

BOOK REVIEW

Competing in Customer Driven Markets: A Holistic Approach by Amila Jayarathne (Colombo: Author publication, 2018, 190 pages) Rs. 500/-.

Reviewed by N. Jayantha Dewasiri

Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Gangodawila, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.

In order to become market-driven, companies need to identify the right market signals, build sensing capabilities, define demand-shaping products, and successfully translate the demand signal to create an effective response. In turn, firms expect to develop and maintain a competitive advantage for a longer period of time, the so-called sustainable competitive advantages. This discussion of competition and gaining sustainable competitive advantage has been evolved with a long history. However, in the discipline of marketing, the discussion of competition is mostly developed around the three generic approaches for developing competitive position according to Michael Porter, even though recent marketing textbooks have slightly discussed some marketing implications beyond the company perspective. It is worth noting that supply chain books mainly discuss the beyond firm operation, though their concern on competition is marginal. However, this book, titled *Competing in Customer Driven Markets: A Holistic Approach*, discusses a different perspective of competition, challenging the traditional perspective that limits mostly to the firm level. The new perspective of competition discussed in this book has a broader outlook extending the scope of competition to the supply network level.

This book argues that the firm level competition is not sufficient and is outdated in the current business world as none of the firms are self-sufficient and self-contained; hence competition should be concerned

in a more holistic approach; in fact, the entire supply chain/network should compete as a whole with other supply chains/networks of competitors in the respective industry. With this argument the conventional thinking of marketing and in particular, achieving sustainable competitive advantages by a firm is highly challenged, thus the scope of competition has moved far beyond the capacity of a firm. It means that, no matter how superior, how established and how capable it is, an individual firm on its own is not strong enough to identify, create, deliver and communicate an outstanding customer value from that of competitors to the respective target market.

This book is different from other supply chain management books and competition related books. It is because, the book on one side brings supply chain management approach to the competition and on the other side, use of supply chain management strategies as competitive sources are discussed with relevant empirical evidence. Even though some scholarly books have discussed that firm-level strategies should support the supply network strategies, they have not specifically discussed how supply network strategies should be used for the competition that should first be addressed at the firm level and then at the supply network level. This book has discussed such perspective of competition with the support of empirical evidence from one of the globally important industries, i.e. international clothing industry, from the Asian context.

*Corresponding author (jayantha@postgraduate.edu.lk;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5908-8890>)



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This is a unique book in many aspects. Firstly, it has expanded the conventional perspective of competition from firm level to supply chain level; secondly it has consolidated the knowledge of supply chain management with the competition-related knowledge in marketing; thirdly, this book has discussed empirical evidence in the Sri Lankan context. Further, the simple but comprehensive approach that it has used adds value to the book as it makes the book reader-friendly for the target audience, namely, undergraduate and postgraduate students and the practitioners from the corporate sector. It is worth noting that this book is intended to be an expansion to traditional texts in competition, not a substitute.

The book consists of four chapters. The first chapter highlights the need for competition beyond the firm capacity with the insights of the current business world. It also discusses why a supply chain/network outlook is needed for a new perspective of competition. It's followed by the discussion of the supply chain/network approach for the holistic perspective of competition. In the holistic perspective of competition, three new approaches of competition are discussed: competition among the companies in the same echelon in a single supply chain; competition among companies in different echelons of a single supply chain; competition between supply chains. The third level gives the holistic approach of competition, which is in high demand today.

The second chapter matches the supply network perspective of competition with the business context. It first provides insights on the nature of competition in the current business context followed by the discussion of Michel Porter's five forces model of competition in a given industry context. Here, the international clothing industry, with the evidence from the Sri Lankan clothing industry, has been considered as the empirical base for the five forces model. Then, the chapter introduces new types of competitions that have a holistic approach to competition; in this case, three types of competition, namely, static competition, dynamic competition and foresight competition. Then, the chapter explores how competition, consequently competitive approaches/structures, should be changed according to the nature of the markets. Four types of markets are considered here as monopoly market, monopolistic competition, oligopoly,

and pure competition. This discussion is novel as the nature of competition has been discussed not only in the pure competition but also in other markets where it is conventionally believed that there is no competition.

After introducing the background information on the novel holistic approach of competition and the need of supply chain perspective into the competition from the first two chapters, the third chapter aims for the overview of the supply chain management. This chapter is important for readers who are in the marketing discipline, as the concept of supply chain management is not strongly developed among them. In this chapter, the concept of supply chain management is first defined and then the scope of same is represented. It is followed by the discussion of the supply chain as a management philosophy, as a set of activities to implement a management philosophy, as a set of the management process and as a business strategy. Then, the prerequisites for supply chain management are described.

In the fourth chapter, the supply chain management strategies that can be used as competitive strategies are discussed in detail. It includes supply chain process integration, the importance of focus on core competencies, customer relationship management, strategic supplier relationships, information sharing, utilising 3PL/4PL (3rd Party Logistic/4th Party Logistic) providers, designing and maintaining suitable supply chain/network structure, co-operation with competitors and postponement.

The four chapters in the book are methodologically arranged and tight to each other. In particular, the holistic approach of competition introduced at the first chapter is clearly and logically justified and relevant strategies are comprehensively discussed with required empirical evidence in the remaining chapters. The summary at the end of each chapter gives a clear and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being discussed. The author communicates the main points by using real-world examples, anecdotes and cases that captivate interest and attention. For anyone interested in understanding how sustainable competitive advantages should be developed with a holistic approach, *Competing in Customer Driven Markets: A Holistic Approach* is a book that can be recommended.