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Exploring Alternative Views of Time in Marketing Management: How Temporal Orientation Impacts a Firms' Strategic Orientations

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ABSTRACT

The field of marketing demonstrates an established and long-standing tradition of incorporating time into its theoretical frameworks. Nonetheless, although marketing has heavily utilized time in its conceptualizations, scholars have suggested that marketing has overly relied upon a single type of time, objective time as measured through a clock, and has underutilized subjective time which refers to time that is differentially perceived and experienced by individuals, organizations, and cultures. In light of this context and need to study alternative forms of time, we explore how a specific type of subjective time – organizational temporal orientation – impacts strategic orientations.

This work posits that a specific type of subjective time, organizational temporal orientation, impacts several strategic orientations, including market orientation, production orientation, selling orientation, innovation orientation, and entrepreneurial orientation. Organizational temporal orientation refers to the significance a firm attaches to the past, present, or future (Bluedorn and Denhardt 1988). We follow researchers who have speculated that temporal orientation is an antecedent condition of strategic choice and strategic orientation (Das 1991; West and Meyer 1997).

Based on the premise that temporal orientation is an antecedent condition of strategic orientation, this work develops several theoretical propositions, drawing from previous temporal orientation research and strategic orientation research, and discusses the implications of integrating subjective time into theoretical works related to strategic orientations. For instance, we posit that temporal orientation is associated with an innovation orientation (i.e., a willingness to invest in projects with uncertain outcomes), such that: the more future-oriented the firm, the more likely the firm is to pursue an innovation orientation; and the more present-oriented the firm, the less likely the firm is to pursue an innovation orientation.

This study makes several key contributions. To our knowledge, this is the first study that specifically connects temporal orientation to a wide-range of strategic orientations (e.g., market orientation, selling orientation), thereby demonstrating the importance of temporal orientation. In addition, this research identifies temporal orientation as a new antecedent of strategic orientations, which complements the extensive work on consequences to strategic orientations (Johnson et al. 2011).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jeff Carlson is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Robins School of Business (University of Richmond). He earned a PhD from the University of Connecticut. His research focuses on advertising (online advertising, “green” advertising), salesperson performance, pricing, and marketing strategy. His work has appeared in the Journal of Advertising, International Journal of Research in Marketing, and the Journal of Marketing Management. He has taught several classes at the undergraduate, MBA, and executive education levels including courses in marketing research, professional selling, marketing management, and sales force management.

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