

Chapter 4

Strategic Fashion Management: Influential Factors in Strategy Implementation

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ABSTRACT

Strategic fashion management is one of the major absentees in the catwalk of the fashion literature. The meta-analysis research strategy was used to find and analyze hundreds of papers and books that may have some discussions regarding the intra-organizational factors that contribute to the effective execution of strategies in the fashion industry. Inclusion criteria were all published studies in top ten related journals and all existing books on Amazon website that have at least one of the nine keywords about strategy implementation. This research has identified ten sets of influential factors, each of which has an impact on the successful implementation of strategies. A strategy implementation model has been developed by combining these ten groups of factors based on systems theory. This paper reflects the development of a tentative model of strategy execution based on a literature review.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic fashion management in general and strategy implementation in the fashion industry in particular, are widely ignored areas of research. The importance of doing research regarding strategy implementation can be justified and discussed from at least two interrelated perspectives: theoretical as well as pragmatic points of view. From the theoretical perspective, it would be argued that due to very limited research regarding strategy execution, there is a massive gap in current literature regarding strategy implementation (Aboutalebi, 2016a; So, Parsons, & Yap, 2013). From a practical point of view, manag-

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ers are experiencing a very hard time because the rate of failure of strategy executions is sky high in their companies and they cannot expect any support from academics who are mainly unfamiliar with this crucial issue of strategy implementation (Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015). This study aims to shed light on major intra-organizational factors that influence strategy implementation in the fashion industry.

Strategic fashion management can be defined as *a systematic process of conducting an environmental analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and making required adjustments based on feedback to achieve long-term objectives in fashion and fashion-related industries*. The fashion industry requires strategic fashion management and specialist fashion strategists. Having proper strategic management is necessary for every industry but this necessity is more evident in the fashion industry because of its additional complexity. Managing strategies in the fashion industry is relatively more difficult than other industries due to the ever-changing and creative nature of the fashion industry. The focus of this paper would be on strategy implementation in this industry.

In the remainder of the paper, a background and justification for conducting this research have been provided. Next, the major influential factors in strategy execution are discussed, followed by the research methodology employed in this study. Then, the tentative model of strategy implementation is developed. Finally, this paper will conclude with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

BACKGROUND

Although fashion is a familiar concept that has attracted the attention of many people for more than a millennium, the notion and practice of fashion management are new or unfamiliar to many. A search for strategic fashion management on Amazon's website, the largest and most comprehensive collection of books, resulted in zero findings. This indicates the lack of existence of strategic fashion management. So, seemingly the concept of 'Strategic Fashion Management' is being introduced for the first time in this paper. It is not possible to cover all aspects of strategic fashion management in one paper. Consequently, this study highlights only the least discussed dimension of any type of strategic management, which is strategy implementation.

As argued by MacLennan (2011, p. 3), "strategy execution is a seriously under-researched area without an established theoretical basis". In a similar vein, Flood and his co-authors (2000, p. 243) claim that "strategy implementation, like any action-orientated human activity, needs theory based on research to identify the key factors to evaluate and the key levers to push to achieve desired results". However, few authors have tried to suggest a model for implementing strategy (see De Flander, 2010; Galbraith & Nathanson, 1978; Hrebiniak & Joyce, 1984; Kaplan & Norton, 2008; MacLennan, 2011; Morgan, Levitt, & Malek, 2007; Stonich, 1982; Syrett, 2007; Thompson & Strickland, 1986).

Justification for Conducting the Research

Organizations' growth and profitability considerably rely on appropriate and effective strategy implementation (Aboutalebi, 2016c; Lorange, 1998). "There is now a growing recognition that the most important problems in this field are not strategy creation but in strategy implementation" (Flood *et al.*, 2000, p. 2). In a similar vein, Saul (2000, p. 212) claims that "Ensuring successful implementation of the strategic business plan is the greatest leadership challenge in today's business environment."

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