

Analysis of the Category of Researches on Marketing Force Synergy*

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Abstract The paper proposes the concept of marketing force synergy, analyses its characteristics, defines the basic categories of it , and puts forward the three-level framework of the marketing force synergy units. It demonstrates the relationship among the necessary conditions, the sufficient conditions and the stable conditions of marketing force synergy. And it also discusses the constituting factors of the marketing force synergy interface and analyzes the synergy mode of the marketing force from the two dimensions, i.e. synergy behavior mode and synergy process.

Key words marketing force, synergy units, synergy conditions, synergy interface, synergy modes

1 Introduction

Marketing force, which was proposed in the 1990s, as an enterprise capability that can create competitive advantages for the enterprises, has attracted the extensive attention by the businesses and the scholars. In the aspects of concept, composition and evaluation of marketing force, it has achieved certain achievements. But in the aspects of marketing force management, especially how to confect various sub marketing forces effectively to enable the limited resources to play the major role, how to reduce the internal friction among the various sub marketing forces and how to make all sub forces interact, coordinate and collaborate in a certain way thereby allowing the overall system function doubled or amplified, it is still an empty area. Under this situation, the research subject is proposed. I hope that the paper can enrich the marketing force management theories and give guidance to enterprises' operation activities.

2 The Concept and Characteristic of Marketing Force Synergy

Marketing force synergy refers to marketing force management process and method that in some critical condition, the main body of marketing applies the theory of synergy to integrate the sub forces (sub systems), constituting the marketing force and make the sub force work on each other and cooperate with each other, then producing the order parameter of the entire system, which leads the self-organizing system into an orderly situation from disorder, or from an orderly status to a more orderly status, finally the function of the entire system is doubled or amplified. The marketing force synergy has the following characteristic:

(1) Targeted. The goal of marketing force synergy is very explicit, and the internal goal is to realize cooperation between the synergy units of marketing force, to produce the order parameter that dominants the development of marketing force system and make the system in order and stabilized. Then the function of the system is increased and the synergetic effect of $2+2>4$ is realized. The external objective is to gain competitive advantage. Internal goal's success is the foundation of realizing the external objective; the external objective is result of the internal goal on the marketing level.

(2) Gradualness. The formation of a synergetic effect of the marketing force is a long-term process. To achieve the final synergy goal needs the enterprise to study continuously in the practice with the consideration of both its actual situation and the market condition. It is a course that transforms from disorder to an orderly status or from an orderly status to a more orderly state. The entire process showed that the formation of marketing force synergy is gradual and circulating process.

(3) Nonlinear. If the company hopes to realize the synergetic effect inside the marketing force system and gain the competitive advantage outside, there must be a strong cooperative relation among the synergy units of the marketing forces. It is not a simple addition of the function of each unit, but reflected on the rich levels and intersections^[1].

(4) Dynamic. The marketing force is formed in a certain period and under a certain competition environment. It can bring the competitive advantage to the enterprise within only a certain period. With the lapse of time, the original marketing force of the enterprise will gradually weaken even disappear. Therefore, the synergy units of marketing force must carry on the innovation of synergy mode according to the changed environment.

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(5) Domination. The main body of marketing integrates the marketing sub-forces, makes sub-units interactive with each other, and optimizes the combination of each sub-unit to generate the order parameter, which leads the entire marketing force system from disorder to a state of order, or a more orderly state.

(6) Endogeneity. Marketing force synergy is an intrinsic conversion process during which the optimal resource allocation and cooperation of the units transform to synergetic effects and competitive advantage. Marketing force synergy, which reflects the subjective initiative of the main body of marketing, takes the resources and conditions that the enterprises own as a foundation, and proceeds on the basis of the enterprises' internal force.

3 The Basic Category of Marketing Force Synergy

Based on the resources and facing the competition, marketing force is a composition of forces which is employed by the enterprises to effectively integrate its inside and outside resources, and to optimize and efficiently utilize the resources on the marketing level and have it strengthened and enhanced in the dynamic environment, finally turn it into enterprise competitiveness. The enterprises rely on the competitiveness to acquire the competitive advantage, supporting the enterprises' sustainable development^[2]. From the definitions of marketing force and marketing force synergy, we can see that the category of marketing force synergy includes main body of marketing force synergy, synergy objects, synergy units, synergy conditions, synergy interfaces and synergy modes. The analysis of basic category of marketing force synergy (synergy units, synergy conditions, synergy interfaces and synergy mode) are the foundation of research on marketing force synergy systematically.

3.1 Synergy Units of Marketing Force

Synergy units of marketing force are the basic units which compose synergies or the cooperative relationship. Namely the subsystems constituting the marketing force system, including the culture force unit, product force unit, price force unit, sales force unit, channel force unit, brand force unit and implementation force unit (different scholars have different opinions on the structure of marketing force, the paper is based on the seven elements theory). The seven synergy units of marketing force can be divided into three levels (figure 1), i.e. the core system, the dominant system and the supporting system. The culture force unit is the core of composing the synergy units of marketing force. It is not only a high-point in the market competition, but also plays an important role in the formation of other forces and the action of their functions. The product force unit, the price force units, the sales force units, the channel force unit, the brand force unit are the dominant forces of the marketing force synergy system, and the basic sub-forces which plays a major role in the formation of the system. The implementation force unit is invisible but it is the supporting strength of the system. It maintains and enhances the core unit and the dominant force units.

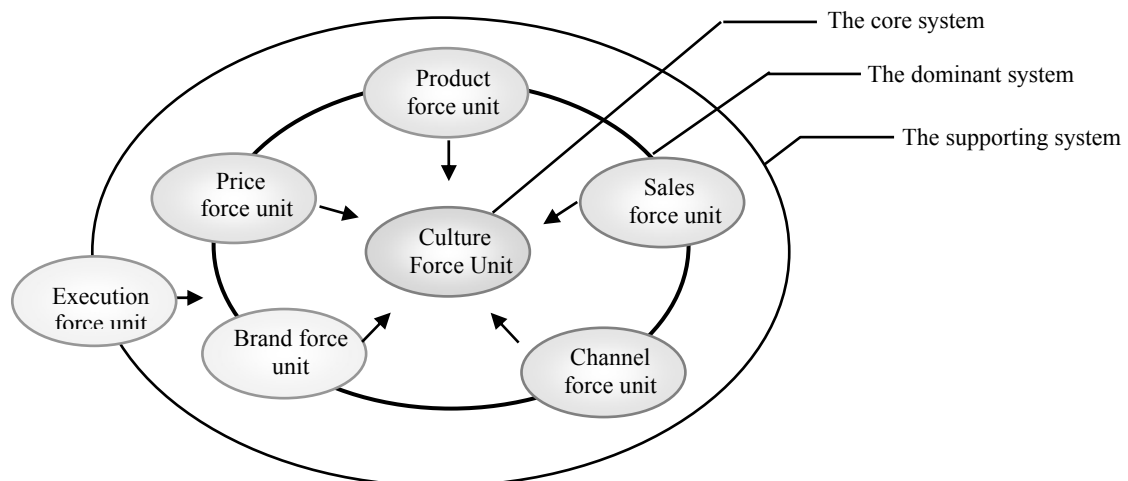


Figure 1 The Three-level Framework of Marketing Force Synergy Units

The understanding of the synergy units of the marketing force is the basis of making the marketing force system produce synergetic effect. The synergy units usually consist of three parts: the unit task, the person or organization completing the unit task, and the corresponding resources. Therefore, a synergy

unit is a set function and the three components are multi-dimensional. A unit can be composed of a number of tasks, a number of people or more than two sectors and a number of resources. A unit is different in different enterprises and at different time. The synergy unit of the marketing force can be denoted as follow:

$$X = \{f_1(x, t), f_2(x, t), f_3(x, t)\}$$

x — represents a certain synergy unit

t — represents time

$f_1(x, t)$ — represents the unit task;

$f_2(x, t)$ — represents the person or organization completing the unit task;

$f_3(x, t)$ — represents the corresponding resources

Take product force unit of company S for an example, the product force unit is denoted as follow:

$$P = \{f_1(p, t_1), f_2(p, t_1), f_3(p, t_1)\}$$

$f_1(p, t_1) = \{\text{produce according to the quality and quantity demand, cooperate with other sectors to arrange production, } \dots\};$

$f_2(p, t_1) = \{\text{employer A, B, product design sector, } \dots\};$

$f_3(p, t_1) = \{\text{ten computers, a certain technology, expense of RMB 10,000 per month, } \dots\}.$

3.2 Synergy Conditions of Marketing Force

Synergy conditions of marketing force refers to the precondition and foundation for the synergy that comes from the interaction between the various sub-units of marketing force, or a new orderly state formed through their mutually synergy interactions under specific situation. The conditions of marketing synergy include the necessary and sufficient conditions, and the stabilizing conditions of marketing force synergy. The necessary condition refers to the essential conditions that synergy units of marketing force cooperate mutually, to realize the internal and external goal of marketing force synergy system. The sufficient condition refers to the direct factor of the cooperative effect after synergy units of marketing force cooperate mutually; it is the value condition of marketing force synergy. The stabilizing condition refers to the condition that guarantees that the cooperative system operates steadily, and eliminates randomness and the fortuitous after synergy units of marketing force has the cooperative effect. The correlation of the necessary condition, the sufficient condition and stabilizing condition is shown in the following Figure 2:

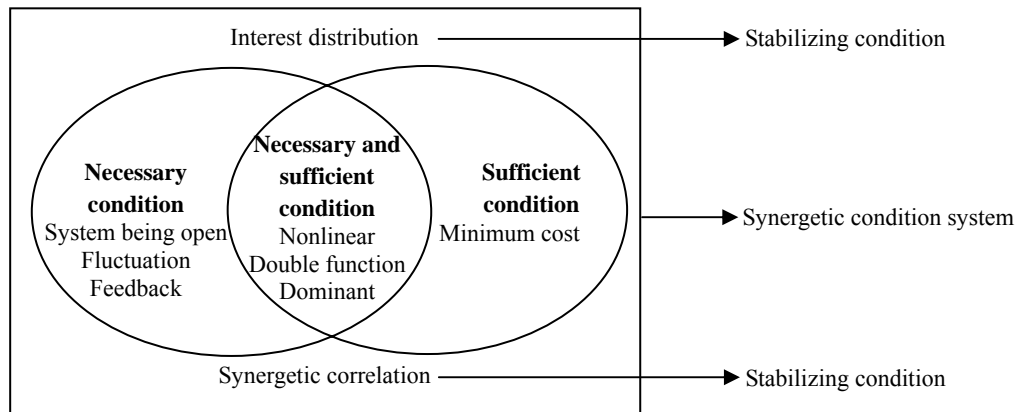


Figure 2 The Correlation of the Synergy Conditions of Marketing Force

(1) System being open. It refers to that there are exchanges of marketing material (e.g. marketing equipment or technology), energy (e.g. management innovation) and information (e.g. marketing intelligence) between the marketing force system and the external environment and among the synergy units so it can provide marketing force system with the self-organization capacity and to offset the tendency of disorder in the system.

(2) Fluctuation. It refers to that the exchange between the marketing force system and the external environment and the coordination among the synergy units will make the system fluctuate (e.g. marketing Opportunity and threat). And certain small warps (e.g. using price strategy by mistake) will lead to the obvious change in the system, which is reflected in continuous fluctuations. Occasional dominant forces will determine the direction of the system evolution, becoming the driving force for the synergetic evolution of the system.

(3) Feedback. It needs a process to make the units of marketing force become synergetic. During the process synergetic effect forges, becomes stabilized, and gets further developed. Achieving a stable synergetic effect requires feedbacks from both the positive and the negative side. Marketing force synergy is a dynamic process. The feedback from the two sides can make the synergy process keep the given objective and eliminate the randomness and the chanciness, making results of the synergy behavior an inevitable outcome.

(4) Nonlinear. It reflects the basic principle of the mutual function between the synergy units. The rich levels (e.g. synergy between different levels) and cross-causality among the synergy units allow the marketing system to break through the linear increase and to realize the function of the entire system. It is the result of input and output of information and energy, also the cause of marketing system fluctuation^[3].

(5) Doubled function. It refers to that marketing force units coordinate with each other and achieve matching with or compensating each other, and then changes the permutation and combination of marketing force units to make the function of the entire system greater than the aggregate effect of every marketing unit, and finally realizes the synergetic effect.

(6) Dominant condition. It refers to that through mutual coordination, the synergy units produce the order parameter (e.g. marketing integration), which dominates the entire system to an orderly ideal situation.

(7) Minimum cost. The synergetic function of the synergy units reduces the separation and friction between the units, thereby making the cost minimum.

(8) Synergic correlation. It is the synergic level between the units of the marketing force system. The synergy degree directly determines the orderly degree of the system and degree of synergetic objective attainability.

(9) The interest distribution. It refers to the interest distribution to each unit should be in direct ratio with its contribution.

3.3 Synergy Interfaces of Marketing Force

Marketing force synergy interface refers to aggregate of substance, information, energy exchange and the sum of interactions and the interacting process between the marketing system and environment, occurring among the seven units that constitute the marketing force synergy. Marketing force synergy interface is the foundation for the formation and development of a synergy relation.

Marketing force synergy system is composed of seven synergy units (sub-systems). The nonlinear exchange of substance, information among the seven subsystems leads to the synergetic effect which doubles the function of the system. We take the product force unit—channel force unit interface as an example. In Figure 3, $f_1(x, t)$ is denoted the task, $f_2(x, t)$ the human resource or organization in charge of the task, $f_3(x, t)$ the resource. Product force unit $\{f_1(p, t), f_2(p, t), f_3(p, t)\}$ constitutes a face PF, channel force unit $\{f_1(m, t), f_2(m, t), f_3(m, t)\}$ constitutes another face MF. Thereafter, the management of the work division, material and information flow is transformed to management of the interaction of the two faces. The interaction of task flow, relation flow and resource flow between face PF and face MF makes an interface (the interface produced by the interaction of two units is named sub interface). In a word, the management of the two units becomes the management of the interface.

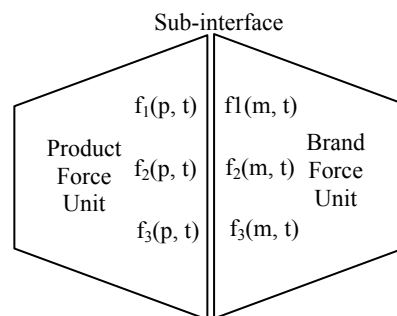


Figure 3 Product Force-Brand Force Synergy Sub-interface

For example, it delivers the needs of product package through the interaction between $f_3(m, t)$ and $f_3(p, t)$. The management of the interface between the two units reflects on two aspects. Firstly, it accelerates the exposure of new product to the customer, which can be realized because the synergetic

management of the interface encourages the channel system to develop from a pyramid pattern to a flat pattern, namely shortened the distribution channels. Secondly, it adopts a strategy to enlarge the scope that the customer can get access to products. The synergetic management of the interface increases customers' opportunities of directly contact with the products, meanwhile decreases the distance and cost that customers spend on bringing the product home, increases customer delivered value and promotes sales.

Each unit should have its own basic interfaces $f_1(x, t)$, $f_2(x, t)$, $f_3(x, t)$ and form a face. Then the work division and coordination among the synergy units and the synergetic effect will be realized through management of the seven faces. The marketing system is an open system; the seven faces exchange the materials, energy and information with the external environment while they interact with each other. Therefore the seven faces of the synergy unit interact with the face of external environment, thereby forming an interface, i.e. the marketing force synergy interface, theoretically the marketing force synergy interface has $C_7^2=21$ sub-interfaces (Figure 3). The management of marketing force will be transformed to the management of the interface. (Figure 4). For example, when the enterprises stay in the growth period, one important task is to enhance the publicity of brand, therefore, it can be achieved through the management of the synergy interfaces of marketing force (the synergy between brand unit and other six units is synchronized in the time and space):

(1) The synergy of the brand unit and the product unit.

The $f_2(q, t)$ of the brand unit Q will transfer the information of the product quality to the product unit P (the product unit may also be active), the product unit P by the way of improving product packaging, quality, service and other aspects promotes the brand force, thereby enhancing the brand competitiveness of the whole Company.

(2) The synergy of the brand unit and the channel unit.

The $f_2(q, t)$ of the brand force unit Q will deliver its request to the channel force unit (the channel unit may also be active), the channel force unit, through the cooperation with other channel members, asks them to promote and display the company brands in order to expand product awareness. In addition it makes sure that the facilities, abilities and styles of the sales channels are consistent with the company brand image, work standards are unified and brand reputation gets enhanced, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the company brand.

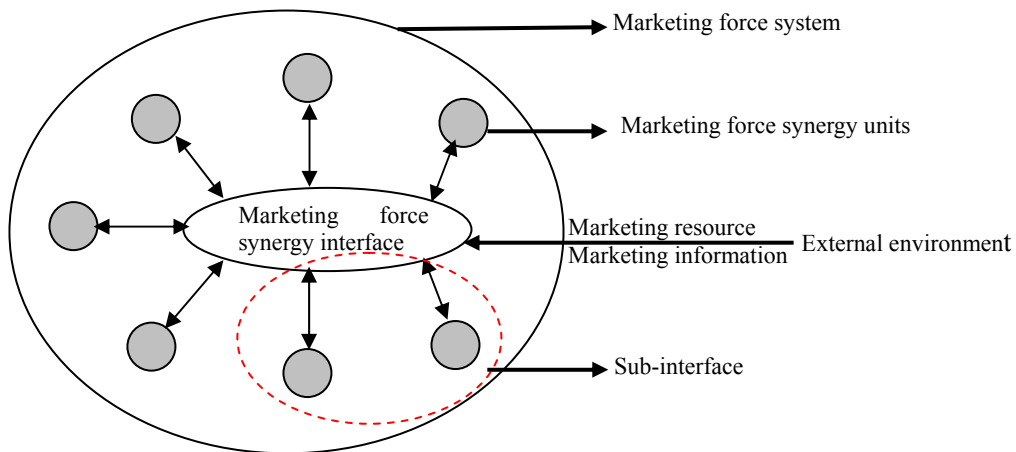


Figure 4 Synergy Interface of Marketing Force

3.4 Synergy Mode of Marketing Force

The modes of marketing force synergy means that on the basis of a clear systematic objective, the synergy effect produced by the marketing force system is the sum of the correlating ways between the units and between the units and the external environment. It reflects not only the interactions between the marketing force system and the external environment in terms of the material, energy and information. Meanwhile, it is also the path and method of realizing the synergetic effect. In the process of producing synergetic effects, though the synergetic relations are complex, we can carry on analysis from the aspects of synergetic behavior mode and the formation process of synergy.

(1) The behavior mode of marketing force synergy

The behavior mode of marketing force synergy not only reflects the synergy objective among the synergy units, but also reflects the behavior modes among the units. The synergy modes between the synergy units include two modes: compensating mode and competition-cooperation mode. Complement mode refers to in the synergy process, the advantage of a certain unit match the disadvantage of the other unit, it compensate each one's inadequacy of structure or function, thereby realizing the advantage complement and achieving the systematic objective. Competition-cooperation mode refers to units develop a competitive-cooperative relation, under the condition of making sure the systematic objective attainable. The units inspire and restrict each other. It promotes the reasonable flow of resource inside the system; meanwhile this kind of synergy behavior can benefit each other.

(2) The formation process of marketing force synergy

On the identification of the synergy mode, Professor Haken, the founder of synergy theory, put forward an important view, i.e. the mode-identification course is the course that the mode forms, on the basis of a description about Structure principle of synergy mode identification. The formation process of a systematic mode is as follow. Setting the initial state as part of the subsystem is orderly, the order parameter affiliated to the subsystem prevails over competition and dominates the whole system and leads it to a specific orderly state, finally finishing the macroscopically qualitative change of the system. From Professor Haken's description, it can be drawn the identification process of marketing force synergy mode is the formation process. Under an unstable state, the marketing force system is influenced by a series of parameters. They competes with each other, but only the most powerful parameter finally overwhelming other parameters is the order parameter It dominates the entire system to realize self-organization, thereby reaching a new orderly state from the disorderly state and producing new time structure, space structure or function structure that cause the system to produce the overall function greater than the sum of single synergistic effect produced by each unit. The synergy mode of marketing force is the aggregate interactions among the units while the marketing system produces the synergistic effect

4 Conclusions

Marketing force synergy is a new area for researchers. On the basis of previous studies on marketing force management, the author put forward the concept of the marketing force synergy, i.e. the marketing force system stays under a reforming or critical condition, the main body of marketing applies the theory of synergy to integrate the sub force (sub system), constituting the marketing force and make the sub force work on each other and cooperate with each other, then producing the order parameter of the entire system, which leads the self-organizing system into an orderly situation from disorder, or from an orderly status to a more orderly status, finally the function of the entire system is doubled. The paper holds that the discussion of the basic category of the marketing force synergy is the foundation and precondition of systematic research on the marketing force synergy. The basic category of marketing force synergy includes four parts, i.e. the synergy condition, synergy unit, synergy interface and synergy mode. The synergetic effect of the marketing force system is the consequence of interactions of the four parts, of which the nature and structure of synergy unit, determining the action and organization of the synergetic relation, is the foundation of the synergetic relation; the synergy condition is the precondition to synergetic correlation; synergy interface is process and standards of selection and optimization of synergetic effect; synergy mode, which is the result of optimization, is the sum of synergetic correlations produced by the synergy units.

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