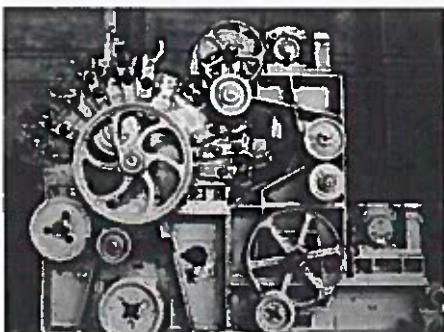
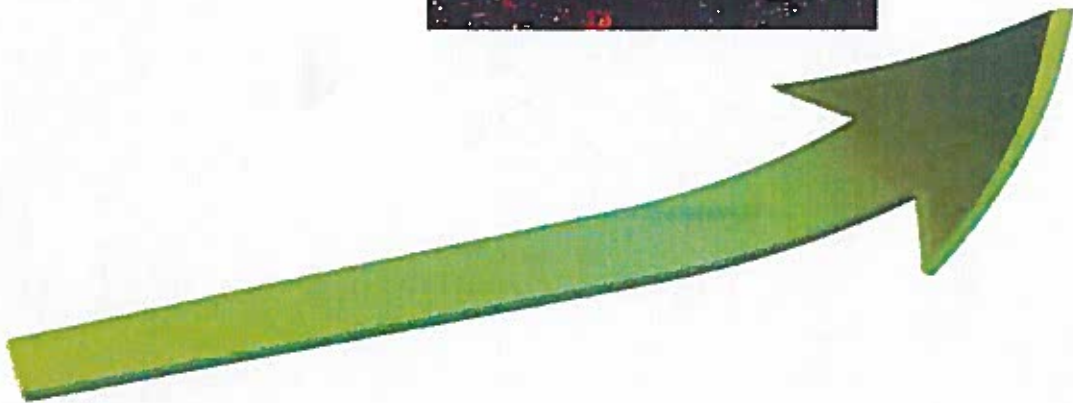


Competitiveness: Business Models, Innovations, and Systems



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6 Marketing knowledge as a competitive tool for manufacturing companies in the electronics industry in the Guadalajara metropolitan area

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INTRODUCTION

The classical marketing model focuses directly on a product or a service. Nonetheless, contemporary companies have to face international competition that goes beyond the product itself. Therefore, intangible resources provide a lucrative opportunity for generating growth in active industries, such as the electronics industry. Companies must manage the collection of data and information through their external agents and interest groups in such a way as to allow them to be used to introduce positive changes to traditional models, which are focused on the tangible aspects of the companies. A cognitive vision of the market is a fundamental principle for the development of more competitive systems in contemporary companies.

This trend has broken the traditional paradigms related to the production of capital goods and towards production of services and products recognized by consumers as true satisfiers of their desires and needs. A company's interest groups are also taken into account, arriving at a multi-disciplinary cluster that leaves room for active participation of marketing in collection and processing of information about consumers' interests. Therefore, a classical view where marketing is considered to be an area related to planning, sales, design, product and strategy development should be modified in such a way as to be focused directly on creation of technical and administrative advantages, which will benefit consumers, suppliers and, primarily, companies that implement marketing knowledge techniques. However, many companies, such as those in the electronics manufacturing industry of the Guadalajara metropolitan area, do not consider these elements to be of critical importance. On the contrary, the companies consider them to be more administrative costs, although marketing brings more benefits than harm to an organization. This is how key companies in the so-called Mexican Silicon Valley, such as Jabil, Sanmina or Flextronics, have initiated a transition towards inclusion of new trends into various businesses.

This article provides a description of the industry, application of marketing knowledge to the electronics manufacturing companies and the impact of knowledge processing and implementation on development of competitive marketing advantages, which would allow positioning a cluster to be a true option for manufacturing of electronics.

JUSTIFICATION

Challenges faced by industries in light of existing competition in the global markets have led to the appearance and re-appearance of theories which allow organizations to implement their processes and transactions. Therefore, marketing has become a relevant part of today's

organizations. Benefits obtained through implementation of marketing models are very lucrative from an economic perspective for companies who choose to implement them. Nevertheless, this potential remains far from being developed in terms of collection of knowledge of interest groups for the purpose of arriving at intelligent marketing, which is more aligned with a company's needs.

Therefore, a choice of competitive strategies, which could be beneficial to consumers and enhance the communication process and the relationship between the company and its clients for monitoring product demand, as well as the implementation of designed strategies, must be based on a tool that promotes identification of a useful knowledge that will aid in a company's marketing processes.

The significance of this study lies in the need to acquire substantial competitive advantages based on intangible capital, which is formed on the basis of knowledge related to suppliers, clients, distributors and company staff. It determines the use of marketing to offer more attractive high value products to end consumers. Manufacturing companies should master this model, since they are producing highly sophisticated products, in order to obtain desired positions in the market through apparent advantages, added value and consumer experience. Marketing knowledge exists at all times and in all transactions, but it should be clear that successful results are achieved only when the knowledge is put into practice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Companies in the new century face a need for a maximum increase of their competitive advantages. Therefore, organizational priorities have to be modified in order to provide due recognition to intangible elements, which can lead to significant changes and improved performance of the companies. Knowledge management is a model that aims to convert this goal into a reality, bringing about improvements to strategic and competitive outlooks and solutions to issues faced by a company (Massaro, Bardy, & Zanin, 2011). Although companies have shown some interest in viewing production capacities from the perspective of the employees (Salvati, Shafei, & Shaghayegh, 2010), it has taken a long time for this concept to evolve, convert and find its own place in the day-to-day vocabulary of enterprises and scientific researchers. According to Šajeva (2010), it was even considered an element that did not have much importance on development of company business plans. From this perspective, scholars, such as Qin Li, Ping Zhou and Xin Li (2011), have a very clear view of knowledge management:

Information management is the basis for knowledge management. Knowledge management is an extension and a development of information management. The difference from prior information states has to do with the fact that this approach connects information with informational activities, information - with individuals, who in turn transfer it to intelligence teams, which transform it into competitive knowledge, transmitted through a process of inter-personal communication.

Such a statement further elaborates on the ideas of Liao, Chuang and To (2011) that knowledge has the unique property of being created in accordance with the experience of those in charge of collecting data and information, providing organizations with unique structures for each case. In

addition to shared experiences, it is a sustainable advantage in itself (Alavi & Leidner, 2003). Nonetheless, the competitive advantage that has been developed by an organization must be based on the perception by the markets in which they participate (Hung, Chou, & Tzeng, 2011).

Knowledge management pursues three main objectives, which are based on Catanneo's views (2008):

- Provide support to essential organizational processes and performance
- Provide support to new performance-related managerial needs
- Create value generation sources

Each one of these has a basis for improving the quality of decision making, production, sales and process improvements. This concept is described by the term "information and knowledge society" (Crescêncio & Dalfovo, 2003) and contributes to the fact that many organizations have begun to change their behavior and trends towards growth, since global complexity, technological advances and, of course, knowledge accumulated as a result of operations (Martinez, 2006) have modified the paradigm created over the course of many years when scientific knowledge functioned only in science and not in terms of the search for competitive advantages (Tang & Li, 2010). On some occasions, the usefulness of this theory may be the difference between the success and failure for companies that have begun to apply it. Therefore, each organization should strive for better employment of available cognitive resources, distinguishing between three main elements of knowledge management, i.e., data, information and knowledge, since the first two give rise to knowledge, converting it into the most valuable resource of an enterprise and must be coded in accordance with the policies and decisions of the enterprise.

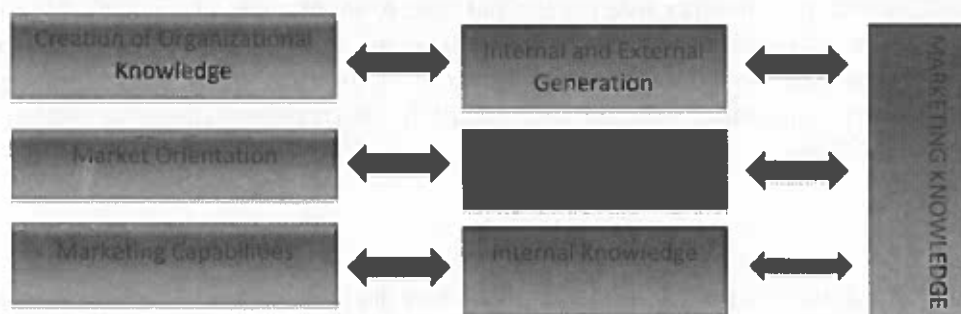
However, coding assigned to knowledge directly depends on the individual in charge of its processing and orientation (López & Meroño, 2011). Therefore, in the majority of cases, a traditional model proposed by Nonaka (1994) on explicit and tacit knowledge is used where it can freely shift between these two phases. This is how a knowledge hierarchy pyramid is built where conceptualization and idealization of abstract cognitives may serve as triggers for the organization's value chain (Kebede, 2010.) Nevertheless, despite being valid for organizations, such theories have been naturally surpassed, due to circumstances related to the transformation of organizational behavioral schemes. Therefore, when it comes to marketing, knowledge has to be transformed at a breathtaking pace in order to make use of the advantages arising within organizations. Marketing is undergoing a period of substantial transformation (Stampacchia & Mele, 2010). In recent years, a considerable amount of attention has been paid to an empirical generalization of marketing (Write & Kearns, 1998). This is how many companies acquire knowledge to face the challenge of being more competitive (Hau & Evangelista, 2007) with respect to their products and services, since company success is defined by the development of new cognitive assets which are used for creating basic competencies (Aktharsha & Anisa, 2011).

Therefore, marketing knowledge has been a pivot point that has contributed to the increasing number of market-focused advantages (Park, Whitelock, & Giroud, 2009). This type of knowledge is different from technological knowledge, since it is focused on product development and research and not on the manufacturing process (Sánchez, Ramírez, & García, 2008). Therefore, it could be concluded that marketing knowledge is a must-have know-how

when it comes to implementing market research activities and including them into business plans. According to Rossiter (2001), the concept may be defined as everything formulated by marketing managers for establishing marketing plans. Nonetheless, consumers are the ones who possess true empowerment, since they are the ones who determine product value by means of their usage experience and not the manufacturer by means of product distribution and production (Rèpres, 2010).

Furthermore, Everything is affected by external orientation of markets, with an emphasis on information development based on consumers and competitors, which provides an external knowledge required for creating and consolidating company capabilities (Vaux & Ansu, 2009). This orientation is a mere adoption and implementation of a marketing concept for the establishment of a foundation for knowledge creation and management (Darroch et al., 2004). Much work has been carried out with a focus on the market with the objective of finding a practical application for marketing from a more pragmatic standpoint. Therefore, a specific perspective of these types of tools must mainly be focused on accessing, taking advantage of, application and integration of knowledge accumulated in relation to marketing (Litter, 2005). They can also be used in knowledge conversion models (Nonaka et al., 2006) and the intellectual and social capital developed by Newell, Tansely and Huang (2004) for creating a cognitive focus that fully defines marketing capabilities of an enterprise.

Figure 6.1 Marketing Knowledge Generation Model



Source: Prepared by the authors

Figure 6.1 shows that integration of three marketing-focused principal elements of the organization lead to marketing knowledge. Likewise, integration of marketing processes and tasks directly help to create and sustain competitive advantages (Schlegemilch & Penz, 2002), which are established when the value of marketing is conveyed through managers who have a superior understanding of current and future needs of the consumers with an objective of offering them solutions that are different from those offered by competitors (Ellis, 2009). Nonetheless, this is only a beginning, since knowledge must be returned in an explicit manner, i.e., a manager must apply this concept, which can be distributed and implemented within the organization (Akroush & Al-Mohammad, 2010).

However, if one wants to ensure the success of marketing knowledge within the operational units, it is necessary to break through the idiosyncrasies of centralized structures, both from the internal environment and the suggested external environment (Ingmar, Wilhelm, & Li, 2004). Therefore, according to a model developed by O'Donnell (2000), a model can be used for

establishing the influence of knowledge flow factors, such as a proposal of modification of marketing knowledge, taking into account the traditional marketing mix model.

The electronics industry must modify its schemes to implement these types of schemes, since this industry plays a fundamental role on a global level, as it is considered a strategic technology sector (Melero & Calatrava, 2000). Thus, it becomes clear that sales of consumer goods are only a small part of the global strategic direction of the industry. As far as the city of Guadalajara and its metropolitan area, according to Partida (2002), it was not until the 1960s that the first *maquiladora* (manufacturing) enterprises started to become established in the location that was later called the Mexican Silicon Valley. Competitive advantages offered by the Jalisco state and, in particular, by the Guadalajara metropolitan area for the establishment of *maquiladora* enterprises, especially contract manufacturing ones, were identified by Merchand (2005) in the following manner:

- Trained Staff
- Population Density
- Government Support
- Industrial Cluster
- Infrastructure

All advantages offered by the city have encouraged multinational companies to perceive the Guadalajara metropolitan area as a natural area for the purpose of investment and establishment of electronics companies of all types. However, in addition to the main established companies related to contract manufacturing, the state government also propels the growth of the industry with tax incentives in order to promote foreign investment in two aspects: direct or indirect (Jalisco State Government, 2006).

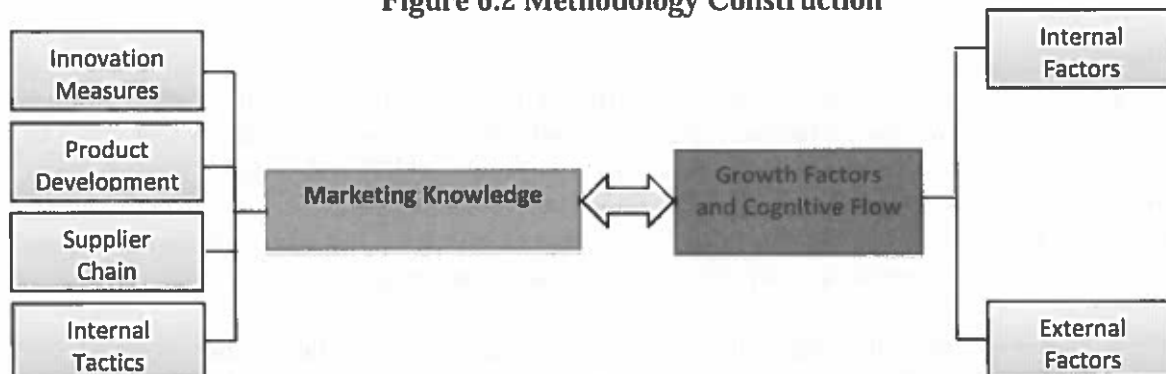
METHODOLOGY

Procedures applied for reaching the proposed study objectives are considered to be more of a general nature than research techniques, but they mark the guidelines that have to be followed to obtain results (Labarca, 2008). There are two main research techniques used in this study: a documentary research method and field research method. Likewise, two types of research were implemented in this study. The first is qualitative, which provides complete information about the organization's overview and background (Donlyres, 2000). It is complemented with quantitative research, in order to discover organizational behavior in numeric terms.

The survey design is based on three different tools, which have been tested and confirmed in international studies. These tools consist of two sections where knowledge creation and flow are measured. The entire survey, except for demographic data, is based on the Likert scale.

Companies were surveyed during November and December of 2011. All surveys were taken in the Guadalajara metropolitan area industrial parks.

Figure 6.2 Methodology Construction



HYPOTHESES

- H₁: Greater marketing knowledge provides for better product development
 H₂: Greater marketing knowledge provides for better logistics capabilities
 H₃: Greater marketing knowledge provides for better technological innovation

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Twenty-five surveys were conducted with middle and top managers of electronics companies, which employ contract manufacturing as their business model. It was decided to engage these employees because it would be a more adequate way to find out whether a marketing management model was implemented or whether steps had been implemented to accommodate this type of model within the organization. In addition, a scheme used by top management is easier to access than that used by line workers. Only two women carried out management tasks, such as line supervisors or area coordinators, thus male contribution accounted for 23 positions. Bartlett's Sphericity Test and KMO Study were performed, which yielded the following results:

Table 6.1 Bartlett's Sphericity Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy measures		.579
Bartlett's Sphericity Test	Chi (χ) square approximated	2340.743
	Difference	430
	Sig.	.000

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data

Table 6.1 shows that variables have a 57.9% correlation. In other words, more than half of the study can be explained with the results obtained from the surveys. Although the industry is represented by 12 companies and 25 surveys were made, it should be noted that the hypotheses have a possibility of carrying out multi-variable studies, performed with statistical software. Moreover, the significance level shows that it is highly significant, since the statistical error is minimal (.000 value), thus it can be concluded that the study is 99% reliable.

Hypothesis 1 Analysis

This assumption considers that greater marketing knowledge provides for better product development. In other words, companies require a marketing knowledge model to add value to their products. A corresponding study was made through ANOVAS, taking into account questions about the tool, which investigation and development considers suitable for contract manufacturing companies and collection of knowledge that they have in place based on client information in order to generate a functional strategic marketing model.

ANOVA behavior indicates that neither knowledge variable was taken into account for performing research and development tasks. This mainly refers to significance levels, which do not show any type of correlation with expressed data. This allows for

Table 6.2 Hypothesis 1 ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	gl	Root mean square	F	Sig.
D121	Inter-groups	.591	1	.591	.724	.404
	Intra-groups	18,769	23	.816		
	Total	19.360	24			
D122	Inter-groups	.173	1	.173	.144	.708
	Intra-groups	27.667	23	1.203		
	Total	27.840	24			
D123	Inter-groups	.641	1	.641	.762	.392
	Intra-groups	19.359	23	.842		
	Total	20.000	24			
D124	Inter-groups	.923	1	.923	.784	.385
	Intra-groups	27.077	23	1.177		
	Total	28.000	24			

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data

any errors that may appear. Moreover, it shows that application of knowledge management models do not correspond to the creation of any type of marketing experiences based on prior experience with research and development processes of the organization.

Hypothesis 1 is rejected, due to lack of sufficient data that promotes implementation of any short-term changes in the surveyed companies.

Hypothesis 2 Analysis

This assumption considers that greater marketing knowledge provides for better logistics capabilities. Organizational activities also contemplate outsourcing of logistics activities,

therefore, if marketing knowledge management can be implemented as a growth driver, it is almost taken for granted that organizational competitiveness will grow in this context.

ANOVA analysis was performed, taking into account the responses provided by managers in order to determine the behavioral manner of such organizations in activities which involve logistics in any of its aspects and the relationship between them and organizational marketing.

Table 6.3 Hypothesis 2 ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	gl	Root mean square	F	Sig.
D131	Inter-groups	2.903	4	.726	.302	.006
	Intra-groups	48.057	20	2.403		
	Total	50.960	24			
D132	Inter-groups	1.345	4	.336	.193	.005
	Intra-groups	34.895	20	1.745		
	Total	36.240	24			
D133	Inter-groups	9.059	4	2.265	1.168	.000
	Intra-groups	38.781	20	1.939		
	Total	47.840	24			
D134	Inter-groups	3.436	4	.859	.463	.000
	Intra-groups	37.124	20	1.856		
	Total	40.560	24			
D135	Inter-groups	4.659	4	1.165	.539	.001
	Intra-groups	43.181	20	2.159		
	Total	47.840	24			
D141	Inter-groups	1.916	4	.479	.462	.012
	Intra-groups	20.724	20	1.036		
	Total	22.640	24			

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data

Results obtained for this hypothesis show that the implementation of knowledge into the supply chain has been a principal axis for determining marketing-related strategies. This has helped to improve the performance of logistical activities, by reducing a number of errors with receipt and distribution of merchandise from and towards the plant. Nonetheless, there are areas with room for improvement, since the results show a disparity in F statistics. That is, changes are still being made in order to take greater advantage of knowledge provided by product suppliers and consumers, who are not the general public, in order to improve strategies for attracting new companies or maintaining those who are already using services on a regular basis.

Hypothesis 3 Analysis

The third assumption considers that greater marketing knowledge provides for better technological innovation. Here, technological innovation does not refer to product improvement, but to the improvement of plant machinery and equipment.

Table 6.4 Hypothesis 3 ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Root mean square	F	Sig.
E11 1	Inter-groups	.827	4	.207	.408	.801
	Intra-groups	10.133	20	.507		
	Total	10.960	24			
E11 2	Inter-groups	4.818	4	1.205	2.052	.126
	Intra-groups	11.742	20	.587		
	Total	16.560	24			
E11 3	Inter-groups	6.133	4	1.533	3.108	.038
	Intra-groups	9.867	20	.493		
	Total	16.000	24			
E11 4	Inter-groups	2.998	4	.750	.890	.488
	Intra-groups	16.842	20	.842		
	Total	19.840	24			

Source: Prepared by the authors based on survey data

Significant discrepancies were observed, which mainly refer to the fact that interviewed contracted manufacturing companies were divided into two groups: one of them consisted of big enterprises, such as Jabil, Flextronics and Sanmina SCI. The other was a group of small enterprises that manufacture electronics and do not implement changes to their marketing strategies on an ongoing basis, thus they do not attract potential clients, which helps to set aside the issue of changing existing machinery and equipment. Thus, in the ANOVA the following can be observed:

- Companies introduced few changes to their machinery and work equipment, since they implement few marketing strategies.
- Organizational marketing is focused on the sales of services, not on the creation of value through technical innovation.

Therefore, hypothesis 3 is rejected due to inconsistency in the manner of organizational management.

CONCLUSIONS

Our present information and knowledge society has already penetrated the lives of all human beings in the 21st century. This includes enterprises, which are now required to place a greater emphasis on their intangible resources. A consumer, an employee, a supplier and a top manager may have different points of view on the systems, processes and resources owned and operated by a company. Nonetheless, a clear move towards an interchange of these experiences for the purpose of improving critical production points is a challenge faced by those industries that are the most sensitive to change.

The electronics industry and, in particular, contract manufacturing enterprises must capitalize on their most valuable resource - marketing knowledge - which will allow them to move forward and to continue holding a consolidated position in the consumers' minds. This will also lead to the growth of these companies in international markets, continuing with technological innovation that has a favorable impact on sector competitiveness and influences the requirements of the groups of interest, mainly those directly related to the consumption of goods.

Therefore, the search for positioning and support by consumer and production preferences undertaken by the Mexican Silicon Valley cluster is a task aimed at building a solid industry that will attract direct investments and take advantage, through logistical capabilities knowledge, of communications with suppliers and consumers and thus strengthen the strategic positioning of the most innovatory products.

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