

Strategy Discourses as Practice in the Age of Innovation

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Abstract:

In the era of innovation, the strategy of a company is no longer seen as an action limited to phases connected to each other, but beyond that the strategy is seen as a collective action where each actor can influence the strategic process with his potential and his knowledge. Strategy can be studied in a multidimensional way. Strategy as discourse is one of the aspects where it is difficult to locate its resources that feed strategic system. Moreover, behind each concept disseminated inside or outside the company, there emerges a strategic intention.

The ultimate goal of this study is to see how strategic discourse is shaped in reality based on the strategy as practice (SaP). At the same time, what articulation between the SaP approach as discourse and the innovation context.

Keywords: Strategy as practice (SaP); practitioner; practice; praxis; innovation discourses.

JEL Classification Codes: ..., ..., ...

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today, contemporary competition known as hyper competition has made the competitive landscape universal (Lindskov and al, 2021, pp. 1099-1128). Faced with this situation, companies are looking for a new way to compete in the market. Being competitive in the market is not reserved only for companies that have the best material resources such as funds, production equipment, but know how to manage all their material and immaterial resources under the shell of the company's strategic system. This atmosphere made the competition tough and unpredictable.

Faced with this trend, strategic and operational decisions have become less identifiable by the competition. In this context, (Cusumano and al, 2019, pp. 1-309) asserted that the innovation system of companies has become more complementary constituted by a set of new products that are homogeneous between them. This is in order to reach a strategic decision based on a clear and homogeneous discourse that facilitates the manufacturing and implementation of this strategy.

Strategic decision making is no longer practiced in a credible environment. The concept of deep uncertainty is emerging (Marchau and al, 2019, p. 405). In this situation, the big companies of the world are wondering how to compete in a phase where we have the same access to competitive resources at the macro, meso and micro level of the environment. The answer key lies in the way of thinking and doing things.

The strategy is more considered as a classic linear process, but can be seen as a social action (Kearney and al, 2019, pp. 6-17). Social action has several aspects, including the rhetorical aspects of strategy (Vaara, 2015, pp. 491-505). In this context, strategy is shaped by a body of knowledge (Mokeddem and al, 2018, pp. 240-246). These resources will be transferred each in its own context in order to be understandable by all actors involved in the field of strategy development.

This study aims to develop a reflection on how strategy can produce new innovation discourses based on the approach of strategy as practice (SaP) which will be used as an analytical approach in this study (Jarzabkowski and al, 2021, pp. 44-55).

2. Motivation

Our study stems from an intimate conviction that social discourse in terms of strategic words used and when they are used is one of the foundations of this new strategic approach. Everyone is involved in this process. Strategy development is no longer restricted to one level above another.

In this context, a company's innovation system is not only presented through a new work procedure, a new packaging, a new architecture of its products and services, but beyond that, the mode of social interaction is one of the keys to success towards developing an innovative and homogeneous strategic discourse.

Our writing method carries an approach to constructing innovative discourses based on the SaP approach.

3. Methodology

This study aims to present how the innovative strategic discourse is shaped in reality. This theoretical demonstration was developed according to a conceptual method describing three innovative positions that configure the strategic approach in practice. In order to answer this question, a review of the new literature was carried out in order to provide the bases of the strategy as discourse in an innovative context.

4. Literature review

4.1 How does the SaP as discourse work in practice?

The conceptual development of the strategy has emerged over the years. Strategy-related terminology differs depending on the approach used. We cite strategic management (Fuertes and al, 2020, pp. 45-70) which presents strategy as a generic process based on two approaches: general strategy and corporate strategy. In this context, the strategic approach comprises four main phases: the definition of the company's strategic orientations, the internal and external environmental analysis, setting strategic alternatives and finally the implementation and control of this process.

The second term related to the field of strategy is namely strategic decision making. According to (Jankelová and Joniaková, 2022, pp. 242-264), strategic decision-making is an important factor influencing business performance. In this regard, the strategic decision-making process of micro and small companies is quite different from that of medium and large companies. This term is significantly associated with the human dimension of managers, which is based on values and emotions.

The evolution of terminology has followed a change not only in tools but also in the way of thinking and doing things. Another concept that made the buzz is the strategizing. According to (Jarzabkowski and al, 2021, pp. 44-55), the founder of this concept stated that strategy is made as a situated and socially accomplished activity, comprising the following elements: the actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors. All these existing practices are the basis for achieving this activity. According to (Mokeddem and al, 2018, pp. 240-246), strategy as practice is a new fad of strategic management known by its ability to identify the core competencies of the company and even see if its capabilities can be consistent with the overall strategy of the company. But how does it work in reality?

First of all, the evolution of strategic notions observed has strengthened the performance of companies. Never neglect any tool at any time during this process. Knowing how to harmonize each characteristic of each strategic concept with the new trend and therefore with the new objectives. From there, replicating the process in reality is not easy. According to (Kearney and al, 2019, pp. 6-17), the SaP approach is defined through three basic parameters: the practitioners (those who do the strategy work); practices (social, symbolic and material tools through which strategic work is carried out); and praxis (the stream of activity in which the strategy is accomplished).

This new strategic fashion has created multivariate sensations that affect positively in case of success or negatively in case of failure the whole company. According to (Jarzabkowski and al, 2021, pp. 44-55), the literature suggests very broad definitions of who can consider strategy as a triangle based on practitioner, practice, and praxis. The following table

provides an overview of the most important indicators that define the three basic parameters of SaP approach as discourse.

Table 1. How the SaP as discourse work in practice

	Practitioner	Practice	Praxis
SaP approach	- Practitioner as an individual (CEO or CFO); - Practitioner as aggregate actor (class of actors, such as top management, middle management and engineering); - An internal practitioner (MD, middle manager, CEO or project manager); or external practitioner (consultants, gurus and institutions actors, such as chambers of industry and Trade, regulators, colleges of business and economics, trade unions, media; Interest groups such as ecologists).	- Spatial arrangements and, to some extent, material elements of practices such as: the socio-material support, emotional aspect, the motivations, routines, speeches used, express their successes and their failures; critical thinking; introduction of specific theoretical perspectives; narrative and stories; institutional discourse; actions of competing companies; knowledge information...so on.	- Praxis at the macro level. - Praxis at the meso level. - Praxis at the micro level.

Source: (Jarzabkowski and Paul Spee, 2009, pp. 69-95); (Vaara and Whittington, 2012, pp. 285-336); (Fenton and Langley, 2011, pp. 1171-1196);

From this table, we present how strategic discourses are shaped and at what level their resources are identified. In order to understand the field of strategy-making as discourse, three basic concepts are identified for this purpose. In this context, the choice of the practitioner is made according to praxis and practice. We present one of its combinations in order to bring out the nature of this discourse and its degree of involvement in the environment.

First, the macro level refers to initiatives that respond to the practices of strategy at the institutional level, which is most often associated with explaining patterns of action within a specific industry. This decision-making level develops in managers a historically institutionalized strategic ideology. This ideology is seen as an accumulation of knowledge that seeks to stabilize or reproduce social relationships and thus develop new discourses in reality. We present the case of the industry of the great innovators in the world namely Google Android which includes 2 billion users and the iPhone has an installed base of approximately 1 billion devices (Cusumano and al, 2019, pp. 1-309). This position develops a rhetorical context that draws a beam of expansion and installation all over the world. *"We are all over the world and excited to sell our innovation"*.

In this context, aggregate practitioners are seen as key players in spreading their strategic message. This category of practitioners is presented by senior management is more apt to collaborate through generic workshops. Moreover, to bring out these ideological elements, other practices have been integrated such as the introduction of specific theoretical perspectives as a new current of expression. This will encourage practitioners to be more inspired in their expression and therefore their strategic discourse. On the other hand, one of the mechanisms of expression frequently used by senior management is to express their successes and their failures in order to reinforce the prerogatives of the general management or to encourage the actors involved in the strategy to explain their strategic opinions. Furthermore, critical thinking can also be seen as a source of inspiration for developing on strategic discourse. In this phase, the discourse is gradually designed. This critical thinking views strategic discourse as part of the ongoing reconstruction of social relations. In this respect, each actor involved in the company's strategy can contradict the ideas of the others in order to trigger other spirals of knowledge creation and thus enhance the quality of the discourse intended to be disseminated.

Second, the meso level refers to initiatives that explore and attempt to explain strategy practices at the organizational or sub-organizational level. In this position of decision-making, stories are very good practice for explaining ideas and opinions. In this context, the strategy is seen as a narrative resource integrating the collection of stories through interviews conducted with the actors involved. In fact, CEOs can use their storytelling skills when talking to their staff to persuade them to support him during the strategy development process. This reflection is accentuated on business stories and even personal stories in order to bring into play a strategic scenario where the company wants to reach it. Some of the stories most used by companies include stories told about a company's journey to success, a personality like Jack Ma as a successful businessman, or the last era of an industry before it don't go digital. All of its narrative acts can inspire companies to give the best of them.

Indeed, the rules of strategic expression are based on shared routines of behavior, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, acting

and using things. We focus on strategic narrative practices. We cite a few discourse transmission practices based on different levels of narration, namely personal narratives, generic narratives and situational narratives. Personal narratives deal with a specific vision of a business founder or an innovative conception of a product or service. At the same time, public narratives convey archetypal stories about distinct business models. Finally, situational narratives include historical narratives that describe the evolution of the industry or how to be successful in their sector of activity.

At the participant level, a broad category of strategy practitioners was considered to influence the strategic decision-making process. The top management considered is a partner, who defends the interests of the company and its shareholders. In turn, engineers use whimsical posters on company portals and walls to share best practices where certain pairs have leveraged their resources to solve related strategic issues. At this level, the micro-narrative of individuals about strategy and the institutional discourse are the broadest used to disseminate the practical notion of strategy. This approach requires a strong ability to analyze the situation through in-depth interviews, in order to understand each individual's thinking. However, the creation of strategy manufacturing zones is not only about individual identities but also about collective and organizational identities. The actions of competing companies can be leveraged to convey a clear strategic message that develops continuous responsiveness reasoning in individuals. Finally, business and economics colleges are also considered full stakeholders in this process of developing a homogeneous strategic discourse. This is done through advanced training on the ways of expression on each competitive strategic situation, for example during the differentiation strategy the company develops new creative sensations at each level of the organization.

Finally, micro refers to initiatives that attempt to explain strategy as a practice based on the experiences of the individual or group of individuals i.e. their field of expertise along with their knowledge and skills. In this level, the strategy is used as a conversational movement between pairs. In particular, (Wodak and al, 2011, pp. 592-644) identified five discursive strategies to foster the development of the linguistic micro processes

involved, namely linking, encouraging, directing, modulating and re/engaging. The linking phase aims to express and associate new information and relevant points of view on the problem in question. The encouragement phase is used to encourage participation by reducing protocols and power structures. The directing phase guided practitioners towards a desired goal. The modulation phase serves to reconfigure strategic actions and reflections for the well-being of the company and finally the re-engagement phase seeks to encourage practitioners to integrate themselves again into the field of strategy making with a new strategic thinking. Consequently, several linguistic devices can be used with these strategies such as narratives, metaphors, emotional expressions and even sociomaterial practices. Others see ambiguity and multivocality of ideas as major supports in the process of strategic conversation.

This list of SaP approach is not exhaustive, there are an unlimited number of combinations depending on material and immaterial resources that are sometimes difficult to identify. This will make the imitation operation a very complicated process to grasp. This atmosphere provides companies with an environment conducive to development and innovations.

4.2 How is the discourse of innovation formed?

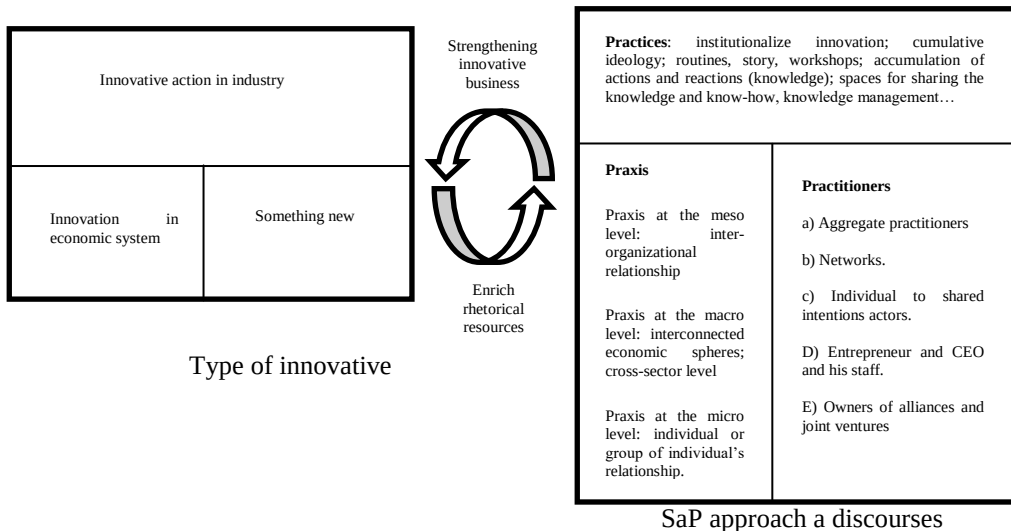
The development of innovation strategy is driven by environmental changes that require new institutionalization and infrastructure to make continuous innovation thriving (Pansera and Owen, 2018, pp. 23-34). According to (Borowski, 2021, pp. 1-17), innovation strategy can be described as a plan for the development of business activities aimed at encouraging, mobilizing, motivating and achieving technological or service advances by investing financial and human assets in research and development activities. In this context, the terminology related to the field of innovation has evolved considerably since 1990 to date. New terms have emerged such as “frugal innovation”, “reverse innovation” and, notably, “inclusive innovation” has proliferated in the field (Pansera and Owen, 2018, pp. 23-34).

According to (Pisano, 2019, pp. 62-71) developing links to the world of innovation is not an easy or quick task to achieve. To be an innovative

company, it is not necessary to directly develop new products or services (Borowski, 2021, pp. 1-17). The company may be innovative at an intermediate stage without having offered tangible services and products in the market. According to (Henning and McKelvey, 2020, pp. 495-501), innovation and entrepreneurship mainly depend on innovative people, their skills, and knowledge.

In this part, we present how innovative discourse develops within a company. For this reason, a reflective approach was adopted with three innovative situations selected (Borowski, 2021, pp. 1-17). This is in order to develop three types of strategic discourses all based on the SaP approach (see figure 1).

Fig.1. SaP as discourse in an innovative context



Source: Own elaboration

We cite the case of the industrial revolution presented by the new industrial architecture, namely industry 4.0. This new configuration aims to increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing industry (Ghobakhloo and al, 2021, pp. 4237-4257). In this regards, industry 4.0 is strongly linked with a wide variety of principles: real-time response capability, decentralization, interoperability, modularity and virtualization are the most widely recognized principles in this field (Murugaiyan and Ramasamy,

2021, pp. 1241-1262). The phenomenon of industry 4.0 with their ability to participate in reality has been tested by (Awan and al, 2021, pp. 2038-2060). This phenomenon sees competition as interconnected economic spheres. Faced with this new situation, business leaders are invited to change their verbatim and their strategic discourse. According to (Reischauer, 2018, pp. 26-33), industry 4.0 has a manufacturing-oriented innovation discourse that aims to institutionalize innovation systems that encompass business, academia and politics. This mutation is the result of a cumulative ideology based on connected technology. Through this ideological system, aggregate practitioners are invited to draw inspiration in their expression and therefore their strategic discourse.

Innovation discourse prototype I

“We can be connected everywhere during our mission but beyond that we seek to be sustainable in our actions”.

The second type of innovation is presented by the expected changes in the existing economic system which consists of the development and implementation of new solutions for a company and the improvement of existing solutions. This aims to increase the efficiency of its operation and thus have a strategic position as a pioneer in its market.

In practice, the complexity that surrounds the innovation process is determined by a considerable number of characteristics composed by several processes and routines that aim to create value within the organization. In order to facilitate the understanding of innovation discourse led by companies in their processes, we explore the study conducted by (Vala and al, 2017, pp. 471-481). Business leaders seek to know how they can convey their innovative thinking to the whole organization.

This study carried out on Portuguese companies with the aim of exploring twenty-two routines that are potentially effective in carrying out their innovation discourses. Among the twenty-two routines selected, 10 key innovation routines have been retained in order to develop the company's innovation process. We cite some of the most important routines

from this study. First, the company must embody technology monitoring practices to be aware of all relevant technological developments in the field. This routine relies on a solid knowledge of the field by practitioners who are based mainly on a rich knowledge base. This monitoring approach is a transversal approach based on networks, involving several people located at several levels of the organization and across organizations.

The second routine is presented by the environmental information retained on the market in order to follow its evolution and identify opportunities that bring value. This routine requires strong analytical and data processing skills, which are carried out systematically way at the cross-sector level. Consequently, the retained environmental information is seen as an accumulation of actions and reactions between competitors that shapes the current competitive status.

The third routine is presented by the company's ability to closely monitor the activity of its competitors. In this context, the business leader should retain a person or group of people responsible for competitive intelligence. It is recommended that these actors have some skills in research and information gathering. The fallout behind such a practice is to find new products, services, process technologies, and even to anticipate possible competitive actions.

Finally, companies participate in innovation events, for example fairs, meetings or conferences. This routine contributes to the creation of spaces for sharing the knowledge and know-how of others via multidisciplinary workshops that unite sectors of activity around a common managerial discourse. This relationship will flourish especially with the foundation of an inter-organizational relationship.

In conclusion, creating an explicit routine structure will develop a culture of reflection and strategic thinking. In this regard, the routines developed will be internalized in the practices and praxis carried out by the practitioners. We recall that the routine practices of the typology of the strategic monitoring (technical, competitive, environmental...) are necessary not only to have information on the current environment but to know how to develop a proactive strategic discourse based on innovation.

Innovation discourse prototype II

“We can deploy an integrative solution that not only addresses the current problem but beyond thinks to solve the issues not currently available”.

The last type of innovation used in this study aims to address aspects related to market players. We reciprocate with something new that lowers cost, reduces risk, or provides an improved product, service, and instrument. We choose an innovation model that contributes to the implementation of a strategic innovation project. In this context, we seek to know how to transfer a discourse of innovation based on costs. For this purpose, according to (Chwastyk, 2015, pp. 33-40) a very important crucial element before the start of the implementation of innovation processes, namely clearly identifying the costs of innovation, developing a detailed innovation plan and estimating more precisely costs has become a major necessity. At this stage, developing a thought of innovation with cost control requires a strong decomposition of the cost structure that configures the innovation process.

We break down this cost structure into a set of points. First, the costs associated with all the design solutions. In this respect, the costs include all aspects related to the design and components of this product/service. The second element that makes up this cost structure is the criteria for choosing the best solution. This element must be in line with the company's internal capacities, especially since each selection criterion triggers one of the costs linked to its construction. The third element that forms this cost structure, namely the choice of experts who will be responsible for the innovation mission. Each proposal deployed by the expert will be evaluated according to the impact factor of this proposal. The fourth element that forms this cost structure, namely the determination of the weights of the criteria retained. This is why each criterion will be evaluated according to its scope and its effects on the company. Finally, the overall evaluation of the innovation process is calculated as an additional cost that includes all the costs related to the choices and composition of each criterion.

In conclusion, clarifying the components of the cost structure related to innovation will help to make employees aware of each planned expense.

In this regard, each actor involved in the strategy in practice will be able to communicate strategically with the whole company using cost-related terminology. For this reason, telling the experience of a leading company in the field of cost innovation is a practice highly demanded by practitioners.

Innovation discourse prototype III

“We can deploy innovative solutions with a strong control of the cost structure and therefore meet the expectations of our partners”.

5. CONCLUSION

The main challenge of this study is to know how to develop the strategy as a discourse in an innovative context and how the strategic message can be disseminated in a way understandable by all and therefore make the company more efficient compared to others.

For this need, a strategic approach was adopted, from a strategic one-way approach to a strategic approach as practice (SaP). The first considers strategy as a much formalized process. On the other hand, the second considers the strategy as a multifaceted resource not limited by a context or by a tool. This new approach offers companies a new way to compete, where we can take advantage all our strategic resources at any organizational or inter-organizational level.

The strategic discourse is shaped on the basis of three strategic aspects, namely, practitioners, practices and praxis. These three fundamentals of the SaP approach operate in a homogeneous cluster with a stronger inter and intra connection between them. In this context, strategy-related practices operate on the basis of a set of strategic mechanisms fed by strategic and even operational actors. The latter play the role of direct or indirect strategic mediator. These strategic mechanisms develop around a social context either at the organizational, inter-organizational, intra-organizational levels known by the praxis.

In order to properly retain the functioning mechanisms of the strategy as a discourse, three innovative contexts have been identified. The first concerns the industrial revolution known by industry 4.0. This new

situation has upset the competition or our business models have become more obsolete. This competitive trend requires a new strategic device in order to clearly identify all market opportunities and threats.

Our system is purely based on strategic discourse or how to encourage our partners to get involved in this new industry. In this industrial context, sectorial competition has become more connected; each strategic decision can affect other sectors of activity. In order to clearly understand the situation, our discourse seeks to identify the praxis, practices and practitioners linked to this project. The discourses are based on an accumulation of knowledge which develops a macroeconomics ideology. This ideology can be institutionalized by an internal regulation at the level of the company, where each actor becomes connected to the others in his thought and his discourse. This discourse can not only affect the business environment, but beyond the scope of intersectoral activities.

The second innovative context aims to familiarize members of the company with the notion of strategic innovation. In this respect, the internalization of current knowledge practices is a solution highly appreciated by companies. For this purpose, the discourses requested are very rich in knowledge located in several organizational and inter-organizational forms. Therefore, transforming practices into routines rules will facilitate the transformation of strategic discourse into concrete action.

Ultimately, this last innovative context aims to deploy an innovative discourse based on costs. To do this, each actor involved in the strategy must be aware of each step of the innovation process. At this stage, narrative stories are very popular in this type of action. Business leaders seek to share stories of the best innovative business path with a strong ability to control costs.

In the perspectives of this study, we will see how to develop a strategic discourse prototype. For this reason, we will work on the basis of qualitative analysis of company activity reports in an industrial context. We seek to determine the evolution of this context and thus identify the main factors that drive strategic discourse based on the SaP approach.

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