

Chapter 15

Competitive Intelligence

Competitive Intelligence: A Proposal for Value Creation through Information and Knowledge – The Limeira Gross Domestic Product Sector: Brazil

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ABSTRACT

In the fashion accessories business, which is essentially based on SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) there is a lack of know-how about information systems potential to obtain and analyze the market and its tendencies. The adoption of management practices based on accurate market and organization information are key factors for the definition of strategies for the sustainable development. The ability to see important issues in the chain of value is crucial to identify the most important factors for success, to anticipate the competition and to have pro-active management instead of reacting to market pressures (Thomas, Krishnamoorthy, Singh & Venkateswaran, 2015). In this context, considering the consequences of information systems on company results and their contribution for social and economic development, the authors have carried out research in the fashion accessories industry so as to enlarge knowledge on the subject. Here the industry is characterized in Limeira, São Paulo, Brazil, referring to the contribution of this sector in the economy. Then, the relevance of the information systems integration in the production in the value chain and the challenges and problems needed to be overcome by small companies is analyzed using a focus group technique with SMEs directors and managers. Finally, the main results are discussed, summarized and directions for further research are formulated. This study aimed to analyze the purpose of Sindijóias, industry union, to the creation of an intelligence center to support the competitiveness of the accessory jewelry companies. It also provides a knowledge proposal and possible solutions for companies and a contribution of academic value due to the lack of research in the area.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0973-8.ch015

INTRODUCTION

Information and knowledge are the main economic and strategic resources since the nineties. Those are extremely important for the sustainability and competitiveness of organizations (Anunciação, 2014). Information management requires specific manage and organizational competences. It is the base of all activity developed by organizations, influences the value chain and it is the main economical transactional resource. So organizations must find their own information systems to get and analyze data, enabling better, easier decisions and management (Guarda, Santos, Pinto, Augusto & Silva, 2013).

Actually, information and knowledge are main productive factors and crucial to the definition of correct strategies answering the demand of market. This process of analyzing and evaluating the tendencies of market to find opportunities and reducing the risks of decision taking corresponds to the so called Competitive Intelligence. On the other hand, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the company itself also based on information corresponds to Organizational Intelligence (Valentim *et al.*, 2003).

Human resources well prepared, organizational dynamics adequately structured and an adequate information system is needed to get and process the essential information. Also, sustainability depends on the knowledge worked from preferences, tendencies of consumers, the competence actions, the general evolution and changes, many times difficult to perceive. As well as the knowledge of the company real capacities to achieve the objectives and finally the mission.

For SMEs there are more difficulties and so it becomes harder to define the key performance indicators (KPIs). Aware of this reality and the relevance of small companies for the Gross Domestic Product, the present research is carried on the accessory industry, based on SMEs, in the town of Limeira, S. Paulo, Brazil.

Are SMEs prepared for the new society of information and knowledge? Could they answer to a more demanding observation of market evolution? Would knowledge provided by an out sourcing entity allow competitive advantages for these companies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Market organizational adaptability depends of organizational competitiveness which is a critical factor for the economic success. Competing in this dimension means possessing the ability to «*orchestrate all the leads*» that the market supplies (Berry, Carbone & Haeckel, 2002). To understand it adequately, valuing each respective true capability being conscious of the company limitations, in other words, to develop an adequate intelligence system.

The necessary key-drivers are supported in some competences (Mcconnell & Ward-Perkins, 1998):

- Accessing to various markets reaching potential clients (Globalization);
- Having better relationship with customers, anticipating market needs, taking opportunities for new products and innovative solutions (Anticipation);
- Allowing subcontracting, establishing partnerships for various activities, searching for excellence (Specialization);
- Involving the value chain in the final success of the product. Developing close relationship with clients and suppliers;
- Partnerships with clients and suppliers;

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