Journal of Business Research 69 (2016) 5547–5552

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Business Research

Marketing resources, performance, and competitive advantage: A review and future research directions

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 1 February 2016
Received in revised form 1 March 2016
Accepted 1 April 2016
Available online 20 May 2016

Keywords:
Marketing resources
Competitive advantage
Dynamic marketing capabilities
Firm performance
Resource advantage theory (RAT)
Resource-based view (RBV)
Resource-based theory (RBT)

ABSTRACT

Marketing scholars and practitioners recognize marketing resources as crucial drivers in the process by which firms develop their competitive advantages and achieve higher levels of performance. However, there is little agreement in the literature on what constitutes marketing resources or how these influence brand or firm performance. In this editorial article, the co-editors of this special issue identify and describe three distinct research streams related to marketing resources and performance, namely relation to firm/brand environment, marketing as an organizational function and marketing resource deployment. Next, they discuss the theoretical frameworks and contributions of the seminal research articles as well as the papers included in this special issue that represent these three themes. Finally, this editorial identifies some open questions and future research directions in this important research area.

1. Introduction

Marketing resources are crucial drivers of a firm's business strategy as they help the firms gain a competitive advantage over competition (direct or latent) and lead to better performance. Past research in this area uses diverse theoretical perspectives, including market-based assets and their effects on the stakeholder value (Srivastava, Shervani, & Fahey, 1998), the impact of brand equity and innovation on long-term marketing effectiveness (Slotegraaf & Pauwels, 2008), resource-based theory (RBT) (Srivastava, Fahey, & Christensen, 2001; Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014), and resource advantage theory (RAT) of competition (Hunt & Morgan, 2005), among others. However, there is still little systematic research on the theoretical foundations and empirical implications of marketing resources and competitive advantage.

Researchers using RBT typically recognize the role of marketing resources such as brands and relationships (customer and distributional) in obtaining competitive advantage (e.g., Barney, 1991, 2014; Combs & Ketchen, 1999; Day, 2014). However, the literature has generally ignored the fundamental processes that transform resources into value for the customers (cf. Srivastava et al., 2001). Therefore, any contemporary application of the RBT to marketing would require identification of marketing-specific resources based on the RBT premises, namely rare, valuable, and imperfectly imitable (Kozlenkova et al., 2014; Srivastava et al., 2001). In other words, we need more research using RBT as a contemporary framework to integrate a wide array of resources to provide a compelling explanation of a firm's competitive advantage.

In contrast to RBT, RAT posits that a firm can achieve sustainable competitive advantage only if it manages and manipulates its internal resources in such a way that their consumption in a dynamic industry competition provides superior financial performance for a firm (Hunt, 1997, 2011). The theory adopts a resource-based view (RBV) of the firm by focusing on marketing resources in terms of their ability to obtain competitive advantage. RAT considers resources as the tangible and intangible assets of a firm that can produce a market offer that has a value for a specific segment of the market (Hunt & Morgan, 2005). However, there is a need for further empirical research on the efficiency of stakeholder value and inward-looking strategy.

The literature in the strategic management area has also explored marketing competencies of organizations for a long time, starting with the pioneering work by Miles and Snow (1978) that was extended by Conant, Mokwa, and Varadarajan (1990) and Woodside, Sullivan, and Trappey (1999), among others. Conant et al. (1990) provide an understanding of strategic forces in marketing competencies and organizational performance. More recently, Barrales-Molina, Martinez-Lopez, and Gazquez-Abad (2014) introduce an integrated framework for dynamic marketing capabilities (DMC), but this research stream is still limited due to a lack of theoretical support for the relationship between DMC and objective measures of market performance.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.169

Despite a burgeoning literature on resources and their effects on competitive advantage and performance in marketing, management and economics fields, many unchartered research avenues, unanswered questions and challenging issues remain that require further theoretical and empirical elaboration. This special issue of the Journal of Business Research with 'Marketing resources, performance and competitive advantage' as its theme, examines how diverse marketing resources may enhance the organizations' competitive advantage and performance, using multiple theoretical perspectives and empirical approaches. The following sections identify the research gaps in this field and then describe how the articles in this special issue address some of these gaps. Finally, this editorial concludes with a discussion about the remaining open questions and some useful pathways for future research.

2. Marketing resources, performance and competitive advantage — a framework

Marketing resources represent broad value propositions that affect the stakeholders in any business and firms that generally deploy these resources to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Hooley, Greenley, Cadogan, & Fahy, 2005). These resources may include tangible or intangible value propositions, physical or human processes, and intellectual or relational properties (cf. Srivastava et al., 1998; Hooley et al., 2005). Marketing resources also vary in their direct or indirect contribution to competitive advantage. For example, "market-based" resources that have direct effects on competitive advantage and are immediately deployable, whereas "marketing support" resources that serve as support activities and have indirect effects on competitive advantage (Hooley et al., 2005). Market-based resources are critical factors of firm performance, because of their pivotal role in acquiring market knowledge, developing brands, creating marketing relationships, etc. However, Srivastava et al. (1998) pointed out problems of identification of these resources in financial statements and the lack of their direct effects to improve the firm performance. In this context, despite years of research across different academic disciplines, there is scant literature exploring the inter-relationships among marketing resources, competitive advantage and marketing performance. The problem lies in the fact that the literature rarely takes a holistic view and mostly takes a partial conceptual ground and limited empirical approach.

This special issue identifies and covers three main research streams related to marketing resources and performance. The first area is the relation of firm and/or brand to its environment, such as its stakeholders (Gaur, Kumar, & Singh, 2014; Krush, Agnihotri, Trainor, & Nowlin, 2014; Kurt & Hulland, 2013). The second area includes the effects of marketing as a function, in which the articles debate about the role of marketing department or function in a firm and how that role affects the overall company performance (Nath, Nachiappan, & Ramanathan, 2010; Zhao, Libaers, & Song, 2015). The third area is the identification and deployment of marketing resources and their effects on performance (Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2014; Capron & Hulland, 1999; Hooley et al., 2005; Kor & Mahoney, 2005; Mariadoss, Tansuhaj, & Mouri, 2011; Wang, Dou, Zhu, & Zhou, 2015). Articles in this area typically discuss the problem of resource deployment within the firm and how internal strategies affect firm performance. Table 1 briefly describes the seminal research articles on these three broad themes, with their theoretical frameworks, major findings, open questions and contextual factors, as identified and discussed by these authors.

2.1. Relation to firm/brand environment

The first research stream explores the relationship between the firm and/or brand and its environment, i.e. stakeholders. For instance, Kurt and Hulland (2013) study the problem of initial public offering and effects of marketing strategy on firm performance and competitive advantage. These authors find that both, initial public offering and seasoned equity offering firms, adopt a more aggressive marketing strategy during the two years following their offering. In addition, strategic flexibility of rivals with respect to a firm moderates the link between marketing investment and firm value, whereby an aggressive postoffering marketing spending does not yield a higher firm value when a firm competes against rivals with greater strategic flexibility. Similarly, an empirical article from Gaur et al. (2014) investigates the role of marketing resources and competitive advantage in foreign direct investments (FDI) context, showing that firms are more likely to shift from exports to FDI, if they have substantial firm- and group-level international experience coupled with technological and marketing resources.

Krush et al. (2014) investigate the relationships between marketing and sales resources (e.g. sales capability and marketing dashboards) and sensemaking, and their combined effects on firm performance. The study finds that sales capability and the use of marketing dashboards contribute directly to a firm performance, but also have an interactive effect with sensemaking. In addition, sensemaking has the potential to affect both cost efficiency and firm growth. The importance of sensemaking for marketing scholars is in the fact that it plays a critical role in the firm's knowledge capabilities and critical for the firm's success in facing the market changes. These findings reaffirm the importance of integrating both sales and marketing operations.

2.2. Marketing as an organizational function

The second research stream relates to the marketing performance as a function within the firm. For instance, Nath et al. (2010) study the relative impact of a firm's functional capabilities (marketing and operations) and diversification strategies (product and international diversification) on financial performance. Using marketing resources, operation resources, product diversification, and internationalization as the contextual factors, these authors show that firms perform better when they focus on a narrow portfolio of products for the clients and concentrate on a diverse geographical market.

Zhao et al. (2015) discuss the prerequisites for the first product lunch success and the relationship to available firm resources, and investigate how product-positioning strategy may mediate the impacts of marketing resources, technical resources, and founding team startup experience on product success. In addition, the experience of a founding team startup moderates the effects of marketing and technical resources on the sustainability of product-positioning strategy. The authors argue that the impact of marketing resources on product performance is smaller for founding teams with more prior startup experience than those with less prior startup experience.

2.3. Marketing resources deployment

The third research stream includes studies that focus on the relationship between resources deployment and marketing performance. For instance, Capron and Hulland (1999) investigate the degree of redeployment of three marketing resources (brands, sales forces and general marketing expertise) across merging firms following horizontal acquisitions. They examine the impact of these resource redeployments on firm performance. The study finds that redeployment of marketing resources following acquisitions is asymmetrical. The authors argue that effects of marketing resource redeployment on cost-based synergies are marginal, but their effects on both revenue-based synergies and overall performance are more noteworthy.

Kor and Mahoney (2005) examine the effects of the dynamics, management, and governance of R&D and marketing resource deployments on firm-level economic performance, showing that a history of increased investments in marketing is an enduring source of competitive advantage. These authors underline the role of history of investments in firm's processes and resources that can offer fundamental insights for understanding the relationship between firm dynamic capabilities and performance, because resource deployments could help generate dynamic capabilities over time.

Table 1
Research streams of marketing resources and performance.

Research streams	Exemplars	Findings	Open questions	Theoretical perspective
Relation to firm/brand environment	Kurt and Hulland (2013)	• Both initial public offering firms and seasoned equity offering firms adopt a more aggressive marketing strategy during the two years following their offering. • A key moderator of the link between marketing investment and firm value is the strategic flexibility of rivals with respect to issuers. • Aggressive postoffering marketing spending does not translate into higher firm value when issuers compete against rivals with relatively greater strategic flexibility.	• Effects of corporate financial policy on marketing strategy and subsequent firm value	Not specified
	Gaur et al. (2014)	• Firms with more firm- and group-level international experience, have more technological and marketing resources are more likely to shift from exports to FDI. • Firm resources are constrained in an emerging economy and the institutional environment is less structured than in a mature economy	• Unclear which resources act as enablers of strategic change • Need more attention to the ability to manage institutional idiosyncrasies as a firm-level capability, akin to technology or advertising	RBV
	Krush et al. (2014)	• Sales capability and the use of marketing dashboards contribute directly, but also have an interactive effect. This finding asserts the importance of integrating both sales and marketing operations. • Sensemaking influences cost control and enhances customer relationship performance. This implies that sensemaking has the potential to simultaneously impact both cost efficiency and growth. • Sensemaking plays a critical role in the firm's knowledge applications and is considered critical for the firm's success in learning about and responding to market changes.	• Relationship(s) between organizational resources and sensemaking, and their effects on firm performance require more research. • Little is known how sensemaking can be enhanced via the integration of both marketing and sales resources (i.e. sales capability and marketing dashboards).	RBV
Marketing as an organizational function	Nath et al. (2010)	• Relative impact of a firm's functional capabilities (marketing and operations) and diversification strategies (product/service and international diversification) on financial performance • Firms are better off when they focus on a narrow portfolio of products/-services for the clients and concentrate on a diverse geographical market.	• More clarity is needed among marketing resources, operation resources, product / services and internationalization.	RBV
	Zhao et al. (2015)	• Product-positioning strategy (conceptualized as the degree of product differentiation) mediates the impacts of marketing resources, technical resources, and founding team startup experience on product success (conceptualized as timing of product launch and product market and financial performance). • Founding team's startup experience moderates the impact of marketing and technical resources on building strong product-positioning strategy. • The impact of marketing resources on product performance is smaller for founding teams with more prior startup experience than those with less prior startup experience.	• Identify possible mediators that have effects on resources in their direct effects on the first product success	RBV
Marketing resources deployment	Capron and Hulland (1999)	• The degree of redeployment of three marketing resources (brands, sales forces and general marketing expertise) across merging firms following horizontal acquisitions examines the impact of these resource redeployments on firm performance. • Redeployment of marketing resources following acquisitions is asymmetrical. • Effects of marketing resource redeployment on cost-based synergies are marginal, but their effects on both revenue-based synergies and overall performance are more noteworthy.	• Relationship between competition and resource heterogeneity is an underresearched area.	RBV
	Kor and Mahoney (2005)	• Effects of the dynamics, management, and governance of R&D and marketing resource deployments on firm-level economic performance • A history of increased investments in marketing is an enduring source of competitive advantage.	• More clarity is needed among the change in marketing deployments, experience of managers and ownership.	RBT, DC
	Hooley et al. (2005)	• Develop and empirically test scales for measuring marketing resources and assess their impact on performance outcomes • Marketing resources impact on financial performance indirectly through creating customer satisfaction and loyalty leads to the superior market performance. • Distinguishes between market-based and marketing support resources	• It is necessary to identify marketing resources that frame the contemporary business practice.	RBV
	Mariadoss et al. (2011)	• Different types of marketing capabilities can be a catalyst to different types of innovation based sustainability strategies. • Innovation-based sustainability strategies are positively associated with sustainable consumption behavior and firm competitive advantage.	• Relationships and differences between marketing capabilities in B2B & B2C and innovation-based sustainability strategies	MC based on RBV
	Angulo-Ruiz et al. (2014)	• Conceptualizes marketing capability as the deployment of marketing resources to achieve the ultimate objectives of customer satisfaction and brand equity (i.e., customer-oriented marketing capability) • Disentangles the dynamic relationships among marketing resources, sales, customer satisfaction and brand equity • A marketing capability that combines customer and branding capabilities (COMC) in a network process improves the bottom line and future earnings of organizations.	• Need to study other marketing resources, such as product development, or other metrics of marketing, such as channel equity and customer service • Unclear effects of COMC on SME, because of the focus on large firms	RBT
	Wang et al. (2015)	• Three internal capabilities (innovation, information and relational capabilities) are critical enablers of firm capabilities in enhancing inter-firm collaboration. • Effects of innovation and information capabilities are moderated by market turbulence, while relational capability has a consistently positive effect on collaboration effectiveness regardless of the market turbulence level.	• Unclear how inter-firm collaboration leads to greater dynamic capabilities of individual firm • Need to identify important antecedents of capability development	RBV, DC

Note: RBT/RBV — resource-based theory; DC —dynamic capabilities; MC — marketing capabilities; DMC — dynamic marketing capabilities.

Hooley et al. (2005) develop and empirically test scales for measuring marketing resources and assess their impact on performance outcomes. Their findings indicate that marketing resources impact on financial performance indirectly through creating customer satisfaction and loyalty that leads to the superior market performance. The contextual factors of market-based resources that require further investigation are: customer linking capabilities, market innovation capabilities, human resource assets and reputational assets. Mariadoss et al. (2011) assert that different types of marketing capabilities can be a catalyst to different types of innovation-based sustainability strategies. In addition, innovation-based sustainability strategies positively associate with sustainable consumption behavior and firm competitive advantage.

Angulo-Ruiz et al. (2014) conceptualize marketing capability as the deployment of marketing resources to achieve the ultimate objectives of customer satisfaction and brand equity (i.e., customer-oriented marketing capability — COMC). They extricate the dynamic relationships among marketing resources, sales, customer satisfaction and brand equity to show that marketing capabilities improve the bottom line and future earnings by combining customer and branding capabilities (COMC) in a network process. Finally, Wang et al. (2015) find that three internal capabilities (innovation, information and relational capabilities) are critical enablers in enhancing inter-firm collaboration. They argue that market turbulence may moderate the effects of innovation and information capabilities. However, the relational capability has a positive effect on collaboration effectiveness regardless of the market turbulence level.

2.4. Theoretical perspectives

Management and marketing researchers use the terms of resource-based view (RBV) and resource-based theory (RBT) interchangeably. For example, Table 1 shows the use of both these terms in the same research context or the use of different research paradigms embedded in these “different” theories, such as dynamic capabilities (DC), marketing capabilities (MC), and dynamic marketing capabilities (DMC) in the reviewed articles. Most scholars use the term RBT as resource-based inquiry reaches maturity as a theory because there is hardly any conceptual or methodological difference between these terms anyway (Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2011; Kozlenkova et al., 2014). In addition, several conceptual perspectives have emerged as spin-offs from RBT that justify its maturity status (Barney et al., 2011), such as the natural-resource-based view (NRBV) of the firm (Hart, 1995), dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), and dynamic marketing capabilities (Bruni & Verona, 2009).

Marketing scholars (as well as business research scholars that utilize marketing concepts) are particularly interested in conceptualization, drivers and academic execution of the DMC. As a result, the application of DC and its performance in marketing context has attracted a considerable attention in the last decade. However, researchers should be careful in the verbatim application of this RBT perspective, because it uses stringent assumptions of inter-firm competition and market dynamics between firms. Research problems and topics in marketing typically address the issues of intra-firm dynamics and consumer–firm interdependence. For instance, Davcik, da Silva, and Hair (2015) asserts the role of intra-firm resource distribution in the development of brand equity. In addition, the authors call for further research regarding the internal firm processes in the multi-brand portfolio and their effects on firm performance. Therefore, marketing researchers should be more stringent in conceptualizing their resource-based inquiry towards the drivers and the outcomes of DMC perspective. Following the conceptual framework from Section 2, in the next section we group the articles selected for publication in this special issue according to the three research streams in the study of marketing resources and performance.

3. Special issue articles

3.1. Relation to firm/brand environment

Within the first boundary research area, i.e., the relationship of the firm with its environment, five papers in this special issue contribute to the debate. First, Kull, Mena and Korschun (in this issue) develop the conceptual study on the RBV and stakeholder theory. The study highlights the need to examine firm–stakeholder relationships as contributors to firm performance. The study explains, from a resource-based logic, the process by which stakeholder marketing can lead to superior performance by describing the mechanism through which performance materializes. Next, Wang and Sengupta (in this issue) show a chain of effects, from a marketing resource (stakeholder relations) to competitive advantage (brand equity) to organizational performance, highlighting the importance of appropriate mediators to provide more accurate indications of the overall effects of marketing resources. Their findings encourage the use of a stakeholder perspective to explore DMC that may emerge in a multiple stakeholder environment.

In their paper, Rakthin, Calantone and Wang (in this issue) identify technological and market knowledge as valuable resources that a firm can utilize for competitive advantage. They also extend the scope of absorptive capacity (ACAP) beyond a technology-related context and develop a model to compare the performances of potential and realized ACAP as well as that of market orientation in order to assess shared performance in a market-related context. Results from their web-based survey with sales and/or marketing managers in service and manufacturing companies publicly traded in the U.S. and international stock exchange, show that ACAP of market knowledge positively influences firm performance by enhancing customer acquisition and retention of the firm. Moreover, market orientation operates through the innovation process to add its effects to that of ACAP. Finally, this study also shows the moderating role of a firm's balance in cost leadership and differentiation strategy.

In the next paper, Haapanen, Juntunen and Juntunen (in this issue) use RBV to argue that heterogeneity in resource and capability endowments provides firms with a necessary advantage to compete on foreign markets. Based on prior results, these authors propose that international expansion requires a bundle of key capabilities, a capability portfolio, in which capabilities' relative importance varies as internationalization proceeds. This study is one of the first attempts to use a questionnaire in which only yes/no answer is possible. The authors develop a method to handle binary data and use finite mixture structural equation modeling (FMSEM) to reveal three differently behaving latent classes, the preparing international, the novice international, and the experienced international. Findings indicate that the time of initial entry is an important watershed in terms of how firms allocate their financial resources between key capabilities, a manifestation of higher-order capabilities.

Finally, Wang, Wang, Jiang, Yang and Cui (in this issue) draw on resource dependence theory to argue that buyer power advantage makes the buyer reluctant to collaborate with the supplier in the long run, with three types of relationship bonding tactics initiated by the supplier firm: customization, information sharing, and managerial ties to the buyer firm. Using 131 matched buyer–supplier dyadic data; this paper shows a negative correlation between buyer power advantage and long-term collaboration. Supplier customization and managerial ties mitigate the effect of buyer power advantage on long-term collaboration but information sharing has no significant effect on the relationship between buyer power advantage and long-term collaboration.

3.2. Marketing as an organizational function

Three papers in this special issue address the second research stream that focuses on the marketing as an organizational function. First, Cacciolatti and Lee (in this issue) study moderators of the capability–performance relationship (market orientation, strategy and organizational power) that explain the contribution of intra-firm capabilities to performance and competitive advantage in the RAT context. Their findings suggest that developing both tangible and intangible capabilities may not suit all firms. The lack of a specific theoretical framework makes this stream of research confusing regarding the definition, measurement and operationalization of the constructs related to marketing and organizational capabilities and performance.

Similarly, Takata (in this issue) examines the stability and relative importance of the effects of industry forces, market orientation, and MC on business performance using survey data (n = 568) from Japanese manufacturers over the course of three years (2009–2011). He finds direct and stable effects of MC on performance over the three years, with MC are the most important driver of performance, followed by industry forces, specifically, competitive rivalry and power of suppliers, and market orientation. Market orientation has an indirect effect on performance through MC. MC have a stronger effect on performance in cases of high competitive rivalry compared with those of low competitive rivalry. Within the different MC, new product development and pricing are the primary factors. Channel management is more important in cases of high competitive rivalry.

Finally, Covin, Eggers, Kraus, Chang and Chan (in this issue) investigate the differences in the role of marketing-related resources, decisions, and actions pertaining to innovation between family (FFs) and non-family firms (NFFs). Using data from 1671 firms operating in four countries, these authors use a fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis to reveal six configurations of behavioral proclivities and/or resources that predict radical innovativeness, including two that are unique to FFs, three that are unique to NFFs, and one that is common to both firm types. All these findings highlight the role and the importance of marketing function in leveraging a firm's DC to create better performance.

3.3. Marketing resources deployment

Five articles in this special issue focus on the relationship of resources deployment and their effects on performance. First, Rahman, Lambkin and Hussain (in this issue) study the effect of mergers and acquisitions (M&A) both on marketing inputs (costs) and marketing outputs (revenue), leading to an assessment of the effect on the overall marketing efficiency of the merged firms. This finding is in contrary to previous studies that focused solely on marketing outputs. The study shows that the merged firms failed to achieve cost efficiency in their marketing activities following M&A. In addition, the study finds that the overall marketing efficiency of the merged firms improved following M&A, but the degree of improvement is marginal.

In the second paper, Spielmann and Williams (in this issue) use a qualitative approach to study the creation of competitive territorial brands of wine producers in France. The study shows that multiple individual brands interact with an overarching territorial brand through communal leverage to sustain territorial and individual brands. According to the authors, territorial brand is a form of regional umbrella branding that does not result from a top-down process as previous research would suggest but from a bottom-up process. The study finds that a territory's physical resources and capabilities are drivers of marketing relationships for origin-specific firms.

In the third paper along this theme, Kim, Shin and Min (in this issue) study the role of MC in the success of new products by showing how MC such as marketing and technological resources may drive the new product development process, which in turn may enhance the new products competitive advantage in terms of differentiation or costs. The authors use data from the manufacturing and service industry firms in Korea (N = 209) to show that a firm's strategic MC affect its product advantages (differentiation and cost advantage) and its product-market performance via two technological resource mobilization modes (dynamic vs. embedded).

In the fourth paper, Ceric, D'Alessandro, Soutar and Johnson (in this issue) use service blueprinting and benchmarking techniques to demonstrate the process by which service firms can identify marketing resources specific to co-creating customer value. Specifically, using a case study about the Australian operations of a European mobile phone service provider, these authors show that service blueprinting can help improve internal processes and identify inside-out resources and capabilities, whereas benchmarking can help recognize outside-in competitive resources and capabilities. These findings would help service firms identify and deploy those DMC and resources that help optimize their service management processes and marketing performance.

Finally, in the fifth paper in this research stream, Sharma, Davcik and Pillai (in this issue) combine the signaling theory and DMC perspective to investigate the mediating role of product innovation in the process by which strategic capabilities such as R&D and brand equity influence marketing performance. Using panel data for 1356 food brands from the packaged foods market, these authors show that MNC firms are able to use R&D expenditure to improve their product innovation and market share to a greater extent compared to SME and retailer firms. Moreover, the stronger brand equity of MNC firms may actually hurt the performance of their new products by inhibiting product innovation. These findings provide some new insights into the process by which firms in highly competitive product categories could optimize their expenditure on R&D and brand building, to positively influence their product innovation and marketing performance.

4. Open questions and future research

Current research on resource-based inquiry addresses the issue of intra-firm competition for firm resources and their internal distribution in achieving a better firm performance. For instance, Davcik et al. (2015) highlight the importance of intra-firm resource distribution in the development of brand equity. Similarly, Cacciolatti and Lee (in this issue) explore the contribution of intra-firm capabilities to performance and competitive advantage in the RAT context, while Sharma et al. (in this issue) demonstrate how the intra-firm competition for resources may affect the performance of different brands in heterogeneous brand portfolios in the RBT context. RBT research generally focuses on the competition among firms for the inter-firm distribution of resources; however, the above studies highlight that marketing research should also focus on intra-firm dynamics and the impact of the distribution of internal resources on a firm's decision-making process and performance. These internal firm dynamics include consumer–firm dependence, brand co-creation and stakeholder effectiveness, management of brand equity, effectiveness of resource distribution in service dominant organizations, etc.

As highlighted in the Introduction to this special issue, current research on DMC and their influence on competitive advantage and marketing performance is rather scant and most of these studies focus on the identification and deployment of marketing resources and their effects on performance (e.g., Capron & Hulland, 1999; Kor & Mahoney, 2005; Hooley et al., 2005; Mariadoss et al., 2011; Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015). In contrast, there are very few studies that explore the other two themes, namely the relation of firm and/or its brands to its environment, such as its stakeholders (e.g., Gaur et al., 2014; Krush et al., 2014; Kurt & Hulland, 2013) or the role of marketing as an organizational function and how it affects overall firm performance (e.g., Nath et al., 2010; Zhao et al., 2015).

In view of the above, there is a clear need for more research on these themes and to address this need we had suggested several topics in our call for papers for this special issue. While the papers included in this special issue address many of those topics, several issues still remain unresolved and warrant more attention in future research, such as:

- The role of R&D and innovation as dynamic marketing capabilities
- The role of sustainable competitive advantage as a strategic goal for a firm

- The impact of intra-firm competition for resources on a firm's competitive advantage
- The influence of 'inside-out' versus 'outside-in' approaches on marketing strategy
- How do intra-firm DMC influence marketing strategy, competitive advantage and firm performance?
- Relative importance and the influence of marketing resources at product, brand, portfolio and firm levels on obtaining the competitive advantage.

One of the biggest challenges in this context relates to the level of analysis using a specific theory in marketing resource inquiry. For example, most studies rely on firm-level analysis when using RBT as their theoretical foundation because of its origins in management literature, which mostly examines firm-level issues. However, marketing studies typically rely on product, brand or consumer level analysis and rarely on the firm level, hence marketing scholars must be more diligent and cautious in the direct use of the RBT as their theoretical framework. In fact, future research may address this concern by extending an RBT perspective to develop more appropriate theoretical frameworks for use in marketing studies. From a theoretical perspective, this requires further investigations into the DMC and their managerial implications, as well as a fresh look into the RAT and extending its possible applications.

In addition, future research should address open questions that are important for the marketing community but not covered by the theoretical lenses of the most prominent theoretical frameworks in the field. For instance, how intra-firm competition for resources may affect the consumers. An important and underestimated research avenue is related to the firm's environment and how the new evolving brand logic (co-created, experiential and multi-stakeholder) might be managed and theoretically conceptualized, because the brand development requires the integration of the different stakeholder resources and capabilities in order to strengthen the brand capabilities and value.

Acknowledgments

The guest co-editors are grateful to Professor Arch Woodside, the erstwhile chief editor of the Journal of Business Research, for his continuous support and guidance during this amazing academic endeavor. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the reviewers for their immense help with timely reviews and constructive feedback for the authors. The list of reviewers (in alphabetical order): Young-Hyo Ahn (Incheon National University), Jonathan Bohlmann (North Carolina State University), Liliana Bove (University of Melbourne), Luca Cacciolatti (University of Westminster), Kimmy Chan (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Jeremy Galbreath (Curtin University), Nicholas Grigoriou (Monash University Malaysia), Flora Gu (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), Gopal Iyer (Florida Atlantic University), Oriol Iglesias (ESADE Business & Law School), Fuming Jiang (Curtin University), Namwoon Kim (Hong Kong Polytechnic University), MinChung Kim (University of Hong Kong), Daniela Langaro (ISCTE-IUL), Ravi Pappu (University of Queensland), Darko Pantelic (Jönköping University), Kishore Gopalakrishna Pillai (University of Bradford), Marianna Sigala (University of South Australia), Bharadhwaj Sivakumaran (Great Lakes Institute of Management), Ashish Sinha (University of Technology, Sydney), Ashish Sood (University of Southern California), Rajneesh Suri (University of Philadelphia), Cleopatra Veloutsou (University of Glasgow), Zhilin Yang (City University of Hong Kong), and Xubing Zhang (Hong Kong Polytechnic University).

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