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How B2B marketers interact with customers and develop knowledge to produce a co-owned marketing strategy

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How B2B marketers interact with customers and develop knowledge to produce a co-owned marketing strategy

Abstract

Purpose: The paper explores how senior B2B marketing managers within a collectivist culture, contribute to knowledge development by interacting with staff in customer organizations in order to produce a co-owned marketing strategy.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative research strategy incorporating an open ended questionnaire was used to collect data from 15 senior B2B marketing managers in three Korean companies that deployed the customer centred approach. The grounded theory technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and the mind map method (Burgess-Allen and Own-Smith, 2010) were used to show how senior Korean marketing managers' thoughts are processed and knowledge transfer occurs.

Findings: The findings show that a governance mechanism is instrumental in guiding interactive communication that results in knowledge being utilized that benefits the members of a partnership arrangement. The knowledge development process is enhanced by mutual trust and emotional bonds that are established through socialization. Cyclical interaction through socialization and frequent (in)formal meetings facilitates the process of turning explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge and vice versa, and encourages new knowledge to be developed. Socialization also helps to reduce learning myopia, and contributes to the innovatory processes that result in customer needs being met.

Originality/value: The paper provides insights into the importance of boundary setting that facilitates cooperative marketing action, which results in a B2B integrated marketing intelligence and planning process.

Keywords – Interactive communication, Knowledge development, Market-based knowledge, Knowledge sharing, Learning, Strategy

1. Introduction

The utilization of market-based knowledge is ~~considered to be~~ fundamental in terms of underpinning successful strategy development and implementation (Chiva *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, knowledge about a customer can help marketers to establish a customer-centric culture (Davonport *et al.*, 2001) that manifests in B2B partnerships producing customer value. ~~Kumar (2014) supports this view by pointing out that a learning culture results in the innovation process being managed. By recognizing this, B2B marketers are aware of how the utilization of knowledge, combined with interactive communication results in new products and operational improvements.~~

~~Although the fields of learning and marketing strategy in relation to marketing capability are well researched, i~~It can be argued that there is limited research as regards how B2B marketers embrace market-based knowledge to develop cooperative marketing action. Of key interest ~~here~~ is how information sharing results in knowledge, and how the dissemination of ~~such~~ knowledge helps to integrate the marketing decision-making process (Fugate *et al.*, 2009). The work of ~~Medlin (2004),~~ Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos (2004), and Arnett, *et al.*, (2021) can be considered informative as it addresses the importance and the effort needed to build a trustworthy relationship that is achieved through frequent staff interaction involving the utilization of knowledge. With regards to inter-organizational cooperation, a supplier's flexibility in terms of supporting a firm's downstream marketing capability (Yang *et al.*, 2019) and rapid market responses ~~can be~~ considered important. ~~In addition,~~ Lee and Trim (2012) explain how companies with a collectivist culture develop partnership arrangements with channel partners, and utilize knowledge to integrate marketing processes. Although ~~these such~~ studies ~~are can be considered useful and relevant as regards from the perspective of~~ marketing strategy development, the authors of these studies do not investigate how the relationship building process combines to produce knowledge that results in a co-owned marketing strategy. For the

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2
3 purpose of this paper, we define a co-owned marketing strategy as a set of marketing plans that
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5 are integrated into an overarching marketing strategy that is administered by the main business
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7 partner (e.g., the manufacturer holding legal title to the products/brands on offer).
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13 ~~Taking the above into account,~~ The objective of this paper is to explore how senior B2B
14
15 marketing managers within a collectivist culture, contribute to knowledge development by
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17 interacting with staff in customer organizations in order to produce a co-owned marketing
18
19 strategy. ~~Hence, To fully understand what is involved,~~ it is essential that marketers in the
20
21 supplier organization identify and draw on the resources and capability of partner
22
23 organizations and devise a customer-centric culture that underpins the customer-knowledge
24
25 management process (Davenport *et al.*, 2001). A strong network capability is known to
26
27 promote learning activities (~~Boso *et al.*, 2013~~), and ~~can~~ reinforce the network approach (Park
28
29 and Kim, 2015). Reflecting on what a network organization represents, we draw on the
30
31 definition provided by Achrol and Kotler (1999, p.148): “A *network organization* is an
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33 interdependent coalition of task- or skill-specialized economic entities (independent firms or
34
35 autonomous organizational units) that operates without hierarchical control but is embedded, by
36
37 dense lateral connections, mutuality, and reciprocity, in a shared value system that defines
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39 “membership” roles and responsibilities”.
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48 In order to address how knowledge development and learning is managed, we build on the
49
50 work of Lee and Miller (1999) and Lee and Trim (~~2008a and~~ 2012), relating to how an ‘in-
51
52 group’ orientation in a collectivist culture influences marketing policy. In addition, we draw on
53
54 the view that a ‘culture of knowledge’ allows staff in partner organizations to share and develop
55
56 knowledge with their counterparts (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2014).
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3 Although we focus on how the process of marketing strategy development is underpinned by and
4 reinforces relationship building through interactive communication, emphasis is placed on
5 understanding how senior marketing managers in Korean companies turn tacit knowledge into
6 explicit knowledge (Platts and Yeung, 2000) in order to devise and implement marketing
7 strategies. ~~By doing so, w~~We identify a number of key aspects relating to how senior
8 marketing managers in Korean companies utilize knowledge with staff in partner
9 organizations through information sharing. The insights will, we believe, deepen our
10 understanding of how market-based learning (Morgan and Turnell, 2003) is embraced in a
11 collectivist cultural context and results in a customer centred approach.
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26 ~~As regards the methodological approach, we deployed a qualitative research strategy~~
27 ~~involving an open ended questionnaire to collect primary data from managers in companies in~~
28 ~~Korea. The grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and the mind map method~~
29 ~~(Burgess-Allen and Owen-Smith, 2010) were used to analyse the data and visualise key~~
30 ~~findings. Indeed, the inductive approach allowed the researchers to discover the extent to~~
31 ~~which the interaction process both facilitates and reinforces the in-group decision-making~~
32 ~~process.~~
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44 2. Conceptual framework

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46 ~~Easterby-Smith (1997) reminds us that there are different approaches to learning and~~ Griseri
47 (2002) points out that knowledge is derived from what is agreed, and this provides a grounding
48 for underlying knowledge to emerge in the form of a group consensus ~~(Sackmann, 1991)~~. Chiva
49 *et al.*, (2014) broaden this view by suggesting that new knowledge is derived from a process of
50 insights and interpretation.
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3 As regards encouraging staff to share information/knowledge, Choi *et al.*, (2020) identified
4 compatability and reciprocal behaviour as being important. Oh (2019) contributes to our
5 understanding of the development of knowledge by indicating that trust and fairness in
6 procedure as well as trust in management are moderators of information/knowledge sharing
7 behaviour. The perception of trust and fairness affect cognition and emotion as well as
8 relationships and interactions among/between people; and also, the perception of fairness in
9 systems/procedures and organizational structure can influence individuals as regards them
10 withholding their views/ideas (Park and Kim, 2018).
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23 Research suggests that the process of knowledge development is underpinned by a knowledge
24 creation spiral, known as the SECI (socialization-externalization-combination–internalization)
25 process (Nonaka and Takeuch, 1995). During the process of knowledge convergence of the
26 SECI process, individuals interact with their peers as well as individuals from different groups.
27
28 As individuals interact with staff at different levels within the organization and with staff in
29 external organizations, and engage in counter arguments, the interaction process becomes
30 information intense, and as a consequence, staff form emotional bonds. Establishing emotional
31 bonds is important as this affects how an individual absorbs and shares information/knowledge
32 ~~and how willing they are to share their knowledge, views and ideas vis-à-vis enhancing~~
33 ~~knowledge~~ (Oh, 2019). ~~The advantage of this is that it facilitates the communication of ideas and~~
34 ~~knowledge, and requires individuals to convert their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge,~~
35 ~~which is articulated and enhanced through reflection and the utilization of knowledge.~~ Regular
36 meetings, involving company staff and external staff, gives rise to an integrated and shared
37 interpretation of knowledge (Fugate *et al.*, 2009). However, the sharing of sophisticated explicit
38 knowledge through teamwork involving individuals from different groups (e.g., non-marketing
39 functions) (Bendig *et al.*, 2018), ~~especially at the inter-organizational level,~~ needs clear guidance
40 ~~and leadership~~ from senior management. We refer to this as specific knowledge enhancement.
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3 Through time, the relationships developed become enriched with additional resources and
4
5 provide a basis for innovatory practices (ALHussan *et al.*, 2017), ~~and which manifest in~~ new
6
7 approaches to the development of knowledge.
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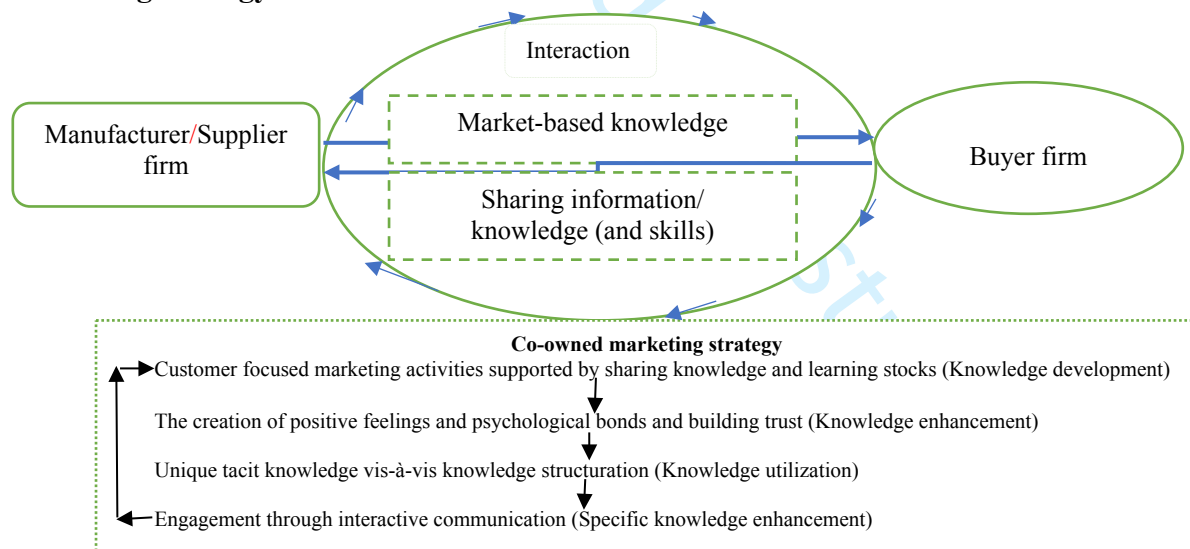
10
11
12 Narver *et al.*, (2004) highlight the importance associated with an organization having a market
13
14 orientation that utilizes market-based knowledge to provide a coordinated holistic approach to
15
16 marketing planning. Peltier *et al.*, (2013) explain that a customer oriented approach enhances
17
18 information sharing. Therefore, it is logical to suggest that ~~the capabilities of each function~~
19
20 ~~within an organization should not be viewed in isolation (Ngo and O’Cass, 2012) because~~ B2B
21
22 marketing managers need to utilize ~~cross-functional entional~~ knowledge, especially
23
24 technological knowledge, in a co-ordinated manner. According to Mills and Smith (2011), the
25
26 accumulated heterogeneous and qualified knowledge that is specific in nature, is more likely
27
28 to be utilized to interpret the business environment vis-à-vis learning stocks to find a new
29
30 strategy to move forward. This is representative of knowledge development on a continual
31
32 basis.
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40 ~~Understanding that there are barriers relating to inter-organizational interaction, B2B marketers~~
41
42 ~~need to know what information can be shared, because t~~Through the process of information
43
44 sharing, mutual trust is established (Lee and Trim, ~~20122008a and 2012~~). ~~Trust that is~~
45
46 ~~established between individuals, and~~ influences the degree and quality of the information shared
47
48 ~~and is influential in terms of~~ knowledge ~~is enhanceeenhancednt~~ (Park and Kim, 2018; Oh,
49
50 2019). However, mutual trust does not necessarily eliminate, but is known to reduce three forms
51
52 of learning myopia (i.e., temporal, spatial, and failure) ~~outlined by~~ (Levinthal and March, ~~(1993)~~)
53
54 as it provides a form of boundary as to what is calculated reality, based on available information
55
56 and the capability of the organization. ~~Bearing this in mind, boundary setting in a B2B~~
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partnership helps an organization to develop objectives that are specified and well-defined vis-à-vis market opportunity and the utilization of knowledge.

The conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1, was been developed from the extant literature and outlines how buyer-supplier interaction is dependent on the sharing and utilization of knowledge that gives rise to a customer centred marketing strategy. In order to extend our understanding of the process of knowledge development in a collectivist culture, we understand that psychological bonding is influential in terms of knowledge structuration and the development of a sustainable B2B relationship. Also, the co-ownership of a marketing strategy is viewed as essential in terms of achieving mutuality.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework: inter-company interaction and the development of marketing strategy



3. Propositions development

Senior managers in Korean companies are known to focus on developing a sustainable competitive advantage through the approach of 'migratory knowledge', and the recruitment of

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2
3 ~~experienced foreigners and expatriates (Kim and Yi, 1998-1999).~~ Managers in Korean
4
5 companies are known to engage in networking with government representatives (Lee, 1998-
6
7 1999) and work within a consensus oriented culture that is market focused. Underpinning this
8
9 mentality is a commitment to trust-building and exchanging information between partners to
10
11 increase the coordination of business activities (Dyer and Chu, 2000). Senior managers in
12
13 Korean companies exercise a paternalistic approach (Lee, 2010) when managing staff and
14
15 place emphasis on avoiding ambiguity and conflict, and. ~~In addition, they consider that~~
16
17 ~~training is essential with regards to~~ personal development ~~and an employee fulfilling their role~~
18
19 ~~within the organization~~ (Lee and Trim, 2008b). ~~The fact that senior managers consider~~
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21 ~~themselves responsible for the welfare of employees means that much emphasis is placed on~~
22
23 ~~learning and group performance (Lee, 2010).~~

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33 ~~Bearing the above in mind, i~~It can be argued that marketing managers in Korean companies
34
35 have a distinct view of what market-based knowledge is and the benefits associated with it
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37 (Lee and Trim, 2012 and 2013). They are committed to providing customer value through the
38
39 relationship building approach with partner organizations that is underpinned by the concept
40
41 of mutuality (Arnett *et al.*, 2021). Such an approach allows B2B marketing managers in
42
43 Korean companies to establish value innovation programmes and cross-functional teams that
44
45 provide support for the development of a range of strategic projects (Kim and Mauborgne,
46
47 2005). ~~As a result of this, We contribute to~~ strategy development within Korean organizations
48
49 ~~by exploring can be viewed as fluid and adaptable. Nevertheless, there is limited research~~
50
51 ~~explaining how B2B marketing managers manage the process of knowledge creation within a~~
52
53 ~~collectivist culture. Hence, this research can be considered useful as it explores~~ how B2B
54
55 marketers develop knowledge in association with external staff in order to produce a co-
56
57 owned marketing strategy.
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3.1 Learning and communication

Researchers have studied the role and influence of learning from different perspectives and this has provided marketing academics and marketing practitioners with scope to determine the effectiveness of learning in the context of customer relationship management. Hult *et al.*, (2003, p.542) define learning in terms of “values and beliefs associated with the development of new knowledge that has potential to influence behaviour”. Two points emerge from this: a strategic resource must be rare and deemed not easy to imitate. In addition, cultural exposure moderates the impact that culture has on a situation or event, and the logic of this is that marketing strategy outcomes are in fact representative of an organization’s ability to learn (Srivastava *et al.*, 1998). ~~With respect to facilitating the process of institutionalized learning, what has to be borne in mind is how an organization adapts and survives, mainly as a result of its marketing actions. Hence, linking learning with strategy development (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002), is a key issue to be addressed by B2B marketing managers~~

~~As regards trustworthy behaviour and learning, B2B marketers need to pay attention to the fact that trust is an outcome of an array of individual staff beliefs and the good faith they develop towards the organization.~~ Trustworthy behaviour encourages marketers to improve the way they communicate and participate in information sharing (McAuliffe *et al.*, 2019), ~~and~~. ~~Trustworthy behaviour~~ is affected by the way in which an organization establishes its values and shares them, ~~and how senior staff manage situations through their own behaviour~~ (Afsar and Shahjenhan, 2018) ~~as well as the role that an individual occupies in the organizational hierarchy and working environment.~~ Joo and Shim (2010) support this view and suggest that a good work environment helps staff to establish positive feelings and make

1
2
3 a psychological bond with individuals in their organization ~~that materializes in them~~
4 ~~performing to the best of their ability~~. Murphy and Sashi (2018) indicate that a clear
5
6 communication structure allows individuals to bring their own knowledge and expertise into
7
8 group discussions and to accept the predominance of the group over the individual (Nonaka *et*
9
10 *al.*, 2002). Putting in place appropriate organizational structures is essential in terms of the
11
12 development and utilization of knowledge (Lowe and Tapachai, 2020). ~~By having a flexible~~
13
14 ~~structure in place, individual staff feel empowered and this results in an increased~~
15
16 ~~commitment to improve communication and information sharing that enhances the learning~~
17
18 ~~process~~. Bearing these points in mind, two propositions can be cited.
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23
24 **Proposition 1.** In order to encourage knowledge development, it is important to establish a
25 clear organizational structure as this facilitates information sharing and promotes learning
26 activities.
27

28
29 **Proposition 2.** Establishing trust in learning creates positive feelings and psychological bonds
30 among marketing staff that influences communication and information/knowledge sharing
31 and results in knowledge enhancement.
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35 3.2 Market-based knowledge and value creation

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37 A formal approach to acquiring market-based knowledge provides a basis for marketers to
38 scan the business environment, identify the priorities of competitors and advise senior
39 management as to how to change the strategic direction of the company (Harvey and Denton,
40 1999). Knowledge that is market-based is useful for identifying changes in common buying
41 patterns among customers, devising marketing information systems, and developing customer
42 relationships (Lee, 2004; Tuli *et al.*, 2007). ~~Ma *et al.*, (2014) and~~ Wetze *et al.*, (2014) suggest
43
44 that marketers can enhance innovation adoption that results in the development of customer
45 prioritization strategies and also, better understand the way in which the needs of key
46 customer groups can be satisfied. ~~However, to be fully effective, a learning model needs to be~~
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48 ~~in place.~~
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8 An established learning model, 4Is (intuiting; interpreting; integrating; and institutionalizing)
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10 (Lawrence *et al.*, 2005; Boh *et al.*, 2007), can be used to merge knowledge and experience
11
12 (tacit knowledge of an individual) into a collective (group/team) decision making process
13
14 through demonstration and articulation (Akinci and Sadler-Smith, 2019). This process can
15
16 also be explained in terms of 'feed-forward learning', where an individual initiates the process
17
18 of putting forward possible ideas to a group for example; and 'feedback learning', which is
19
20 converting explicit knowledge that is stored at organizational level to tacit knowledge at
21
22 individual level, by learning from 'experience' or 'expertise' (Oh, 2019). It can be argued that
23
24 the 4Is approach explains the process of SECI from a psychological perspective by indicating
25
26 how individuals relate to their organization's values, and adjust and converge/transfer their
27
28 knowledge and capability in order to contribute to knowledge creation and improving the
29
30 organization's competitiveness.
31
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37 Through the process of explicit knowledge turning into sophisticated and trailblazing
38
39 knowledge, an individual can gain tacit knowledge, which has unique properties. Knowledge
40
41 structuration can influence a firm's innovative output (George *et al.*, 2008) and also, cognitive
42
43 categorization will allow B2B marketing managers to better understand how the strategic
44
45 issues confronting the organization are to be interpreted. In order for organizational
46
47 knowledge to be transferred, there must be an appropriate structure (eg., systems, procedures
48
49 and policies) in place and also, the recipient and the donor of knowledge need be both
50
51 motivated and consider the process worthwhile (~~Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008~~). ~~It is vital that~~
52
53 ~~B2B marketers understand this in terms of how to establish collaborative trust at the personal~~
54
55 ~~level (Fang *et al.*, 2008)~~. Bearing in mind the above, the following proposition was identified.
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Proposition 3. Knowledge structuration that is based on an individual's unique tacit knowledge gained through the process of turning explicit knowledge into sophisticated knowledge and vice versa influences marketing strategy development.

3.3 Placing learning activities in a marketing context

In the case of predicting the future diffusion of products, network structure analysis can be used (Trusov *et al.*, 2013) to assist B2B marketing managers vis-à-vis the marketing planning process. ~~This may mean that marketing managers share knowledge and engage more openly with their counterparts in finance and technology/research and development for example.~~ By sharing knowledge and information with staff in other business functions, B2B marketing managers ~~will be~~ are able to extract the benefits derived from market-based knowledge activities, formulate marketing plans and produce innovative marketing strategies.

~~The construction of a message(s) used in a communication and the way in which information/knowledge is exchanged can be viewed from the perspective of an exchange partner's intentions and also their capabilities, and is symbolic of the relationship itself. It is important to make a distinction between economic exchange (trust and commitment) and social exchange (the work situation and culture), and how these different exchanges are intertwined over a long period of time, and give rise to value creation (Medlin, 2004).~~ Trust is at the heart of the knowledge sharing process and can be reinforced through interaction and a commitment to knowledge enhancement (Mitrega, 2012). In order for a relationship to be strengthened through time, value creation needs to take into account the benefits derived from the association of each of the parties involved (e.g., mutual benefits) and how communication reinforces a customer's considerations of value (Lindberg-Repo and Grönroos, 2004). An additional point to note ~~therefore,~~ is that ~~as~~ B2B marketing managers interact in different ways and ~~in different forms,~~ the communication process can ~~should~~ be viewed as flexible and

1
2
3 continuous as it allows B2B marketing managers to participate in multiple evaluations and to
4 ~~maintain or develop a relationship further even when a product failure occurs~~ (Murphy and
5
6
7 Sashi, 2018). Bearing these points in mind, the following proposition can be cited.

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9
10 **Proposition 4.** A flexible approach to information/knowledge sharing results in knowledge
11 enhancement and mutual benefits that increase the organization's capability.
12

13 14 4. Methodological approach

15
16 The focus of the research is to explore how senior B2B marketing managers contribute to
17 knowledge sharing by embracing interactive communication. In doing so, we extend our
18 understanding of the process of knowledge development by studying how marketing
19 managers in a collectivist culture embrace a holistic way of thinking (~~Nisbett et al., 2001;~~
20
21 Park and Jeon, 2018) that facilitates marketing cooperation and knowledge transfer in a B2B
22 context. ~~In this paper, we address Although knowledge represents a universal concept,~~ the
23 way knowledge is managed and developed ~~by can vary, and in this paper, we looked at this~~
24 ~~from the perspective of~~ senior marketing managers in Korean companies ~~from.~~ ~~Therefore, a~~
25 ~~the context is country~~ country specific ~~context only~~, and not generalizable.
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40 As the nature of the study, ~~which~~ was to understand the thinking process of marketing
41 managers and the antecedences relating to how a consensus was arrived at vis-à-vis sharing
42 and utilizing information/knowledge, we decided to use a qualitative research approach and
43 deploy an open ended questionnaire. ~~The advantage of t~~ ~~This was that it~~ allowed us to deepen
44 our understanding of how senior marketing managers manage the knowledge development
45 process in a partnership arrangement, and produce a co-owned marketing strategy.
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56 By drawing on the insights of senior marketing managers ~~that operated in a collectivist~~
57 ~~cultural setting that had extensive marketing experience~~, it allowed us to gain new insights
58 into how ~~senior marketing managers they~~ agreed common ~~marketing~~ objectives and
59
60

1
2
3 established the boundaries within which marketing decisions were made and executed. To
4
5 achieve this, we deployed the grounded theory technique (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) as it
6
7 enabled us to analyse the content of the transcripts in a systematic manner and place the
8
9 emerging concepts in a hierarchical sequence. In addition, we used the mind mapping method
10
11 (Burgess-Allen and Own-Smith, 2010) to show ~~how the~~ senior marketing managers ~~in Korean~~
12
13 ~~companies~~ processed information in the form of tasks and policies.
14
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19 ~~As regards t~~The cognitive mapping technique, ~~it is considered useful as it~~ allows researchers
20
21 to identify key concepts and the links between the concepts (Calori *et al.*, 1994). Researchers
22
23 can apply their own judgement (Goodhew *et al.*, 2005) in order to decode and present
24
25 arguments/actions that are generated through content analysis. The mapping approach is,
26
27 therefore, ~~considered~~ useful as it allows researchers to look at the concepts uncovered in a
28
29 meaningful way and establish how and why people within an organization communicate in
30
31 the way that they do (~~Eden 1992;~~ Eden 2004; Yun *et al.*, 2011) vis-à-vis. ~~Hence, through the~~
32
33 ~~cognitive mapping process, researchers are able to depict why employees act as they do and~~
34
35 ~~what types of constraint are in place to~~ legitimize organizational behaviour (Eden, 1992).
36
37 Furthermore, amalgamated, cause maps can be produced that are symbolic of the way in
38
39 which a group as opposed to an individual thinks and acts (Eden, 2004). ~~The nature of the~~
40
41 ~~research was to understand the holistic view of knowledge development that embraces~~
42
43 ~~market based knowledge in the context of a partnership arrangement and to produce a~~
44
45 ~~synthesis “rather than reductive analysis of the actor’s view of the world” (Huff and Fletcher~~
46
47 ~~cited in Calori *et al.*, 1994, 441). The holistic view adopted allowed the interactions and~~
48
49 ~~relationships identified between individuals to be visualized and linked in a specific way (Yun~~
50
51 ~~*et al.*, 2011).~~

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3 Linking the mind map approach with the grounded theory approach allowed the researchers to
4
5 look inside the minds of senior marketing managers and establish why they formed the views
6
7 that they did and how these views were translated into a set of marketing oriented
8
9 relationships. The coding process allowed us to identify and categorize the patterns in the data
10
11 and investigate their associations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). ~~Furthermore, b~~By moving
12
13 beyond descriptive codes to explanatory (pattern) codes (Miles and Huberman, 1984), ~~the~~
14
15 ~~researchers-we~~ were able to add more depth. This allowed us to understand how the senior
16
17 marketing managers (the theory holders) in the ~~Korean~~ companies build and manage
18
19 relationships by interacting with their peers and their counterparts. Hence, the inductive
20
21 theory approach proved fit for purpose (Edmondson and McManus, 2007).
22
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29 Access to the senior B2B marketing managers that participated in the research was negotiated
30
31 through one of the researcher's own network of Korean business contacts. Three gatekeepers
32
33 (Guba and Lincoln, 1981), each representing one of the companies in the study, agreed to
34
35 seek access to the company on behalf of the researchers. The gatekeepers had in-depth
36
37 industry knowledge, were sensitive to events and ~~were~~ known to be supportive of academia-
38
39 industry partnerships. The three participating companies were: an automobile company; a
40
41 construction company; and an electronics company. Each of the companies that participated
42
43 in the research was well established in its industry and the participating marketing managers
44
45 were well aware of the importance of knowledge development and adhered to the customer
46
47 centred approach. By comparing and contrasting companies in three different sectors, we
48
49 were able to identify the "intervening" -and "action/interaction" -conditions that relate to the
50
51 thought processes of senior marketing managers and discern how they view the relationship
52
53 building process to share information/knowledge. The respondents agreed to complete the
54
55 questionnaire by electronic means and provided in-depth answers. As the researchers had
56
57 limited access to the respondents, it meant that it was not possible to utilize any other form of
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1
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3 data collection. ~~Bearing in mind that we relied on gatekeepers to collect the data on our~~
4 ~~behalf, we paid careful attention to the trustworthiness of the data (Guba and Lincoln, 1981)~~
5 ~~and how the social relationships and their causes were to be portrayed (Miles and Huberman,~~
6 ~~1984).~~
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14 ~~The questions used in the study were drawn from the extant literature and the open-ended~~
15 ~~questionnaire was piloted prior to the data collection phase.~~ The gatekeepers proved
16 instrumental in piloting the questionnaire and suggested they played a supporting role by
17 ~~collecting the data within an agreed time period. Based on discussions with the gatekeepers,~~
18 the questionnaire was limited to eleven questions only. O ~~and~~ one of the researchers, fluent in
19 both Korean and English, undertook translated the questionnaire from English into Korean as
20 ~~had been agreed. The researchers paid great attention to~~ the back-translation of the
21 questionnaire, from English into Korean, and the back-translation of the completed
22 questionnaires, from Korean into English. ~~Based on the agreement with the gatekeepers, t~~
23 The
24 senior B2B marketing managers were prepared to spend upwards of two hours each providing
25 written answers. The eleven questions related to the following themes: organizational culture;
26 marketing strategy and development; customer value and satisfaction; and relationship
27 building and information sharing.
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47 **5. Data analysis and findings**

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49 A total of 15 questionnaires, fully completed by the senior B2B marketing managers were
50 returned. ~~It can be noted that a~~ A all the respondents had been with their organization for over
51 twenty years and held a position of responsibility within the organization. ~~In addition, t~~ They
52 also had extensive marketing strategy knowledge, and some had overseas marketing work
53 experience. Ethical considerations were taken into account and the respondents were given
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3 anonymity. As regards distinguishing between the respondents and the companies, we used
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5 the letters A or B or C for the company, and labelled the respondents from 1 to 5.
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10 ~~For t~~The analysis of the survey, ~~instrument was carried out in a number of stages. W~~e
11 adopted ~~and followed~~ the guidelines provided by Patton (1990), and Strauss and Corbin
12 (1998). First, we grouped the responses under the specific questions posed and then
13
14 proceeded to use open coding. This was followed by axial coding and then selective coding to
15
16 add density and validation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). During the open coding phase, we
17
18 identified and labelled 36 themes and classified them as first order.
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26 After the open coding process, the researchers independently read through again the responses
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28 and a few days later came together and discussed the findings and then undertook the axial
29
30 coding and selective coding stages. The “phenomenon”, in relation to “action/interactional
31
32 conditions” was deemed to identify the boundaries in relation to governance, risk
33
34 management and resilience, through the process of interactive communication. By identifying
35
36 the phenomenon, the researchers were able to focus on how to manage the “intervening
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38 conditions”, which was sharing information to improve knowledge and skills in order to
39
40 manage the “action/interactional conditions”, defined as building emotional bonds to establish
41
42 and manage B2B customer centred relationships. As regards selective coding, attention
43
44 focused on providing conceptual density (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; ~~Lee and Trim, 2008a~~),
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46 and the researchers reviewed all the responses to ensure that all the aspects were reflected on
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48 in the intervening conditions. By reinvestigating the data set identified and better
49
50 understanding the relationships between the phenomenon, the action/interactional conditions,
51
52 the intervening conditions, and what the consequences/outcomes were, we were able to
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54 reduce the 36 themes (first order) to 13 themes (second order), and then to 4 themes (third
55
56 order). The second and third order themes are listed in Table I.
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The three main overarching theoretical categories from the literature were: knowledge development; knowledge enhancement; and knowledge utilization. By placing the themes under an appropriate category, we were able to reflect on what the facilitating factors or conditions were in terms of information/knowledge sharing at the individual level, the group level and the organizational level; and how the ‘feedback’ and ‘feed-forward’ learning occurs vis-à-vis tacit knowledge being turned into explicit knowledge. This approach was deemed relevant as Choi *et al.*, (2020) state, the higher the level of organizational culture openness there is, the more pressure exists on people to share information/knowledge and also, the greater the degree of openness, the more individual self-development is likely to occur.

Table I: Second and third order themes

Themes (Second order)		Themes (Third order)	
Knowledge Development (KD)		Establishing a learning organization culture (KD)	
Organizational learning		Open communication and information exchange (KE+ KU)	
Learning culture		Trustworthy and sustainable business relationships (KE+ KU)	
Individual learning		Innovative marketing strategy (KU)	
Marketing intelligence			
Institutional learning			
Knowledge Enhancement (KE)			
Trust			
Communication			
Knowledge Utilization (KU)			
Innovation			
Marketing Strategy			
Information sharing			
Marketing plans/planning			
Sustainable business relationships			
Customer value			

The key themes that are related to the propositions and the key insights from the data analysis appear in Table II. Through the process of producing explanatory (pattern) codes (Miles and

Huberman, 1984), the researchers were able to link the third order themes with the four propositions. The reader will note that Table II contains some variance in the characteristics among the companies but in general the commonalties are evident. The characteristics show how senior marketing managers in the companies undertake their tasks and adhere to company policy. Reflecting on the key insights in Table II, it can be suggested that senior B2B marketing managers are guided by senior marketers (~~those occupying a higher position in the organization's hierarchy~~) in terms of embracing the concept of learning and operate within a learning culture. By being proactive, senior B2B marketing managers implement a marketing strategy that has a customer value focus. This ensures that trust based relationships are developed and mutuality manifests. As a result of continued co-operation, marketing intelligence (market-based knowledge) and information sharing aid the marketing decision-making process and this results in appropriate marketing plans being implemented.

Table II: Propositions and Research Findings

Propositions	Automobile company	Construction company	Electronics company
P1. In order to encourage knowledge development, it is important to establish a clear organizational structure as this facilitates information sharing and promotes learning activities.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning to produce an organizational value system that is accepted by employees and staff in partner organizations. Information flows are monitored and forecasting and scenario planning are used to ensure that the organization responds to a strategic need.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning to produce organizational relationships that facilitate communication and result in knowledge based relationships being developed. The win-win concept is adhered to and managers are sensitive to market demands and embrace innovation to achieve organizational goals.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning in order to share knowledge both internally and with staff based in partner organizations. Technical support, relevant documentation and project management are used and contractual relations are maintained.
P2. Establishing trust in learning creates positive feelings and psychological bonds among marketing staff that influences communication and information/knowledge sharing and results in knowledge enhancement.	By being viewed as trustworthy and confident, senior B2B marketing managers develop a proactive marketing management logic that results in a diplomatic style of leadership. This is achieved through transformational change and the organization adapting to the environment.	A win-win mentality is in place that is viewed as confidence building and is aimed at encouraging innovative thinking to produce a hybrid organizational culture. Various learning activities are undertaken that result in managing change. Risk taking is encouraged and helps to transform thinking so that new management practices evolve.	Personal achievements at work and the ability to socialize are considered important, and so is the ability to maintain customer records and to think through customer requirements. Seminars and workshops are used to instil the fact that the organization has to compete in the market. By adopting a transparent process, effective management systems are developed.
P3. Knowledge structuration that is based	A formal marketing intelligence system is in place that monitors	Marketing research is used to provide insights into how to	There is continual observation of human resource

<p>on an individual's unique tacit knowledge gained through the process of turning explicit knowledge into sophisticated knowledge and vice versa influences marketing strategy development.</p>	<p>and assesses customer demand and filters information relating to the actions of competitors. Various studies are carried out to gauge a partner company's financial position and checks are made regarding the quality of their products and the motivation the of staff. Scenarios are devised and used in training sessions.</p>	<p>produce innovative products and deploy an innovative marketing strategy. Staff are required to place much emphasis on monitoring and evaluating product performance and financial performance, and benchmarking against competitors is carried out continuously.</p>	<p>management needs and the facilities of suppliers. There are medium term and long term risk management strategies in place and an appropriate risk mitigation strategy is in being.</p>
<p>P4. A flexible approach to information/knowledge sharing results in knowledge enhancement and mutual benefits that increase the organization's capability.</p>	<p>Both a formal and informal process of communication is used to reduce organizational boundaries, and ensure that the continual sharing of information allows trustworthy relationships to develop. An integrated marketing strategy is in existence which is underpinned by a clearly defined set of marketing values. Senior B2B marketing managers adopt a holistic view of marketing planning and set realistic marketing objectives that are measurable.</p>	<p>Frequent contact and socializing after work are known to instil loyalty and produce a futuristic outlook. The concept of mutuality is embraced and is continually reinforced by top management who promote cooperative behaviour and objective, group decision-making. A formal marketing strategy process is in being and staff that perform well are rewarded through promotion and increases in salary.</p>	<p>Staff communicate openly and take customer complaints seriously. The concept of mutuality is adhered to and an integrated marketing strategy has the benefit of requiring staff in partner organizations to conduct regular audits. An integrated marketing system has the objective of integrating purchasing and product development, sales management and customer service. Attention is given to educating B2B marketing managers and successful marketing managers are provided with additional incentives.</p>

~~In order to explain further the information in Table II, and to~~ see how senior marketing managers process knowledge and engage in knowledge development to achieve a customer centred business relationship, we ~~paid attention to the reflected on the fact that the inductive research approach requires the researcher to understand how a process unfolds and how insights can be developed into a phenomenon and thus explain~~ "the occurrence of a surprising event" (Edmondson and McManus, 2007, pp.1161-1162). ~~We utilized the mind map technique (Budd, 2004) as it allows the researcher to capture and make use of data from organizational informants by identifying how an individual interprets events, thinks through events and structures a series of events/actions into a logical understanding unique to them and their environment.~~ The main advantages associated with using mind maps are that they allow the researcher to distil large amounts of information and gain in conceptual richness (Eriksson and Hauer, 2004), ~~and also, Eden et al., (1992) point out that a map allows researchers to show each concept identified and the complex causal relationships that are~~

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3 ~~evident. The easy-to-read pictorial form allows for reflective thinking and problem solving~~
4
5 ~~(Calori *et al.*, 1994; Yun *et al.*, 2011).~~
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10 ~~Bearing in mind that the focus of the paper is to understand how B2B marketing managers~~
11 ~~manage the knowledge development process by turning tacit knowledge (donor knowledge)~~
12 ~~into explicit knowledge (the donor's knowledge that is interpreted and then explained in the~~
13 ~~context of new knowledge),~~ ~~†~~
14 ~~The mind map technique proved valuable in terms of identifying~~
15 ~~the inner thought processes of the senior marketing managers in Korean companies. It is~~
16 ~~worth noting that during the process of turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge,~~
17 ~~emotional bonding plays an important and influential role in the way donor knowledge is~~
18 ~~accepted and processed.~~
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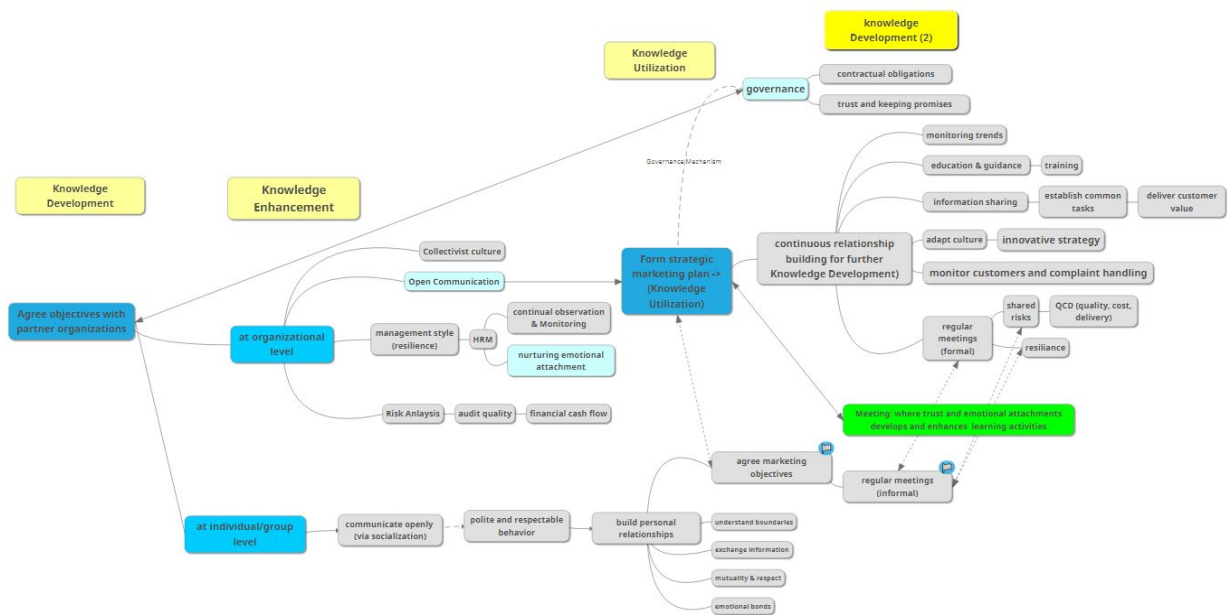
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31 A mind map was produced for each of the three companies and then synthesized into a meta-
32 map portraying how tacit knowledge is turned into explicit knowledge through formal and
33 informal interaction, and attention was given to how the relationships were strengthened
34 through emotional attachment. Figure 2, which represents the merged maps. ~~It~~, shows how
35 senior B2B market~~ersing managers~~ manage the knowledge transfer process across boundaries
36 by matching the characteristics/factors that are considered important. A common
37 understanding facilities the way in which staff interact and share information ~~(Mitsubishi and~~
38 ~~Greve, 2009)~~ so that trustworthy behaviour is encouraged between staff and decision-making
39 is improved (McAluffe *et al.*, 2019).
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53 The reader will note from Figure 2 that learning, in the context of a partnership arrangement,
54 can be viewed from an individual/group level and an organizational level perspective. ~~More~~
55 ~~s~~Specifically, the knowledge management process is associated with the utilization of
56 knowledge that incorporates governance, resilience and risk management. Indeed, the core
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3 themes identified reflected the “deeply held and shared values” (Ringberg and Gupta, 2003,
4 p.612). ~~This proved valuable as we were able to understand how senior marketers derive and~~
5
6 ~~make use of new knowledge as they are “under greater scrutiny to identify and produce new~~
7
8 ~~breakthrough products, services, and marketing campaigns” (Titus, 2007, p.262).~~
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19 As can be noted from Figure 2, in order to develop knowledge in a B2B business-to-business
20 partnership context, senior marketing managers establish realistic and measurable objectives
21 as this forms the basis upon which interactions occur and are managed, and
22 information/knowledge is shared at the organizational, group and individual level. By
23 establishing joint governance that manifests through the implementation of a strategic
24 marketing plan, knowledge that is articulated through group interaction is utilized. By making
25 having clear ~~the~~ policies and procedures ~~that are~~ in place, marketing staff are able to prioritize
26 what information/knowledge is shared and with whom. Also, it helps marketing staff build
27 positive emotional relationships with staff in partner organizations and facilitates the
28 development of learning activities through effective communication, knowledge development
29 ~~. This should ensure that new knowledge and is developed through time as trust develops~~
30 between individuals ~~and the products produced are unique and marketable.~~
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Figure 2: Meta-map - Turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through interaction and emotional attachment



6. Discussion

It is clear from Table II that senior marketing managers in all three companies adopt a strategic marketing perspective and build relationships that are focused on integrating partner organizations into their strategic planning process so that their marketing capabilities are leveraged. Although they make emotional connections through social bonding at the individual level, the way in which senior management integrate partner organizations into the firm's operations differs. In the case of the automobile company, attention is given to “common[ality] in ideology”, management style, quality and customer satisfaction. In the case of the construction company, attention is given to a partner organization's innovative capability that relates to product quality and meeting cost targets as well as meeting task performance criteria. Staff in the electronics company pay attention to meeting changes in customer needs and matching products with market trends. They also identify future potential partners that possess the required organizational capability and once selected, they

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3 communicate the strategic marketing plan to them so that staff in the partner organization can
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5 work with them to achieve mutual goals.
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10 Senior marketing managers in all three companies place emphasis on resilience and risk
11 mitigation. Hence there is a focus on risk management and developing knowledge and skills
12 through continual education using seminars and conferences. Knowledge is also shared with
13 staff in partner organizations through company manuals, joint planning and the co-ownership
14 of plans. Understanding customer needs better than the competitors (Narver *et al.*, 2004) is at
15 the heart of the planning process. In the case of the construction company, incentives are
16 provided to staff to motivate them and ensure that they meet health and safety, and quality
17 standards.
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30 6.1 *Improving the knowledge base*

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32 Senior B2B marketing managers place emphasis on responding to customer demands in a
33 timely manner and place emphasis on solving practical problems (~~Batt and Purchase, 2004;~~
34
35 Waluszecoski *et al.*, 2019) through customer-centred learning. Existing knowledge is utilized
36
37 to establish new routines that help to maintain collaborative-trust. This conforms to the view
38
39 of building trust based relationships (Park, 2011) and developing new knowledge to influence
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41 the behaviour of staff (~~Hult *et al.*, 2003~~).
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49 Improving the knowledge base is linked with increasing organizational capability and this is
50 partly achieved through individuals participating in group decisions. The company psyche is
51 very much based on a win-win mentality and the development of trust based relationships
52 (Park, 2011). For example, by individual staff keeping their promise, stronger trust based
53 relationships manifest that enhance the learning process throughout the partnership
54 arrangement. In order to meet customer needs, staff integrate the activities of socialization
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3 with those of the partner organization(s) and individuals identify an individual in the partner
4 organization (e.g., peer selection), and nurture an emotional affiliation. Through establishing
5 emotional attachment, knowledge implementation is enhanced. This adheres to the view that
6 the interaction process itself has a social component that results in the development and
7 exchange of knowledge, and is reinforced by the learning approach (Nonaka and Takeuchi,
8 1995; Håkansson and Waluszewski, 2005).
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19 Senior marketing managers are committed to building and maintaining relationships through
20 time and this is done in order to ensure that learning is viewed as necessary with respect to
21 increasing the organization's capability and its market standing. Respondent C2 (electronics
22 company) indicated how this was achieved: "through the process of developing an
23 educational package to share information, and by explaining how the company's various
24 systems work and by holding regular meetings with staff in other companies, organizational
25 learning becomes common practice". This suggests that the externalization of knowledge at
26 the individual level and the organizational level is guided by clear strategic guidelines, which
27 allows individuals to use discursive consciousness to verify their understanding of the
28 directions given vis-a-vis delivering customer organization's specific requirements in a timely
29 manner.
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46 As regards managing B2B customer centred business relationships, it can be suggested that
47 there are some differences between the three companies in how they implement learning. For
48 example, the automobile company appears to have a structured approach but at the same time
49 allows some flexibility in terms of forecasting and planning whereas staff in the electronics
50 company appear to adopt a more formalized approach and place emphasis on contractual
51 obligations. As regards the construction company, it appears that a looser, more informal
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3 learning approach is in being as senior B2B marketing managers change/amend strategic
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5 direction in order to meet changes in customer requirements.
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13 14 6.2 Knowledge creation and creating customer value

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16 The governance mechanism in place provides guidelines so that business to business deals are
17
18 based on fulfilling contractual obligations. However, through personal bonding, a degree of
19
20 flexibility is evident and this allows staff to continually share information in order to solve
21
22 problems. Much attention is put into financial audits and maintaining quality standards, and
23
24 dealing with customer complaints. The organizational ethos is underpinned by trust based
25
26 relationships and a code of ethical practice.
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33 By reflecting on the above, the process of SECI in relation to sharing and developing
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35 knowledge in a B2B partnership context is dependent on an influential management style that
36
37 results in information and knowledge being shared within and between organizations. A clear
38
39 management style helps to establish and maintain collaborative trust, provides a basis for
40
41 individual staff to fine tune their own learning strategy vis-à-vis identifying their knowledge
42
43 and skill deficiencies (~~Joe and Shim, 2010;~~ McAuliffe *et al.*, 2019), and maintain their self-
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45 respect and personal reputation.
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51 With regards to the interactions associated with learning in the context of a B2B joint project
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53 team, an individual's contribution and behaviour is gauged in terms of the knowledge they
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55 have and the knowledge they bring back to their own organization from the partner
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57 organization (Jang and Ko, 2014). This is viewed as a reflection of how well an individual
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59 adjusts to a situational setting and demonstrates an individual's belongingness to a group ('in-
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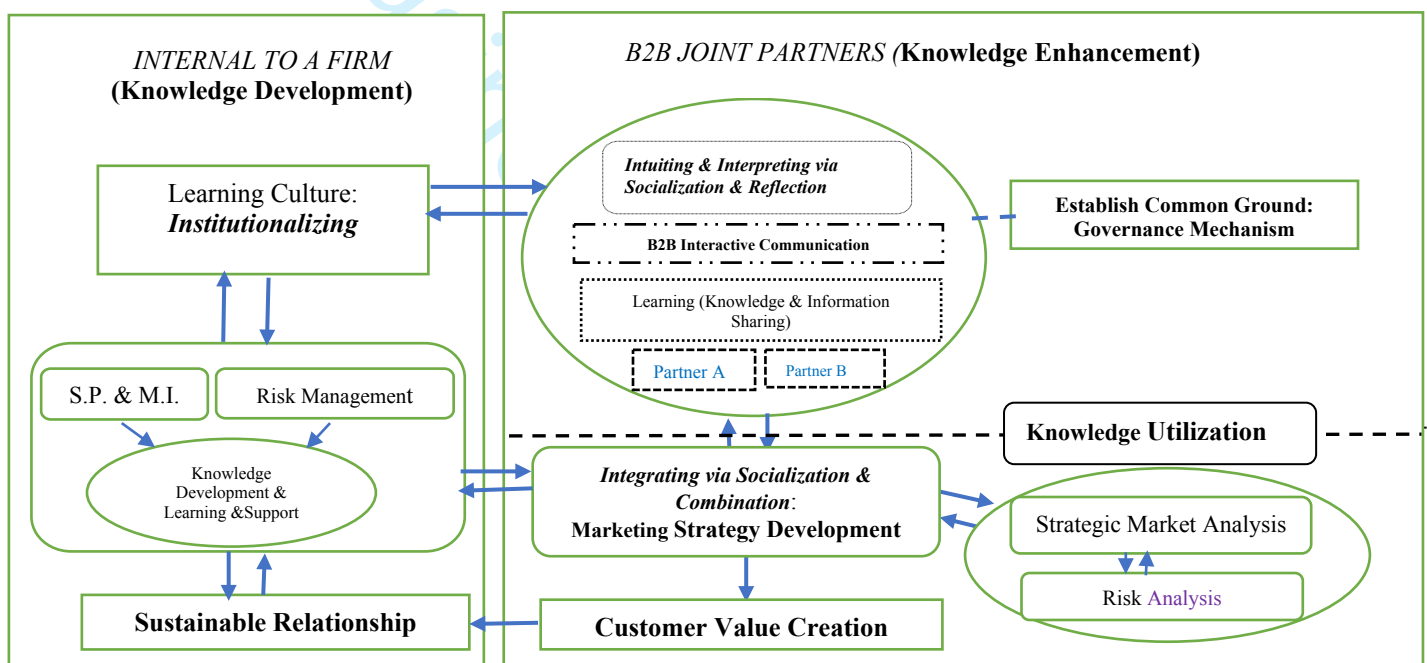
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3 group'), and is an indication of their trustworthiness as perceived by the group members
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5 (ALHussan *et al.*, 2017; Bendig *et al.*, 2018).
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10 Figure 3 is a conceptual representation of the B2B interactive communication and learning
11 process relating to a B2B partnership and has been derived from the findings. Figure 3
12 portrays the way in which new knowledge and customer value are created. In addition, it
13 shows that the organization's value system gives rise to learning, promotes interaction
14 between staff, and ensures that marketing intelligence (M.I.)(market-based knowledge) is
15 utilized in marketing strategy development. The objective is to increase the organization's
16 knowledge capability, which is done through reinforcing the need for information sharing,
17 education and training. Marketing research, forecasting and scenario planning (S.P.)
18 constitute strategic market analysis and are used to aid the marketing strategy process and
19 ensures that risk mitigation is at the heart of the planning process.
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35 With regards to formalizing ~~marketing intelligence~~MI, senior B2B marketing managers
36 appear to adopt an 'outward looking' and 'market-based' generative learning approach
37 (Morgan and Berthon, 2008). For example, staff in the automobile company work with a
38 formal ~~marketing intelligence~~MI system in order to ensure that new knowledge is adopted.
39
40 Evidence of this was provided by Respondent A3: "we analyze customer segments, demands
41 and trends, and filter information relating to competitors in order to meet market demand
42unmet needs". Two areas were highlighted: distribution networks and new product
43 development. In addition, reference was made to the necessity to undertake market research to
44 identify customer needs vis-à-vis embracing innovation to provide customer value. This is
45 evidence of the customer centred, market-driven approach. When problems do surface or
46 there is a conflict of interest, an influencer (internal or external) is identified to bring parties
47 together so that conflict is avoided. Staff in the construction company collect and analyze data
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on a continual basis, the objective being to establish costs, benchmark against competitors and monitor market trends so that latent/unmet needs are identified. Senior B2B marketing managers in the electronics company also analyze ~~marketing intelligence~~ MI and use it to benchmark against competitors, so that retaliatory tactics/strategies can be developed and embedded in the organization's marketing strategy.

Figure 3: The interactive B2B Communication process: sharing knowledge and creating customer value



Senior B2B marketing managers in all three companies are involved in managing and organizing ~~marketing intelligence~~ MI operations that are aimed at utilizing information and knowledge from outside the organization (Henard and McFadyen, 2005), and strengthening and elevating the organization's training programmes. This is evidence of the network approach to business development and shows that the various parties in the network are committed to mutual dependence (Waluszewski *et al.*, 2019). It can be suggested that all three companies make an effort to reduce the vulnerability associated with learning in the context of 'failure myopia' (Levinthal and March, 1993), by utilizing market-based knowledge and

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3 the information and knowledge gained from partner organizations through continually
4
5 evaluating outcomes (Murphy and Sashi, 2018). Through the process of interaction and
6
7 internalization, staff absorb and implement knowledge gained from partner organizations and
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10 thus improve the company's ~~marketing intelligence~~-MI capability, fine tune the customer
11
12 relationship management policy (Lee, 2004; Tuli *et al.*, 2007), and at the strategic level, senior
13
14 management ensure that a market orientation approach is implemented in a pro-active and
15
16 continual manner (Narver *et al.*, 2004). The emphasis on identifying market opportunities
17
18 through market analysis suggests that all three companies are market driven.
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24 The institutional learning approach to marketing strategy development can be divided into
25
26 two different learning activities that are interrelated and take into account how training and
27
28 education are used to update the skill and knowledge base of employees throughout the
29
30 partnership arrangement. Exchanging information is viewed as identifying and enhancing
31
32 “common-ground” in the context of knowledge development (Reiche *et al.*, 2009), which is
33
34 placed within a collectivist marketing strategy decision-making process. Agreeing common
35
36 ground allows B2B marketers to establish a governance mechanism as well as engage in joint
37
38 risk analysis. During the process of external knowledge gathering, emphasis is placed on
39
40 producing a marketing strategy that is co-owned by the parties involved. This supports the
41
42 view that the members of the partnership arrangement are both able and committed to turning
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44 tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and vice versa, due to the fact that they have formed
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46 emotional bonds that imbue respectful behaviour and harmonious working relationships.
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54 The reason why B2B marketing managers deploy the adaptive learning approach is to solve
55
56 problems quickly, hence they use the ‘generative learning’ (Morgan and Berthon, 2008)
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58 approach. As they work across different groups, they also need to know why the different
59
60 groups are unique and if individuals are willing to share information to help resolve a

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3 problem. The cooperation of staff is viewed from the perspective of an individual (informal)
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5 contributing to the strategic (formal) direction of organization. Hence, staff are encouraged to
6
7 embrace innovation in order to improve product quality and achieve cost reduction, as this is
8
9 perceived as providing mutual benefit.
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14 The process of turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge ~~in a B2B relationship context~~
15
16 is multi-faceted as it continuously involves intuiting and interpreting at an individual level
17
18 and a group level within the organization. B2B marketers go through reflection and
19
20 integrating so that there is constant forward feedback (to marketing strategists) as well as
21
22 feedback from the marketing strategy group to those involved in learning support as can be
23
24 seen in Figure 3. As regards ~~B2B~~ trustworthy relationship building vis-à-vis marketing
25
26 strategy development, the manner in which forward feedback is received and acted upon by
27
28 marketing strategists is important as it affects the marketing decisions made and results in
29
30 backward feedback, which is reflected on by those responsible for managing the learning
31
32 process. Through the process of informal and formal meetings that result in mutual trust,
33
34 flexible boundaries are established, and ~~This enables senior staff to identify~~ knowledge and
35
36 skill gaps are identified, ~~and ensure that training is provided so that the threat of learning~~
37
38 ~~myopia is reduced.~~
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46 6.3 A trustworthy learning environment

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48 As regards creating a trustworthy learning environment, reinforcing the organization's code of
49
50 conduct is viewed as reducing the possibility of making mistakes. Furthermore, emphasis is
51
52 placed on establishing how an individual's learning strategy helps reduce the gap between
53
54 temporal and spatial learning myopia (Levinthal and March, 1993). This is done by taking
55
56 into account the timeframe within which specific knowledge is to be acquired, ~~what is~~
57
58 ~~required in terms of specific knowledge~~ to meet short-term versus longer-term objectives, and
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3 having rules in place that help individuals make calculated risks by utilizing existing and
4
5 cross-boundary knowledge from an innovative perspective (Kleinschmidt *et al.*, 2007; Lee *et*
6
7 *al.*, 2017). For example, senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers in the automobile company view
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9 knowledge development from two perspectives: trust and confidence building vis-à-vis
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11 managing reliability of the firm's products/services.
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16 Senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers employed by the construction company view the learning
17
18 process as equipping them to “innovate in order to improve product quality, reduce cost and
19
20 keep prices down” (Respondent B2). This is viewed as achieving mutual dependence (Ritter
21
22 *et al.*, 2004), which is underpinned by a win-win mentality that is viewed as confidence and
23
24 trust building. In terms of the electronics company, senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers consider
25
26 that it is essential to socialize with people and learn how to share information relating to
27
28 existing and potential business problems. A strong emphasis is placed on individual learning
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30 and an individual's ability to “keep, maintain and update customer records” (Respondent C2);
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32 and to think through “customer requirements, to openly discuss problems relating to quality
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34 control, cost improvement, after sales service, and financial arrangements” (Respondent C4).
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42 *6.4 Interactive communication*

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44 The reader will note from Figure 3 that the B2B interactive communication process operates
45
46 within and between organizational layers and functions, and is ~~marketing intelligence-MI~~
47
48 driven. Emphasis is placed on building trust-based personal relationships between
49
50 organizational members and this is achieved through face to face communication (Lakshman
51
52 and Parente, 2008). The sharing of information is essential as it leads to a high level of
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54 customer support that ultimately enhances the organization's marketing strategy and the
55
56 implementation of localized knowledge (Fletcher *et al.*, 2013).
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3 Senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers in the automobile company are encouraged to take an active
4 interest in the achievements of partner organizations. This is to prevent psychological buffers
5 from being formed and to ensure as Respondent A5 explained, that “common interests are
6 identified that result in reliability between parties”. This helps individuals to fine tune their
7 own learning strategy (exploration) and contribute to achieving marketing/strategic objectives
8 (exploitation) (Levinthal and March, 1993). Marketing staff are required to monitor customer
9 demand and link this with trend analysis and financial analysis, and project forward to include
10 competitor action and potential retaliatory moves. ~~MI Marketing intelligence~~ is provided to
11 the global marketing team and is symbolic of providing or aiming to provide an enriched
12 customer experience (Ramaswamy, 2011). This is why senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers are
13 conditioned to adopt a holistic view of marketing planning and set realistic marketing
14 objectives ~~that can be attained~~.

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33 Senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers in the construction company are in frequent contact with
34 their peers and socialize after work with their subordinates. This is to create, as Respondent
35 B3 stated: “an atmosphere so that marketing managers in partner organizations develop
36 confidence to solve problems with people in the company”. The main benefits of this is that
37 staff establish a psychological bond that manifests in staff being highly loyal to the
38 organization, and staff are perceived as reliable with a futuristic outlook (~~Joe and Shim, 2010;~~
39 Afsar and Shahjenhan, 2018). A formal marketing strategy process is in being and staff that
40 perform well, are rewarded through promotion and increases in salary.

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53 Senior ~~B2B~~-marketing managers in the electronics company engage in open communication
54 and are intent on finding out why customers complain. This is due to a well defined customer
55 service policy that requires that customer expectations are monitored on a regular basis (Swart
56 and Kinnie, 2010) vis-à-vis developing and engaging in further innovative value creation
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(Murphy and Sashi, 2018). Respondent C3 stated that “employees were encouraged to behave in a correct manner and provide help to customers when necessary”. In order to remain customer focused, partner organizations are required to undertake regular audits and to integrate their marketing systems.

7. Managerial implications

~~There are a number of aspects that senior B2B marketing managers in overseas companies need to be aware of before they start to engage in relationship building with staff in Korean companies. Senior B2B marketing managers in Korean companies view time spent socializing with company staff and staff in partner organizations as necessary in terms of building relationships and establishing deficiencies. Eplace emphasis is placed on identifying problems before they occur and this approach is underpinned by a commitment to training and improving the skill base of employees. The utilization of knowledge is viewed as essential in terms of risk mitigation and meeting the strategic marketing objectives set. Hence, B2B marketers based in overseas companies need to develop an awareness of the emphasis placed on collecting and sharing marketing intelligence (market-based knowledge) vis-à-vis the marketing planning process. In addition, they need to embrace the market driven approach and up-date themselves on a regular basis by attending industry seminars and conferences.~~

8. Conclusions and further research

The paper addressed the knowledge sharing and utilization process, the emphasis being on market-based knowledge and how interactive communication provides a basis for a customer centred approach bearing in mind definable boundary conditions. The outcome suggests that senior marketing managers in the companies place emphasis on maintaining sustainable

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3 business relationships so that joint responsibility results in a speedy and less risk oriented
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5 approach to the market.
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10 The research findings from this study make clear that the knowledge development process is a
11 continuous cycle whereby senior B2B marketing managers and their staff interact, share
12 knowledge and information with staff in partner organizations in order to ensure that customer-
13 centred business relationships are sustained. When specific knowledge is not available in-house,
14 an individual is encouraged to gain such knowledge from external sources or to utilize existing
15 marketing intelligence. At group level, emphasis is placed on the integration of knowledge into
16 the strategic marketing planning and implementation process, and key individuals are accepted
17 into the decision-making process (in-group) that are known to be influential because of their
18 intuiting and interpreting skills.
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33 The knowledge gained is used to influence behaviour (Hult *et al.*, 2003) and in turn new
34 knowledge is created that improves the marketing planning process and ultimately results in
35 products and services that enrich the customer experience (Ramaswamy, 2011). This suggests
36 that relationship building with partner organizations should be viewed from the perspective of
37 a value network (Ritter *et al.*, 2004). ~~It should be noted that an individual is evaluated
38 according to their performance but an individual should not be evaluated independently of the
39 'main' group that they are associated with. This is because as Turner (2000) suggests, social
40 structure is known to play an influential role within an organization. Hence, the peer group
41 decision-making process assumes dominance over the individual decision-making process.~~
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55 As regards a follow-up study, ~~we acknowledge that when researching dynamic capabilities
56 and their relationships,~~ research can be undertaken in the area of how learning in a B2B
57 partnership is influenced by specific types of interaction and how this contributes to
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3 knowledge accumulation. ~~Such research would~~ ~~This can be viewed as relevant because it~~
4 ~~should be possible to~~ make a distinction between exploration and exploitation and ~~how a~~
5 ~~balance is arrived at. It would, we assert, be useful to include in a future study, the per~~include
6 the perspectives of senior B2B marketing managers based in partner organizations thus
7 providing additional insights into ~~so that a multi-perspective view of the~~ relationship building
8 proces can be established.

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17 ~~The logic of this is that it would allow insights to be provided into how~~
18 ~~information/knowledge sharing and interaction manifests in the development of new~~
19 ~~knowledge, and how an international marketing strategy is devised and implemented that~~
20 ~~incorporates the concept of mutuality.~~

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37 of the paper for their highly informative comments and guidance.
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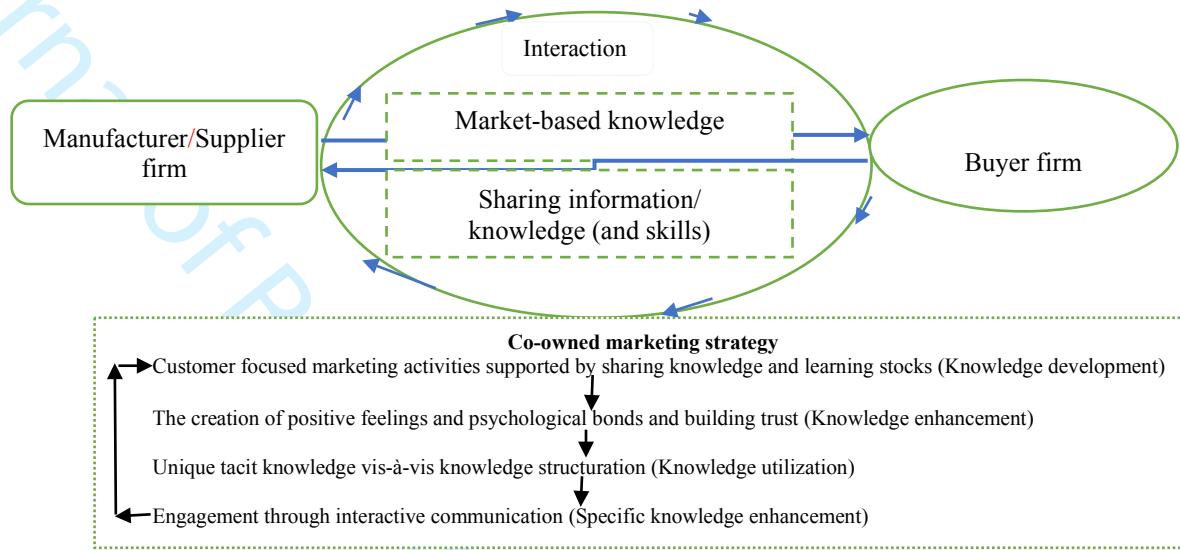
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Figure 1: Conceptual framework: inter-company interaction and the development of marketing strategy



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Table I: Second and third order themes

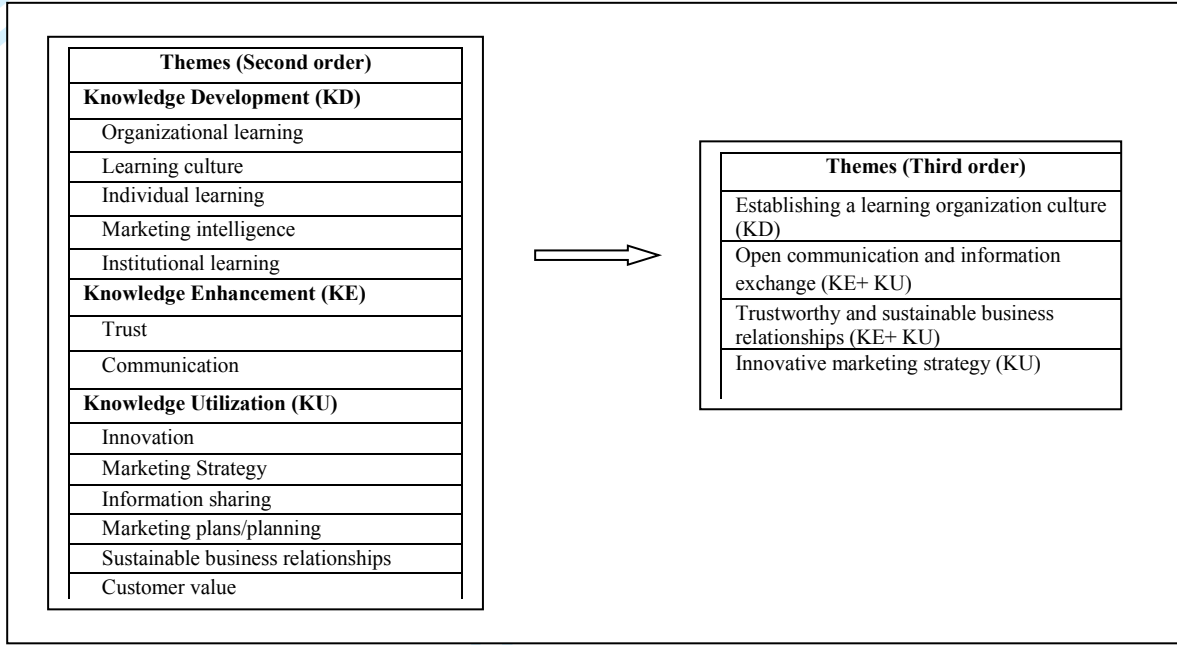


Table II: Propositions and Research Findings

Propositions	Automobile company	Construction company	Electronics company
P1. In order to encourage knowledge development, it is important to establish a clear organizational structure as this facilitates information sharing and promotes learning activities.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning to produce an organizational value system that is accepted by employees and staff in partner organizations. Information flows are monitored and forecasting and scenario planning are used to ensure that the organization responds to a strategic need.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning to produce organizational relationships that facilitate communication and result in knowledge based relationships being developed. The win-win concept is adhered to and managers are sensitive to market demands and embrace innovation to achieve organizational goals.	Management have a clear commitment to use learning in order to share knowledge both internally and with staff based in partner organizations. Technical support, relevant documentation and project management are used and contractual relations are maintained.
P2. Establishing trust in learning creates positive feelings and psychological bonds among marketing staff that influences communication and information/knowledge sharing and results in knowledge enhancement.	By being viewed as trustworthy and confident, senior B2B marketing managers develop a proactive marketing management logic that results in a diplomatic style of leadership. This is achieved through transformational change and the organization adapting to the environment.	A win-win mentality is in place that is viewed as confidence building and is aimed at encouraging innovative thinking to produce a hybrid organizational culture. Various learning activities are undertaken that result in managing change. Risk taking is encouraged and helps to transform thinking so that new management practices evolve.	Personal achievements at work and the ability to socialize are considered important, and so is the ability to maintain customer records and to think through customer requirements. Seminars and workshops are used to instil the fact that the organization has to compete in the market. By adopting a transparent process, effective management systems are developed.
P3. Knowledge structuration that is based on an individual's unique tacit knowledge gained through the process of turning explicit knowledge into sophisticated knowledge and vice versa influences marketing strategy development.	A formal marketing intelligence system is in place that monitors and assesses customer demand and filters information relating to the actions of competitors. Various studies are carried out to gauge a partner company's financial position and checks are made regarding the quality of their products and the motivation the of staff. Scenarios are devised and used in training sessions.	Marketing research is used to provide insights into how to produce innovative products and deploy an innovative marketing strategy. Staff are required to place much emphasis on monitoring and evaluating product performance and financial performance, and benchmarking against competitors is carried out continuously.	There is continual observation of human resource management needs and the facilities of suppliers. There are medium term and long term risk management strategies in place and an appropriate risk mitigation strategy is in being.

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<p>P4. A flexible approach to information/knowledge sharing results in knowledge enhancement and mutual benefits that increase the organization's capability.</p>	<p>Both a formal and informal process of communication is used to reduce organizational boundaries, and ensure that the continual sharing of information allows trustworthy relationships to develop. An integrated marketing strategy is in existence which is underpinned by a clearly defined set of marketing values. Senior B2B marketing managers adopt a holistic view of marketing planning and set realistic marketing objectives that are measurable.</p>	<p>Frequent contact and socializing after work are known to instil loyalty and produce a futuristic outlook. The concept of mutuality is embraced and is continually reinforced by top management who promote cooperative behaviour and objective, group decision-making. A formal marketing strategy process is in being and staff that perform well are rewarded through promotion and increases in salary.</p>	<p>Staff communicate openly and take customer complaints seriously. The concept of mutuality is adhered to and an integrated marketing strategy has the benefit of requiring staff in partner organizations to conduct regular audits. An integrated marketing system has the objective of integrating purchasing and product development, sales management and customer service. Attention is given to educating B2B marketing managers and successful marketing managers are provided with additional incentives.</p>
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Figure 3: The interactive B2B Communication process: sharing knowledge and creating customer value

