Developing Propositions on Firm Capabilities, Business Network, Knowledge Management Practices and Dynamic Capabilities in the Thai Textile Industry

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Abstract

The Thai textile and garment industry faces challenges such as declining competitiveness, productivity limitations, and supply chain instability. This research investigates the factors influencing dynamic capabilities in this industry through a multiple-case study analysis of Thai textile and garment companies. The study reviews the relationships between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices, business network, and dynamic capabilities. By analyzing these companies' experiences, the research aims to establish an operational framework and research approach for exploring the relationship between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices, business networks, and dynamic capabilities. Five Propositions were hypothetically developed. Managers can make informed decisions about resource allocation, prioritize capability development initiatives, and strategically. The findings of the proposed research framework will provide insight for managers to make decisions about resource allocation, prioritize capability development initiatives, and strategically manage network partnerships to enhance their firm's dynamic capabilities.

Keywords: Business network, Dynamic capabilities, Firm capabilities, Knowledge management, Textile

I. INTRODUCTION

The textile and garment industry is key manufacturing sector for Thai economy, but its significance has declined in recent years. This decrease can be attributed to various challenges, including decreased competitiveness in production and marketing relative to neighboring countries, difficulties in enhancing productivity for medium and small producers, instability within domestic supply chains, and shifts in consumption and production patterns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sirada Siribenchapruek (2022) mentioned in her study that Thailand's textile and garment industry is structured into three key segments. The first part is man-made fiber production, which serves as the upstream sector. This segment leverages the country's petrochemical factories, providing essential raw materials for synthetic fiber production. In contrast, natural fibers like cotton and linen are primarily imported from the United States and China due to Thailand's limited cultivation capacity, resulting in a shortfall of raw materials for industrial use.

The second component is yarn and textile spinning, classified as the midstream industry. This process involves transforming both man-made fibers and imported natural fibers into yarn through spinning, followed by weaving fabrics and applying bleaching, dyeing, or printing techniques before the materials advance to the downstream sector.

Finally, the production of other textiles and apparel constitutes the downstream industry, encompassing the manufacture of a diverse range of end products. This includes functional and technical textiles designed for specific applications, such as medical textiles and materials for various industries, as well as household textiles and clothing. Together, these segments illustrate the complexity and interdependence of Thailand's textile and garment industry.

In the past, the textile and garment industry was one of the most important economic sectors. However, its importance has declined due to three challenges: (1) lower competitiveness than other regional producers, especially for downstream and midstream products, according to the suspension of tax privileges and higher labor costs than other regional countries; (2) limitations on productivity enhancements, as most entrepreneurs are SMEs and small businesses with limited capital and limited use of technology; and (3) stability of the domestic textile and garment supply chain, due to a declining share of the global market (Patton, 2015)

For broader perspective, the textile and garment industry is a key pillar of global trade, fashion, functionality, and innovation. Driven by evolving consumer preferences, technological advances, market trends and companies' dynamic capabilities, it offers numerous opportunities (Priyanka, 2024).

The purpose of this research is to explore how firm capabilities influence dynamic capabilities in textile industry in Thailand. The next part will be research objectives, followed by literature reviews, research framework, research methodology, and the discussion at the end.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To review the conceptualization of firm capabilities which relate to dynamic capabilities.

2. To develop the propositions for studying the relationship between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices and business network and dynamic capabilities.

3. To develop the operationalization and research framework for investigating the relationship between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices and business network and dynamic capabilities.

III. LITERATURE REVIEWS

The dynamic capabilities framework has been studied for decades, examining how private enterprises create and capture wealth in rapidly changing technological environments (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Zahra & George, 2002). Past literatures suggested that a firm's competitive advantage comes from unique processes for coordination, shaped by its specific assets—such as difficult-to-trade knowledge and complementary resources—and its evolutionary paths (Day, 1994; Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014). Ultimately, the framework highlights that generating wealth in such environments relies heavily on refining internal technological, organizational, and managerial processes (Morgan, Slotegraaf, & Vorhies, 2009).

A. Theoretical Background

This research is grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, a prominent theory in strategic management that emphasizes the role of a firm's internal resources and capabilities in achieving a sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The RBV posits that resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) to contribute to a competitive advantage. Building upon this foundation, this study delves into the dynamic capabilities' perspective, which focuses on a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure its resources and capabilities to adapt to changing environments (Teece et al., 1997).

The Resource-Based View (RBV) has evolved significantly since its emergence in the 1980s. Early contributions by Miller (1960), Wernerfelt (1984), and Barney (1991) established the foundation, emphasizing the importance of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources for achieving competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Miller, 1960; Wernerfelt, 1984). The RBV shifted the focus of strategic management from external industry factors to internal firm resources and capabilities.

Over time, the RBV has been expanded and refined. The Knowledge-Based View (KBV) emerged, highlighting the strategic role of knowledge (Grant, 1996; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Dynamic capabilities addressed the need for firms to adapt and reconfigure resources in response to change (Teece et al., 1997). The relational view broadened the perspective to include inter-firm relationships and networks (Dyer & Singh, 1998). These developments have enriched the RBV and broadened its applications across various fields.

Today, RBV research continues to explore new frontiers, such as the micro-foundations of capabilities, sustainability, the digital age, and value creation. While challenges remain in measuring RBV constructs and addressing dynamic environments, the theory remains a cornerstone of strategic management, providing valuable insights into how firms can leverage their internal resources to achieve sustained competitive advantage.

B. Dynamic Capabilities

Tidd, Bessant, and Pavitt (2005) and Teece et al. (1997) provided the definition of dynamic capabilities as a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to respond to rapidly changing environments, ultimately fostering new and innovative competitive advantages despite existing path dependencies and market positions. This encompasses the firm's capacity to generate, develop, and implement new ideas, products, or processes that create value for both the firm and its customers.

Dynamic capabilities, as conceptualized by Teece et al. (1997), are the higher-order organizational processes that enable firms to adapt and reconfigure their resources and ordinary capabilities in response to changing environments. These capabilities are not merely a static set of skills, but rather the mechanisms through which firms integrate, build, and reconfigure their existing resources and capabilities to maintain a competitive edge (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This continuous process of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring allows firms to not only survive but thrive in dynamic markets (Teece et al., 1997). For example, a firm with strong R&D capabilities (a firm capability) can leverage those capabilities to develop new products that meet emerging customer needs (sensing and seizing). However, it is the firm's dynamic capability to reconfigure its production processes and reallocate resources to support the launch of those new products that ultimately leads to sustained competitive advantage (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). In this way, dynamic capabilities build upon and extend existing firm capabilities to ensure ongoing adaptation and success.

C. Innovation Capabilities

There was number of literatures defined Innovation Capabilities, for example; "the ability to continuously transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes, and systems that create value for the customer and the firm." (Tidd et al., 2005), "a set of organizational processes and routines that enable firms to generate new ideas, select promising ones, and implement them into new products, services, and processes." (Wang & Ahmed, 2007), or "organizational processes designed to create, develop and transform technological capabilities into new products, processes and services." (Lawson & Samson, 2001). For these literatures, Innovation Capabilities can be summarized as a firm's ability to generate, develop, and implement new ideas, products, or processes that create value for the firm and its customers. Innovation capabilities involve a combination of creativity, problem-solving, experimentation, and knowledge management (Teece et al., 1997; Zahra & George, 2002). They enable firms to stay ahead of competitors, adapt to changing market conditions, and drive growth. Therefore, based on this literature review, we can define innovation capabilities as the organizational processes and routines that enable a firm to continuously generate, develop, and implement new ideas, products, processes, and services to create value for the customer and the firm. These capabilities involve the transformation of knowledge and ideas into tangible outcomes, and are influenced by the firm's ability to learn, adapt, and reconfigure its resources in response to a changing environment.

E. Marketing Capabilities

Previous literature defined Marketing Capabilities as "complex bundles of skills and accumulated knowledge, exercised through organizational processes that enable firms to coordinate activities and make use of their assets." (Day, 1994), "the processes that deploy resources and integrate market knowledge to understand and satisfy customer needs." (Morgan et al., 2009), "dynamic, firm-specific processes that transform marketing resources into superior market performance." (Kozlenkova et al., 2014), or "the ability to perform marketing activities effectively and efficiently." (Homburg, Theel, & Hohenberg, 2020) Based on these definitions, therefore, Marketing Capabilities can be defined as Marketing capabilities are the integrated processes and skills that allow a company to effectively understand and respond to its market by conducting market research, adapting to change, using resources wisely, and ultimately creating value for both the customer and the company.

Market Capabilities includes the ability to conduct market research, develop effective branding strategies, create compelling advertising campaigns, and build strong customer relationships. Marketing capabilities also involve the ability to adapt to changing market conditions, identify new opportunities, and differentiate the firm's products or services from competitors (Day, 1994). For examples, Market research, branding, advertising, customer relationship management, customer service, sales force effectiveness, pricing strategy, distribution channels

F. Operational Capabilities

Operational capability can be described by Hayes and Wheelwright (1984) that it is a firm's ability to efficiently manage core operations, encompassing supply chain management, production efficiency, quality control, and cost management. It involves coordinating activities from raw material procurement to product delivery, producing goods at minimal cost and waste, ensuring products meet customer expectations, and controlling expenses across the organization. Operational Capabilities can be also defined as "the specific set of abilities, processes, and routines that a firm regularly uses to transform inputs into outputs." (Wu, Melnyk, & Flynn, 2010), which emphasized the transformative aspect and the recurring nature of these capabilities within a firm's operations.

To assess operating capabilities, firms should measure performance against key priorities—cost, quality, delivery, flexibility, and innovation—relative to competitors (Nand, Singh, & Bhattacharya, 2014; Narasimhan & Das, 2001)

Knowledge Management Practices

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) defined knowledge management as the process of "creating, sharing, and using knowledge to enhance organizational performance." They emphasize the dynamic and social nature of knowledge creation, highlighting the importance of tacit knowledge and its conversion into explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001) define knowledge management practices as "the organizational routines and processes that facilitate the acquisition, creation, storage, transfer, and utilization of knowledge." This definition emphasizes the role of organizational routines and processes in enabling effective knowledge management (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Knowledge management supports seizing opportunities by enabling firms to identify and leverage relevant knowledge to develop new products, services, and processes. By sharing knowledge and best practices, firms can quickly mobilize resources and respond to emerging opportunities (Grant, 1996). Sharing knowledge across departments and teams enhances communication and coordination, enabling firms to reconfigure their resources more effectively (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Firms could apply knowledge to solve problems, improve processes, and develop new offerings is essential for seizing opportunities and adapting to changing market conditions (Alavi & Leidner, 2001)

G. Business Network

The term "business network" is often used interchangeably with other terms such as "strategic network," "strategic alliance," and "alliance network.". Previous literature defined business network as "a set of relationships among firms." This simple definition highlights the core idea of interconnectedness between organizations" (Gulati, 1998). Gulati, Nohria, and Zaheer (2000) defined strategic networks as "the pattern of relationships that a firm has with other firms." They emphasize the importance of the network structure and the firm's position within the network in determining its access to resources and opportunities (Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000). Dyer and Singh (1998) introduce the "relational view," emphasizing that resources are embedded within interfirm relationships. They argue that business networks can be a source of competitive advantage when they enable firms to access and leverage resources that they wouldn't be able to access individually (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

For this study, base from the mentioned literatures, the definition of business network can be defined as "A business network is a web of interconnected relationships between companies, individuals, and other organizations within a specific industry or market." These relationships, which can be formal or informal, involve the exchange of resources, information, and influence, and can be a source of competitive advantage by providing access to resources and facilitating learning and adaptation. The structure of the network and a firm's position within it are crucial in determining its access to opportunities and its ability to reconfigure resources and co-evolve with other firms in the network. This interconnectedness allows firms to sense and seize opportunities, contributing to the development of their dynamic capabilities and ultimately, their success in dynamic markets.

Measuring business networks involves assessing the quantity and quality of connections a firm has with other businesses, individuals, and organizations. This includes analyzing the network's size, density, and a firm's position within it (Gulati, 1998; Gulati et al., 2000). It also involves examining the strength, type, and resources exchanged within those relationships (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Ultimately, the impact of the business network on a firm's innovation, finances, market position, and adaptability should be evaluated (Lavie, 2006). Data for this analysis can be gathered through surveys, interviews, social network analysis tools, and archival data.

H. Building Dynamic Capabilities Upon Firm Capabilities

Dynamic capabilities, as Teece et al. (1997) articulated, represent a firm's capacity to adapt and reconfigure its resources and competencies to navigate a changing environment. They are not merely a static set of skills, but rather the processes that enable a firm to *integrate*, *build*, and *reconfigure* its existing capabilities to maintain a competitive edge. Essentially, dynamic capabilities are about strategically leveraging and modifying existing firm capabilities to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

Think of firm capabilities as the foundation—the essential skills and knowledge a company possesses. These might include operational efficiency, marketing prowess, or innovative product development (Dosi, Nelson, & Winter, 2000). Dynamic capabilities, then, are the architectural plans that allow a company to reshape that foundation. They enable a firm to sense shifts in the market (perhaps using its marketing capabilities), seize new opportunities (by leveraging innovation capabilities), and reconfigure its operations (drawing on operational capabilities) to meet those evolving demands (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This continuous process of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring allows firms to not only survive but thrive in dynamic markets.

For example, a firm with strong R&D capabilities (a firm capability) can leverage those capabilities to develop new products that meet emerging customer needs (sensing and seizing). However, it is the firm's dynamic capability to reconfigure its production processes and reallocate resources to support the launch of those new products that ultimately leads to sustained competitive advantage (Wang & Ahmed, 2007). In this way, dynamic capabilities build upon and extend existing firm capabilities to ensure ongoing adaptation and success.

IV. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

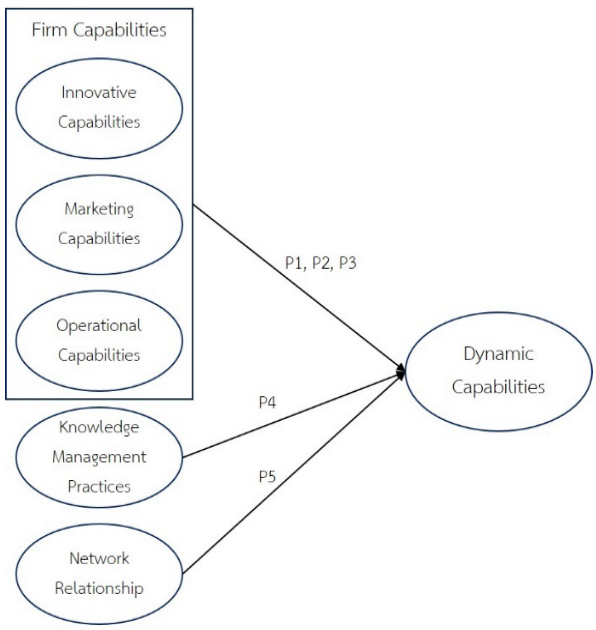

Figure 1: Research framework

Figure 1 illustrates conceptualized based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach, with a focus on how different types of firm capabilities contribute to the development of dynamic capabilities. For the research framework, the research propositions are developed to describe the relationships between constructs in the research model.

Proposition 1: Innovative capabilities are positively associated with the development of dynamic capabilities within a firm.

Innovative capabilities, which involve generating new ideas, experimenting, and adapting to technological changes (Lawson & Samson, 2001; Tidd et al., 2005), are essential for firms to sense and seize new opportunities. This continuous process of exploration and learning enhances a firm's ability to adapt and reconfigure its resources and strategies, which are key aspects of dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997). By fostering a culture of innovation, firms become more adept at identifying and responding to changes in the environment, ultimately strengthening their dynamic capabilities.

Proposition 2: Marketing capabilities are positively associated with the development of dynamic capabilities within a firm.

Marketing capabilities, with their emphasis on understanding customer needs and market trends (Day, 1994), are crucial for sensing changes in the external environment. By effectively deploying market research, branding, and customer relationship management, firms can gather valuable insights into customer preferences, competitor actions, and emerging opportunities. This market knowledge enhances their ability to seize opportunities and reconfigure their offerings to maintain a competitive advantage, reflecting the core processes of dynamic capabilities (Morgan et al., 2009).

Proposition 3: Operational capabilities are positively associated with the development of dynamic capabilities within a firm.

Operational capabilities, which focus on efficiency, quality, and responsiveness in delivering products or services (Wu et al., 2010), provide a strong foundation for dynamic capabilities. Firms with strong operational capabilities can quickly adapt and reconfigure their processes and resources to meet new demands and challenges. This operational flexibility enables them to seize opportunities and respond effectively to changes in the market, which are essential aspects of dynamic capabilities (Roscoe, Cousins, & Lamming, 2019).

Proposition 4: Knowledge management practices are positively associated with the development of dynamic capabilities within a firm.

Knowledge management practices facilitate the creation, sharing, and utilization of knowledge within the organization (Grant, 1996; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This knowledge is crucial for sensing changes in the environment, identifying new opportunities, and reconfiguring resources to adapt to those changes. By effectively managing knowledge, firms can enhance their organizational learning, which is a key driver of dynamic capabilities.

Proposition 5: Strong network relationships are positively associated with the development of dynamic capabilities within a firm.

Strong network relationships provide firms with access to external resources, knowledge, and opportunities (Gulati, 1998). This access enhances their ability to sense changes in the environment, seize new opportunities through collaboration, and reconfigure their resources by leveraging their network partners (Dyer & Singh, 1998). By participating in business networks, firms can learn from others, gain access to new markets, and adapt more quickly to changing conditions, all of which contribute to the development of dynamic capabilities.

Table 1 provides a concise overview of the key constructs in your research framework, along with their definitions, important considerations for measurement, and relevant citations.

Table 1: Firm capabilities

Construct	Definition	Key Considerations	Citations
Innovative Capabilities	The organizational processes and routines that enable a firm to continuously generate, develop, and implement new ideas, products, processes, and services to create value for the customer and the firm.	- Focus on both product and process innovation - Consider the role of knowledge creation and learning - Assess the firm's ability to adapt and respond to technological changes	Lawson and Samson (2001) Tidd et al. (2005) Wang and Ahmed (2007)
Marketing Capabilities	The processes that deploy resources and integrate market knowledge to understand and satisfy customer needs.	- Emphasize customer focus and market orientation - Consider the integration of marketing resources and activities - Assess the firm's ability to adapt to market changes and build strong customer relationships	Day (1994) Vorhies and Morgan (2005) Morgan, et al. (2009)
Operational Capabilities	The firm's ability to consistently and reliably perform activities that transform inputs into outputs to meet customer requirements.	- Focus on efficiency, effectiveness, and quality - Consider the role of process improvement and resource integration - Assess the firm's ability to meet customer demands and adapt to operational challenges - Firms should measure performance against key priorities—cost, quality, delivery, flexibility, and innovation—relative to competitors	Wu, Melnyk, and Flynn (2010) Roscoe et al. (2019) Narasimhan and Das (2001); Nand et al. (2014)
Knowledge Management Practices	The processes and systems a firm uses to create, capture, share, and apply knowledge.	- Emphasize knowledge creation, sharing, and utilization - Consider the role of technology and organizational culture - Assess the impact of knowledge management on innovation and firm performance	Grant (1996) Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)
Business Network	The pattern of relationships that a firm has with other firms, involving the exchange of resources, information, and influence.	- Consider the type, strength, and diversity of relationships - Assess the impact of network position and structure - Evaluate the role of trust and collaboration within the network	Gulati (1998) Dyer and Singh (1998)
Dynamic Capabilities	The firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments.	- Focus on the processes of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring - Assess the firm's ability to adapt and transform in response to environmental changes - Consider the role of organizational learning and strategic flexibility - Key elements include creativity, problem-solving, experimentation, and knowledge management, which drive value creation for the firm and its customers.	Teece et al. (1997) Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) Tidd et al. (2005)

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a case study analysis approach to determine the relationships between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices, network relationships, and the development of dynamic capabilities. Yin (2014) defines case study analysis as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of real-world cases, providing rich contextual insights into how firms leverage their resources and connections to adapt and thrive in dynamic environments (Yin, 2014). In addition, the case study approach emphasizes the importance of studying phenomena with the nature of firms' behaviors.

The research will involve purposefully selecting a small number of companies from a single industry and of varying sizes and performance levels. In this case study research, the sampling technique employed could be purposive sampling. This technique is widely used in qualitative research when the goal is to select cases that are particularly informative and relevant to the research question (Patton, 2015). A sample size of 3 companies is proposed. This is a common sample size for multiple-case studies, allowing for in-depth analysis of each case while also enabling cross-case comparisons.

Data collection will utilize a multi-faceted approach, including semi-structured interviews with key informants, analysis of company documents, and potentially on-site observations. This triangulation of data sources will ensure a comprehensive understanding of each case.

The collected data will be analyzed using qualitative techniques such as coding, categorization, and thematic analysis, first examining each case individually and then comparing and contrasting findings across cases. This rigorous analysis will uncover patterns and relationships between firm capabilities, knowledge management practices, network relationships, and the development of dynamic capabilities, while considering the unique context of each company.

Through this in-depth case study approach, the research aims to provide valuable insights into the factors that contribute to organizational agility and adaptability. The findings will have implications for both academic understanding of dynamic capabilities and practical guidance for managers seeking to enhance their firms' ability to navigate and succeed in today's ever-changing business landscape.

VI. DISCUSSION

This research offers valuable theoretical insights by demonstrating how diverse firm capabilities, including innovation, marketing, operations, and knowledge management, collectively contribute to the development of dynamic capabilities. It also emphasizes the crucial role of external network relationships in fostering organizational agility. By integrating these elements, the study refines the Resource-Based View and advances dynamic capabilities theory, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents and drivers of dynamic capabilities.

For research methodology, case study analysis provides a powerful method for testing the research propositions by enabling in-depth data collection from multiple sources and offering a rich contextual understanding of how firm capabilities, network relationships, and dynamic capabilities interact within real-world companies. Through within-case and cross-case analysis, researchers can identify patterns, build explanations, and refine propositions based on empirical evidence. This iterative process ensures that the propositions are grounded in real-world observations and contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of the relationship between these constructs.

Essentially, case studies allow researchers to move beyond abstract theorizing and delve into the complexities of how firms actually operate and adapt. By analyzing multiple cases, comparing and contrasting their experiences, and drawing evidence-based conclusions, this research can develop contributions that offer valuable insights for both academics and practitioners in the field of strategic management.

The findings of this research offer practical guidance for managers. By understanding the interconnectedness of various capabilities and network relationships, managers can make informed decisions about resource allocation, prioritize capability development initiatives, and strategically manage network partnerships to enhance their firm's dynamic capabilities. This knowledge empowers managers to navigate change, seize opportunities, and ultimately achieve a sustained competitive advantage.

Future research can build upon this framework by empirically testing the proposed relationships, exploring moderating factors, and conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of dynamic capabilities on firm performance. Further investigation into specific capabilities and cross-cultural comparisons can provide even deeper insights into the complexities of organizational adaptation and competitive advantage in a dynamic global environment.

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