Study 2:

Spinning-along Innovations – Case Studies on Corporate Venturing
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Abstract

Organizational ambidexterity is a new research stream in organization theory. Ambidextrous organizations manage to simultaneously exploit existing capabilities and explore new opportunities. Yet, until now, little empirical research has been conducted on how to realize organizational ambidexterity and, more specifically, on the ambidextrous designs that secure the long-term success of innovations. This study intends to fill this gap by developing a theory based on case study evidence. Specifically, the spin-along phenomenon as a special type of ambidextrous corporate venturing is analyzed. The spin-along approach is defined here as a combination of internal and external venturing activities.

The results show that ambidexterity can be realized through the spin-along approach by optimizing structural, contextual and leadership-based antecedents and that these antecedents are strongly interrelated and can strengthen or weaken one another. Evidence shows further that it is useful to implement a coordinating management layer between the parent company and the spin-along in order to optimize the antecedents. In doing so, an ambidextrous middle management, rather than the senior management of the parent, handles the conflicting goals between exploitation and exploration, and plays a decisive role in realizing ambidexterity.

On the whole, the spin-along approach could be regarded as a fourth method that unifies the three concepts of “temporal separation”, “structural separation” and “parallel structures”. Accordingly, organizational ambidexterity can be achieved by increasing exploration and exploitation capabilities while simultaneously balancing them.

This study concludes with propositions that are based on the developed theoretical framework as a foundation for future research on ambidextrous corporate venturing. Additionally, practical advice will be given and critical success factors defined for realizing ambidexterity in corporate practice.