The Relationship between Managers’ Competitive Intelligence and Renovation of Small Industries

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Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between managers’ competitive intelligence and Renovation of small industries of east Azerbaijan Province, Iran. In this research, the dimensions of competitive intelligence including trade awareness, awareness of competitors’ situation, technical awareness and social–strategic awareness have been studied with regard to the indices of small industries Renovation based on the theoretical frame of Management college of France (GTILAB). The statistical population includes the managers of small industries of the organization under study consisting of 2713 people. The sample size is 337, based on Cochran’s formula. The sampling method is of stratified random type. The data were collected by using a questionnaire. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by face value. The reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed by using Cronbach’s alpha, which showed 0.838 for the question on competitive intelligence and 0.726 for the question on the Renovation of small industries. In order to test the research hypotheses, Pearson’s test was used. The result shows that there is a relationship between competitive intelligence and its four dimensions and the Renovation of the small industries in the organization under study. The dimension of social–strategic awareness, awareness of the competitors’ situation, and technical awareness are placed in respective orders.

Key words: Competitive Intelligence, Trade awareness, Awareness of Competitors’ Situation, Technical Awareness and Social, Strategic Awareness, Competitor Analysis, Small Industries, Renovation of Small Industries

1. Introduction

Economy globalization and speeding up technology changes and information explosion has caused organizations to bear more pressure in order to remain on competition scene. On the other hand, information technology by providing different ways of superiority has caused organizations to conquer other competitors by increasing their competitive intelligences and utilizing information. Today, competitive intelligence has become one of the significant management concepts and has been incorporated into the culture of pioneer companies. In the contemporary world, business has gained more complex structure and different companies have reported to new plans in order to achieve superior objectives. With the advent of new informatics technology and public access to World Wide Web, great changes in the abilities of industrial enterprises, production and distribution procedures and organizational structure of agencies which have add on the importance of small and medium industries development in the industrial structure of the countries. Today, in most of the countries, small and medium industries play roles in different aspects of societal, production, industrial and providing services. In most of the countries, these industries are the main providers of new employment, the cradle of development and invention and intention of new technologies. These industries with considerable amount of export play an effective sold in economical development of countries. A company, in spite of its acceptable work, should be informed of goal activities of its competitors. Therefore, achieving competitive intelligence is one of the inevitable necessities for companies in order to increase their capabilities by collecting and analyzing information, increasing knowledge and awareness. This knowledge provides managers with a complete image of contemporary and future competition scene situation in order to develop their organization by making quick and opportune decisions.

This research aims at investigating the relationship between managers’ competitive intelligence and Renovation of small industries of east Azerbaijan province, Iran. In this research the dimensions of competitive intelligence including trade awareness, awareness of competitors’ situation, technical awareness, and social-strategic
awareness have been studied with regard to east Azerbaijan small industries Renovation based on the theoretical frame of management college of France (GTILAB).

2. Theoretical Foundation of the Research

Hard competition is brought about by some structural elements which have mutual effects on each other (Porter, 2006, 59). Also, proliferation of small companies has intensified deviation from directed multi-dimensionality to international communications full of hard international competitions which is not only between nations, but also between public enterprises of competitor countries (Talali et al, 2003, 106). Thus economists believe that commerce policy and competition are two sides of a coin. Current businesses are competing in two worlds: objective world of resources which is clear for managers and symbolic world made of information. Major leaders and managers should analyze abilities, deficiencies, opportunities and threats from both objective and symbolic aspects and occupancies of each area con improve or destroy business (Chernia Vesca & Potter, 2001, 90).

2.1 competitive intelligence

Psychologists have always paid close attention to intelligence and tried to study its nature, types, variability and etc. during the history of psychology. Speaking about intelligence brings features such as quick learning, precise calculation and new solutions to the mind (Fatemi, 2006, 1). Intelligence means power of learning, achieving intellectual skills, achieving physical skills and adaptability with environment. Intelligence means showing appropriate reaction for every stimulus in every moment. Competitive intelligence isn't a new concept. Companies have always tried to find out what their competitors do. This concept has found a position in academic places since 1980s. Some authors have argued that Michael porter (1980), famous researcher of strategic management, has created the concept of competitive intelligence by introducing five competitive powers and generic strategies (Peyrot et al., 2002). Some countries such as France, Japan, Sweden, and U S have had considerable improvements in using competitive intelligence systems. In these countries, competitive intelligence has found its position as an important element in achieving competitive superiority (Multi Quert, 2004). However, competitive intelligence is among those concepts which have had quick development and competitive intelligence expert community has had 40 percent growth each year (Calof, 1996, 4).

Competitive intelligence includes collecting and analyzing information which aids companies in order to understand and touch competitors better. Information about capacities and abilities of competitors and their demands is a firm basis for improving market position and establishing strategic plans (Naomi & Esg 1997, 1). Competitive intelligence is a process of collecting scientific information about competitors and using it in a long-term or short-term strategic plan. Through competitive intelligence organization finds out to give priority to what competitions. In fact, competitive intelligence enterprises analyze competitors of an organization. These enterprises support strategic and practical decision making programs and warn commercial opportunities and threats (Peltoniemi & Vuori, 2005, 2). Based on France Management College, competitive intelligence is the art of finding, collecting, producing, and storing information, trying to provide access for staff at all levels of organization, in order to not only establish the future of organization, but also support it against competitive threats (Najafi & hagghi, 2003, 3).

Companies require information in order to give more worth and provide clients with more satisfaction. They should have far more information about competitor companies, mediators and other forces and elements which are active in the market. Information is woe of the strategic elements and marketing instruments (Katler & Armstrong, 2000, 152). Collecting and evaluating information about competitor companies has a vital role in codifying strategies. The more information company can gain about competitor companies, the more effective and successful it can codify and implement strategies. Therefore, detection, perception and reaction to competitors have always been present as a marketing activity and companies need to carry out an effective program which is called competitive intelligence (David, 2000, 240). Competitive intelligence determines suitable activities for companies including competitive intelligence provision, exchange, evaluation which is in the commerce field of these companies (Foster, 2008, 1). Competitive intelligence helps companies in describing their industry and work and in determining competitors' weaknesses and strengths. It also includes
collecting data about competitors and explaining these data for management decisions. If appropriate competitive intelligence is utilized, companies can't be beaten against competitors' actions and also time of reaction to competitors becomes shorter (Gregory, 2005, 1).

If companies want to arrange their competitive strategies appropriately, controlling and investigating competition environment surrounding them is important and essential. However, sometimes more than other times access to competitive intelligence hard a particular significance during organizations' lifetime. If an organization makes decisions based on below factors, attention to competitive intelligence can have more feedback: 1. internal and external markets 2. Capacity development 3. Achievement and learning 4. Growth and development, introducing new goods or technology process 5. Horizontal or vertical incorporation and synthesis 6. Changing organizational structure 7. Forming strategy. Each of the mentioned situations has often optimal result in a fundamental investment of wealth and effort (Porter, 2007, 3). Kahaner suggests that competitive intelligence is a united process. He believes that competitive intelligence process is composed of four phases which are: programming, directing, data collecting, analyzing and distributing (Vazife Dust & Ghasemi, 2008, 3). Although decision makers of an organization are the main users of competitive intelligence system, Kahaner suggests that thought of collecting information should be in the mind of every person. Creating awareness in an organization is also a continuous activity in which acclamation and rewarding should be used for participants (Viviers et al., 2005, 276-589). The relationship between competitive intelligence and other forms of intelligences is like figure 1. Competitive intelligence is a dynamic commercial knowledge for collecting, analyzing, communicating and managing information and reprieving the concept of competition in company's strategy to assure the benefits of competition about commercial environment (Ovsanka & Diaicikora, 2008, 4). Competitive intelligence collects wider information in comparison to market research (Weight & Ashill, 1998, 89). Competitive intelligence groups are responsible for duties related with unknown information, analyzing and explaining structure-less information and they contest information into intelligence and form decision making processes (Wright, 2009, 1). Competitive intelligence can be assumed like a pyramid which at the first pace includes information resources, at the second pace different techniques’ uses for data analysis and at the third pace functional plans development (Wright & Geraldine, 1999, 54). Competitive intelligence system should focus on changes of market and environment in relation to the current and recent strategies of the organization (Ortoll-Estinet et al., 2008, 3).

2.2 Renovation of Small Industries

During the recent two decades, with the advent of new technologies and access to communication networks, especially internet, great changes have been occurred in the ability of production enterprises, ways of production and distribution and organizational structure of small agencies. Also, the role and importance of small enterprises in industrial structure of countries has been increased. Therefore, in the recent years one of the interesting ways of industrial development for developing and developed countries has been minimizing industries and reliance on small and medium industries as a industrial and economical development engine. In other words, in the contemporary modern world, small industries with their specialized characteristics have considerable results in different and important issues such as economical growth, competition, and solving the problem of ubiquitous unemployment.

Due to economical globalization, for becoming competitive, small and medium industries need developments in increasing goods quality and decreasing prices of products, increasing scale, innovation, variety, modernizing machines and training. Both small and large industries are necessities of effective and efficient world. Actual industry development can't be met with the absence of one of them. Therefore, creating proper connections between these two branches is among the essential conditions of an optimum industrial development (Keymaram, 2005, 45). Research shows that small industries have a higher rate of innovation in comparison to large industries, especially in activities which are based on staffs’ skills (Karami, 2002, 49). Cogent evidences suggest that university research in small agencies has a greater share in innovative activities in comparison to large agencies (Link & Ress, 1990, 25-33). Small production factories and enterprises lack modern and expensive equipments and machines and production instruments. In these factories, almost always minimum of facilities, second-hand and cheap instruments are used for production. Main part of the production activities of small factories is done without machine and is relief on individual skills (Molayi, 2003, 14).

Experience shows that small industries are prevailing throughout the world (Acs, 2004, 62-63). Small industries can mass around a large industry and produce demands of large industries laterally. In fact, if we assume large
industries similar to main body organs, small industries play the role of important joints which bring about harmonious motions of main body organs (Mosaui Shahrodi, 2004, 7). Descriptions of small and medium industries greatly differ among countries and different parts of the world. Dominant economical and industrial conditions of countries represent their small and medium industries. Some of the indices which are always present in most of the definitions for small and medium industries are: number of staff, funds, assets, sales volume, and production capacities. But the most comment induces for defining small and medium industries is number of staff (Keymaram, 2005, 43). Small industries Renovation is defined as increasing the use of organizations and economical efficiency and making use of probable empty capacities which aims at growing production capacity, besides decreasing finished price. In other words, industry growth and development in aspects like achieving optimum conditions and competitive benefits is identified with features such as export, industry development, interest and small industries development (Zoghi, 2004, 15-17). Obstacles of small and medium industries are: market obstacles, financial obstacles, and lack of access to different type of information, government policies, and legal obstacles (Yonido, 2004, 15-17). Development won't be successful, unless managers and owners of production enterprises have complete motives. Also they should consider modernization as a inevitable requirement for continuing production activity and increasing benefits. Industry administrators and economy programmers should take into consideration that small and large industries development is one of the necessities of every country's industry development. Large policies and programs should also be established in support of it. Thus, for growth and Renovation of small industries and production enterprises managers should make use ma scientific and empirical solutions of achieving it (Vepa, 1994, 200).

What follows is a sample of the previous study on this research topic

In a study, Salko (2007) has examined the effects of management styles on success of small industries in the textile industry of Canada. This study seeks the fact that whether the manager focuses his deep interest on the production of organization or he considers the satisfaction of customers or both of these items are his focus? The results show that the managers of industrial units employ different leadership styles in their organizations and the success rate of progress in managing their industrial enterprises is related to the applied style.

In a study, Karami (2007) has examined the views of senior managers in the strategic management process in small and medium-sized electronic firms in England with regard to internal and external environment. He has presented a dynamic model of strategic management for small industries. Results show that those firms which use strategic management techniques either formal or as informal increase the level of firm's success in developing and implementing business strategies. Besides, the application of strategic management process in small industries helps to solve the organizational problems essentially and decreases organizational conflicts. Additionally, creating a search system as a part of management process is necessary for developing and strategic planning of business which results in profitability and increase in growth rate of industries in the development and adaptation to unexpected environmental changes in turbulent markets.

In a study, Sharafineghad (2007) has examined and prioritized the effective factors on Renovation of small and medium industries' exports in confectionary and chocolate industries of Tehran (Iran). Results show that the variables of packaging products, variety of products, price element, distribution element, public relations, manpower, domestic demand conditions, marketing strategies, identification and evaluation international marketing environment and regarding differences of market among statistical samples are moderate. Additionally, the rate of advertising variables, selling in advance, exploratory and scientific facilities, financial sources, the role of government, the lack of unexpected fluctuations, marketing studies, related and supporting industries and enjoyment of infrastructures among statistical population are lower than average. Among these items, the condition of quality variables, products, basic materials, taking advantage of technology, internal competitive intensity, strategic attitude of management and the ability of management knowledge are above average. Results also show that prioritizing of these factors were ranked from the highest to the lowest is as follows: the quality of products, strategic attitude of management, intensity of internal competition, the ability of management knowledge, basic materials, taking advantage of technology, sale improve, marketing studies, the lack of unexpected fluctuations, advertisement, enjoyment of infrastructures, related and supporting industries, financial sources, the role of government and statistical and exploratory facilities.

In 1995, a study which was conducted by Texas University shows that there is a positive relationship between importance of competitive intelligence and success in financial performance. Considering three financial key indicators in this study which include average of sale, market share and profitability, it is shown that those companies enjoying competitive intelligence have a better and more distinctive performance than other.
companies (Mayler, 2004, 35).

3. Theoretical Framework of Research

In present study, the theory of France Management College was regarded as a theoretical framework for determining the relationship between managers and renovation of small industries. From the perspective of this college, dimensions of competitive intelligence include (Najafi, Haghi, 2004, 2):
1. Commercial awareness including gain data from customers, suppliers, distributors and product; then their information is collected and analyzed.
2. Awareness of competitors' conditions including price of competitors' products, competitors' alternative products, competitors' sale data and competitors' data system.
3. Technological and technical awareness including studies, sale technology, the technology which is used in company and the right of invention.
4. Strategic and social awareness which concerns some issues such as rules, financial and tax issues, political and economic issues along with social aspects and human resources.
Evaluation indicators of renovation of small industries can also be divided into technical and economic indicators which their important properties are (Vepa, 1994, 200):
a) Technical indicators including: 1. Substitution and replacement of machinery and worn equipments with new and more modern models; 2. Transportation and better displacement of materials; 3. Checking exact inventory of company; 4. Enjoyment of proper management; 5. Enjoyment at least a third of over above-diploma graduated human resource; 6. Enjoyment of design process, production and mechanized line engineering production; 7. Creating at least once a change in hardware and software technology of production units over past five years; 8. Company enjoyment of advanced technology marketing introducing and selling products; 9. Providing after-sale services. b) Key economic indicators including: 1. increasing sales; 2. increasing production capacity with lower last price; 3. Increase in the rate of investment return; 4. Exporting products to abroad; 5. Company enjoyment of competitive prices in the internal and foreign markets; 7. High efficiency of production factors.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework of study

4. Research Hypotheses

Corresponding research hypotheses to the questions and objectives of research are as follow:
1. There is a correlation between competitive intelligence and renovation of small industries.
2. There is a correlation between managers' commercial awareness of and renovation of small industries.
3. There is a correlation between managers' awareness of competitors' conditions and renovation of small industries.
4. There is a correlation between managers' technological and technical awareness and renovation of small industries.
5. There is a correlation between managers' strategic and social awareness and renovation of small industries.
6. There is a correlation between correlation rate of managers' competitive intelligence dimensions and
renovation of small industries.

5. Method

Present study is a survey in terms of method and it is also practical in terms of objectives. In 1380, small industries organization of Iran has introduced those industrial units which have at least 5 and at most 49 workforce employees as small industries (Karami, 2003, 46). Statistical populations of study i.e. senior managers of small industrial enterprises in E.A (East Azerbaijan) at the date of conducting study were 2713 industrial enterprises. Sample size which was computed by Cochran formula was 337 individuals. Statistical random sampling was used in order to select statistical population. Thus, at first statistical population based on the number of industrial states was classified to be 35 classes. Then they were selected by determined numbers after computing the share of each class in the statistical sample size by simple random sampling of each category. Data collection tool, the researcher-made questionnaire, was comprised of 56 questions. The scale which was used in the questionnaire was a five-item Likert scale. Validity of questionnaire included content and face validity. For computing the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach alphabets in terms of competitive intelligence and Renovation of small industries are respectively 0.747 and 0.742. So, reliability is adequate.

6. Statistical Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used in order to analyze the data obtained from collected questionnaires. Frequency distribution tables and percentage of related responses were used in order to describe comments of statistical samples related to questions and variables of the study. Research hypotheses, based on the results of the questions evaluation, also were tested by using inferential statics. Pearson test was used for testing hypotheses one to five and Friedman test was used in order to test the sixth hypothesis as well.

6.1 Statistical description of research questionnaire and variables

As it is shown in table 1, 99.4% of statistical sample were male 0.6% were female. Based on table 2, it is also observed that statistical sample consists of 1.2% below 25 years old, 80.4% between 25 and 35 years old (25-35) and 15.7% between 46 and 55 years old (46-55). 30.9% of statistical sample are individuals having above-diploma degree, 58.8 have BA, 9.8% have MA and 0.6% have PhD. 14.5% of statistical sample have less than 5years of management experience, 69.1% have between 5 and 10 years (5-10), 12.5% have between 11 and 15 years (11-15), 2.1% have between 16 and 20 (16-20) and 1.8% have more than 20 years in this regard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response quantity</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>99.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, based on Table 3, it is observed that the mean of managers' competitive intelligence of small industries is 136.38. Mean of dimensions of competitive intelligence independent variable which includes commercial awareness, awareness of competitors' conditions, technology and technical awareness and strategic and social awareness of small industries managers are respectively achieved 37.24, 35.78, 26.65, 36.70. Mean of responses to Renovation of small industries independent variable has achieved 53.2908.

6.2 Inferential-statistical data analysis
After defining each of the hypotheses to be statistically H0 hypothesis and its contradictory H1 and conducting the necessary analyses, results of statistical tests are shown in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Renovation of small industries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Competitive intelligence</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Commercial awareness(marketing)</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awareness of competitors' conditions</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Technology and technical awareness</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strategic and social awareness</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.585</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in table 4, for hypotheses raging from 1 to 5 in significance of 2-tailed, Pearson test of significance level is 0.000 (p=0.000) and this figure is lower than the minimum of significance level (p=0.05). So, in hypotheses one to five all H0 hypotheses are rejected.
Table 5. Friedman test for determining dimensions of competitive intelligence with small industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>Commercial awareness</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awareness of competitors' conditions</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp.Sig</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Technology and technical awareness</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic and social awareness</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in table 5, significance level of Friedman test is lower than 0.05 which is the minimum of significance level; so, statistical hypothesis H0 is rejected in hypothesis six.

7. Conclusions

Conclusions correspond to research hypotheses are as follow:
1. There is a correlation between competitive intelligence and renovation of small industries.
2. There is a correlation between managers' commercial awareness and renovation of small industries.
3. There is a correlation between managers' awareness of competitors' conditions and renovation of small industries.
4. There is a correlation between managers' technological and technical awareness and renovation of small industries.
5. There is a correlation between managers' strategic and social awareness and renovation of small industries.
6. There is a correlation between correlation rate of managers' competitive intelligence dimensions and renovation of small industries. Ranking correlation of competitive intelligence dimensions with renovation of small industries is respectively as follow: Commercial awareness, awareness of competitors' conditions, technological and technical awareness.

8. Research Proposals

Proposals correspond to research results are as follow:
1. Strengthen managers' competitive intelligence: As results show that Renovation of small industries can increase competitive intelligence. So, in this case efforts can be done by creating necessary backgrounds to develop, training and developing managers' competitive intelligence. It is possible through creating a sense of competition among managers, creating a sense trying in managers for accessing to existing data in new business environment, creating motivation in managers for analyzing competitors, training managers in terms of using Internet for regarding market and using plans for studying and combining competitors.
2. Increasing managers' commercial (marketing) awareness: Considering this point that commercial awareness of competitive intelligence has the most correlation with Renovation of small industries, it is recommended that managers provide growth and development of small industries through being aware of customers' demands for similar products of competitors, being aware of times of customers' purchase, being aware of customers' loyalty toward the products of company, being aware of related to potentials of suppliers and contractors, being aware of distribution channels and creating a change in attitudes of customers toward products and services of the company.
3. being aware of competitors' conditions: According to research results referring to existence of correlation between awareness of competitors' conditions and Renovation of small industries; it is recommended that efforts should be done through creating necessary backgrounds toward growth and development small industries. It is possible through being aware of last and sale prices of competitors' products, being aware of changing related data of competitors in the Internet, accessing to related data of competitors' uses of Internet for considering market, being aware of effect of competitors' sale prices on the sale of his/her own company, being aware of competitors’ sale system, being aware of related data to the monthly sales of competitors, being aware
of competitors' discounting in selling and being aware of related data of customers used services and competitors' products.

4. Increasing managers' technological and technical awareness: According to research results referring to existence of correlation between technological and technical awareness and development small industries; it is recommended that efforts should be done through creating necessary backgrounds toward growth and Renovation small industries. It is possible through using trade fairs, enhancing brand reputation, using public relation programs, creating necessary background in research and development, using the results of fundamental and applied research in product design process, changing quality of goods and services in terms of customers' preferences, improving internal processes, making pricing strategies to be effective, making marketing via the internet to be effective, awareness of effects of new strategies on selling, trying to reach patent, marketing and sale via the Internet, using brochures and booklets of introducing products containing data.

5. Increasing managers' strategic and social awareness: Regarding results of the study, the second component which has more correlation with Renovation of small industries is strategic and social awareness of competitive intelligence. It is recommended that efforts should be done through creating necessary backgrounds toward growth and Renovation of small industries. It is possible through increasing managers' awareness of regulations and governing state laws on small industries, being aware of competitors' way of attracting human resource, being aware of decreasing competitors' human resource, being aware of competitors' organizational chart, being aware of marketing budget of competitor companies, being aware of financial performance of competitor companies, being aware of financial strength of competitors on the market situation, being aware of changes in the stock value of competitors, being aware of rate of competitors' assets efficiency, being quickly aware of recession and inflation in market in comparison to competitors.

References


