

# Dynamic Marketing Capabilities in Intercultural Environment



Maciej Mitreęa and Anna L. Wiczorek

**Abstract** The dynamic capabilities approach is nowadays one of most influential schools in management theory, and this approach calls for systematic reorganizing of company resources and processes due to changing competitive environment. In this chapter, we contribute to emerging knowledge on dynamic capabilities (DCV) in marketing in several ways. Firstly, we identify the gaps in the literature with regard to these capabilities emphasizing some controversies and inconsistencies with regard to definitions of main constructs and their measurement. Secondly, we review prior conceptualizations in this area and propose our own definition of so-called dynamic marketing capabilities (DMC) which is aligned with DCV in strategy research as well as with prior typologies of marketing resources and capabilities. Thirdly, we present results of own qualitative research (case studies), which allows us to identify how real existing companies develop and use DMC in their activities on export markets. Thus, our study enabled exploration of some building blocks of DMC on international markets.

**Keywords** Dynamic capabilities · Marketing · Intercultural · International · Case studies

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## 1 Introduction

The company strategy concepts remain the main area of interest within management discipline. There are, at least, three widely accepted paradigms presenting different approaches to company strategy: the industry-based view of the firm (Porter 1985), the resource-based view or RBV (Barney 1991), and the relational view or RV (Dyer and Singh 1998). The dynamic capabilities view (DCV) was introduced as an extension to the RBV (Teece et al. 1997; Teece 2007; Winter 2003) and corresponds with growing interest in dynamic aspects of management. In line with RBV, DCV assumes developing unique company resources and competences as a main factor of competitive advantage, but in contrast to RBV, DCV emphasizes that such resource constellations must be constantly challenged. Shortly, in DCV the company must develop capabilities (bundles of resources) that enable constantly sensing the environment to seize opportunities and reconfiguration of company resources. DCV assumes also that advantage-generating resources do not have to be possessed and controlled by the focal company, but it is fair enough that the company has effective access to such resources, i.e., through inter-organizational relationships and networks.

It is rather widely accepted that there is no single one dynamic capability, but there are various dynamic capabilities that shape functional capabilities in such areas as supply chain (Fawcett et al. 2011; Hammervoll et al. 2012), manufacturing and R&D (Brown and Bessant 2003; Lawson and Samson 2001; Stanisławski 2013; Stawasz 2015), information technology (Bhatt and Grover 2005), and, the last but not the least, marketing (Bruni and Verona 2009; Flatten et al. 2015; Tsai 2015). This chapter corresponds with a recent call for more clarity and convergence of definitions of dynamic capabilities across various business areas (Schilke et al. 2018), especially with regard to dynamic capabilities devoted to marketing as a business function (Barrales-Molina et al. 2014; Falasca et al. 2017). Firstly, this chapter contributes to this call by conceptualizing so-called dynamic marketing capabilities (DMC) in line with theoretical boundaries of this concept in DCV. Secondly, this chapter presents the case studies of companies utilizing DMC in their international activities. Thirdly, on the basis of case studies, this chapter proposes main elements of DMC adjusted to intercultural environment, and at the same time, this chapter contributes to a better understanding of cultural contingencies of developing dynamic capabilities in organizations. Some limitations of the chapter and suggestions for further studies are presented in the final part.

## 2 Dynamic Marketing Capabilities Concept

The dynamic capabilities view (DCV) grounded in two seminal works by Teece et al. (1997) and Eisenhardt and Martin (2000) appeared to be a very influential school in management research, e.g., almost 35,000 citations of Teece et al. (1997).

**Table 1** Overview of DMC understandings presented in the literature

Conceptualization	Authors
Human capital, social capital, and cognition of managers engaged into building, utilizing, and integrating market knowledge and marketing resources in order to adjust to market and technological change	Bruni and Verona (2009)
Specific inter-functional business processes aimed at building and creating extraordinary values for customers as a response to market changes	Fang and Zou (2009)
Managerial/business processes which bring extraordinary value for company stakeholders through three elements: customer relationship management, new product development, and supply chain management	Xu and Li (2011)
Inter-functional processes connected with utilizing market knowledge to transform the company connected mostly with new product development and proactive market orientation	Barrales-Molina et al. (2014)
Firm’s capacity to build, integrate, and reconfigure strategic marketing tools and acumen for effectively identifying and accessing international markets and delivering value to these markets	Weerawardena et al. (2015)
A group on interconnected routines which make it possible for a company to engage into specific marketing actions in response to changing market conditions	Konwar et al. (2017)

Source: Authors’ own study

However, this theoretical framework has raised a lot of controversies that connected with tautological character of its assumptions, weak empirical fundamentals, and unclear meaning of main construct (Arend and Bromiley 2009; Barreto 2010; Newbert 2007). These controversies were to a large extent based not on underpinnings of DCV itself, but rather on the fuzzy way DCV was incorporated in research projects from various disciplines. These studies have proposed many specific dynamic capabilities which were clearly inconsistent with DCV. Consequently, our knowledge about specific dynamic capabilities did not progress too much and a lot of empirical research in DCV area functions more like “emperor’s new clothes” phenomenon than anything else. These issues were very visible in the specific research area about dynamic capabilities in marketing.

The term dynamic marketing capabilities was introduced in the literature in 2009 by Bruni and Verona (2009) and Fang and Zou (2009). It is not entirely true since this very term had been used earlier—i.e., during conference presentations organized by AMA. The access to these presentations was, however, restricted only to AMA members. Thus, we can treat 2009 as a starting point in academic discussion on the importance and meaning of DMC. Taking such starting point means that the research on DMC is at its early stages. An initial phase of development of any theoretical concept tends to be characterized by a high level of fragmentariness, and it has its disadvantages and advantages at the same time since it gives an opportunity for various exploratory research directions, conceptual and empirical in nature.

Table 1 presents DMC definitions which were reflected in publications between 2009 and 2017 and which show the varied nature of understanding DMC. We can observe various inspirations used on conscious or unconscious level by DMC researchers. Most often dynamic marketing capabilities were understood as routines

of a given organization and classified as processes influencing and crossing the whole organization. We can assume that DMC understood in such a way emerge in time on the basis of experience and interactions between marketing people, the executive management, other members of an organization, and some external entities (e.g., market research agencies). However, it should be also emphasized that quite some prior studies conceptualized and especially measured DMC in a way that was inconsistent with DVC view, because these studies treated DMC as various improved effects of resource utilizations not business routines improving/revising these resources (e.g., Fang and Zou 2009; Weerawardena et al. 2015). Such approach toward DMC is problematic, because it opens tautology hazard for DMC research. Similarly to general DCV in strategy research, DMC should be rather conceptualized from the perspective of some processes/stable patterns of behavior leading to modified resource combinations.

Day (2011) is of the opinion that contemporary environment gives marketing managers new challenges and within marketing theory there is a gap between already well-researched marketing capabilities and those that are only now emerging as important from the perspective of the observable tendencies in the social and technological surroundings. It appears that the gap could be filled by DMC. At this stage, it is important to build a consensus on a DMC conceptual framework, so as to ensure cumulative knowledge growth.

Following prior definitions of DMC, typologies of marketing resources and capabilities (Kozlenkova et al. 2014; Morgan 2012), and seminal works on dynamic capabilities by (Teece et al. 1997; Eisenhardt and Martin 2000), we may assume that for any definition of DMC to stay consistent with their DCV origins, this definition should associate DMC with some processes reconfiguring marketing resources of the focal company. In turn, these strategic changes should be aligned toward changes that happen in the company market and they should be somehow routinized, i.e., DMC should allow not only discrete change even the deep one, e.g., rebranding, but it should facilitate systematic changes in the set of marketing resources. Last but not the least, the changes facilitated by DMC should be not restricted only to marketing department, but it should involve top management, because changes brought by DMC should be strategic in nature and they should involve coordination across departments in the organization.

Therefore, we propose to define DMC as market-dependent processes oriented at reconfiguration of firm's marketing resources and capabilities.

### **3 Case Studies of DMC in Intercultural Context**

There is a weak understanding of how dynamic capabilities may be applied toward international markets/intercultural environment (Knight and Kim 2009; Weerawardena et al. 2015), especially with regard to marketing strategies (Fang and Zou 2009; Weerawardena et al. 2015). This is a very early research area, but it calls for more studies. Even intuitively, company export internationalization is a

natural context of applying DMC, because while marketing becomes more international there is systematic challenge to align marketing activities toward new circumstances, i.e., specific features of foreign markets. Such alignment may take many forms, e.g., adjusting products/services, resegmentation, new communication tools, and repositioning as well. As today economy is more and more globalized, it may be even assumed that all medium and big companies should develop some DMC adjusted to the dynamics of their international activities.

Following early stage of research in the area under consideration, we contribute by qualitative research conducted among companies. This study was explorative in nature and was aimed at identifying some elements of international DMC. We conducted case studies of 8 companies that dynamically develop their position on foreign markets, so the selection of companies was judgmental. Specifically, we focused only on these companies that have substantially modified their marketing resources to make them more aligned to trends observed in international environment. We also concentrated only on these companies that have largely and recently improved their positions on foreign markets. Thus, we selected rather “success stories” than “failures” as alternative criteria for selecting cases in qualitative research. Last but not the least, we have concentrated mainly on companies with Polish origins, which was convenient to us, but was also justified by the dynamic improvement of position of Polish companies in international supply chains. This improvement is visible especially through positive international trade balance that is observable for Polish economy in recent years.

Table 2 describes specific features of all 8 companies that we investigated. Some names of these companies are presented only through codes, because during interviews conducted in these companies such anonymity was expected and guaranteed. The majority of these companies were companies with Polish origins, except  $\beta$  Company, C company, and Disney. Following principles of qualitative research, wherever available, we combined data from various sources, i.e., interviews conducted with top management, company secondary data (“internal secondary data” in Table 2), and publicly available publications about the company (external secondary data in Table 2). In terms of the number of employees and turnovers, the investigated companies were usually big companies. Our data collection took place in 2018, but the activities of enterprises we analyzed retrospectively referred to much longer time period, sometimes including the last two decades. In this chapter, we only present selected research results that illustrate specific building blocks of DMC developed in investigated companies.

*Atlas Group* is one of biggest company providing chemical products to building industry in Central and Eastern Europe, but it has also an important and growing position in Western Europe. Atlas Group consists of 19 business entities and employs over 2000 people. Although, this company needed to progressively adjust marketing to export markets since the 1990s, it was especially the end of the first decade of twenty-first century, when Atlas had a chance to apply their DMC in international scale. Specifically, the economic crisis that started in 2008 challenged existing marketing resources and only through dynamic adjustments that were made in various foreign markets, Atlas was able not only to sustain its position on this

**Table 2** Basic features of companies participated in qualitative research

No	Firm name/code	Industry	Firm size	Export size (%)	End market	Data sources		
						Interview	Internal secondary data	External secondary data
1	Atlas	Chemical products	Very big	Around 20	Mainly B2C	X	X	X
2	Topex	Electro-tools	Big	30-50	B2C/B2B	X	X	X
3	Beta	Electronics	Very big	Transnational	Mainly B2C	X	-	X
4	C	Electronics	Very	Transnational	B2C/B2B	X	-	X
5	KU	University	Big	30-40	B2C	-	X	X
6	Disney	Entertainment	Big	Transnational	B2C	-	-	X
7	Inglot	Cosmetics	Middle	Around 50	B2C	-	-	X
8	CD Projekt	Computer games	Big	Around 50	B2C	-	-	X

Source: Authors own study

markets, but even improve it. DMC was observable through sometimes radical changes and flexibility in marketing resources, like illustrated in the following citation with Atlas manager: *“Even with growing market, one single event may hamper it, for example one political event or global one like economic crisis. The crisis in 2008 has hit enormously in our buyers in Latvia, so we needed to react immediately and we have set our own distribution channel that replaced prior wholesale partners and sustained our brand on this market.”*

*Topex Group* is a big Polish company providing tools and power tools to customers mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, but company products may be found in 40 countries around the world. A large portion of Topex sales comes from foreign markets and it still grows. According to interviews conducted with Topex’s manager, the company also needed to adjust their activities to the volatility of the tool industry (boosted by the global financial crisis). However, this volatility remains somehow a constant challenge in company operations nowadays, which also means that the company has some analytical tools in place, which help in adjusting operation toward changes that happen in macro-environment, e.g., legal changes in particular countries, political and even military conflicts, and exchange rates. These changes cannot be easily predicted, so in the case of this company, scenario planning is one of most important blocks of DMC in international markets. It is illustrated by the following citation from the interview: *“... the weakness of, złoty” [Polish national currency] transfers automatically into prices of imported products. Searching for answers for future predictions is nothing more than, prophesy from the sphere’. Managing such big company as Topex we need to be ready for every scenario. ...”*

*Beta* is a multinational corporation, one of the leaders on the global market supplying electronics to consumers (rather than business markets) through extensive middleman chain around the world. Beta has been building their international position for several decades already, but the company substantially reshaped their product portfolio since the beginning of the twenty-first century following new consumer trends and technologies. However, the specific aspect of DMC that was very visible in Beta activities was not only adjusting toward environmental trends but also facilitation or even designing these trends through marketing communication, especially social media as illustrated in following citation: *“... we are trying for the main innovations to build situations that when product launches on market, somehow in all touchpoints there is already some content about it. It is about rates and reviews, some releases connected with product or product category, technology, some video records about how to use it. It all makes that when product launches, there is not situation that nobody knows what it is. It all improves the purchasing or decision making path.”*

Similarly to Beta, Company C has a well-established brand image, provides electronic products to the global market, and is oriented mainly at individual consumers with their products. This company also not only adjusts to consumer trends but also stimulates such trends on its own. Specifically, this company has invested a lot of efforts in popularizing specific technology XYZ among women, even if this technology has a long tradition among male consumers. In this case, one

may conclude that stimulating consumer trends or even specific lifestyle went hand in hand with demographic resegmentation as important aspect of DMC: “*It is worth to mention X, Y, Z—the programme that makes technology closer to women, it show good practices and promotes knowledge in this area. I like this programme not only because it was awarded by the industry, but also because it is so unique.*”

Kozminski University (KU) is another example of the company utilizing DMC on international market, but operating in a very different industry than companies already described. Kozminski is a private nonprofit business school that was established in Poland in 1993. Although starting from the position of the local school competing with well-established Polish universities, Kozminski has substantially developed their competences, including triple accreditation via EQUIS, AMBA, and AACSB. Nowadays, it is also ranked as the top business school in Central Europe according to *the Financial Times* and in other major rankings. The specific aspect of DMC in the context of international markets which makes Kozminski very special is that in contrast to the vast majority of Polish universities, Kozminski has been investing from its beginning in building international marketing competences and international recognizability. It was even when Polish domestic educational market was very comfortable, especially in the 1990s, when there were many new players entering the market. In contrast to these companies, Kozminski was systematically developing their position with regard to such elements as language competences of teaching and administrative staff, building portfolio of publications in recognizable journals, direct marketing on international scale, and facilitating affiliation with university using various modern communication tools.

Walt Disney Company is an American corporation operating in mass media and entertainment industry. This is one of biggest players in this industry that heavily diversified from animation studio originally into producing theatrical movies, television, and theme parks. There are many aspects of DMC observable in Disney activities, but perhaps the business routine that made this company special in this regard was systematically revising their segmentation and brand positioning. Although Disney had some earlier experience with producing non-cartoon movies, the turning point was probably the introduction of *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie in 2003. Since that time, Disney is consequently enlarging the end market. Disney still produces mainly action movies, but Disney became oriented not only at children, but also families in general and even older customers. The next turning point in this process was the acquisition of Lucas Arts company and launching new movies within *Star Wars* franchise. Additionally, Disney also systematically combines some old marketing tools, like TV advertisement with increased presence in “modern channels,” including video games and social media. Similarly to companies like Beta and C providing electronics, Disney become very effective in creating the interest in their new products before these products become really launched on the market.

Inglot Cosmetics is the Polish company with over 30 years of experience in producing women beauty products, especially make-up products. The company released their first products: nail polishes, lipsticks, and eyeshadows in the late 1980s in Poland still before communism finally collapsed. Since that time the



company developed radically. The first step was to redefine distribution strategy: from selling products through pharmacies and grocery stores into establishing its own exclusive retail outlets in malls. Nowadays, Inglot has over 800 such outlets located in all over the world and become one of top players on global make-up market. However, what is especially interesting with regard to Inglot DMC in international market context is that Inglot is very agile in adapting their products toward specific features of foreign markets. Very spectacular and also successful example of Inglot competencies was the introduction of O2M Halal Breathable Nail Enamel in the Middle East markets in 2014. As for many Muslim women it was very important that the water cleans every part of their body before prayers, this specific type of nail polish was warmly welcomed by many Muslim customers and helped Inglot in building brand image in the region.

CD Projekt is another Polish company that implemented DMC toward their activities on foreign markets. The company was established in 1994 and at the beginning CD Projekt focused on distributing foreign computer software, especially video games into Polish market. Then the company become translating major Western video-game releases into Polish language, which allowed for systematic developing competencies related to game production. The milestone was 2007, when the company released the *Witcher* game, their own production based on the fantasy universe created by Andrzej Sapkowski in his novels. The game was very successful on the domestic market in Poland, but was also warmly welcomed by many fans of RPG games and received many awards around the world. Since that time CD Projekt introduced new games in international markets, including the *Witcher 2* (2011) and the *Witcher 3* (2015). Both of these products became spectacularly successful on global markets in terms of the sales volume and number of prestigious awards received. What makes CD Projekt a very interesting example of DMC in international markets is, first at all, path dependencies observed in company gradual internationalization. The success of every next product was more international and it was largely based on the experience accumulated from prior product releases. Secondly, CD Projekt nicely combined their strengths earned on domestic market, especially animation capabilities and copyrights for Sapkowski's fantasy universe with modern marketing techniques useful in game industry, such as production of high-quality trailers and controlled dissemination of news about new products through social media. Although the universe created by A. Sapkowski contains a lot of regional elements, especially strong connections with Slavonic mythology, CD Projekt managed to combine these elements into products sold globally. The recognizability of CD Projekt's products became so strong that Netflix started production of television series based on Sapkowski's universe, which is planned for release in 2019.

## 4 Conclusions

In this research, we contributed to emerging knowledge on dynamic capabilities (DCV) in marketing in several ways. Firstly, we identified the gaps in the literature with regard to these capabilities emphasizing some controversies and inconsistencies with regard to definitions of main constructs and their measurement. Secondly, we have reviewed prior conceptualizations in this area and proposed our own definition of so-called dynamic marketing capabilities (DMC) which is aligned with DCV in strategy research as well as with prior typologies of marketing resources and capabilities. Thirdly, we presented results of own qualitative research (case studies), which allowed us to identify how real existing companies develop and use DMC in their activities on export markets. Thus, our study enabled identification of some building blocks of DMC on international markets.

Although our study was only explorative in nature, business practices that we observed lead us to some temporal conclusions in the area under investigation. The development of international DMC comes usually as the path-dependent process which is very much in line with DCV reasoning (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000; Teece et al. 1997). Business routines enabling agility in international markets do not come on a discrete basis, but they are rather built through multistage process, where company first builds its strong position on domestic market and only then it gradually modifies its product portfolio and other marketing resources toward specific features of foreign markets. Additionally, enlarging scale of international activities starts usually through foreign markets that are culturally and economically close to the domestic market and only then it moves to the more distant markets. The companies we studied were mainly based in Poland, so they usually started with expansion toward the countries in the region, i.e., Central and Eastern Europe, and then they continued toward Western countries.

Although many marketing mix adaptations were visible in our case studies (e.g., Atlas, Inglot, Kozminski, CD Projekt), we also observed that some companies develop specific routines that allow them to propose quite standardized solutions in international markets (Disney, Beta, C). These were usually very big companies, which were not only able to detect and anticipate changes in the global market, but also they had some routines in place, which enabled stimulating trends on the large scale. These companies seem to detect somehow latent needs in consumer behavior and facilitate these needs with their marketing mix, especially marketing communication. This strategy corresponds well with the distinction between so-called reactive market orientation and proactive market orientation (Narver et al. 2004), where the latter is suggested to increase the success of NPD in today's changing markets. Our research suggests that incorporating this strategy in DMC may be very helpful to succeed in international markets. The question is to what extent such strategy may be also be applied by smaller companies at the early internationalization stage. This is the area for further research, because social media allows for marketing communication on a global scale even in the case of smaller companies. Nevertheless, intuitively this is rather strategic option suitable for established companies as they

can more easily use path dependencies in their activities and they have already some marketing resources in place that would legitimize their new activities among customers.

Our research also suggests that developing DMC in international markets demands some specific managerial features, which also corresponds well with DCV in strategy research. Specifically, it corresponds with so-called dynamic managerial capabilities concept (Helfat and Martin 2015; Martin 2011; Sirmon and Hitt 2009), where there are the three underpinnings: managerial cognition, managerial social capital, and managerial human capital. Our study suggests that there are some elements of managerial mind-set which correlate well with DMC. The majority of our case studies concerned some companies based in Poland, which became finally successful in international markets, but they had difficult beginnings as they all started either still in the communism era in Poland or in the painful stage of early transformation. Thus, entering foreign markets in the case of these companies must have been based on entrepreneurial spirit spread among founders and managers of these companies. Our research illustrates that such entrepreneurial management is needed also in further stages of internationalization, especially in case of discrete changes in the environment. For the companies we investigated, the global financial crisis was the good example of such change and the companies needed to make some radical changes in their marketing mix to handle new circumstances (e.g., Atlas Group). Clearly, such radical changes demand “readiness for change” as an element of managerial mind-set.

Our research is not free from limitations. Firstly, our research is qualitative, so any generalizations from our case studies cannot be straightforward. Further studies should go beyond single setting in Central and Eastern Europe and use larger samples to test if the strategies we identified appear to be statically significant in such datasets, thus, in turn, demanding some work on the measurement model of DMC. Prior studies in this area contain a lot of gaps, which may be treated as an incentive for the future. However, DMC similarly to DCV in strategy research does not seem to be only a fashion in academic research, because this construct corresponds well with the increased volatility of today’s markets and increased internationalization of all industries in general.

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