Strategy Execution Act:
Channelizing Strategy Execution Operations into Actions

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Abstract:
Abstract: There have been studies that point out key issues in people management to convert strategy execution operations and processes into the actions and finally into the results. However, there is a lack of frameworks to demonstrate linkages among people related issues in the context of strategy execution. This study extends the 'Act' perspective to investigate strategy execution and develop a framework of 'strategy execution act'. The existing studies have predominantly been conducted on firms operating in matured market. Therefore, a study on the firms operation in emerging market such India adds value to the existing literature. The study adopts multi-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative techniques. The proposed framework explains managerial implications in terms of channelizing strategy execution operations into actions and results.

Keywords: strategy execution operations, strategy process, strategy execution Act

Strategy Execution Act: Channelizing Strategy Execution Operations into Actions

Introduction

The literature of strategic management has been focusing on finding new thrusts areas to formulate effective strategy according to changing business environment. However, at the same time, the scholars found that many of the firms fail because of poor execution of a stated strategy (Bossidy and Charan, 2002; Hrebiniak, 2006). Both the scholars and the practitioners have realized that a sound strategy is not enough for superior firm performance and effective strategy execution is as important as effective strategy formulation (Galpin, 1998; Neilson, et al., 2008; Martin, 2010). The research studies since last decade started addressing this critical issue by reflecting on different aspects of strategy execution. However, a lack of strategy execution frameworks was one of the most important reasons of execution failure (Hrebiniak, 2008). The current research on strategy execution tries to fill this gap by developing integrated frameworks of strategy execution (Higgins, 2005; Hrebiniak, 2006; Sull, 2007; Kaplan and Norton, 2008; Srivastava and Sushil, 2014, 2015). These frameworks manifest different perspectives of strategy execution ranging from align to adapt. The 'Align' perspective has been the most fundamental where scholars suggest effective alignment of organization design with strategy to ensure smooth execution (Gupta and Govindarajan, 1984; Giles, 1991; Higgins, 2005; Srivastava and Sushil, 2016). The 'Adapt' perspective of strategy execution focuses on effective change management, as strategic shift by a firm may requires significant change in structure, systems, and processes to ensure effective execution (Adler, 1988; Volberda, 1997; Sushil, 2005a; Ortenblad, 2004; Srivastava and Sushil, 2014). In addition, there are 'Automate' and 'Act' perspectives of strategy execution. The 'Automate' perspectives by taking approach stresses on fine-tuning the organizational and the information systems for effective execution of a given strategy (Kaplan and Norton, 1996; Ittner and Larcker, 1998; Higgins, 2005; Zheng et al. 2010; Mathrani et al. 2013; Srivastava and Sushil, 2015). The 'Act' perspective underlines the people management aspects of execution. The 'Strategy Execution Act' (SEA) channelizes the operations and suggests action plan for execution. A casual approach to SEA is one of the key barriers in effective execution of a given strategy (Giles 1991; Grover *et al.* 1995; Srivastava and Sushil, 2014).

There have been studies that point out key issues in people management to convert execution operations and processes into the actions and finally into the results (Peng and Litteljohn 2001; Raperta *et al.* 2002; Miller et al. 2004; Martin 2010). However, there is a lack of frameworks to demonstrate linkages among people related issues in the context of strategy execution (Hrebiniak, 2006; Kaplan and Norton, 2008; Srivastava and Sushil, 14, 2015). This study extends the 'Act' perspective to investigate strategy execution. The research objective of the study is to identify key factors of 'Strategy Execution Act' (SEA) and develop a model of SEA demonstrating linkages among the identified factors. The existing studies on strategy execution are predominantly conducted on firms operating in matured market. Therefore, a study on the firms operation in emerging market such India is expected to add value to the existing literature. After stating the research objective and presenting literature review, this paper explains the research design adopting a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Subsequently, paper explains the factor identification and development of a structural hierarchical relationship among the factors. Finally, the paper proposes a model of SEA and explains managerial implications in terms of channelizing strategy execution

operations into actions and results. The paper concludes with the contribution, the limitations, and direction for future research.

Research Objective

As discussed above, one of the key gaps in the existing literature is strategy execution frameworks, especially in the context of firm operating in emerging markets. A framework development requires research investigations at two level. The researchers should first identify important factors of a macro-construct such as SEA in this study. Subsequently, causal linkages among the factors should be established demonstrating theoretical and managerial implications. As pointed out earlier, the existing literature points out key SEA factors such as execution leadership and performance orientation, however, their inter-linkages are yet to be established. In this context, this study tries to address following research questions:

1. What are the key factors of 'SEA' that facilitate effective strategy execution?
2. How these factors are linked with each other?
3. What is the empirical validity of the inter-linkages among these factors?

Addressing these research questions led to the research objective of this study as:

- To develop a model of 'SEA' for effective strategy execution.

Literature Review

This study tries to address, to some extent, research question 1 and 2 through literature review. We have searched scholarly articles databases such as EBSCO, Science Direct, ProQuest, and Google Scholar to identify relevant research studies with search terms, used independently or in combination – strategy execution act, human resource management, strategy, execution, implementation, and framework. We continued the exercise to identify additional articles using the reference section of the retrieved articles. As a final selection criterion, we selected an articles if has at least 10 citations on Google Scholar as on May 31, 2016. In addition to that, we have also included the relevant articles of last three years, which may not have 10 citation. Google Scholar citation is used as criteria to select the articles because it results in more comprehensive coverage in the area of management than Thomson-ISI (Kousha and Thelwall, 2007; Moussa and Touzani, 2010). Google Scholar also computes citation over a longer timeframe, therefore, resolves the problem that ISI's 2-year time period is too short, especially for slow response disciplines (Harzing and Wal, 2008). The literature review starts with discussion on SEA aspects of strategy execution and role of SEA in channelizing operations into actions through people management. The subsequent sub-sections of literature review highlight each proposed factors of SEA in the context of strategy execution.

Strategy Execution Act: Channelizing Operations into Actions

The literature highlights that the extent of strategy execution problems differentiates high-success firms with the low-success firms (Alexander, 1985). The high-success firms prevent execution problems to occur and, on the other hand, they take quick actions to address execution problems if occur. Existing studies point out that people management is one of the most troubled areas as far as success rate of strategy execution is concern. This study defines 'Strategy Execution Act' (SEA) as the people management practices and processes that

channelize the operations of strategy execution into the execution actions. For example, execution leadership (Lepsinger, 2006; Martin, 2010) and communication & coordination (Miller *et al*., 1997; Harrington, 2006), as people management practices, play a crucial role to convert the execution operations into the actions. Scholars have observed that merely resolving challenges related to technological systems and competence may not necessarily improve performance outcomes (Giles, 1991). Furthermore, avoiding or neglecting SEA aspects such as reward & motivation and performance orientation will possibly damage strategic results (Grover *el al*., 1995). This study proposes seven factors of SEA - execution leadership (AC_1); performance orientation (AC_2); communication and coordination (AC_3); innovation (AC_4); reward and motivation (AC_5); review and reflection (AC_6) and corporate culture (AC_7). Table 1 presents literature highlights of each factors. Based on literature review and inputs from corporate practitioners, this study further operationalizes each factors in terms of measures and develops a standardized questionnaire for primary data collection. Following sub-sections briefly review each factors.

Table 1: Factors of SEA and Important Highlights of Literature

Execution Leadership (AC_1)
The execution leadership focuses not only the strategic intent but also clarifies operations and processes of strategy execution. Therefore, senior management demonstrates execution leadership when they support and involve execution processes and activities at different levels. The execution leadership is also reflected when they empower middle and lower management to contribute effectively; provide compelling vision and directions to managers and employees; and providing clearly measurable objectives and outcomes (Dutton *et al*., 1993; Beer and Eisenstat, 2000). For example, as pointed out by Floyd and Wooldridge (1992), middle managers often seeks direction from top management, however, more often than not they find themselves better off to initiate execution action plan. Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) also point out a lack of consensus between top and middle managers, which hurts the execution actions and results. Therefore, it is necessary that top managers demonstrate execution leadership and communicate clearly to middle managers the strategic direction, strategic goals, and measurable strategic outcomes (Westley, 1990; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). The execution leadership is critical to motivate employees to convert the strategic objectives into the execution outcomes. We have identified some of the some of the operational measures of execution leadership as - top management support and active involvement in execution; leaders clarify execution initiative at different levels; leaders provide compelling vision and direction to employees; and leaders provide measurable objectives and outcomes to employees.

Performance Orientation (AC_2)
The management interventions ultimately aim to instil performance orientation among employees and managers. A performance orientation among employees and managers helps in translating strategic intent into operations and processes and finally, into the actions. Execution activities suffer when they lack support and commitment from majority of employees (Alexander, 1985). Such lack of support and commitment from employees reflects lack of performance orientation. Scholars points out role of a leader to nurture performance orientation in the organization (Bossidy and Charan, 2002). The core objective of employees' involvement, consensus building, etc. is to develop the performance orientation in the organization (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1992a; Breene *et al*., 2007). Many scholars have pointed out the role of communication & coordination, reviews & reflection, etc. to develop performance orientation (Martin, 2010). The operational measures of performance orientation identified are

- employees are enthusiastic to achieve set targets; employees have a sense of urgency on completing their tasks; employees consider performance more important than relationships; employees properly follow policies; and employees have high commitment to outcomes.

Communication and Coordination (AC₃)

Literature found that the Communication and coordination is the most frequent facilitator as well as barrier of strategy execution (Alexander, 1985). It is argued that the strategic direction and deliverables should be communicated appropriately to all the employees and managers involved in the execution of a given strategy (Reeda and Buckley, 1988; Qi, 2005). Communication and coordination is present at every levels of strategy execution and its effect on execution is manifested in different forms (Noble, 1999). The key role of communication and coordination is to bridge the gap between strategy formulators and executors and develop a consensus among them. When the actors in execution are not on the page, it results in undermining synergies across the functions and teams. The resources such as information required to achieve execution targets vary with the changes in strategy (Piercy, 1998). Bowman and Ambrosini (1997) demonstrated that vertical communication enhances shared understanding (Bowman and Ambrosini, 1997) among the managers. The vertical communication is critical in case of top management who influences execution through functional managers (Bowman and Ambrosini, 1997; Breene *et al*., 2007). The operational measures of communication and coordination are - level of employees' understanding about strategy; encouragement to vertical communication; level of coordination of execution activities; and strategy formulators and executors working as a team.

Innovation (AC₄)

A key role of innovation is to connect performance indicators with customer and market within which a firm is operating (Tushman and Anderson, 1997; Kirca *et al*., 2011). Organizations should use cross-functional coordination & communication and reward & motivation practices to promote innovation practices among employees (Klein and Sorra, 1996). The execution leadership ensures employees' participation to motivate them for innovation practices that affects performance orientation (Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). Employees' involvement in setting strategic goals reduces uncertainty (Govindarajan, 1989; Harrington, 2006) and a network of connectivity facilitates innovation (Harrington, 2006). Innovation opportunities also foster commitment and ensure performance orientation (Stock and Zacharias, 2011). An innovation opportunity at different levels bolsters commitment to execution actions and outcomes. Today's intense competition calls for innovation to reduce risk of strategy imitation by the competitors. Important operational measures of innovation are - company encourages employees and gives them time for innovation; management allocates sufficient funds for innovation; organization has openness to new ideas; and organization has flexibility for innovation.

Reward and Motivation (AC₅)

Firms strive to motivate employees' behaviour that supports strategy execution (Stonich, 1984; Gomez-Mejia, 1992). However, a lack of link between reward system and a given strategy results in poor execution outcomes (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a; Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002). Therefore, it is important to connect reward system with the strategy to encourage employees think and act strategically (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990). When a firm rewards performance tuning with growth metrics, managers would intend to focus on executing a strategy (Mankins and Steele, 2005). Consider the case of a low-cost strategy; in this case, it is important to reward efficient control of business operations (Menguc *et al*., 2007). On the other

hand, if reward system focuses on today's performance then it is difficult to achieve innovation (Franken *et al.*, 2009). If firms reward and motivate managers' performance by aligning it with strategic metrics, managers would be benefit by executing a strategy. This will also ensure high performance commitment. The plausible operational measures of reward and motivation identified are - linking reward systems with execution process and outcomes; compensation system to motivate managers and employees to strategic goals; and linking performance appraisal and training & development with execution contribution.

Review and Reflection (AC₆)

The fundamental question in strategic management is how to tune strategy with the changes in the environment. Firms conduct review and reflections exercises to keep on assessing the changes both within and outside the firm. Reviews and reflections are possible more critical in case of strategy execution. For example, Sashittal and Wilemon (1996) argued that marketing department needs to frequently interact with almost all the functional department such R&D in order to ensure a connect between management practices and market realities. Such reviews and reflections keep updating the processes and practices and result in smooth strategy execution (Sashittal and Wilemon, 1996). It is possible that due to lack of time, during execution, managers will not be able to think and act strategically. A continuous review and reflection minimize communication / coordination gaps among the teams and, on the other hand, keep enforcing the performance orientation through consensus building (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a). At the same, when an environment is volatile and characterized by high velocity changes, reviews and reflections help in quickly identifying alternative course of action plan and correct execution problems (Reeda and Buckley, 1988). A sense of empowerment, instill through reviews and reflections, promotes employees' involvement and ownership in bringing changes in execution plan, therefore, resulting in better execution outcomes (Eden and Ackermann, 1998). The important operational measures of reviews and reflections identified are - efficient formal operational and strategic reviews; review process is inclusive and interactive; and linking review process with rewards and incentives.

Corporate Culture (AC₇)

Corporate culture is one of the most talked areas for superior firm performance. It is also found to be critical to differentiate firms because of high and low success rate of execution (Delisi, 1998). For example, corporate culture is manifest in a firm's short-term and long-term orientation. In most of the cases, firms try to balance short and long-term orientation for better execution outcome (Levinthal and March 1993; Sebastian *et al.*, 2009). A heavy focus on short-term orientation may lead to risk of neglecting important changes that should be incorporated (Alexander, 1985; Al-Ghamdi, 1998). On the other hand, over emphasis on long-term approach can obstruct the routine activities. Ambidextrous organizations, where long and short-term objectives go hand in hand, produce superior performance (O'Reilly and Tushman, 1996; Sebastian *et al.*, 2009). Another important aspect of corporate culture is use of ethical means by company and its staff (Schneider and Arnon, 1983; Jones, 1995; Barles *et al.* 2002). Verschoor (1999, 2003) demonstrated that use of ethical means by the managers and building ethical systems and processes positively contribute to long-term financial and non-financial performance of the firm (Verschoor, 1999, 2003). For example, it is found that ethical practices by the marketing managers, who often face ethical dilemma, improve reputation and operations of the firm (Babin *et al.*, 2000; Schwepker and Hartline, 2005). A learning and sharing corporate culture is critical, especially in today's high-velocity environment, to accommodate changes and promote performance orientation (Senge, 1990; Qi, 2005), etc. Learning and sharing helps in sensing the changes and undertaking appropriate actions to keep execution

activities on track (Schaap, 2006). The operational measures of corporate culture identified are - balance of short and long-term orientation; use of ethical means; and learning and sharing culture.

Methodology

The research context of the study is firms operation in India. The literature review in this study tries to address, to some extent, research questions 1 and 2. A self-administered questionnaire has been developed based on operational measures of proposed factors of SEA. Apart from pre-testing, reliability testing is conducted to finalize the questionnaire. Using standardized questionnaire an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) has been conducted using responses from a sample of 182 corporate practitioners to finalize key factors of SEA. The random and convenience sampling techniques is used while ensuring varied backgrounds and experiences of the respondents (Table 2). The principal components method is used to extract the factors and the varimax rotation is followed to maximize the variance of the square loading across measures subject to the constraint that the communalities of each variable remain the same (Johnson and Wichern, 1998).

Table 2: The Respondents Profile for Exploratory Factor Analysis

After finalizing factors of SEA, a total interpretive structure modeling (TISM) survey is conducted to find out linkages among the factors and develop a model of SEA. The interpretive structural modeling (ISM) proposed by Warfield (1974) and TISM (Sushil, 2012; 2016) are useful, specially to investigate new areas of research, as they provide a practical interpretation of structural models based on graph theory. The ISM lacks the interpretation of how the linkages operate in real life scenario. The TISM technique resolves this problem by applying interpretive matrix tool (Sushil, 2005a). During the TISM survey, the experts/practitioners are asked to explain 'how' one factor is influencing another one. This technique helps in developing hierarchical relations among the identified factors. The TISM method has been used to develop framework in strategic management areas (Nasim, 2011; Sushil, 2012; Neetu and Sushil, 2014; Srivastava, 2013; Srivastava and Sushil, 2014, 2015). The TISM survey covers data collection from a sample of 43 corporate practitioners in India. The average years of experience of respondents were 9.3 while they represent 12 industries in India. The participants have been asked to provide the interpretation of the linkages (Appendix A) that help in understanding the managerial implications of the results (Corley and Gioia, 2011; Goyal and Grover, 2012; Srivastava and Sushil, 2014).

Finally, to empirically validate the framework of 'SEA, a separate questionnaire was conducted (Appendix B) from a sample of 48 corporate practitioners. A questionnaire has been developed on 5-point Likert scale, where '1' denotes strongly-disagree and '5' as strongly-agree. The judgmental sampling technique was used. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face to ensure higher validity of the response. One sample t-test of significance has been used to compare mean value of each of the linkage of SEA model with a test value, i.e. mean value greater than three (mean test value = 3). As the responses from the survey respondents varied from 'strongly-agree' to 'strongly-disagree', a mean value of more than '3' seems to be a reasonable test value for hypothesis testing. The hypothesis for validating the SEA model is as follows:

Null hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference between the observed mean and specified mean value for acceptance of the linkages among the factors of SEA.

Alternate hypothesis (H₁): There is significant difference between the observed mean and specified mean value for acceptance of the linkages among the factors of SEA.

Thus, the linkages among the factors of SEA would be accepted if the significance value for t-statistics is less than 0.05 (95% confidence interval) indicating a higher level of acceptance of the linkages of SEA.

Results and Discussion

The statistical criteria suggested by Hair *et al* (1998) to conduct exploratory factor analysis are - factor loading greater than 0.30 (meeting minimal level); loading of 0.40 (important); loading greater than 0.50 (significant). This study uses a factor loading of 0.50 as the cut off score. The results of factor analysis are presented in the Table 3. The Table presents 'factor loading', ranging from 0.506 to 0.837. A KMO value 0.749 indicates that the factor analysis is useful for the data. A significance value that is lower than 0.10 indicates that the data set is suitable for factor analysis. The results of these tests indicate the factors that are conceptualized and proposed in this study are suited for the observed data set. The value of Cronbach Alpha for the scale reliability was observed as 0.830. The value of Cronbach Alpha for each factor is also presented in table 3. Overall, the questionnaire satisfactorily qualifies the reliability test. Finally, a total seven items were dropped as the factor loadings was less than 0.5. A total twenty-seven items were confirmed that are structured into seven factors of SEA.

Table 3: Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

As this study hypothesizes and proposes that seven SEA factors interplay with each other in structural hierarchical manner and suggest implications for strategy execution. As presented in Table 4, because of TISM exercise, the seven factors of SEA are partitioned into five levels. The level partitioning is done based on reachability (factor 'A' affects other factors) and antecedence (factor 'A' is affected by other factors). The reachability, antecedence, and level partitioning decide the level of driving power or dependency of a particular factor. As Table 4 shows, a level of 1-5, where 1 being least driving power, i.e. high dependence on other factors; whereas 5 shows most driving power of a specific factor, for example, execution leadership in this case. Based on level partitioning, driving-dependence power of the factors, we build a TISM model of SEA, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: TISM Model of Strategy Execution Act (SEA)

The corporate culture and execution leadership emerged as the factors with most driving power. This indicates that execution leadership and corporate culture affects other factors of SEA. On the other hand, 'performance orientation' has least driving power and highest dependence on other SEA factors. The interesting insight that comes out of TISM exercise is that the factor with most driving power does not directly affect the strategy execution but directly by influencing other factors. Similarly, a factor with least driving power has most direct effect on strategy execution, which is performance orientation here. Therefore, managing the corporate culture and execution leadership set the tone for channelizing the execution operations into the actions and performances. However, it is clear that mere corporate

culture or execution leadership cannot directly ensure performance orientation in the firm to convert strategic goals into the results. The highest driving power of corporate culture and execution leadership suggest that they are the prerequisites for effective execution but, at the same time, appropriate reward systems, communication/coordination, innovation opportunities are required build performance orientation in the firm.

Table 4: Reachability Matrix and Level Partitioning of the Factors of SEA

Finally, t-test analysis is conducted to validate each linkage demonstrated in the TISM model of SEA. The results of t-test, as presented in Table 5, shows that all the linkages has a 'mean' score of more than 3, therefore all the linkages are accepted in the model. The results show that the significance level is also high in all the case. The standard deviation of less than one in case of all the linkages shows a strong consensus on accepting the linkages as valid in across the firms of the respondents. The effect of corporate culture and execution leadership on communication & coordination is very strong as reflected in high mean value as well as t-value in these cases. The proposed linkage of communication & coordination with reviews & reflections and performance orientation is also strongly supported by the experts as the mean values are at high-end and the standard deviation is at low-end. Similar is the case with the linkages of corporate culture with reviews & reflections and performance orientation.

Table 5: Results of one sample t-test

Managerial Implications

As demonstrated in the TISM model of SEA (Figure 1), the corporate culture with highest driving power, which means they affect tall other factors of SEA, is the most necessary factor to address to improve state of strategy execution. However, on the contrary, firms tend to focus on more immediate factors such as performance orientation, which with least driving power does not affect any SEA factor. Therefore, even though performance orientation may have immediate influence on execution (e.g., improving efficiency / productivity); unless factors such as corporate culture and execution leadership are tuned with the strategy of the firm, it is difficult to improve success rate of strategy execution (Alexander, 1985; Al-Ghamdi, 1998). A SEA factor with highest driving power, for example corporate culture and execution leadership here, may possibly be the most important facilitator or barrier of strategy execution because there are implications of such factors on other SEA factors. On the other hand, factors that do not have implication on other factors, e.g., performance orientation, management should be clear that addressing such factors is a short-term affair to improve performance.

As shown in the figure 1, the 'communication & coordination', 'review and reflection', and 'innovation' are the SEA factors which are shaped by corporate culture and execution leadership but, the same time, they are affect the performance orientation. This shows that execution leadership and corporate culture influence performance orientation through these factors. For example, a strong communication & coordination, reviews & reflections, and innovation orientation require learning and sharing culture in the organization (Senge, 1990; Qi, 2005). The execution leadership influences performance orientation by setting a platform to involve middle managers middle managers through communication & coordination and reviews & reflections processes. Such practices lead to shared understanding, which positively orients managers towards achieving strategic objectives (Klein and Sorra, 1996; Qi, 2005). However, as corporate culture influences execution leadership, such execution leadership

practices play role only when corporate culture supports them. For example, the corporate culture, characterized by balance between short and long-term approach, facilitates execution leadership to review and reflect on key changes and clearly communicate strategic shift to middle managers (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990).

An execution leadership also affects innovation practices through communication & coordination, reviews & reflections, and reward & motivational practices (Franken *et al.*, 2009). For example, without participating or providing input to strategic planning, the middle and lower level managers fail to support the execution of innovation plans (Guth and MacMillan, 1986; Klein and Sorra, 1996). Furthermore, managers may be unable to support innovation plans because of lack of communication & review that educate them on strategic choices. On the other hand, when managers have limited knowledge about an innovation plan they delegate execution to subordinates who are more knowledgeable but who lack authority and resources to execute the plan. In addition, when middle managers disagree with strategic initiatives, they work against the execution (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992a). Therefore, role of communication & coordination is critical at all stages of execution (Noble, 1999). Communication & coordination affects performance orientation through reviews & reflections, rewards & motivation and innovation. For example, internal marketing interventions prepare managers to get together to achieve strategic objectives (Piercy, 1998). A continuous reviews & reflection provides opportunity of involvement and hence helps managers understand complete picture and have sense of ownership and commitment to strategic outcomes (Raimond and Eden, 1990).

Reward and motivation practices also help in shaping up the performance orientation and innovation initiatives in an organization. For example, if an organization links the reward schemes with immediate performance, then it would be difficult to have managers' involvement for future-plans (Franken et al., 2009). A reward system linked with strategy motivates the employees to behave in ways that support execution of a given strategy (Stonich, 1984; Kerr, 1985; Gomez-Mejia, 1992). In short, the TISM model of SEA suggests majorly three categories of execution factors related to people management. First, the factors, which have most driving power (execution leadership and corporate culture), influence performance orientation or execution performance through other factors of strategy execution act (SEA). Second category is of those factors, which have least driving power (performance orientation), which have immediate effect on performance but they are shaped-up by other SEA factors. Third category is of those factors, which works as mediating factor between performance orientation and corporate culture and execution leadership. Therefore, addressing performance orientation may immediately improve execution outcomes, addressing corporate culture and execution leadership will help firms improving execution outcome in long run. As mentioned in the literature review, the context of strategy execution research has mostly been firms operating in matured market. However, as this study suggest that corporate culture and execution leadership shape up SEA factors such as communication & coordination, role of market or country context cannot be denied as they influence corporate culture and leadership practices. Therefore, suggesting a universal prescription for all the firms, especially in the case of strategy execution, may not be appropriate. Developing a long-term execution climate in an organization requires firm to develop carefully a corporate culture and leadership practices to shape-up appropriate communication channels, reward systems, and innovation approaches.

Conclusion

As discussed in the literature review, results and discussion, and managerial implications sections, there are several studies discussing the role of strategy execution act (SEA) to achieve effective strategy execution. The literature has also identified key factors of SEA to convert strategic goals into the business performance. However, there is lack of empirically tested frameworks that demonstrate the linkages among the SEA factors. A lack of frameworks was found to be one of the most fundamental reasons of poor state of strategy execution. A TISM model of SEA, developed in this study, is an attempt to fill the literature gap. This study also focuses on managerial action plan as this study adopts the interpretive approach of developing the framework. The hierarchical relationships among the factors of SEA, as shown the proposed model, demonstrate relative criticality of each factors and outline managerial action plan. The proposed model reiterates importance of performance orientation, however, suggests that corporate culture and execution leadership are important to shape-up communication channels, reward systems, and innovation orientation in a firm, which ultimately affect execution performance. This study also contributes in research methodology, especially when we study a managerial focused problem, extending multi-method approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques with an interpretative tool. An interpretation of nodes and links in a TISM framework is an innovative experiment to clarifies "what" and "how," as well as "why" aspect of causal linkages in a theory-building exercise . In addition to that, as pointed out earlier, consequence of poor strategy execution is more alarming for the firms operating in emerging markets. On top of that, there is a limited attempt to study strategy execution in the context of firms from the emerging markets such as India. This study finds out that corporate culture and execution leadership shape up SEA factors such as communication & coordination; role of market or country context should not be overlooked as they influence corporate culture and leadership practices. Therefore, suggesting a universal prescription for all the firms, especially in the case of strategy execution, may not be appropriate. To develop a long-term execution climate, top management should analyze corporate culture and leadership practices foster to appropriate communication channels, reward systems, and innovation approaches.

Despite methodological rigour, it is not possible to make a universal prescription to resolve managerial problems. This study uses multiple techniques, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, however, a larger sample size covering different market context will be more useful to increase reliability of the results. There is also a fair possibility of bias in a survey research based on a scale questionnaire. The TISM survey in this study takes the majority whenever there are disagreements among the respondents, therefore, possibly restricting the insights. To address this problem, a fuzzy TISM approach may lead to find additional insights. Additionally, a multiple discussion method approach such as Delphi method may help to build consensus among the respondents and avoid bias. The limitations of this study points out the direction for future research. First, this study needs to be extended in different market context to unearth additional insights and develop more generic model of strategy execution. An alternative thinking is also required to analyze and structure other hard aspects of strategy execution related to organization design and systems.

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Figure 1: TISM Model of Strategy Execution Act (SEA)
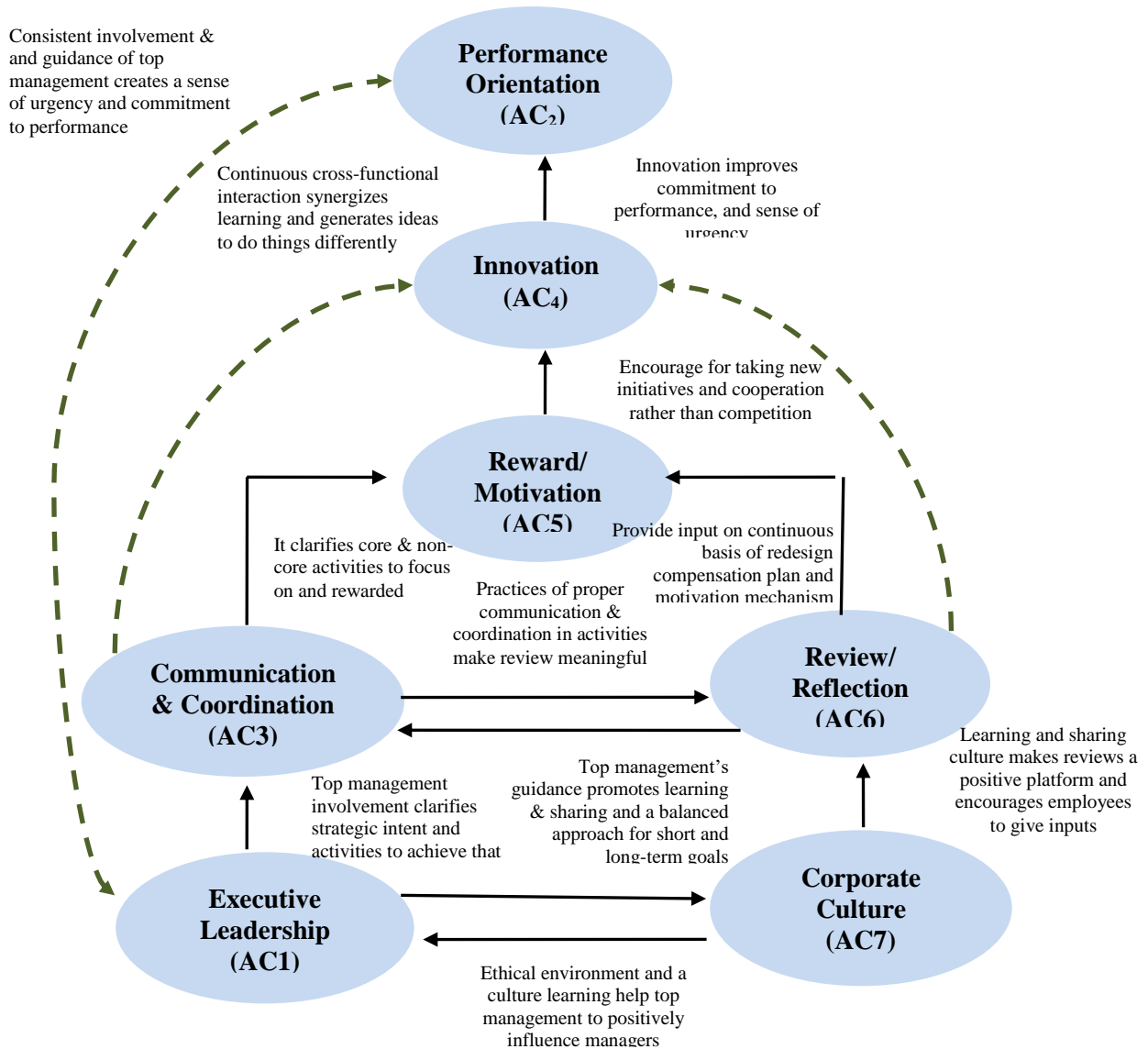
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Table 1: Factors of SEA and Important Highlights of Literature

Variable	Literature Highlights	Select References
Execution Leadership (AC1)	• The execution leadership should go beyond knowledge of strategy and focus on improving the execution. • Middle managers initiates their own narration and action for strategy when top management fails to provide them direction and guidance. Execution leadership is critical to orient middle managers towards performance by clearly communicating strategy and measurable objectives to achieve. • Execution leadership is reflected in top management's support and involvement in execution; clarifying execution initiatives at different levels; providing compelling vision and measurable objectives to the employees.	Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton &Ashford, 1993; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997 Beer & Eisenstat, 2000; Hrebiniak, 2006
Performance Orientation (AC2)	• All the execution efforts ultimately boils down to performance orientation of the employees, therefore, it is the prime objective of any management intervention. • An organization culture and execution leadership play crucial role in developing performance orientation. • Some of the issues that reflect of performance orientation are sense of urgency, giving more importance to work than relationship, proper follow-up of policies and procedures, etc.	Alexander, 1985; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990; Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Breene *et al.*, 2007; Martin, 2010
Communication & Coordination (AC3)	• Communication and coordination is one of the most cited facilitator as well as barrier in successful strategy execution. • Communication and coordination is pervasive at every level and in all functions of management but it is criticality in execution manifests in different ways. • Effective communication and coordination also bridges gaps between strategy formulators and executors, which is critical for execution success. • Lack of shared understanding about strategy and execution efforts among can spoil the possibility of higher performance.	Alexander, 1985 Reeda & Buckley, 1988; Bowman & Ambrosini, 1997; Noble, 1999; Qi, 2005; Breene *et al.*, 2007
Innovation (AC4)	• Innovation links execution decision and actions with the market and customer. • Organizations should effectively use cross-functional coordination &communication and reward &motivation to generate innovation practices at different levels. • A higher level of employees' involvement reduces uncertainty and develops a network of connectivity that facilitates innovation learning. • Innovation opportunities also foster commitment to outcome.	Stacey, 1995; Andrews & Smith, 1996; Menon *et al.*, 1999; Kirca *et al.*, 2006; Harrington, 2006
Reward & Motivation (AC5)	• The reward and motivation mechanism should be designed to develop employees' behaviour that suits to execution. • A gap between strategy and reward system serious hurts execution success. • The reward and motivation should be based on strategic focus so that it employees efforts can be linked to firm growth.	Gomez-Mejia, 1992; Aaltonen & Ikavalko, 2002; Mankins & Steele, 2005; Franken *et al.*, 2009
Reviews & Reflections (AC6)	• Consistent reviews and reflections are required to keep execution a continuous process. • Continuous review and reflection helps employees to think and act strategically. • The reviews and reflections identify key managerial actions to avoid and correct problems of execution.	Reeda & Buckley, 1988; Raimond & Eden, 1990; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992a; Sashittal

	• It also develops performance orientation by involving employees and therefore, providing ownership and commitment to strategic outcomes.	& Wilemon, 1996
Corporate Culture (AC₇)	• Corporate culture is the fundamental variable of act aspect of execution. • In the context of strategy execution, it is reflected by balance of short and long-term goals, ethical work practices, and learning and sharing culture. • Ambidextrous organizations, which balance long and short-term objectives, produce superior performance. • Learning and sharing culture helps in appreciating changes and taking appropriate actions to keep execution activities on track.	Jones, 1991;Levinthal & March 1993; Delisi, 1998; Barles *et al.* 2002; Sebastian *et al.*, 2009

Table 2: Profile of the respondent for exploratory factor analysis (N=182)

Job Hierarchy	Frequency	Percentage	Domain	Frequency	Percentage
Top Management	43	23.63	Public	115	63.19
Senior Middle Management	62	34.07	Private	67	36.81
Middle Management	47	25.82	*Total*	*182*	*100*
Engineers/ Executives	30	16.48			
Total	*182*	*100*	Role		
			Planning	50	**27.47**
Sector	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	Coordination	**20.8**	**32.96**
Power	39	21.43	Execution	**50**	**39.56**
Telecommunication	34	18.68	*Total*	*182*	*100*
Transportation	28	15.38			
ICT	19	10.44			
Banking	18	9.89	**Work experience***		
Consulting	16	8.79	< 5 years	21	9.5
Construction	13	7.14	5 to 10 years	30	13.6
Others	16	8.79	*Total*		
Total	*182*	*100*			
*Experience in current organization					

Table 3: Results of exploratory factor analysis and reliability test

Constructs (Cronbach Alpha)	Operational Measures	KMO	ID	IC
Execution Leadership (AC₁) (CA: 0.830)	Top management supports and actively involves in strategy execution.	.753	1	5
	People are empowered enough to contribute in the strategy execution.	.657		
	Leader clarifies the strategic execution initiatives at different levels.	.759		
	Leader provides a compelling vision and direction for the group.	.783		
	Leader provides measurable objectives for implementing the vision.	.710		
Performance Orientation (AC₂) (CA: 0.808	People are enthusiastic to achieve the targets.	.770	2	5
	People have a sense of urgency on completing their work.	.767		
	Performance is considered more important than relationships.	.717		
	Employees properly follow the policies.	.568		
	Staff has risk taking attitude and entrepreneurial skills.	.675		

Communication & Coordination (AC₃) (CA: 0.828)	Instructions & information given to employees are consistent, consolidated and enough.	.819	2	4
	Activities of the organizations are well coordinated.	.782		
	Strategy formulators and executors work as team to execute the strategy.	.645		
	Employees are convinced that the strategy is the right one for his/her organization.	.561		
Innovation (AC₄) (CA: 0.884)	Company encourages the staff and gives them time for innovation.	.837	0	4
	Management allocates sufficient resources for innovation.	.723		
	Organization has openness to new idea.	.805		
	Organization has flexibility for innovation.	.759		
Reward & Motivation (AC₅) (CA: 0.881)	Reward system is linked with execution process and outcomes.	.768	1	3
	Compensation system motivates managers and employees to achieve company goals.	.755		
	Company rewards the cooperative behaviour not the competitive behavior.	.772		
Reviews & Reflections (AC₆) (CA: 0.0775)	Review process is linked with rewards and incentives.	.706	0	3
	Organization has efficient formal operational and strategic reviews.	.700		
	Review process is inclusive and interactive.	.506		
Corporate Culture (AC₇) (CA: 0.718)	There is balance of short-term and long-term orientation.	.525	1	3
	There is no mistrust among the people.	.811		
	Organization has learning and sharing culture.	.737		

CA= Cronbach Alpha FL=Factor Loading; ID=Item drop; IC=Item confirmed; KMO=0.749; Chi-Square=973.13 Sig.=0.000; Cumulative loading=72.10;

Table 4: Reachability matrix and level partitioning of the SEA factors (N=48)

	AC₁	AC₂	AC₃	AC₄	AC₅	AC₆	AC₇	Reachability	Antecedence	Intersection	Level
AC₁	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1,7	1,7	5
AC₂	0	1*	0	0	0	0	0	2	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	2	1
AC₃	0	1	1	1*	1	1	0	2,3,4,5,6	1,3,6,7	3,6	4
AC₄	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2,4	1,3,4,5,6,7	4	2
AC₅	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2,4,5	1,3,5,6,7	5	3
AC₆	0	1	1	1*	1	1	0	2,3,4,5,6	1,3,6,7	3,6	4
AC₇	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	1,7	1,7	5

Execution Leadership (AC₁), Performance Orientation (AC₂), Communication & Coordination (AC₃), Innovation (AC₄), Reward & Motivation (AC₅), Reviews & Reflections (AC₆), Corporate Culture (AC₇)

Table 5: One Sample t-test of SEA model (N=58)

Linkages	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Test Value = 3	
					t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Execution Leadership-Corporate Culture	3.53	4.00	4.00	0.57	5.11	0.00
Execution Leadership-Communication & Coordination	4.10	4.00	4.00	0.55	11.00	0.00
Execution Leadership-Reviews/Reflections	4.13	4.00	4.00	0.73	8.50	0.00
Execution Leadership-Reward/Motivation	3.87	4.00	4.00	0.63	7.55	0.00
Execution Leadership-Innovation	3.37	3.00	4.00	0.67	3.00	0.01
Execution Leadership-Performance Orientation	4.17	4.00	4.00	0.65	9.87	0.00
Corporate Culture-Execution Leadership	3.53	4.00	4.00	0.57	5.11	0.00
Corporate Culture-Communication/Coordination	4.33	4.00	4.00	0.48	15.23	0.00
Corporate Culture-Reviews Reflections	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.59	9.33	0.00
Corporate Culture-Reward/Motivation	3.80	4.00	4.00	0.48	9.05	0.00
Corporate Culture-Innovation	3.93	4.00	4.00	0.69	7.39	0.00
Corporate Culture-Performance Orientation	3.80	4.00	4.00	0.55	7.95	0.00
Communication & Coordination-Reviews/Reflection	4.10	4.00	4.00	0.48	12.53	0.00
Communication & Coordination-Reward/Motivation	3.47	4.00	4.00	0.63	4.06	0.00
Communication & Coordination-Innovation	3.67	4.00	4.00	0.48	7.62	0.00
Communication & Coordination-Performance Orientation	4.20	4.00	4.00	0.55	11.93	0.00
Reviews/Reflections-Communication/Coordination	3.83	4.00	4.00	0.59	7.71	0.00
Reviews/Reflections-Reward/Motivation	3.70	4.00	4.00	0.79	4.83	0.00
Reviews/Reflections-Innovation	3.67	4.00	4.00	0.80	4.55	0.00
Reviews/Reflections-Performance Orientation	4.00	4.00	4.00	0.69	7.88	0.00
Reward/Motivation-Innovation	3.40	3.00	3.00	0.56	3.89	0.00
Reward/Motivation-Performance Orientation	3.63	4.00	4.00	0.81	4.29	0.00
Innovation-Performance Orientation	3.33	3.00	3.00	0.84	2.16	0.04