

Advantages of Symbiotic Organization Forms: A Research on Companies Operating in a Shopping Centre in Çanakkale

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Abstract

Companies cooperate with other companies strategically in order to survive and ultimately maintain their lives in environmental uncertainty and complexity. Symbiosis is defined as the coexistence of two dissimilar organisms for mutual benefit, and expressed as an important tool in terms of companies can maintain their lives. Advantages of symbiotic organisation forms are reviewed in this study with a sample of companies operating in a shopping centre located in Çanakkale. As a result of the study advantages of symbiotic organization forms are sorted as; low costs brought by the convenience of transportation to the target markets, use image of shopping centre, lower degrees of competition, increase of sales because of the discount dates of main company (shopping centre), provide more protected location to the company compared with actual market, synergies captured due to the combination of known and strong brands, and new market entry strategy.

Keywords: Strategic cooperations, Symbiosis, Symbiotic relation, Shopping Centres.

Simbiyotik Organizasyon Biçimlerinin Avantajları: Çanakkale’de Bulunan Bir Alışveriş Merkezinde Faaliyet Gösteren İşletmeler Üzerine Yapılan Bir Araştırma

Öz

İşletmeler çevresel belirsizlik ve karmaşıklık ortamında hayatta kalabilmek için stratejik olarak diğer işletmelerle işbirliği yapmaktadırlar. Simbiyosis, birbirine benzemeyen iki canlının karşılıklı fayda için bir arada yaşaması olarak tanımlanmakta ve işletmelerin yaşamlarını sürdürebilmelerinde önemli bir araç olarak görüşmektedir. Yapılan çalışmada Çanakkale’de bulunan bir alışveriş merkezinde faaliyet gösteren işletmeler örnekleme dahil edilerek simbiyotik organizasyon biçimlerinin avantajları irdelenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre simbiyotik organizasyon biçimlerinin sağladığı faydalar şu şekilde sıralanmaktadır; hedef pazarlara ulaşım kolaylığının getirdiği düşük maliyetler, alışveriş merkezinin imajının kullanılması, rekabet düzeyinin düşük olması, ana işletmenin (alışveriş merkezinin) indirimli satış günlerinde diğer işletmelerinde satışlarının yükselmesi, mevcut pazarlara göre işletmelere daha güvenli bir konum sağlanması, bilinen ve güçlü markaların bir arada olmasıyla oluşan sinerji ve yeni pazarlara giriş stratejisidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Stratejik işbirlikleri, Simbiyosis, Simbiyotik ilişkiler, Alışveriş merkezleri.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The traditional competition structure of business world lets us to see large companies in international markets and medium and small companies in regional or domestic markets. However, in today's competitive business environment removed the separated competition levels between business sizes and dragged all sizes of companies in the same competitive area (Etemad et al. 2001: 481). Thus companies were dragged to cooperate strategically with other companies in order to achieve their goals as a result of the globalization of economies and rapidly advancing technology in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Erdoğan and Kitchen, 1998: 373; Mitchell et al. 1992: 19; Smith, 1997a: 149).

There are many theories which were borrowed from biology literature and integrated with business literature. Symbiosis is one of them that is defined as the coexistence of two dissimilar organisms for mutual benefit (Varadarajan and Rajaratnam, 1986: 7). For example, there is a symbiotic relation between crocodiles and birds, which cleans parasites in their mouth. Birds are fed with parasites in the mouth of crocodiles and crocodiles have advantages of getting away from infection without parasites (Essig, 2000: 17). In terms of business, symbiotic relationship defined as a combination of two or more companies in the context of common interests and to gain a vital size of this partnership with mutual benefit of companies (Dana et al., 2013). In this context, the purpose of the study is investigate to the advantages of symbiotic relations to the parties in the sample of companies organized in a shopping centre located in Çanakkale. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with managers of companies in the shopping centre and inductive evaluations were made.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Resource dependency is one of the major theories to examine the dependencies between companies and the sources of these dependencies in organizational literature. The degree of commitment to resources required by activities of general organizations in their environment is examined in the resource dependence approach (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978: 23). Superiority and weakness of relations of organizations connected to each other, varies according to the environment and organizations' own structure, in other words, according to the metabolism of an organization. For example, Subramaniam and Watson (2006) examined the effect of dependency of multinational companies to other companies on the performance of business units in other countries. According to the results of the study, strategic business units of multinational companies in different countries are affected by the dependency of the whole company to other companies in different degrees. Nironen and Tuominen (2002: 403-406) tried to determine organizational advantages of the dependency among companies in network type organizations. In the results of the study, there are four elements determined organizational advantage arising from dependence in network type organizations. These are; similarity of resources and information of activities of dependency, the degree of variation costs among activities, coordination costs according to dependent activities and innovative process in the network. According to this study, although companies, dependent each other in terms of operation, resource and activities, have advantages in the degree of dependency and quality, they may also have some risks.

Because of the technological developments and ascending global

competition, companies have to pay attention to such activities as R&D, innovation and new-product development to survive. However, higher costs of these activities make them impossible for a single company (Marangoz, 1997). For this reason, it is said that companies have gone into the merger and cooperations. When the literature is examined, it is understood that there was no agreed definition on the strategic alliance. Some of the definitions in the literature are presented below (Marangoz 1997; İplik 2008);

According to Terpstra and Chwo-Ming, the strategic alliance is cooperations made for reaching the subjects determined before, by merging with strong companies. Strategic alliances are volunteer agreements between companies comes together in order to change, share and co-development. Thus, it is a strategy that includes to contribution of partners with their capital, technology and other assets of the company (Lin, 2006).

Strategic alliances are an agreement of two or more companies for sharing resources and joint operations for the achievement of individual subjects. In the other definition, strategic alliance is a cooperation facility that includes mutual change and share among companies. Strategic alliances are agreed structures among companies, made for realizing of a specific job, activity or strategy in a specific area stipulated by parties (Ülgen and Mirze, 2004: 328). Some evaluations about symbiosis expressed as strategic cooperation and addressed based on resource dependence theory in this context are presented below.

Symbiosis term is the combination of the Greek origin word "Syn" (common) and, "Biosis" (life) and means "common life" (Gilbert 2013: 675). Symbiosis used first by Micrologist Anton de Bary in 1879 (Chouyung,

Lei and Baoilang, 2009: 1). Bary defined Symbiosis as; "the living together of unlike named organisms" (Sapp, 1994: 7). Smith (1997b) defines the symbiosis as "the intimate living together of two kinds of organisms, especially if such association is of mutual advantage." Another definition of symbiosis is "life of two or more dissimilar organism together for mutual benefit" (Varadarajan et al, 1986: 7).

Symbiotic lifestyles are seen in three ways. These lifestyles are briefly summarized below (www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr):

Commensalism(One-sided

Partnership): One of the two organisms has benefited the condition, when the other has neither benefit nor damage. For example, some herbaceous flowering plants living on high-bodied trees can benefit more effectively from sunlight because of the hold up to the body of the tree. Furthermore, tree has no benefit or damage because of it. An individual who lives commensally can also live alone.

Mutualism (Two-sided Partnerships):

It is symbiotic relations that both organisms have mutual benefit. In this symbiotic relation, living together becomes a necessity in evolutionary perspective and it is named as "necessary symbiosis". For example, in lichens combined of algae and fungus, the mission of fungus is to provide inorganic matter and water to algae. On the other hand, Algae synthesis organic molecules necessary for this unity and produce oxygen. The other example for this is the partnership of crocodile and bird as stated above.

Parasitism: It is a relation that one of the couple (host) has damage while the other (parasite) has benefited. Thus, it is a life of the living by damaging on another. For example, tapeworm and worms in bowels.

Symbiotic organization types can be evaluated in resource dependency approach. But, the point to be considered is that inter-organizational dependency has long-term and vital importance in symbiotic organization types. In other words, symbiotic organization structuring expresses inter-organizational common life. Symbiotic relation purposes that both parties have the benefits such as to increase the output value by decreasing costs, to decrease marketing time or to develop customer services for companies. Symbiotic cooperation can occur anywhere in this benefit chain or reside in various ways (Etemad, vd., 2001: 486). Chouyong, Lei and Baoliang (2009), indicate that a symbiotic system emerged with symbiotic relationships in manufacturing companies. They indicate that symbiotic units were in the base of the symbiotic system, symbiotic units created symbiotic surfaces and symbiotic surfaces created symbiotic environment by coming together.

In some cases, to meet with some forms named as industrial symbiosis is possible, especially in industrial areas. The main purpose in industrial symbiosis is to provide a sustainable production. A group of manufacturing companies provide remaining elements of other company's outputs as an input in their production process, thus they contribute to sustainability by lower use of sources in industrial symbiosis. To see recycling company clusters, green company clusters and resource sharing networks is possible in industrial symbiosis (Chertow, 2000: 314).

3. ADVANTAGES OF SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIPS OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

There were some changes in the world economy, especially after 1980s. These changes are accepted as the reasons that impelled companies to cooperation. Marangoz (1997),

Doğan and Marangoz (2002) sorted these changes as:

- The globalization of world economy,
- Increase of global communications and competition,
- International economic developments emerged as economic blocks, free-trade zones or form of customs unions,
- The emergence of new economic powers in world markets,
- Increase of the importance of "protectionism" trend against foreign competition,
- Important external depth burdens of developing countries,
- Spread of global consumer behaviour, global products and brands,
- Entering free-market economy,
- The emerge of new market opportunities (such as Eastern Europe and Russia's market),
- Rapid changes in international transportation, communications, financial structure and techniques,
- The acceleration on the movement of "privatization" of the public enterprises in many countries .

Partners entering into a cooperative relationship and undertaking different roles, have a chance to get the opportunities they cannot achieve alone by operating with combining assets and capabilities. Marangoz (1997) sorted the advantages of strategic cooperations on companies as; production, R&D, reconstruction, distribution and marketing, advantages on storage, advantages on sales, risk sharing, ease of market entry, competition advantages, resource sharing. Other advantages are sorted as below (Çelik

1999; İplik 2008; Cihangir 2004; Özgen, Kılıç and Karademir 2003; Durak 2005):

Strategic cooperations; increase the global opportunities, decrease the processes costs, facilitate organizational learning, decrease environmental uncertainty, increases the legitimacy of the enterprise, providing the opportunity to gain new skills, helps the company achieve market power, creating the option for future investments, obtain a competitive advantage in line with information and expertise sharing and the creation of synergy among the partners, provide the achievement of companies to their critical objectives faster, with less cost and more successful, allow to reduce production or other costs of the value chain, provide the development and spread of modern technologies, provide the company to have a customer focus, to access to technical resources and to increase reliability.

Strategic cooperations provide the joint companies to create scale economies. Strategic cooperations can be established for merging the complementary resources, skills and strengths. Especially in competitive environment, resources that difficult to access led companies to strategic cooperations. Strategic cooperations provide the company to learn and internalization of new skills. These learning may include achieving of innovative technology or financial, marketing and production expertise. Strategic cooperations mean volunteer cooperation and dependency among international companies usually. Symbiotic relations have a long-term and also become a necessary condition. Famous biologist Lynn Margulis indicated that symbiotic lifestyles became the important part of living's evolution (1998). This condition is valid for companies, too. Today's business world gets a structure and operation that a

single company could not afford the costs alone for a long term.

Symbiotic organization forms provide some advantages to the parties. Both parties have the benefit when they are in a mutual symbiotic relation. Mitchell et al. (1992: 20) sorted the areas of symbiotic relations as; organize of sales, physical distribution facilities, market entry strategies, technical know-how usage, R&D staff, getting information about complex market structures, provide finance, material supply, purchase power, and conduction of marketing research program, etc.

Symbiotic relations provide an advantage of competition to the parties of it. This advantage emerges based on convenience and efficiency in achieving the resources. For example, when symbiotic physical distribution relation emerged between two companies, effective symbiotic structure perfecting the ability of company's physical distribution and also this symbiotic relation becomes the win-win strategy for both companies (Mitchell vd., 1992: 22). Another advantage of symbiotic companies is reducing of process cost. Companies also know each other better in the long-term relations.

Additional to the advantages above it is possible to sort the advantages of symbiotic relations to the parties as:

➤ Provide extra income to the company: Main company in Symbiotic structure can generate income by leasing some of their areas to their side company with a contract. For example, shopping centres lease their parts to the other small companies. Moreover, main companies in a technological development area (Techno Park) lease some different parts in the area. These conditions provide additional income to the companies.

➤ Diversifications of product/service portfolio offered by the company: the variety of offered products and services will increase when the main company goes in a symbiotic relation with a company located outside of the activity area. For example, companies such as food and beverage and entertainment companies can be operated in shopping centres. This condition provides a possibility of differentiation with the combine of different products and services and different customer types.

➤ Conduct of company's market efforts more efficient: It is provided that main and side companies reach target markets freely through symbiosis. For instance, kids' entertainment areas in shopping centre reach to the target market easily without any advertisement or promotion effort.

➤ The execution of joint promotional efforts: Marketing costs of the companies' decrease when symbiosis companies carried out promotional efforts.

➤ Attain of competition to the more stable structure: Symbiosis companies have a safe competitive location in current partnership area. Symbiosis companies wriggle out of the high competitive environment in actual market and are operated in a more stable environment. For example, while a food and beverage company is operated in a highly competitive atmosphere in the city centre, that company would be operated against the limited number of rivals in a shopping centre. Sometimes the presence of one or limited same type of product/service offering company can be provided within the area of activity with the agreement between symbiosis companies.

➤ Create innovation more easily: Pioneer position of the main company of symbiotic relation because of its capacity and the synergy between main company and small companies,

provide the small companies ability to create innovations that they could not do alone.

➤ Easy access to qualified labour force: Attractive environment created by the business area of symbiosis companies, either provide the integration of potential labour with a company or allows them to see themselves as part of the prestigious symbiotic environment. However, other companies operating in the symbiotic environment can be seen as a potential working area by labour. That is why, the chance of symbiotic companies to choose the most appropriate one in labour increases than the others.

Specified benefits can be accepted as an evidence of the activity of symbiotic companies in a more comfortable area than today's aggressive and ruthless competition environment. In this context, the advantages created by the different type of companies convert the interdependence of companies to opportunities and provide companies to survive.

4. METHOD

4.1. The Purpose of the Research

There are many theories adapted from biology literature to organizational theory about the structure and activities of companies. In symbiosis, two or more species live together in a close, long-term association. A symbiotic relationship can be beneficial to both organisms or benefit one organism and leave to other harmed or unaffected (Johnson and Raven, 2006: 364). For companies, symbiotic relation aims, in accordance with the principle of mutual beneficence (mutual symbiosis), the benefits as; the increase of partners output values of two or more company by reducing costs, the decrease of the marketing time and the development of customer services. In this context, the aim of this study is to examine and explore the

benefits of symbiotic relations among companies in a sample of companies operating in a shopping centre located in Çanakkale.

4.2 Method of Research

In-depth interview technique of qualitative research methods is used in the study. Interviews recorded by audio recording device and records are examined and decoded after each interview. Interviews lasted approximately 15 – 45 minutes. The owners of companies were asked the cause of opening a company in a shopping centre, during the interviews. Besides, the advantages of operating a company in a shopping centre were asked.

The maximum variation sampling of purposeful sampling methods, which used in the qualitative studies, is used in the study. Aim of the use of purposeful sampling is to take advantage of comments and opinions of the owners that were evaluated as to have an experience on symbiotic relations. In this sense, the purposeful sampling method is useful in the discovery and explanation of facts and events in many cases (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2004: 84). In this context, 29 companies operating in the shopping centre that research was carried out have generated the population of the research. 22 company owners/directors (76% of the population) were interviewed in depth between the 15th of February and the 1st of March in 2014.

4.3. Findings of Research

4.3.1. Companies Related Findings

The sectoral distributions of companies interviewed during the study were shown in Table 1. According to this 8 of the companies researched is operating in food and beverage, 7 of them in clothing, 3 of them in jewellery/accessories/cosmetics, 2 of them in white goods, and the rest of them in optical and entertainment area. Clothing companies operating time in the sector ranged 8 to 72 years,

food and beverage companies 6 to 30 years, white goods companies 3 to 35 years, optical company 16 years and entertainment company operates in the area till 13 years.

The number of staff working in the company joined research ranged from 2 to 9. However, the majority of companies operating in the shopping centre are operated as a branch. It is determined that companies were operated in shopping centre until approximately 8 years. It is understood that the companies researched were continued to live with the shopping centre when the age of shopping centre was considered as 8 years. From the perspective of the common life expectancy at this level, this is the indication of a symbiotic relationship between companies operating in the shopping centre.

Table 1. Distribution of Companies According to Activity Areas

Activity Area	Numbers of Companies
Food/ Beverage	8
Clothing	7
Jewellery/Accessories/Cosmetics	3
White Goods	2
Optical	1
Entertainment	1
TOTAL	22

4.3.2. Location Related Findings

The causes of preference a shopping centre as a plant location are asked in the interview. Main reasons for preferring of shopping centre are listed below according to participants' responses are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: Companies responses to preference a shopping centre as a plant location

Responses	n
High customer flows to the shopping centre	22
The trend of spending more time in the field of shopping centres, according to the request of meet the shopping, eating, drinking and entertainment needs	20
Requirements of institutional agreements with shopping centre as an institutional policy	19
Increase recognition of the company to operate within a known shopping centre,	16
To have a stock market	14
It is larger than the other shopping centres of the city	10
To be close to the university, hotels and dormitories	7

4.3.3. Findings Related Symbiotic Relationship

In which direction did the sales move in the operating period asked the owners or directors in the interview. 20 of 22 companies stated as the sales were increased and the other 2 companies stated as the sales were decreased. However, the degree of competition in the shopping centre was asked to the companies. 18 of 22 companies stated as lower or none. Other four (4) of companies stated that only one competition with own products of the shopping centre. The cause of it was the number of companies operating on the same field located in shopping centre became limited with agreements. Another interesting finding on competition is that the companies operated in the same field with shopping centre showed their rivals as only the shopping centre (main company), not themselves. The other interesting thing is why the shopping centre allows operating of rival companies.

“What are the advantages of operating in this shopping centre?” question ask to the owners or directors to determine the

advantages of symbiotic organisation types. Responses are similar with actual literature and are sorted as follows;

- Easy transport to the target market,
- Reduce of costs,
- Take advantage of the shopping centre's image,
- Lower degrees of competition,
- The increase of sales in main company's (shopping centre) discount dates,
- Provide more safety location to the company then actual market,
- Synergy caught by collected of known and strong brands together,
- New market entry strategy,
- Easy access for customers.

An interview requested with shopping centre management. Nevertheless, this interview failed because of institutional policies, thus the advantages of shopping centre from this symbiotic organization types asked to the owner or director of companies participated to the interview. Participants stated that symbiotic organization types allow shopping centre to keep customers in shopping centre longer, to convert the shopping centre as a living/social mall with product diversity, and thus increase the profitability of the shopping centre.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Companies have to be adapted to the environment to survive and maintain their existence in the highly competitive environment. Symbiotic life forms play important roles in the evolution process of livings as famous biologist Margulis stated (Margulis 1998). The advantages of joint life forms for the companies dependent themselves in a long term explored in the framework of symbiosis organisation theory in this study. For this purpose, this was tried to expose with in-depth interviews with owners/directors of companies operated in a shopping centre in Çanakkale. Gathered data show that side companies had a similar life

with shopping centre (main company), shopping centre provided safe competitive position to the companies and profitability had an upward movement.

The main advantages of symbiotic organizations to the researched companies are; lower cost brought by convenience of transportation to target market, take advantage of the image of the shopping centre, lower degree of competition, increase of sales because of the shopping centre's discount dates, to provide a more safety position to the company than actual market, synergy caught by collected of known and strong brands together, new market entry strategy.

This study has a nature to form the basis of future studies intended for symbiotic organisation types. In possible future studies, factors affecting the quality and size of symbiotic relationships, issues determining the distribution of power and trust between parties can be explored. In addition, in future studies the effects of environmental uncertainty and complexity to symbiotic relationships and the cause of the main company's move within rival side companies can be answered.

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