. (1997) 'Dynamic capabilities and strategic management', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 18 (7), pp. 509–533.

Tsang, E. W. K. (2002) 'ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE BY FOREIGN PARTNERS FROM INTERNATIONAL JOINT VENTURES IN A TRANSITION ECONOMY: LEARNING-BY-DOING AND LEARNING MYOPIA', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 23, pp. 835–854.

Tsoukas, H. (1989) 'The validity of ideograph research explanations', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 14 (4), pp. 551-561.

Vaara, E., Tienari, J., and Santti, R. (2003) 'The international match: Metaphors as vehicles of social identity-building in cross-border mergers', Human Relations, Vol. 56, pp. 419-451.

Van de Ven, A.H. (1992) 'Suggestions for studying strategy process: a research note', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 13, pp. 169–188.

Van de Ven, A.H. (2007) Engaged Scholarship: A Guide for Organizational and Social Research. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van de Ven, A.H. and Poole, M.S. (1995) 'Explaining development and change in organizations', Academy of Management Review, Vol. 20, pp. 510–540.

Van de Ven, A.H. and Poole, M.S. (2005) 'Alternative approaches for studying organizational change', Organization Studies, Vol. 26, pp. 1377–1404.

Van Maanen, J. (1983) Qualitative Methodology, London: Sage.

Venaik, S., Midgley, D. F. and Devinny, T. M. (2005) 'Dual paths to performance: the impact of global pressures on MNC subsidiary conduct and performance', Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 36, pp. 655–675.

Voelpel, S.C., Leibold, M., Eckhoff, R.A. and Davenport, T.H. (2006) 'The tyranny of the Balanced Scorecard in the innovation economy', Journal of Intellectual Capital, Vol. 7 (1), pp. 43-60.

Von Glasersfeld, E. (1995) Radical constructivism: A way of knowing and learning, London and Washington: The Falmer Press.

Waldersee, R. and Sheather, S.J. (1996) 'The effects of strategy type on strategy implementation actions', Human Relations, Vol. 49, pp. 105-122.

Wang, C.L. and Ahmed, P.K. (2007) 'Dynamic capabilities: A review and research agenda', International Journal of Management Reviews, Vol. 9 (1), pp. 31-51.

Weber, M. (1968) Economy and Society, New York: Bedminster Press.

Weick, K. (1995) 'What theory is not, theorizing is', Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 40, pp. 385–390.

Wernerfelt, B. and Montgomery, C. (1988) 'Tobin's q and the importance of focus in firm performance', American Economic Review, Vol. 78, pp. 246–250.

Wernerfelt, B. (1984) 'A resource-based view of the firm', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 5 (2), pp. 171-180.

Wernerfelt, B. (1989) 'From critical resources to corporate strategy', Journal of General Management, Vol. 14, pp. 4 -12.

Wernerfelt, B. (1995) 'The resource-based view of the firm: Ten years after', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 16 (March), pp. 171-174.

West II, G.P. and DeCastro, J. (2001) 'The achilles heel of firm strategy: Weaknesses and distinctive inadequacies', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 38 (3), pp. 417-442.

Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., and Mandle, C. L. (2001) 'Validity in qualitative research', Qualitative Health Research, Vol. 11, pp. 522-537.

Whittington, R. (1996) 'Strategy as practice', Long Range Planning, Vol. 29 (5), pp. 731-735.

Whittington, R. (2007) 'Strategy Practice and Strategy Process: Family Differences and the Sociological Eye', Organization Studies, Vol. 28, pp. 1557-1586.

Winter S.G. (2000) 'The satisficing principle in capability learning. Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 21 (10–11), pp. 981–996.

Winter, S.G. (2003) 'Understanding dynamic capabilities', Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 24 (10), pp. 991-995.

Wooldrige, B., Schmid, T. and Floyd, S. W. (2008) 'The Middle Management Perspective on Strategy Process: Contributions, Synthesis, and Future Research', Journal of Management, Vol. 34 (6), pp. 1190-1221.

Wright, M., Filatotchev, I., Hoskisson, R.E. and Peng, M.W. (2005) 'Strategy Research in Emerging Economies: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 42 (1), pp. 1-33.

Young, M.N., Peng, M.W., Ahlstrom, D., Bruton, G.D. and Jian, Y. (2008) 'Corporate Governance in Emerging Economies: A Review of the Principal–Principal Perspective', Journal of Management Studies, Vol. 45 (1), pp. 196-220.

Zahra, S.A. (2008) 'The virtuous cycle of discovery and creation of entrepreneurial opportunities', Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, Vol. 2 (3), pp. 243 - 257.

Zaidi, R. and Aslam, A. (2006) 'Managerial Efficiency in Family Owned Firms in Pakistan – An Examination of Listed Firms', CMER WORKING PAPER No. 06-51, Available online at http://cmer.lums.edu.pk/upload/CMER_06_51.pdf [Last accessed on December 25, 2009]

Zollo, M. and S. Winter (2002) 'Deliberate learning and the evolution of dynamic capabilities', Organization Science, Vol. 13, pp. 339–351.

Foreign Competitive – Proactive Implementing Process – Phase-specific and Recurring activities

Sensing

- Sensing at middle management level,
- Idea selling by SMM to LTM for LTM Acknowledgment,
- Argument building by LTM and SMM for IHO level discussions.
- SMM discussion with MMs on broad implementation options
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives

Negotiating

- LTM and IHO Assessing recent implementation performance
- Implementability assessment at IHO level by IHO staff, LTM and SMM,
- Idea adjusting for potential gains at other subsidiaries in other countries
- IHO and LTM negotiating for investment requirements,
- LTM and SMM negotiating for implementation timeframe,
- IHO and LTM negotiating with Large International Financial Institutions
- Executing existing initiatives

Proacting

- Contextualized Formulizing by LTM and SMM at subsidiary level
- IHO's aligning of subsidiary strategy Implementation action choices with international strategy guidelines
- Implementation standards discussion between IHO, LTM, and SMM,
- Competitive linking
- Competitive prioritizing by LTM and SMM and SMM and MM
- Strategic Restructuring
- Resource allocation
- SMM and MM detailed action planning
- SMM and MM Contingency Planning

Mobilizing

- Authorizing by LTM
- Resources provisioning
- Task piloting
- Resources Acquisition
- SMM, MM engage with external partners
- Forward Feeding
- Across-the-firm Execution of enlarged strategic initiatives portfolio
- Management Developing
- SMM and MM External Partners engagement for skills improvements
- Simplifying
- Conflict reduction

Reinforcing

- LTM and SMM, and MM Refining
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- Highlighting
- Rewarding
- Competitive Benchmarking
- Internalization of systems developed in other subsidiaries
- TMT, SMM, and MM Opportunity Searching

Refining

- LTM, SMM, and IHO mobilizing
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- SMM and MM External Partners engagement for strategy and skills improvements
- Key skills improvements shared with other subsidiaries

Recurring Activities

- Managing Performance through monitoring, Controlling, and rewarding
- Intra-functional coordination
- Time management
- Timing Management
- Learning Utilization
- Knowledge management
- Learning from competitors
- Learning from experience

➡ = Phase transition

Time

Outcomes Achieved in Different Phases of *Foreign* Competitive - Proactive Implementing Process Pattern
SIMP Process Phases and achieved outcomes
Sensing • Opportunity sensed by middle management for competitive reaction; • LTM acknowledgment of opportunity at subsidiary level; • Argument built to convince the IHO; • Execution of existing strategic initiatives.
Negotiating • IHO agreement for support to strategy content and implementation actions; • Strategic ideas are adjusted for firm's international gains in addition to subsidiary's competitive gains; • Negotiated agreement between IHO, LTM and SMM for implementation's investment needs and implementation timeframes • Realistic expectations; • Thorough analysis of implementation requirements and existing SIMP skills;
Proacting • Involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning at subsidiary level; • Matching of firm's resource and competitive context with strategy content and implementation actions; • Realistic expectations; • Detailed and agreed action plans; • Clarity of roles and responsibilities; • Agreed performance targets translated in terms of implementation actions; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives; • Sufficient Resources allocated to enact action plans; • Identification and understanding of implementation contingencies
Mobilizing • LTM's support for implementation actions; • Confidence gained from tasks piloting and refinements made before full-scale implementation; • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization; • Development of implementation skills across the subsidiary; • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity; • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm; • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new competitive priorities; • Execution of enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives;
Reinforcing • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives; • Beginning of refining implementation actions and sensed new competitive opportunities; • Compared implementation skills and success with competitors • Internationally refined systems are implemented for efficiency and implementation standardization; • Rewarded positive implementing efforts and behaviour;
Refining • Ensured refinements based on implementation success to build arguments for new competitive initiatives; • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Refined strategic priorities and their continuity; • Execution of the existing portfolio of strategic initiatives; • Knowledge of good implementation behaviours is shared with other subsidiaries
Incremental Outcomes • Managed Performance at subisidiary's different levels; • Synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas; • Timely implementation effort; • Timely response to competitors; • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors; • Key SIMP learnings became available for future retrieval; • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were understood and regularly referred to by implementers; • Increased trust within subsidiary and IHO regarding competitiveness in implementing

Indigenous Competitive – Proactive Implementing Process – Phase-specific and Recurring activities

Sensing

- TMT and MM Assessing recent Implementation Performance
- TMT competitive Opportunity Searching
- Intra- TMT Analysis of Opportunity's Competitiveness Potential
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives

Negotiating

- Intra- TMT Options Discussion
- Intra-TMT Negotiating for opportunity options and investment levels
- TMT Sensegiving to SMM for opportunity's competitiveness potential
- TMT and SMM Implementation options Assessment
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives

Proacting

- Feeding Forward
- TMT and SMM Competitive linking and Prioritizing of SIMP actions
- TMT and SMM Contingency Planning
- TMT's Implementive Preparing
- TMT Resource Allocating
- Detailed Action Planning
- Across-the-firm Goal-setting
- TMT Authorizing
- TMT and SMM Engagement with External Partners
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives

Mobilizing

- TMT's Management Developing
- Resource Provisioning
- Resources Acquisition
- Forward Feeding
- TMT and MM Engagement with External Partners
- Across-the-firm Execution of enlarged strategic initiatives portfolio
- Simplifying

Reinforcing

- TMT and MM Refining
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- Highlighting
- Rewarding
- Competitive Benchmarking
- TMT and MM Opportunity Searching
- Ad-hoc approvals

Refining

- TMT and SMM Refining
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- TMT and MM External Partners engagement for strategy and skills improvements

Recurring Activities

- Managing Performance through monitoring, Controlling, and rewarding
- Intra-functional coordination
- Timing Management
- Learning Utilization
- Time management
- Knowledge management
- Learning from competitors
- Learning from experience

➡ = Phase transition

Time

Outcomes Achieved in Different Phases of *Indigenous* Competitive - Proactive Implementing Process
SIMP Process Phases and achieved outcomes
Sensing • Opportunity sensed by TMT for proactive competitive action; • TMT acknowledgment of competitive opportunity; • Execution of existing strategic initiatives; • Understanding of existing implementation skills and weaknesses**;**
Negotiating • Negotiated agreement between TMT members for implementation's investment needs and implementation timeframes • Realistic expectations; • Thorough analysis of implementation requirements and existing SIMP skills; • SMM clear understanding of strategic expectations; • Understanding of potential implementation options by TMT and SMM
Proacting • Involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning; • Matching of firm's resource and competitive context with strategy content and implementation actions; • Realistic expectations; • Detailed and agreed action plans; • Clarity of roles and responsibilities; • Agreed performance targets translated in terms of implementation actions; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives; • Sufficient Resources allocated to enact action plans; • obtaining outside expert opinion for realistic options and expectations.
Mobilizing • TMT's support for implementation actions; • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization; • Development of implementation skills across the subsidiary; • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity; • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm; • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new competitive priorities; • Execution of enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives;
Reinforcing • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives; • Beginning of refining implementation actions and sensed new competitive opportunities; • Compared implementation skills and success with competitors • Internationally refined systems are implemented for efficiency and implementation standardization; • Rewarded positive implementing efforts and behaviour;
Refining • Ensured refinements based on implementation success to build arguments for new competitive initiatives; • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Refined strategic priorities and their continuity; • Execution of the existing portfolio of strategic initiatives;
Incremental Outcomes • Managed Performance at firm's different levels; • Synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas; • Timely implementation effort; • Timely response to competitors; • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors; • Key SIMP learnings became available for future retrieval; • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were understood and regularly referred to by implementers; • Increased trust within firm regarding competitiveness in implementing

Indigenous Competitive – Reactive Implementing Process – Phase-specific and Recurring Activities

Realizing

- TMT and MM Assessing recent Implementation Performance
- Intra- TMT Options Discussion
- Intra- TMT assessment of options and their competitiveness potential
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives
- Feeding In

Reacting

- TMT Implementive Holding
- Implementability Assessment
- TMT and SMM Competitive linking and Prioritizing of SIMP actions
- TMT and SMM contextualized Formulizing
- TMT and SMM Contingency Planning
- TMT's Implementive Preparing
- Resource Allocating
- SMM and MM Action Planning
- Across-the-firm Goal-setting
- Across-the-firm Execution reduced portfolio of existing strategic initiatives

Action Integrating

- TMT Authorizing
- Across-the-firm Execution of enlarged strategic initiatives portfolio
- Sufficient Resource Provisioning
- Resources Acquisition
- Systematizing
- Simplifying
- MM Adjusting
- TMT Management Developing

Reinforcing

- SMM and MM Accounting
- Highlighting
- Rewarding
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- TMT and MM Opportunity Searching
- Simplifying

Refining

- Reviewing
- TMT and SMM Refining
- Forward Feeding
- Executing
- Resources Provisioning
- TMT and MM External Partners engagement for strategy and skills improvements

Recurring Activities

- Managing Performance
- Implementation monitoring
- Implementation Controlling
- Intra-functional coordination
- Timing management
- Time Management
- Knowledge management
- Learning from competitors
- Learning from experience

Time

→ = Phase transition
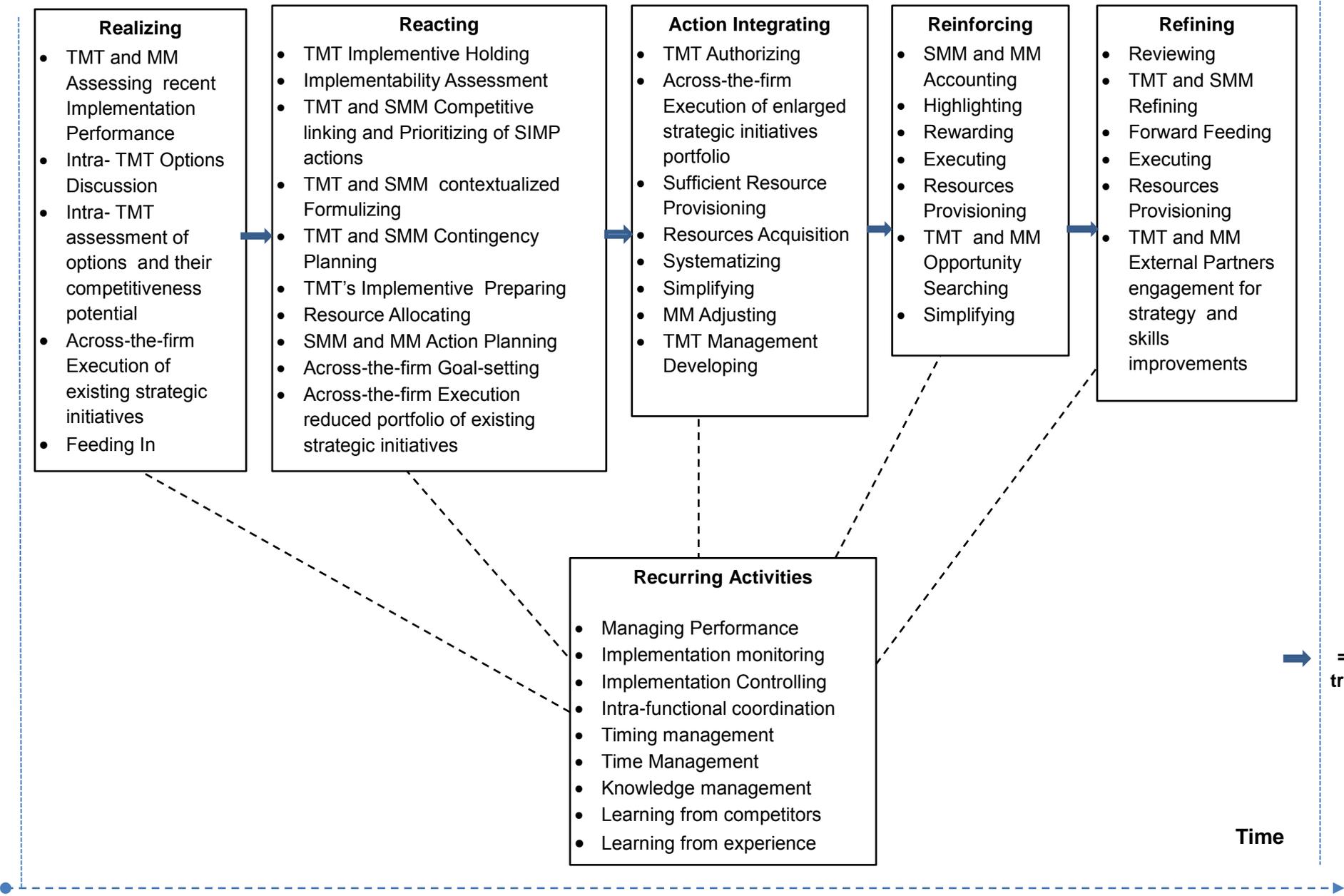
Outcomes Achieved in Different Phases of *Indigenous* Competitive - Reactive Implementing Process
SIMP Process Phases and achieved outcomes
Realizing • Need recognition by TMT for competitive reaction; • Identification of weaknesses in existing implementation skills and existing strategy content; • Realistic expectations of TMT; • Execution of existing strategic initiatives.
Reacting • Shaped the action direction around new strategic priorities; • Established SIMP as a competitive priority, • Thorough analysis of implementation requirements and existing SIMP skills; • Top Management's agreement for implementation choices; * Involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning; • Matching of firm's resource and competitive context with implementation actions; • Realistic expectations; • Detailed and agreed action plans; • Clarity of roles and responsibilities; • Agreed performance targets; • Execution of the reduced portfolio of existing strategic initiatives.
Action Integrating • Top management's support for implementation approach; • Resources made available to enact action plans; • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization; • Development of TMT implementation skills; • Competent family personnel for future succession; • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity; • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm; • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new strategic priorities; • Execution of new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives.
Reinforcing • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives.
Refining • Ensured strategic continuity with improvements; • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Refined strategic priorities and their continuity; • Execution of the existing portfolio of strategic initiatives
Incremental Outcomes • Managed Performance at firm's different levels; • Synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas; • Timely implementation effort; • Timely response to competitors; • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors; • Key SIMP learnings became available for future retrieval; • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were understood and regularly referred to by implementers.

Indigenous Tactical – Proactive Implementing Process – Phase-specific and Recurring activities

Sensting

- TMT and MM Assessing recent Implementation Performance
- TMT competitive Opportunity Searching
- Intra- TMT Analysis of Opportunity's Competitiveness Potential
- Intra- TMT Options Discussion
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives
- Intra-TMT Negotiating for opportunity options and investment levels

Planning

- TMT and SMM planning
- TMT and SMM and Prioritizing of SIMP actions
- MM Action Planning with task times and details
- TMT- oriented Resource Allocating
- TMT and SMM limited Contingency Planning
- TMT's limited Implementive Preparing

Enacting

- TMT functional leading
- TMT Authorizing
- Inconsistent execution of enlarged strategic initiatives portfolio
- TMT's Management Developing
- Inconsistent Resource Provisioning by TMT
- Ready-made Resources Acquisition partly guided by strategy and TMT orientation
- TMT and SMM Engagement with External Partners

Routinizing

- TMT Routinizing good implementation behaviours
- TMT's Management Developing
- Inconsistent Resource Provisioning
- TMT and MM Engagement with External Partners
- Across-the-firm Execution of poorly executed and remaining strategic initiatives

Recurring Activities

- Managing Performance through monitoring, Controlling, and job security
- Good Intra-functional coordination
- Good Time management
- Moderate Knowledge management
- Learning from experience to routinize

→ **= Phase transition**

Time

| Outcomes Achieved in Different Phases of *Indigenous* Tactical - Proactive Implementing Process |
|---|
| **SIMP Process Phases and achieved outcomes** |
| **Sensting** • Need recognition by TMT for competitive reaction; • Identification of some shortcomings in existing implementation skills and existing strategy content; • Some realistic expectation of TMT; • Inconsistent execution of existing strategic initiatives. |
| **Planning** • Shaped the action direction around new strategic priorities; • Thorough analysis of implementation requirements; • Insufficient attention to existing SIMP skills; • Top Management's agreement for implementation choices; * Involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning; • Matching of firm's resource and competitive context with implementation actions; • Realistic expectations; • Detailed and agreed action plans; • Clarity of roles and responsibilities; • Agreed implementation targets; • Execution of the reduced portfolio of existing strategic initiatives; • Limited identification of contingencies |
| **Implementing** • Top management's support for implementation approach; • Resources made available to enact action plans; • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization; • Development of TMT implementation skills; • Competent family personnel for future succession; • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity; • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm; • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new strategic priorities; • Execution of new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives. |
| **Routinizing** • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives. |
| **Incremental Outcomes** • Managed Performance at firm's different levels; • Synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas; • Timely implementation effort; • Timely response to competitors; • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors; • Key SIMP learnings became available for future retrieval; • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were understood and regularly referred to by implementers. |

Foreign Tactical – Reactive Implementing Process – Phase-specific and Recurring activities

Reviewing

- LTM Assessing recent implementation performance
- LTM need recognition for competitive reaction
- LTM and SMM discussion of reaction options
- Across-the-firm Execution of existing strategic initiatives
- LTM negotiating for opportunity options and investment levels

Planning

- LTM and SMM broader formulizing
- LTM and SMM and Prioritizing of SIMP actions
- MM Action Planning with task and responsibility identification
- LTM- oriented Resource Allocating
- LTM's continuity based limited Implementive Preparing

Enacting

- TMT functional leading
- TMT Authorizing
- Inconsistent execution of enlarged strategic initiatives portfolio
- TMT's Management Developing
- Inconsistent Resource Provisioning by TMT
- Resources Acquisition partly guided by strategy and TMT orientation
- TMT and SMM Engagement with External Partners

Reviewing

- TMT Routinizing good implementation behaviours
- TMT's Management Developing
- Inconsistent Resource Provisioning
- TMT and MM Engagement with External Partners
- Across-the-firm Execution of poorly executed and remaining strategic initiatives

Recurring Activities
- Poorly managed performance
- Poor Intra-functional coordination
- Poor Time management
- Observing competitors
- Politicking in zonal offices
- Standard reporting to IHO

➡ = Phase transition

Time

Outcomes Achieved in Different Phases of *Foreign* Tactical - Reactive Implementing Process
SIMP Process Phases and achieved outcomes
Reviewing • Need recognition by LMT for competitive reaction; • Identification of major shortcomings in existing implementation skills and strategy content; • Inability of LMT to communicate effectively with IHO on action requirements ; • Inconsistent execution of existing strategic initiatives.
Planning • Planned broad strategic direction; • Incomplete analysis of implementation requirements; • Insufficient attention to existing SIMP skills; • TMT's loose agreement the need of implementation choices; • Lack of involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning; • Lack of matching of firm's resource and its competitive context with implementation actions; • Unrealistic expectations with limited action choices; • Lack of detailed and agreed action plans; • Insufficient clarity of responsibilities in performing and leading implementation efforts at different levels; • Limited agreement of performance targets; • Execution of the an unclear portfolio of existing strategic initiatives.
Enacting • Lack of IHO's support in implementation approach; • Resources made available to enact action plans; • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization; • Development of TMT implementation skills; • Competent family personnel for future succession; • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity; • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm; • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new strategic priorities; • Execution of new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives.
Reviewing • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff; • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour; • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority; • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities; • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives.
Incremental Outcomes • Poorly Managed Performance at firm's different levels; • Lack of synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas; • Delays in implementation effort; • Insufficient capability to respond to competitors; • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors; • Key SIMP learnings became available for future retrieval; • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were poorly understood.

It is considered relevant to present one mini case study here to highlight how SIMP process phases, underlying activities, and phase-specific and incremental outcomes connect with each other in a temporally evolving manner. The case of the indigenous food products company is presented in the following table to highlight how the firm used a competitive approach towards strategy implementation throughout SIMP process resulting in highly successful implementation.

An example case study: Processual overview of Indigenous Competitive - Reactive Implementing Pattern	
SIMP Process Phase and Phase-specific SIMP Activities [Activities in bold italic and important characteristic of the activity in italic]	**Phase-specific SIMP Outcomes and Some representative data examples**
Realizing Phase: The top management realized that poor market performance was a result of poor implementation and unable to have some hot drinks that customer segments in upper income markets and in central zones needed. Top management (Managing Director and Deputy Managing Director) undertook a detailed ***Implementation Performance Assessment.*** Top management identified recent implementation issues and linked some implementation weaknesses with competitive losses. They engaged with the middle management in an honest dialogue about why implementation is not competitive enough? Middle Managers and their staff continued ***executing*** their existing work routines related to ***existing strategic initiatives*** and their current job roles. (Duration: 3 months)	• Need recognition by top management • Identification of weaknesses in existing implementation skills and existing strategy content; • Execution of existing strategic initiatives *"There was a dip in the sales of some main products. Market research and sales reports were inconclusive. We saw our slowness in market penetration and product development as the key issues. Main competitor got hold of an important geographic zone and threatened to penetrate in other geographic zones with new products and better service delivery." (Deputy Managing Director)*
Reacting Phase: The TMT decided to intervene and engaged in ***implementive holding*** to put some of the existing strategic initiatives on hold for some time to better align future actions within available resources. Middle Managers and team members with poor implementation track records were *relieved* from their jobs. This set a precedent in the firm and signalled that strategy implementation is vital for competitive success of the firm in hot drinks market. Financial and executive approvals for hiring were put on hold by TMT as they geared towards reviewing the broader strategic options. The middle Managers and their line staff continued ***executing a reduced portfolio of strategic initiatives*** within the adjusted arrangements. TMT ***communicated strategic reasoning and expectations*** behind their decisions via meetings with departmental heads. The top management reviewed the firm's existing strategic priorities and competitive needs to set new strategic priorities for ***prioritizing*** the implementation actions and strategy contents. Top management ***communicated*** those priorities to middle managers through *inter-office memos, formal one-to-one and group meetings, and* performance *reviews.* TMT indicated that those priorities of implementing market penetration, system development, and improving implementation skills is what middle managers should refer to for their actions. ***Contextualized Formulizing*** was done as strategic reaction options were discussed	• Shaped the action direction around new strategic priorities • Established SIMP as a competitive priority, • Thorough analysis of implementation requirements and existing SIMP skills • Top Management's agreement for implementation choices • Involvement and agreement of implementers in implementation planning • Matching of firm's resource and competitive context with implementation actions • Realistic • Detailed and agreed action plans, • Clarity of roles and responsibilities, • Agreed performance targets • Execution of the reduced portfolio of existing strategic initiatives *"All those people that are involved in the project [due to the roles they need to perform], and whatever resources needed in*

by the TMT and MM for appropriate reaction to the market situation via improved strategic content and implementation actions. The strategic priorities were used as 'rudder' to guide their formulizing of implementation actions. Top management **engaged middle management** in identifying different options for new products, implementation actions and **action timing** through iterative discussions. Top Management focussed on firm level issues but also directed for functional issues. Middle managers raised issues of systems development to enable smoother implementing. Strategic plan adjustments were made through iterative *formal meetings* between TMT, inter-departmental teams, and between TMT and MMs. Key decisions were taken by TMT regarding existing strategic initiatives and some initiatives were *dropped completely*, like soft drinks, while others were *slowed down*, like sachet packs ranger in view of later integration with new initiatives.

Top management assessed the potential investment sources, the limits of investments, and their timings - both internal equity and local financial institutions for **implementive preparing**. TMT *adjusted their expectations* for people, systems, and activities and made realistic analysis of implementation requirements and potential. Training program options were considered from reputable external training consultants to improve managerial implementing skills. **Contingency Planning** was done to identify *action contingencies* and implementation action options were analysed. Middle Managers identified departmental contingencies and Project champions identified project-specific contingencies. 'What-if' *analysis* was used to guide. Top Management wanted to ensure that strategy-oriented task objectives were developed as they saw this as an important performance management tool so **implementation goal-setting and prioritizing** of those goals was done according competitive gains. Middle Managers were given some broad directions in view of on-going planning and later top management *discussed and agreed strategy-oriented task objectives*. The top management *linked those strategy-oriented task objectives with individual and team performance goals* and achieved 'down-the-line agreement with middle managers and via middle managers with their line staff. **Detailed action planning** was done by middle managers and *agreed* with top management in different departments. After *iterative meetings* between top management and different middle managers an action plan template was agreed to thoroughly address strategy implementation actions, action responsibilities.

Middle managers looked at their action plans and came up with *resource requisitions* for **resources allocation**. Middle managers *negotiated* for their *requisitions* with top

that project... the human resources, their role in that project that should be known to them. And if people are not involved, then things don't get done and then you have to keep on running after the people." (Deputy Managing Director)

"Communication does not mean total communication. Selective communication is to be done , whatever is the need of the individual- in terms of information ['jis ki jitni zuroorat hai'], but from top to bottom, all those people involved in the project, and whatever resources needed, the human resources, their role in that project that should be known to them. That should be communicated, and that should be clearly communicated. There shouldn't be any ambiguities; that now you tell this much and the rest will be told later, No. Then the level of interest does not come in the person." (Deputy Managing Director)

"We engaged in detailed outlining of implementation actions needed in different areas of our business such as HR, marketing, accounts receivables, etc. We identified with different managers as to what will be the realistic competitive gains for us and then we linked those actions with competitive benefits. We developed a form to show the linkages and for each function and strategic project we did the same. This gave us confidence and belief that yes these implementation actions and the way we wanted to carry them out will have good competitive gains for us" (Deputy Managing Director)

management. Top management *favoured actions* that were in line with *their logic* of new product development, sales team development, and internal system development. *Revisions* were made in what middle managers asked for. Middle managers had to make adjustments, mostly downwards. Top Management also informed middle managers that there will be *ad-hoc money available*, in view of emerging opportunities but the *key strategic focus* on differentiation and system development *will not be waivered*. *Project champions* were identified by top management to lead the implementation of strategic initiatives. Those champions were selected on the basis of their experience in the firm and knowledge of project schematics. Obviously, *top management's comfort levels* with certain individuals played a key role in appointing project champions in particular Deputy Managing Director's appointment to champion the sales and distribution expansion in different geographic zones. Top management rigorously questioned all aspects of strategy content and action plans to ensure middle managers provided implementable strategy content ideas and conducted *implementability assessment*. This led to several iterations of planning meetings and documents between the TMT and MM, and between MMs and their FLMs.

Action Integrating Phase: Top managers gave the go-ahead of different action plans for **authorizing** and Middle Managers started organizing their staff around new action plans. *Approvals* were given for *broader plans* as TMT and MMs met formally. Middle Managers ensured that their *line staff understood the need to adjust their work patterns* and schedules accordingly. **Resource provisioning** was done as funds were arranged from *internal equity* and from a local bank. Sales team hiring was done by the firm and resources were provided to meet the overall action plan needs. This led to *trust among organizational members* that *sufficient resources* were provided. **Systematizing** was done as different organizational systems were developed internally to *standardize procedures*. Policies and procedures were *documented* in standard templates. *External consultants* were used for HR systems development. Policies and procedures were *shared accordingly with pertinent implementers*. Document controls were used to ensure procedures were accessible only by approved levels; middle managers *regularly referred to those documents* for operational details. TMT engaged in **simplifying** and provided role clarity for Middle Managers in implementation of different initiatives and projects. *Strategic Expectations* were clearly communicated to middle managers and they subsequently tried to keep tasks, roles and responsibilities clearly defined. *Conflicts* were *resolved* through task clarity and monitoring of agreed task-objectives to ensure their achievement with clarity. Top management also ensured that *timing clarity* was	• Top management's support for implementation approach • Resources made available to enact action plans • Systems developed and policies documented for standardization • Development of TMT implementation skills • Competent family personnel for future succession • Action-taking is facilitated by reduction in process complexity • Importance of timing is developed throughout the firm • Work schedules and implementation tasks synchronised with new strategic priorities • Good execution of new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives *"There is a need to have some policies in place. If you have policies… organizational functioning improves a lot. Our human resources manual is a document, which is a live manual, empowering our people to take decisions, so now it's not this way that they have to run to MD for every decision. There are policies available as far as the day-to-day*

visible to all strategic actors for different implementation actions and their linkage with competitive performance. Top management did set the tone by following the policies and procedures. Top management refrained from involving in execution of existing initiatives but provided guidance for new initiatives to avoid complications. Top management realized that **right timing** was an important consideration in successful acting as per competitive demands. This did not always meant being quicker or faster but being there with products, service, and marketing at the appropriate times. Top management used past failures at the firm, competitor's success in geographic zones, internal project requirements, and systematization times to arrive at *right timing*. Similarly, middle managers adjusted their work schedules, timelines, and directed their line staff accordingly.

MMs, FLMs and other staff engaged in the **execution** of the new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives. Discussions and action-taking according to the new action plans were on-going. The *work time distribution was negotiated* between middle managers and their line staff. Parallel to this project teams were guided by the dual concerns of project-specific and functional roles of project team members. More conflict came for what and when different project deliverables were due. Project champions used moderate authority that was given to them by the top management. Top management consistently followed-up with project champions and used project progress reports, fortnightly meetings, and project-specific rewards were identified for successful completion of project within a specified timeline. Everyone in the firm had to accommodate changed action plans with existing initiatives and work schedules. This **adjusting** was achieved via consideration of adjustment times staff needed to make necessary adjustments to their work schedules and adopt new priorities. This was more difficult for production and sales functions due to their pre-fixed schedules and caused initial exasperations between middle managers and their line staff. Top Management provided continuous support to middle managers as they managed line staff's implementation effort through dialogue and directives. Firm started to achieve implementation success and the feeling of achievement made it easier for everyone to put more in implementation efforts. Managing Director realized that the top management team needed skills development as well as induction of new members to ensure succession in next five years. Deputy Managing Director was provided with training in HR and planning systems. Additionally, a distant family member with relevant industry experience was brought in for Sales Management and offered equity stake and adds competent family owners in the TMT via **management developing**.

management of the business is concerned." (Brand Manager)

"At times, you see… quick speed is not good for the project, so the desired speed is more appropriate. So quick is not necessary, may be a slow speed is required for project and quick speed could negate or hurt the project. I told you about our delays in launching our product, and that helped in successfully penetrating in the market." (Deputy Managing Director)

"We needed to setup a packaging unit to compete with our main foreign competitor in Pakistani market due to perceived quality issues. Improved packaging is a key to fresh products in food markets and we purchased a new unit after getting loan from this local bank." (Deputy Managing Director, Local Food Products firm)

Reinforcing Phase: Top management held middle managers accountable for any time lags and also acknowledged their implementation achievements. Performance reviews were used to ensure middle managers continuously pursued task objectives. Middle managers did the same with their line staff thus instilling strategic implementation culture. Job roles and authority were reduced for middle managers struggling with implementation issues, especially with adjusting and executing new enlarged portfolio of strategic initiatives. For example, sales director was not given pay raise due to sales team issues in central zones. Successful implementation performance and good performers was highlighted in company news, inter-office memos and emails. Importantly, this ***highlighting*** included competitive consequences of implementation progress such as timing in reaching customers with better flavours and better market penetration. Successful implementation was rewarded by the top management and this **rewarding** included salary increments, job security, career progression and training allowances were used to reward successful implementers. **Execution** of the existing portfolio of strategic initiatives continued as per action plans. ***Resources provisioning*** continued same as earlier phase.	• Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority • Ensuring implementation as per new strategic priorities • Execution of existing portfolio of strategic initiatives *"Top management's continuous support for strategic decisions is important because some strategic decisions are done during the project. This does not mean that we drive away from our objectives; instead, we devise some other actions midway, if situation demands, as in the case of our recent ad campaign that was rushed through earlier than planned as we anticipated that competitor's campaign was coming. We also made sure to highlight this to our staff and also our business partners to reinforce confidence in how good implementation was" (Deputy Managing Director)*
Refining Phase: *Key learnings* of middle managers and top management from their experiences of successful strategy implementation were *crystalized* and *shared* to improve strategy implementation process, competitive strategy and initiatives. This **forward feeding** was done in formal meetings that were called 'teapot meetings', and used them to generate future ideas for a mixture of *proaction and reaction*. It ensured that the key learnings were used formatively in developing new strategic initiatives and how they should be implemented. In addition to regular monitoring and follow-ups, TMT and MMs engaged in ***detailed reviewing*** of existing strategy contents and implementation skills. Top management and middle managers used key learnings and started working on identifying new strategic initiatives, in view of the successful implementation. Top and middle management engaged in extensive **refining** to refine existing strategic initiatives and implementation resources. System updating and standardization is done to establish improved execution standards for different organizational functions. *For an example, the local food products firm acted very swiftly to enter into a relatively lower priced packaging segment for one of its key products that was left open due to withdrawal of similar packaging range by a foreign competitor from the Pakistan market.* **Executing** of the refined portfolio of strategic initiatives begins as per newly worked out action plans and resources allocations.	• Ensured strategic continuity with improvements • Recognized implementation efforts by Middle Managers, Front Line Supervisors and their line staff • Reinforced positive implementing efforts and behaviour • Reinforced SIMP as a competitive priority • Refined strategic priorities and their continuity • Execution of the existing portfolio of strategic initiatives *"We arrived at a point where we were happy to have successfully implemented our key strategic initiatives like new products, new packaging plant, HR systematization, our increased capacity program and utilization etc. But it was time to use our learnings and keep refining them to establish new bases for our competitive edge in near future. So we engaged in tea pot meetings throughout the firm and arrived at our recent programs that we are implementing such as new plant set up for increased capacity, new soft drinks, etc. So for us it was not just being there at successful implementation, but also*

	to use that to improve, refine and adapt our strategies. You can say we adapted looking at our implementation success sort of midway, not as the end point" (Deputy Managing Director)
Concurrent SIMP Activities • ***Managing Performance* [**Performance Management as performance goals were regularly updated through implementation monitoring and implementation controlling. This included interventions by top management and middle managers for corrective actions during implementation process**]** • ***Intra-functional coordination* [**Interaction and coordination between functional staff for strategy implementation. Functional staff undertook their own department specific tasks as well as collaborated in project teams that were setup for different strategic initiatives. TMT ensured to follow-up on coordination issues and acted as a go-between to ensure **]** • ***Timing management* [**Activities are continuously aligned with timing needs of strategy and competitive actions**]** • ***Time management* [**Management of time in implementation activities to ensure efficiency in the implementation process**]** • ***Knowledge management* [**TMT and MMs worked engaged to develop different report formats related to timelines, quality management, marketing and HR issues to capture, store, share and utilize implementation knowledge during the implementation process**]** • ***Learning from competitors* [** TMT and MMs also ensured to monitor and learn from positive or negative experiences in competitors' implementation**]** • **Communication [**TMT and MM communicated their strategic priorities, expectations and action plans through formal and informal personalized and formal meetings**]**	**Incremental Outcomes** • Managed Performance at firm's different levels • Synergy in implementation efforts of individuals and teams in different functional areas • Timely implementation effort • Timely response to competitors • SIMP relevant knowledge available to strategic actors • Key SIMP knowledge available for retrieval • Competitive consequences of implementation efforts were understood and linkages of certain implementation actions to competitive gains were understood. *"When we realized that competitor removed small pack from their hot drinks product line then we saw their sales declined. We realized that we could use our packaging plant and launch this new pack in our product line and may be penetrate. We were right in doing this as it turned out that this decision during implementation was a master stroke in reaching small pack consumers. Also it was dependent upon successful implementation of packaging plant initiative"(Deputy Managing Director)*