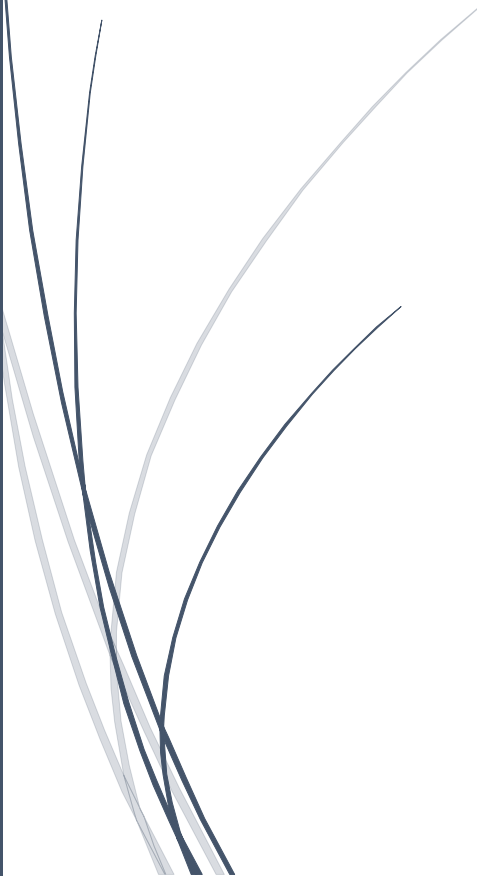


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5/2/2024

Strategic Management

LCMB7003

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Emergence of Virtual Organizations

Introduction:

Due to the fact that they provide a unique structure for strategic management, Virtual Organizations (VOs) are gaining more and more popularity in the modern-day business climate. Despite the fact that virtual organizations (VOs) provide advantages such as reduced overhead expenses and access to a talent pool accessible all over the globe, strategic planning poses a set of challenges that are specific to this dispersed environment. On the other hand, effective strategic decision-making inside VOs may be inhibited by a number of reasons, including as difficulties in communication brought on by a lack of face-to-face involvement, difficulties in developing trust across geographic distances, and difficulties in managing cultural differences in a workforce that is global in scope. Despite these drawbacks, virtual assistants (VOs) have the potential to overcome them by using technology to adapt traditional planning methods, fostering cooperation and open communication, and improving leadership skills that prioritize motivation, trust, and cultural sensitivity. By capitalizing on their strengths and addressing their weaknesses, virtual organizations (VOs) have the potential to achieve success as actors in the dynamic area of strategic management.

Main Body

Afsarmanesh and Camarinha-Matos (2006) define VO as a "set of cooperating (legally) independent organizations, which to the outside world provide a set of services and act as if they were one organization." VO is a group of organizations that jointly provide services to the outside world. Alterations may also be made to it. Cooperation is made easier by the use of computer networks. According to Dimitrakos, Golby, and Kearney (2009), another definition of VO is a "temporary or permanent coalition of geographically dispersed individual, group, organizational units, or entire organizations that pool resources, capabilities, and information to achieve common objectives." This definition might be used to describe a coalition that is either temporary or permanent.

Importance of VO

The modern corporate landscape is undergoing a profound transformation, and virtual organizations (VOs) are increasing in significance as a result of this transformation. These companies provide a structure that is both dynamic and adaptable, which enables them to comply with the requirements of the current economic climate. According to Božić (2023), these teams are distinguished by their geographically dispersed members engaging via the use of technology.

A growing number of significant factors are contributing to the growing significance of virtual organizations, including the following items:

- **Developments in technology:** Since the advent of the internet, cloud computing, and video conferencing applications like as Microsoft Teams and Zoom, it is now feasible to collaborate remotely in a seamless manner. As a consequence of this, virtual assistants are able to get access to a wider range of abilities and foster innovation by drawing from a talent pool that spans the whole world.
- **An ever-increasing need for adaptability:** The modern labor force is becoming more desirous of having more adaptable work schedules. Companies that operate virtually are able to fulfil this need because they allow employees to work from home. This facilitates a more harmonious integration of work and life, which may lead to an improvement in employee satisfaction.

Challenges of Strategic Planning in Virtual Organizations

There are special challenges associated with strategic planning that are brought about by the worldwide scattered workforces of virtual organizations (VOs). Traditional planning techniques, which often rely on in-person meetings and centralized information flow, may become cumbersome and ineffectual in a virtual organization (VO), which is a kind of organization that operates entirely online. Consider the following things, which are among the most significant:

- There are a number of factors that may contribute to communication gaps that are generated by geographic dispersion, including variances in time zones, challenges in language, and the lack of non-verbal indications that are present in in-person encounters (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998). During the process of strategic planning, this may make it more challenging to achieve a consensus, get information, and exchange ideas with one another.
- Developing a common understanding of the organization's goals and strategy may be difficult when members of a team meet in person seldom or never at all. This might make it difficult to build a shared understanding of the organization's objectives and strategy. According to Gibbs, Kim, and Boyraz (2017), this may result in misalignment occurring during the planning process, which in turn makes it more challenging to collaborate.
- It may be challenging to replicate in a virtual environment the collaborative workshops and brainstorming sessions that are often held in the real world. There is a possibility that this will stifle creative thinking and diminish the number of unique ideas that may be created for strategic planning.
- It may be challenging for teams that are geographically dispersed to efficiently exchanging information and knowledge with one another. Informed decision-making during strategic planning may be impeded by outdated data that originates from centrally situated repositories that are difficult to update or are not readily accessible (Wu, Lin, & Lin, 2006).

Adapting Traditional Planning Processes for Virtual Environments

Despite these challenges, virtual organizations (VOs) have the potential to achieve successful strategic planning by adapting traditional planning processes to the specifics of their virtual environment. Some of the most important strategies are as follows:

- It is recommended that you make use of online collaboration tools. Cloud-based platforms and collaboration software may make it easier to modify documents in real time, share information, and communicate with one another. It is possible that live workshops might be replaced by online brainstorming platforms and virtual whiteboards in order to facilitate the production of group ideas (Roper and Kim, 2007).
- You may apply the approach of scenario planning, which is a way of studying potential futures, to a virtual environment where you can utilize the tools that are available online. Utilizing collaborative papers and online surveys allows for the sharing of ideas and the evaluation of potential future situations among teams that are located in different locations.
- By using asynchronous communication tools like as email, discussion boards, and project management systems, members of a team are able to communicate on their own schedules and avoid the time zone differences that may exist between them. According to Gibbs, Kim, and Boyraz (2017), when talks and decisions are thoroughly recorded, a shared understanding is preserved, and the availability of information is assured.
- Ongoing virtual meetings and activities designed to facilitate team building: Even if they are just a few minutes long, holding virtual meetings on a regular basis is an effective way to foster trust, communication, and cooperation. It is possible to provide virtual team-building exercises via the use of online collaborative games and activities.

By using these strategies and making the most of the possibilities that technology presents, virtual organizations (VOs) have the potential to effectively work in a context that is geographically dispersed and overcome the challenges that are associated with strategic planning.

Challenges of Leading Virtual Teams

The challenges that come with managing virtual teams are distinct from those that come with managing traditional office locations. Here is a rundown of some of the most significant difficulties:

- The establishment of trust may be difficult when members of a team are physically separated from one another since it might be difficult to create rapport and trust with them. Nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice and body language, are often absent in virtual communication, despite the fact that they are particularly important for creating trust. Alternate methods for establishing trust must be established by leaders, and some examples of these methods include maintaining open communication, being transparent, and keeping promises.
- Members of virtual teams may face feelings of loneliness and a reduction in motivation as a consequence of reduced social involvement (Downes, 2020). Therefore, it is important for virtual teams to increase their motivation. Leaders have a responsibility to create

opportunities for members of a virtual team to communicate with one another and establish friendships, to recognize and celebrate their achievements, and to give regular feedback and expressions of gratitude.

- Because there are less obvious emotional cues and more possibility for misinterpretation, virtual communication may make conflict worse. This should be taken into consideration while handling conflict. According to Shinnishi and Higa (1997), leaders are required to have the capacity to identify potential issues at an early stage, to encourage communication that is both respectful and honest, and to provide clear protocols for the resolution of disagreements.

Skills and Qualities for Leading Virtual Teams

A certain skill set is required for successful leadership in a virtual office (VO) environment in order to overcome the challenges that are presented. The following is a list of features that are very important:

- **Capacity for Effective Communication:** Leaders are expected to possess the capacity to communicate in written, audio, and video forms in a way that is easily understood, concise, and adaptable. The practice of active listening is very necessary in order to achieve the goals of developing trust and encouraging open conversation.
- **Developing Relationships:** Gilson, Maynard, and Vartiainen (2014) state that leaders of virtual teams should proactively offer opportunities for members of the team to communicate with one another and get to know one another on a personal level. Social events, unofficial communication channels, or online team-building activities are all potential means by which this objective might be attained.
- **Time Management and Delegation:** According to Hacker, Johnson, and Saunders (2019), leaders need to be trained to effectively delegate duties across a variety of work styles and time zones, in addition to being able to effectively manage their own time.
- **Proficient in Technology:** Being able to manage a virtual team involves knowledge with a variety of online communication tools and technology that facilitate cooperation. The leaders of an organization need to have access to these technologies so that they can assist with the administration of projects, the sharing of information, and communication.
- **Compassion and cultural sensitivity:** According to Hacker, Johnson, and Saunders (2019), leaders need to show compassion for the specific challenges that members of virtual team's face, such as issues with maintaining a healthy work-life balance and cultural differences. Having cultural knowledge is necessary for effective management of a varied workforce that is delivered virtually.

Advantages of Virtual Organizations for Strategic Management

Virtual organizations, also known as VOs, provide a variety of advantages in the context of strategic management. These organizations make it possible for enterprises to make use of a unique organizational structure in order to achieve their goals.

- Ability to Access a Worldwide Talent Pool Virtual organizations (VOs) have the potential to access a wider talent pool than traditional companies due to the fact that they are not limited by location (Zephir and Minel, 2011). Consequently, this makes it possible for firms to recruit highly skilled people from any part of the globe, which may lead to a workforce that is both more knowledgeable and more diverse. According to the findings of study conducted by Subramani (2008), VOs have the potential to make use of this variability in order to foster creativity and construction of a larger range of ideas when solving strategic challenges.
- Because virtual offices do not need real premises, the overhead costs associated with running them are significantly reduced. Consequently, this makes it possible for enterprises to reallocate finances to objectives or to acquisitions of technologies that enhance the level of collaboration and communication inside the VO. VOs have the potential to strategically grow and expand by using the cost reductions that result from decreased overhead, according to research conducted by Byrne (1993).
- VOs have the capacity to easily modify their operations in order to meet the requirements of a project, which results in increased flexibility and scalability. Conventional businesses that have a predetermined infrastructure would not be able to take advantage of strategic possibilities and respond to change market conditions in the same manner that they are able to do so because of their flexibility.

Disadvantages of Virtual Organizations in Strategic Management

Despite the fact that Virtual Organizations (VOs) provide a multitude of advantages, strategic management presents a unique set of challenges in this remote environment. Here is a rundown of the most significant disadvantages:

- VOs lack the depth of face-to-face discussion, which may lead to misunderstandings and inefficiencies (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998). This can be a barrier to discourse. It is possible that emails, texts, and video chats may make effective communication more difficult since cultural idiosyncrasies, humor, and body language may be lost in these forms of communication (Subramani, 2008).
- The creation of trust is essential to the success of strategic planning and collaboration between individuals. According to Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1998), the establishment of trust in virtual teams may be difficult owing to the physical distance between members and the lack of interaction. When there is a lack of trust amongst members of a team, they may be hesitant to share their ideas, which may hinder both creativity and judgement.
- When it comes to handling cultural differences, voice actors often draw from a talent pool that spans the whole planet, which results in a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.

According to Puck, Neyer, and Dennerlein (2011), these variances may lead to misunderstandings about the processes involved in decision-making, the ethics of the workplace, and the patterns of communication. In order to effectively manage strategic operations in VOs, it is necessary to give substantial attention to strategies that promote intercultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Conclusions

Due to the fact that they provide a unique structure for strategic management, Virtual Organizations (VOs) are gaining more and more popularity in the modern-day business climate. Despite the fact that virtual offices (VOs) provide advantages such as reduced overhead costs and access to a diverse pool of workers from across the globe, the dispersed form of these offices poses strategic challenges. It is possible that problems in communication may impede the establishment of trust and effective discussion. Additionally, it is essential to pay particular attention to the situation of cultural differences. The use of technology and the modification of traditional planning techniques may allow VOs to effectively manage their strategic operations, despite the restrictions that have been mentioned.

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Précis letter

In their 2018 review, Wagner, Schramm-Klein, and Steinmann dig into the many-sided universe of customer conduct in multichannel web-based business, featuring the meaning of electronic diverts and touchpoints in internet retailing. By consolidating study and exploratory examination, the makers expect to upgrade shopper cognizance of this unique circumstance (Santos and Gonçalves, 2021). They give an interesting perspective on internet business through a multichannel retailing system, upheld by true information. Understanding buyers' perspectives on different Web empowered gadgets for web-based shopping includes utilizing multi-layered scaling (MDS) as the procedure (Afonso, 2021). Individuals are mentioned to assess pairwise likenesses among gadgets so the makers can lay out a proportionality system.

The article written by Wagner et al. (2020), has evaluated the extension level of knowledge related to e-commerce platforms or e-commerce channels including its advantages and disadvantages. The study has significantly addressed the research issue depicting the gap between the customer service from the brick-and-mortar stores. The literature is invaluable for businesses seeking to enhance their strategic management approaches, offering insights into evaluating e-channels, designing touchpoints and ultimately creating goodwill multichannel e-commerce systems to thrive into fluctuating digital marketplace.

First study aims to identify which Internet-enabled devices consumers utilize for shopping, by its categorization into Traditional E-channel, Mobile E-channel, IETV E-channel and Complementary E-channel and understand consumer evaluations of these e-channels under various situational influences.

Results:

- Traditional and mobile e-channels lead in online shopping quality attributes (e.g., usefulness, ease of use).
- Preference for mobile e-channel in scenarios "on the go" or "when pinched for time," while traditional e-channels are favored for comprehensive shopping tasks predominantly within the comfort of home.

Second Study investigates the impact of different e-channel touch-points (standard website, mobile-optimized website, mobile shopping app) on the mobile e-channel's consumer evaluation.

Results:

- Mobile-optimized website and mobile app outperformed standard website accessed via mobile device in terms of usefulness, ease of use, overall satisfaction.
- Standard website via traditional e-channel (PC) set high benchmark, in perceived usefulness and shopping intention.

The authors' interpretation, which directly addresses the core of the research issue, proposes a nuanced explanation of consumer behaviour in multichannel e-commerce by underlining the complex nature of e-channel usage and touchpoints in influencing customer decisions. Even while they acknowledged the limitations—like possible biases in the data gathering process and problems with generalizability—they may not have addressed the impact of particular demographics on customer behaviour. In keeping with industry trends, their suggested next step entails investigating the developing role of emerging technologies in improving the online purchasing experience. Future studies may provide priceless insights into how e-commerce tactics should constantly adjust, which is crucial for companies navigating the quickly changing digital landscape. Adopting a multidimensional strategy like this shows a dedication to fully comprehending and optimising customer interactions over e-channels, which in turn promotes increased customer happiness and loyalty in the ever-changing world of multichannel e-commerce.

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Exploring Consumer Behaviour in Multichannel E-Commerce: Insights from Wagner et al.

In the complex world of e-commerce, where digital storefronts are commonplace and customer tastes are always changing, it is critical for firms looking to differentiate themselves from the virtual competition to grasp the nuances of consumer behaviour. In their insightful paper, "Online retailing across e-channels and e-channel touchpoints: Empirical studies of consumer behaviour in the multichannel e-commerce environment," Gerhard Wagner, Hanna Schramm-Klein, and Sascha Steinmann explore this complex field. By means of their painstaking investigation, they illuminate the multifaceted fabric of customer inclinations, requirements, and anticipations, which materialise throughout numerous e-commerce platforms and interactions. The purpose of this summary is to evaluate and examine the authors' interpretations, their complex connections to the research topic, the constraints that currently exist, the suggested next steps for additional investigation, and any potentially missed practical implications for businesses.

Authors' Interpretation

The research conducted by Wagner, Schramm-Klein, and Steinmann highlights the complex relationship between customer preferences, needs, and expectations across a range of e-commerce platforms and touchpoints. Through an empirical investigation of customer behaviour, they find notable distinctions that hint to differing propensities towards various e-channels and touchpoints. This highlights how difficult it is for customers to make decisions in the digital age and how crucial it is to have strategies that are specifically designed to engage different customer categories.

Link to Research Question

The research question aims to understand the complexities of customer behaviour in multichannel e-commerce contexts, and the authors' findings closely match this goal. Wagner and colleagues effectively tackle this inquiry by means of empirical studies, providing insights into the variables influencing consumer decisions and actions throughout various e-commerce platforms and interactions. Their perspectives enhance our comprehension of the intricacies of customer behaviour in the digital sphere and provide beneficial direction for companies looking to maximise their multichannel approaches.

Identification of Limitations

Wagner, Schramm-Klein, and Steinmann acknowledge a number of study limitations despite the importance of their findings. These include the limitations imposed by sample size restrictions, possible biases in self-reported data, and the difficulty of doing a thorough analysis of multichannel behaviour. In order to appropriately evaluate the study's findings and comprehend the limits of its application, it is imperative that these limitations be acknowledged.

Proposed Next Steps

The authors recommend a number of next measures in order to get beyond the noted obstacles and advance research in this area. Their stance is to conduct more research to examine various factors that impact customer behaviour and to employ cutting-edge techniques such as experiments or longitudinal studies. In addition to improving the validity and reliability of study findings, these suggested next actions are crucial for deepening our understanding of consumer behaviour in multichannel e-commerce contexts.

Agreement with Proposed Next Steps

The following steps that Wagner, Schramm-Klein, and Steinmann have suggested are both reasonable and essential for expanding the field of multichannel e-commerce research. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of consumer behaviour and increase the accuracy of their research findings by embracing innovative approaches and overcoming the limits that their study revealed. Researchers will also be able to create more reliable models and frameworks for comprehending and forecasting consumer behaviour in the digital marketplace by examining a wider range of variables.

Points Missed by Authors

Although Wagner et al. provide a thorough examination of customer behaviour in multichannel e-commerce, it's possible that they failed to consider how their findings would be useful to companies. Through an examination of the commercial consequences of consumer behaviour insights, the writers may offer practical suggestions for maximising e-channel experiences and elevating client contentment in general. Future research projects would benefit from the inclusion of a commercial perspective, which would help close the knowledge gap between academic research and practical applications. This would enable enterprises functioning in the digital ecosystem to create more effective strategies.

Practical Implications for Businesses

Building on the observations made by the authors, companies can use the results of this research to improve consumer experiences through various channels and hone their e-commerce strategies. Businesses can better fulfil customer demands and expectations by customising their marketing activities, product offers, and user experiences by knowing the diverse preferences and behaviours of consumers across many touchpoints. Businesses might, for instance, determine which touchpoints or channels work best for reaching particular customer segments and then spend resources appropriately. The creation of more customised and interesting online experiences can also be influenced by the study's findings, which will boost client happiness and loyalty.

Businesses can also streamline the client journey and optimise their multichannel operations with the knowledge gathered from this study. Businesses can apply focused enhancements to improve usability and conversion rates by identifying potential pain spots or friction regions in the e-commerce process, such as checkout procedures or navigational challenges. Furthermore, by knowing how customers behave across various channels, organisations can create multichannel

strategies that are more integrated and cohesive, giving customers a smooth experience across all the touchpoints they deal with.

In terms of summation up, the groundbreaking paper by Gerhard Wagner, Hanna Schramm-Klein, and Sascha Steinmann provides invaluable insights into the intricate dynamics of customer behaviour in the multichannel e-commerce environment. The authors provide light on the complex web of consumer preferences and behaviours that permeate the digital environment through their meticulous empirical investigation. It would have been beneficial for the authors to provide more context for the findings' application to companies trying to make their way through the digital landscape, even as they rightly point out the limitations that now exist and suggest innovative directions for further study. Nevertheless, their groundbreaking work provides essential insights for scholars, practitioners, and corporations alike, acting as a beacon for additional research and investigation in this dynamic subject.

POWERPOINT SLIDES

Analysis of Results and Implications

- **Authors' Interpretation:**

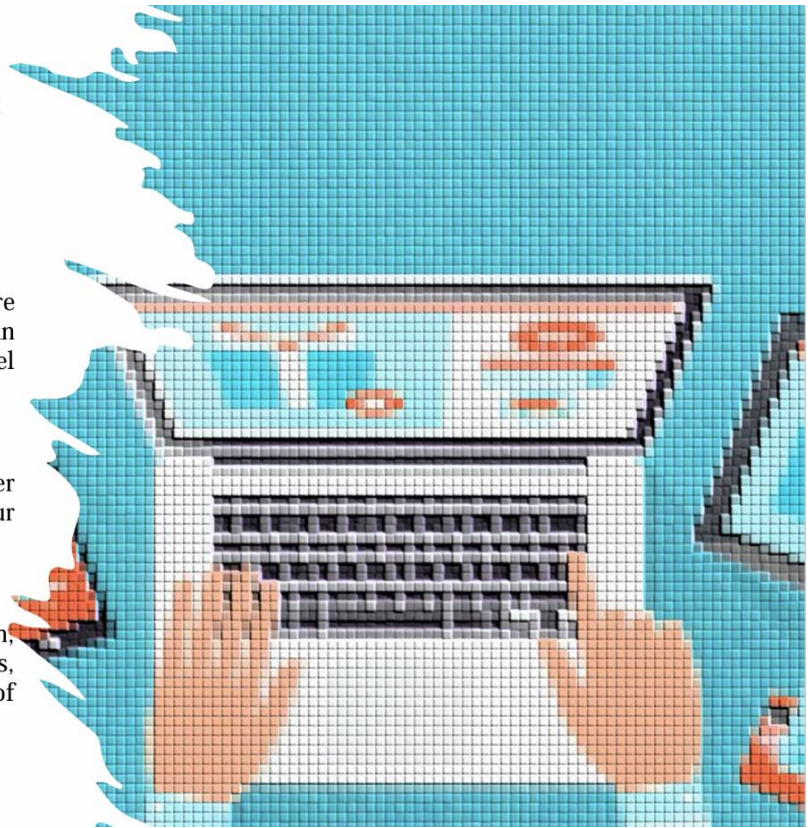
Diverse customer preferences, demands, and expectations are shown by the authors' observations of notable differences in consumer behaviour across e-channels and e-channel touchpoints.

- **Link to Research Question:**

In line with the goal of the study, the results successfully answer the research question by demonstrating how customer behaviour varies across different e-commerce channels and touchpoints.

- **Identification of Limitations:**

To improve comprehension of the study's scope and application, the authors note limitations such as sample size restrictions, inherent biases in self-reported data, and the difficulty of analysing multichannel behaviour.



Next Steps and Evaluation

- **Proposed Next Steps:**

In order to get over the present constraints, the authors suggest conducting additional research that looks into other variables impacting consumer behaviour and makes use of cutting-edge techniques like longitudinal studies or experiments.

- **Agreement with Proposed Next Steps:**

The suggested courses of action make sense and are essential for expanding this field's knowledge base, providing more in-depth understanding, and enhancing the accuracy of results.

- **Points Missed by Authors:**

The study's practical value may have been increased by the authors' exploration of business implications for optimising e-channel experiences based on consumer behaviour insights, even if they present a detailed analysis.