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The Impact of Strategic Agility on Organizational Ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement Company

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement Company in Jordan. The study was conducted on a simple random sample of managers in the company, which amounted to 113 managers. Data were collected from managers through an electronic questionnaire developed by the researcher. The researcher used the SPSS program to analyze the data. Study results indicated a high level application of strategic agility by managers in the company, as well as a high level application of organizational ambidexterity. The results showed that there is a significant impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity, and that strategic agility has a significant impact on exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities.

Keywords: Strategic Agility, Organizational Ambidexterity, Lafarge Cement Company, Jordan**.**

Introduction

In a dynamic and ever-evolving business world, organizations face numerous strategic disruptions that require changes in their business models and other developments to accommodate themselves, thrive, and maintain their stability in a way that increases their resilience (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). Change is one of the most important facts in the life of organizations. Organizations today find themselves facing increasing challenges by having to manage the ever-changing needs of customers that cannot be predicted or controlled, which limits their ability to respond effectively and in a pre-planned manner to these challenges. The success of the organization here depends on its ability to respond quickly and flexibly to customer requirements. The extent to which the organization responds to these challenges is a measure of its agility. Agility is imperative for the success of organizations because it plays an important role in enabling them to react quickly and accurately and read environmental dynamics, which includes the ability to respond to changes in a timely and appropriate manner, to confront the uncertain and rapidly changing competitive forces in the market. Through strategic agility, organizations can implement their operations quickly and interact more quickly than in the past. Therefore, organizations must be agile in order to be able to understand their current markets, their competencies, their current and future customers, and the need for change to meet these opportunities (Barno et al., 2023, 6-8).

The ability to compete and succeed increases readiness for continuous environmental changes, which requires organizational dexterity and the skills it includes to compete. These skills are embodied in the ability to use both hands at the same time, i.e. simultaneously carrying out incremental innovation “exploitation” by making additional improvements to existing products and services to meet the needs of current customers, reduce costs and increase efficiency to achieve profits, and radical innovation “exploration” by developing new products quickly and flexibly, which achieves success for the organization in the short and long term (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Kumkale, 2022, 11-12). From this point of view, dynamic capabilities should be included in organizational processes or routines related to coordination, learning, and transformation, allowing the organization to sense opportunities and then seize them by allocating resources successfully. These capabilities support the organization's ability to maintain its agility by modifying existing competencies (reconfiguring its assets) or developing new competencies (developing new assets) when necessary. As a dynamic capability, ambidexterity embodies management's ability to coordinate and integrate the targeted approach required by the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011). Based on the above, the current study came to verify the effect of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement in Jordan.

Study Problem and Questions

The study problem lies in improving organizational agility at Lafarge Cement Company in Jordan, as the industrial sector is experiencing changes in various fields as a result of scientific progress and technological and information development, which has allowed for the flow of more investments, resulting in many challenges that have increased the intensity and intensity of competition day after day, which has limited the ability of Lafarge Cement Company to discover available opportunities and exploit the potential for expansion in the local and global market, and organizational agility in this company may improve through its agility and strategic minds that enable it to respond quickly to unexpected changes and adapt to innovations, and absorb change as a major factor in its survival.

Accordingly, the study problem revolves around the following questions:

1. What is the impact of strategic agility in its dimensions (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity) on organizational agility in its two dimensions (exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities) at Lafarge Cement Company?
2. What is the importance level of strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity and their dimensions at Lafarge Cement Jordan?

Study Importance

Scientific (theoretical) importance: The importance of the scientific study appears in the variables it includes, namely strategic agility with its dimensions (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity), which is considered one of the modern and decisive administrative concepts due to its prominent role in the movement of organizations in a changing business environment and responding to it effectively, and organizational ambidexterity with its two dimensions (exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities), which is one of the most important contemporary administrative trends that achieve the success of organizations in the short and long term by helping them balance between the processes of exploring potential opportunities and exploiting current opportunities. By investigating strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity, the current study may contribute to strengthening the theoretical frameworks in these topics and bridging the gaps in the literature related to the specific context of Lafarge Cement Company and providing a broader understanding of the factors affecting strategic agility in the industrial sector in particular. After reviewing previous studies related to strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity, the researcher noted that studies in this field are insufficient and need more, especially in the Arab environment. The researcher hopes that this study will be a scientific addition that enriches Arab libraries in the field of its variables that it addressed.

Practical (applied) importance: The importance of the practical study lies in determining the impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement Company, and the extent to which this company benefits from the results it will reach and the recommendations it will present in competing in a dynamic, rapidly changing environment.

Study Objectives
This study aims to achieve the following objectives:
1. Identify the impact of strategic agility in its dimensions (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity) on organizational ambidexterity in its two dimensions (exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities) at Lafarge Cement Company.
2. Identify the importance level of strategic agility and its dimensions at Lafarge Cement Company.
3. Identify the importance level of organizational ambidexterity and its dimensions at Lafarge Cement Company.

Theoretical Framework
Strategic Agility

Modern strategic thinking emerged thanks to the contributions of many researchers starting from the 1960s such as (Chandler; Drucker; Ansoff). It extended to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, in which other researchers participated such as (Mintzberg; Porter; O'Reilly) (Balzano & Bortoluzzi, 2024, 14). Strategy refers to setting future plans for the organization and defining its long-term goals in a way that ensures the compatibility between the organization's mission and the surrounding environment efficiently and effectively (Hamurcu & Eren, 2020).

The term agility was introduced in the early 1990s in the American automotive industry, when the Department of Defense asked Lehigh University researchers to develop a vision and conceptual framework, and provide recommendations for creating an effective industrial infrastructure (Sahid et al., 2021, 3). In 1991, the Lacocca Institute at the university issued a report entitled "Strategy for Manufacturing Development in the 21st Century" in which it was noted that the competitive environment is unpredictable (Uden & Ting, 2023, 119).

Since then, agility has been considered one of the keys to future competition and has been defined as a comprehensive response to the business challenges of taking advantage of rapidly and continuously changing global markets (Jiang, 2014, 85). As for strategic agility, it refers to the successful exploration of the foundations of competition (speed, flexibility, proactive innovation, quality, and competitiveness) through integration and reconfiguration of resources and best practices in a knowledge-rich environment, to provide products and services to customers in rapidly changing markets (Yusuf et al., 1999). Strategically agile organizations have the ability to maintain their competitiveness by focusing on their goals while responding to unexpected fluctuations in their business (Clauss et al., 2021).

Strategic agility is defined as the ability to exploit or create changing patterns of resource deployment for one's own benefit in a thoughtful, purposeful, rapid, and intelligent manner, rather than remaining hostage to stable, pre-determined plans and current business models (Doz, 2023). Strategic agility has been described as "the flexibility and speed that gives an organization the ability to change its business in order to respond to changes in its markets and to face the risks that confront it" (Sultan & Othman, 221, 108).

Zaccaro et al. (2024, 48) defined strategic agility as the organization's ability to adjust its competitive strategy, business model, and resource allocation pattern in response to changing demands in the competitive landscape. Strategic agility has also been defined as the organization's ability to respond quickly to and adapt to environmental changes, while taking steps to deal with uncertainty (Saputra & Nasution, 2023).

Strategic Agility Dimensions

Strategic Sensitivity

Strategic sensitivity refers to the acuity of perception and intensity of attention to strategic developments (Doz, 2023). It reflects the ability of leaders in the organization to communicate with the strategic developments surrounding them (Huff et al., 2013, 42). Sigala et al. (2024, 19) explained that strategic sensitivity requires leaders to be sensitive to external changes and integrate them into the organization's strategic planning.

Cennamo et al. (2023, 46), indicated that organizations with strategic sensitivity develop a sense of the future development of the market, and this is done by participating in experiments and exploring the components of different future products, and by building an accurate assessment of their current business model and core competencies, thus enabling them to implement additional business solutions that reconceptualize their business management entity.

Strategic sensitivity requires organizations to have reliable market information, which is achieved by building and maintaining relationships with individuals and organizations to obtain the maximum amount of innovations and information, and also requires organizational priorities that contribute to focusing on the position the organization wants to reach, with clear goals for individuals and work teams, with mechanisms to hold them accountable and reward them (Sultan & Othman, 2021, 109).

Unity of Leadership

Unity of leadership is the ability of senior management to make quick and bold decisions without regard to the policy of winning or losing (Doz, 2023). Unity of leadership is considered the cornerstone of the organization because without the collective commitment to the new business model by its senior managers, it will be difficult to achieve the desired change (Cennamo et al., 2023, 46). Sigala et al. added. (2024, 19) Unity of command is linked to the ability of managers to make bold and quick strategic decisions, and that managers must cooperate and solve strategic challenges and issues collectively without getting involved in internal politics.

Resource Fluidity

Resource fluidity refers to the internal ability to quickly reconfigure capabilities and distribute resources (Doz, 2023). In a broader sense, resource fluidity is the ability to reallocate resources in a rapid and committed manner (Huff et al., 2013, 42). Deshati (2023), expressed resource fluidity as the concept through which an organization can use its current resources efficiently, and it acts as a driver of strategic speed. Sigala et al. (2024, 19) also indicated that resource fluidity refers to the ability of managers to reallocate and use organizational resources with the utmost flexibility.

Organizational Ambidexterity

The concept of organizational ambidexterity originates from the idea developed by some researchers (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Duncan, 1976) in relation to innovation management (O'Sullivan, 2008, 279). Ambidexterity refers to the way in which an organization expresses operational and innovative activities, and Duncan is considered the first to use the idea of organizational ambidexterity in 1976, when he saw the need to adopt a dual structure that corresponds to the stage of development in which innovation occurs (Lièvre et al., 2019, 108).

Tushman and O'Reilly (1996), then came and emphasized that the success of ambidextrous organizations depends on their ability to pursue both "gradual and discontinuous" innovation and change resulting from hosting multiple contradictory structures, processes and cultures within the same organization. Organizational ambidexterity is embodied in achieving a balance between exploration and exploitation at the same time and is defined as the behavioral ability of the organization to pursue compatibility and adaptability at the same time, where adaptability refers to the ability to quickly reshape activities to meet changing requirements in the business environment (Sanchez & Heene, 2010, 39). Lloria and Burbano (2024), indicated that the concept of organizational ambidexterity is related to the idea of balance, synchronization, conflict resolution, integration and tension between the processes of exploration and exploitation.

Organizational ambidexterity was defined as the organization's ability to excel in exploiting its available skills and competencies and seizing available opportunities while exploring new skills, competencies and opportunities (Saeed, 2022). On the other hand, Long and Holmén (2022, 32) described organizational ambidexterity as the organization's ability to be exploratory, searching for new opportunities, and to be exploitative, using its resources, capabilities and mental models efficiently. Silva et al. (2023), Organizational ambidexterity is a complex set of decisions and actions through which an organization can identify and exploit new opportunities by reallocating organizational assets such as the continuous building and reshaping of competencies.

Organizational Ambidexterity Dimensions

Exploiting Opportunities

Exploiting refers to continuous improvement through incremental innovation and updates to existing services and products, applying current knowledge while increasing productivity and reducing failure, and continuously developing the knowledge available in the organization, which enables it to maintain its competitiveness and meet the ever-changing requirements of customers (Clauss et al., 2021).

The essence of exploitation is to improve and expand existing competencies, technologies and models, and refers to efficiency, selection and implementation, as well as to learning gained through local research, experimental improvement, selection and reuse of existing routines in the organization, and exploitative innovations include improvements in existing components and building the current technological path, it is oriented towards the past and depends on experience, and ultimately exploitation leads to more stable performance (Dupouet et al., 2013, 6).

Exploiting opportunities is linked to many management practices in the organization, including (Da Silva et al., 2023):
- Commitment to improving quality and reducing costs.
- Continuous improvement of product reliability.
- Increasing levels of process automation
- Modifying the products offered to maintain the satisfaction of existing customers while continuously verifying their satisfaction.
- Deepening the existing customer base.

Exploring Opportunities

Exploration is about searching for new sources of income, as organizations explore the future perfect tense when they enhance their competitive position by entering new markets or creating new opportunities, which they imagine as positive outcomes, so exploration is about developing current strategies designed to improve revenues and organizational activity in the future, and is based on an ideal future that has not yet been achieved (Costanzo & Mackay, 2009, 183). The essence of exploration is to try new alternatives, and includes research, diversification, experimentation, risk-taking, and innovation, and exploration activities require a high degree of organizational adaptability (Lièvre et al., 2019, 107).

Dupouet et al. (2013, 6), added that exploration refers to the learning gained through coordinated diversification and planned experimentation processes, and exploratory innovations include shifting to a different technological path, it is future-oriented and depends on reviewing customer beliefs and expectations, and leads to fundamental differences in performance, and thus, achieving great success. Organizations explore in order to explore new opportunities in the market or to identify customer needs or create new demand by anticipating potential customer desires (Clauss et al., 2021).

Da Silva et al. (2023), indicated that the success of an organization is based on its ability to explore everything new, and makes it capable of many things, the most important of which are:

-Searching for new technological ideas by thinking outside the box.
-Creating new innovative products and services.
-Searching for innovative ways to meet customer needs.
-Investing in new market sectors aggressively.
-Targeting new consumer groups actively and energetically.

The Relationship between Strategic Agility and Organizational Ambidexterity

Some administrative literature has investigated the relationship between strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity, such as Salim et al. (2024) study, which investigated the relationship between strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity and concluded that organizational ambidexterity is affected by strategic agility in Egyptian banks.

Given the prominent role of strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity in enhancing the competitive advantage of organizations and raising the efficiency of their performance through investing in human capital and managing talents in them, Clauss et al. (2021) study showed that combining strategic agility and exploiting available opportunities as a dimension of organizational ambidexterity allows organizations to be able to continue competing in the short term through incremental innovations, increasing financial returns from efficiency, as well as seizing opportunities available in the organizational environment by increasing the response of strategic agility. While Saeed (2022) study concluded that through organizational ambidexterity and strategic agility, talent management positively affects the sustainability of human capital in Egyptian pharmaceutical manufacturing companies.

Study Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant impact of strategic agility with its dimensions (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity) on organizational ambidexterity with its two dimensions combined (exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities) at Lafarge Cement Company.

H2: There is a significant impact of strategic agility with its dimensions combined (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity) on exploiting opportunities at Lafarge Cement Company.

H3: There is a significant impact of strategic agility with its dimensions combined (strategic sensitivity, unity of leadership and resource fluidity) on exploring opportunities at Lafarge Cement Company.

Methodology

Sample

The study population consisted of managers at all administrative levels in Lafarge Cement Company, totaling 210 managers. A simple random sample of 138 managers was drawn and an electronic questionnaire was distributed. The number of returned questionnaires was 113, all of which were valid for statistical analysis.

Study Tool

The researcher relied on the questionnaire as a tool to collect the necessary data for the study. The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies that dealt with strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity after making some modifications to suit the nature of the study population. 15 items were selected for strategic agility, distributed at 5 items for each dimension (strategic sensitivity, unity of command and resource fluidity), and 10 items were selected to cover the two dimensions of organizational ambidexterity (exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities) at 5 items for each dimension.

Results

Table 1 includes the statistical analysis data of the study data related to the dimensions of strategic agility and organizational ambidexterity. The table contains the values of the reliability coefficient, mean and standard deviation of the items of the two variables dimensions. The results in the table indicate that there is high reliability for the items of all dimensions, which ranged from 0.77-0.88, and all of them exceeded the minimum of 0.70 (Sekeran & Bougie, 2016, 289). The mean values for all dimensions were high and ranged from 4.11-4.28 for the Likert scale consisting of 5 levels.

Table 1
Reliability, mean and standard deviation

Dimension	Items	Alpha	Mean	Std. deviation
Strategic sensitivity	5	0.87	4.18	0.68
Unity of leadership	5	0.84	4.11	0.64
Resource fluidity	5	0.88	4.28	0.66
Exploiting opportunities	5	0.77	4.19	0.56
Exploring opportunities	5	0.82	4.11	0.66

The information presented in Table 2 is for testing H2, which is related to verifying the impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity. To test this hypothesis, the standard multiple linear regression coefficient was used. The test results showed that there is a significant impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity, as the value of R^2=0.056, which indicates that 56% of the variance in organizational ambidexterity is due to strategic agility, as F=46.65 at a significance level of 0.000.

As for the dimensions of strategic agility, Table 2 indicates that unity of leadership and resource fluidity were significant on organizational ambidexterity, as the value of B reached 0.33 at a significance level of 0.000 for unity of leadership, and 0.27 at a significance level of 0.002 for resource fluidity. As for strategic sensitivity, it was insignificant, as the value of B=0.11 at a significance level of 0.142, which is greater than 0.05.

In light of the results presented in Table 2, there is a significant impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement Company.

Table 2
Impact of Strategic Agility on Ambidexterity

Variable	B	T	Sig.
Strategic sensitivity	0.11	1.48	0.142
Unity of leadership	0.33	3.87	0.000
Resource fluidity	0.27	3.10	0.002
R^2 =0.56	F=46.65	Sig.=0.000	

Table 3 shows the results of testing H2, H3 for the impact of strategic agility on exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities (dimensions of organizational ambidexterity). To test these two hypotheses, a simple linear regression coefficient was used. The results of the simple linear regression analysis in Table 3 indicate that there is a significant impact of strategic agility on exploiting opportunities, where the value of R^2=0.39, which indicates that 39% of the variance in exploiting opportunities is due to strategic agility, the value of F=70.61 at a significance level of 0.000.

The results of the analysis indicate that there is a significant impact of strategic agility on exploring opportunities, the value of R^2=0.51, which means that 51% of the variance in exploring opportunities is due to strategic agility and the value of F=113.29 at a significance level of 0.000.

Table 3
Impact of Strategic Agility on Exploring Opportunities and Exploiting Opportunities

Hypothesis	R^2	B	F	Sig.
H2	0. 39	0.60	70.61	0.000
H3	0.51	0.80	113.29	0.000

Discussion

This study addressed the impact of strategic agility on organizational dexterity in Lafarge Cement Company in Jordan. The results of the study indicated an increase in the management's application of the content of strategic agility in this company, as there is a clear interest in the company's management in transferring material resources according to work requirements, facilitating employees' access to the information they need, and the ease of restructuring its resources, in addition to managers working as a team and engaging employees in open dialogues, which supports teamwork, as well as the management's ability to identify risks before they appear and sense changes at the appropriate time.

The results showed an increase in the content of organizational ambidexterity in the company under study, whether in terms of exploiting opportunities or exploring opportunities. The company seeks to increase its products for its current customers by improving these products, solving customer problems and reducing the cost of its operations with its current customers, in addition to thinking about offering new products by pooling its capabilities to offer innovative products that are difficult to replicate by competing companies, as well as continuing to search for new customers by communicating with them. The company carries out these activities without disrupting the balance between the activities of exploiting opportunities and exploring opportunities.

The results of the study's hypothesis testing indicate that there is a significant impact of strategic agility on organizational ambidexterity at Lafarge Cement Company, and that the actual effect is due to unity of leadership and resource fluidity, while strategic sensitivity was not significant in this impact. The company's management's work as a team, their open communication with employees, their declaration of their actual motives, and their sympathy with employees, in addition to the company's possession of alternative business models that enable it to change and transfer its resources according to business requirements, all of this helped in expanding its products to its current customers and the ability to solve their problems and reduce the cost of its current operations, in addition to its ability to provide innovative products and increase its market share in the future. The results of this study contribute to clarifying the importance of strategic agility in terms of strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity and unity of leadership in enabling management to make the best use of currently available opportunities in addition to thinking about exploring future opportunities.

Recommendations

1. Enhancing the strategic sensitivity of company's managers to monitor changes in the environment, in order to respond to them with appropriate speed.
2. Enhancing the company's capabilities by facilitating the movement of material resources, by identifying official paths and procedures to transfer them to the parties that need them, and reshaping these resources and using them efficiently.
3. Enhancing the exploitation of current opportunities that appear in the environment, by emphasizing the efficient use of resources and maintaining costs at their lowest levels, in addition to paying continuous attention to solving the problems of the company's current customers.

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