

The Neoinstitutional Theory and the Resource-based Theory in terms of Heterogeneity Versus Isomorphism and Conformity

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Abstract

This article delves into the nuanced interrelationship among heterogeneity, isomorphism, conformity, and differentiation within the paradigm of contemporary neoinstitutional theory, enriched by the incorporation of the resource-based theory framework. It investigates the complex dynamics governing organizational behavior and strategic orientation through a sophisticated analytical lens. By amalgamating insights from neoinstitutional theory with the resource-based perspective, the study elucidates multifaceted mechanisms that shape organizational responses to external and internal stimuli. Central to this inquiry is the examination of how organizational diversity, isomorphic pressures, conformity imperatives, and strategic differentiation processes intersect and influence one another within the contemporary organizational landscape. Through meticulous examination and synthesis of theoretical underpinnings, this article offers a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics driving organizational evolution and strategic decision-making in contexts.

Keywords: Neo-institutional Theory, resource-based theory, heterogeneity, isomorphism, conformity, differentiation.

النظرية المؤسسية الجديدة ونظرية الموارد من حيث التباين مقابل التماثل والتوافق

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الملخص

تتعمق هذه المقالة في العلاقة الدقيقة بين التباين والتماثل والتوافق والتمايز داخل نموذج النظرية المؤسسية الجديدة المعاصرة، والتي تم إثراؤها من خلال دمج إطار النظرية القائمة على الموارد. ومن خلال عدسة تحليلية متطورة، تحقق في الديناميكيات المعقدة التي تحكم السلوك التنظيمي والتوجه الاستراتيجي. من خلال دمج الأفكار المستمدة من النظرية المؤسسية الجديدة مع منظور قائم على الموارد، توضح الدراسة الأليات المتعددة الأوجه التي تشكل الاستجابات التنظيمية للمحفزات الخارجية والداخلية. ويتمثل المحور الأساسي لهذا التحقيق في فحص كيفية تقاطع التنوع التنظيمي والضغوط المتماثلة وضرورات الخارجية والداخلية. ويتمثل المحرر وتأثيرها على بعضها البعض داخل المشهد التنظيمي والضغوط المتماثلة وضرورات التوافق وعمليات النمايز الاستراتيجي فهمًا شاملاً للديناميكيات المعقدة التي تقدم والتنظيمي والضغوط المتماثلة وضرورات الموافق وعمليات المايز الاستراتيجي فهمًا شاملاً للديناميكيات المعقدة التي تقدم والتنظيمي والضغوط المتمائلة وضرورات الموافق وعمليات المايز الاستراتيج

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظرية المؤسسية الجديدة، نظرية الموارد، التباين، التماثل، التوافق، التمايز.

Introduction

The neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory engenders a rich terrain of exploration, particularly concerning the dialectics of heterogeneity versus isomorphism and conformity versus differentiation. This article pursuit delves into the intricate dynamics that govern organizational behavior and strategic decision-making [1]. By scrutinizing the fundamental tenets of both neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory, article endeavor to unravel the complexities underlying organizational

adaptation, innovation, and competitive advantage in an ever-evolving socio-economic landscape. This inquiry serves as a cornerstone in comprehending the multifaceted nature of organizational dynamics, shedding light on the mechanisms through which organizations navigate the dialectical tensions between heterogeneity and diversity, conformity and distinctiveness, thus shaping their strategic trajectories and competitive positioning in contemporary markets [2].

In this juncture, the article provides a nuanced investigates of neo-institutional theory and the resourcebased theory independently, offering comprehensive insights into each theoretical. To begin with, neoinstitutional theory stands as a prominent theoretical framework utilized for comprehending organizational behavior within the context of broader social structures and influences emanating from other organizations. This theoretical perspective particularly emphasizes the impact of cultural norms and beliefs on organizational dynamics. Early scholarship in this domain explored how the establishment of overarching cultural norms shaped actors and fostered organizational isomorphism, the tendency for organizations within a given field to become increasingly similar over time. Subsequent developments broadened the scope of the theory to encompass the dynamics of institutional transformation and change, as well as the diversity of actors and practices within fields [3]. This expansion has given rise to new avenues of theoretical exploration, such as those associated with the institutional logic's perspective. While neo-institutional theory draws primarily from concepts and debates within management and sociology, it also incorporates insights from cognitive and social psychology, anthropology, political science, and economics.

On the other hand, according to the resource-based theory of the firm, an organization can achieve superior performance relative to its competitors through the effective combination of its technical, human, and other resources. Within this framework, human capital is recognized as a crucial resource, and thus, it is imperative to optimize the capabilities and knowledge of personnel while mitigating the risk of talent attrition through the application of ergonomics principles. The resource-based theory posits that sustained competitive advantage can be attained by strategically selecting and developing resources that possess characteristics of value, rarity, inimitability, and exploitability by the organization. By enhancing the ergonomic design of jobs and workplaces, ergonomics interventions can facilitate the maximization of the utilization of valuable, scarce, and difficult-to-imitate human resources. Consequently, this contributes to the attainment of sustained competitive advantage and superior economic performance relative to industry norms [4].

In this sub-section, the article engages in an in-depth exploration of the literature review, with a particular emphasis on neo-institutional theory and the resource-based theory. In this article [5] the literature was reviewed, and the utility of neo-institutionalism in public administration was discussed. Neo-institutionalism theory, previously characterized as focusing on the isomorphism and the stability, garnered greater attention in the past two decades regarding its contribution to understanding change. This scrutiny involved examining various aspects: the types of change considered; drivers of organizational change; reasons for investigating neo-institutionalism and the insights they provided; and research results, including the methodologies employed. Neo-institutionalism was posited as offering an effective framework for conducting research on organizational change in neo-institutionalism and for informing public administration practice, for several reasons.

According to [6], resource-based theory delved into the exploration of heterogeneity in performance across firms, scrutinizing it through the prism of valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable resource advantages, alongside the organizational mechanisms devised for their exploitation. Similarly, the Resource-advantage theory of competition delved into the examination of heterogeneity in performance through the perspective of a firm's comparative advantage in resources and its competitive advantage within the marketplace. According to [7], the paper aimed to provide a theoretical framework wherein the "resource-based view" of the firm intersected with evolutionary economics and the study of entrepreneurship, as well as with the economics of industrial organization. The paper was achieved by proposing the concept of the "resource economy," within which productive resources were produced and exchanged between firms. The paper was presented as the dual of the mainstream goods and services economy, whereby the "resource economy" encapsulated the dynamic capital structure of the economy. The paper was concerned with elucidating the distinctive principles governing resource dynamics within the resource economy, encapsulating competitive dynamics in categories such as resource creation, replication, propagation, exchange, and leverage.

According to [8] the resource-based theory formerly adopted an 'inside-out' approach or firm-specific perspective to elucidate the factors contributing to organizational success or failure in the marketplace. According to resource-based theory, a firm's capabilities enabled certain entities to enhance value along the customer value chain, innovate new products, or expand into novel market segments. resource-based theory leveraged the internal reservoir of resources and capabilities within organizations to cultivate enduring competitive advantages. However, it was recognized that not all of a firm's resources

were strategic, thus not all could serve as sources of competitive advantage. Competitive advantage materialized exclusively in contexts characterized by resource heterogeneity and resource immobility. According to [9], the neo-institutionalism Theory, comparative entry encompassed sections that defined the theory, explored developments within the theoretical framework, demonstrated specific applications of the theory to Human Resource Management (HRM), and provided suggested topic areas for future research. Comparative Institutional Theory elucidated the mechanisms underlying country-level variations in the behavior of firms and institutions. It aimed to elucidate how institutions could facilitate exchange relations among actors and engender complementarities, thereby ensuring that rules and practices synergistically contributed to superior outcomes. The utilization of resource-based theory in marketing research experienced a surge of over 500% in the preceding decade, underscoring its significance as a framework for elucidating and prognosticating competitive advantages and performance outcomes. This article [10] furnished a thorough retrospective examination of resourcebased theory, encompassing a contemporary conceptual groundwork for pertinent terminologies and assumptions, as well as a synthesis of empirical discoveries gleaned from the marketing literature. This multifaceted appraisal of resource-based theory also scrutinized existing marketing research through four distinct perspectives: the spheres within marketing that incorporate resource-based theory, the distinguishing characteristics and applications of market-based resources setting it apart from other research contexts, the extension of resource-based theory to encompass the "marketing exchange" as a unit of analysis, and the interconnection of resource-based theory with related theoretical frameworks [11].

Additionally, this scrutiny unveiled prevalent shortcomings associated with previous investigations, proffering provisional recommendations on how to enhance the integration of resource-based theory within marketing endeavors, and suggesting prospective avenues for advancing both the conceptualization and empirical validation of resource-based theory in forthcoming research endeavors. Within the expansive realm of social sciences, neoinstitutional served as a foundational theoretical framework, meticulously examining how neoinstitutional contexts exerted influence and shaped societal structures. This study by [12], rooted in the premise that functionalist differentiation theory facilitated the identification, analysis, and redefinition of issues within social structures, delved into the intricate interplay between social structure and neoinstitutional logics. Employing a meta-cognitive and analytical descriptive and reflective methodology, grounded in an extensive review of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature, the research elucidated those social structures and neoinstitutional logics played crucial roles in institutions, despite not seamlessly aligning or integrating. The study underscored that these relationships, while pivotal, often gave rise to contrasting neoinstitutional, perpetuating institutional dysfunctions, and paradoxes within societies.

This article by [13] undertakes an examination of the evolutionary trajectory and implementation of egovernment through the lens of neo-institutional theory. Initially, it offers a critical appraisal of Jane Fountain's technology enactment framework, contending that the framework falls short in elucidating how elected officials, public administrators, and citizens can actively foster the advancement of egovernment towards enhanced democratic governance. This critique underscores the nascent stage and inherent ambiguity within neoinstitutionalism concerning the dynamics of institutional transformation. The author posits that a nuanced equilibrium must be struck between agency and institutional structures, and between deliberate strategic choices and institutional constraints, in order to comprehensively analyze the sustained evolution of e-government as a protracted process of institutional metamorphosis. It is argued that adopting such a balanced analytical approach holds the potential to engender a more sanguine outlook for the future of e-government within the realm of public administration.

Theoretical Framework

In contemporary neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory, the intricate interplay between heterogeneity and isomorphism, as well as conformity and differentiation, holds paramount importance in comprehending the dynamics of organizational behavior and strategy. This understanding is enriched by drawing upon insights from neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory related theoretical frameworks, providing a robust foundation for synthesizing key concepts and mechanisms that illuminate this multifaceted interplay. Moreover, neoinstitutional theory emphasizes the isomorphic processes through which organizations strive for legitimacy and survival within their institutional environments [14]. Isomorphism, as conceptualized within this framework, refers to the tendency of organizations to emulate the structures, practices, and behaviors of their institutional peers in response to external pressures. Such pressures may include coercive mandates from regulatory bodies, mimetic impulses driven by uncertainty, and normative expectations rooted in cultural and societal norms.

In contrast, the resource-based theory emerges from the strategic management literature, offering a distinct perspective on the sources of sustained competitive advantage within organizations. Originating from seminal works by scholars such as Penrose, Barney, and Wernerfelt, the resource-based theory posits that organizations' ability to achieve and maintain competitive advantage hinges upon the possession of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities [15].

At the core of the resource-based theory is the notion that organizations are heterogeneous in their resource endowments, and it is the unique bundle of resources and capabilities possessed by each firm that ultimately determines its strategic positioning and performance. These resources encompass tangible assets such as physical infrastructure and financial capital, as well as intangible assets such as intellectual property, organizational culture, and knowledge networks. Furthermore, the resource-based theory underscores the strategic significance of firms' capabilities in leveraging and deploying these resources effectively to create value and sustain competitive advantage over time. These capabilities encompass organizational routines, managerial skills, and strategic competencies that enable firms to adapt to changing market conditions, innovate in product or service offerings, and respond to competitive threats.

A. Neoinstitutionalism and the resource-based theory Integration

The integration of neoinstitutionalism with the Resource-Based Theory represents a pivotal convergence within contemporary organizational scholarship, facilitating a nuanced exploration of organizational behavior and strategy formulation. Neoinstitutionalism, grounded in sociological and institutional perspectives, emphasizes the influence of social norms, cultural expectations, and institutional pressures on organizational structures and behaviors [16]. Concurrently, the resource-based theory posits that sustained competitive advantage stems from the possession of unique and valuable resources that are difficult for competitors to replicate. Moreover, this amalgamation of perspectives offers a sophisticated analytical framework for examining how institutional forces shape the development and utilization of organizational resources.

Neoinstitutionalism provides insights into the institutional environment in which organizations operate, elucidating the coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures that influence resource allocation and utilization decisions. Meanwhile, the Resource-Based Theory offers a lens through which to understand how organizations leverage their resource endowments to respond to institutional demands and differentiate themselves from competitors [17].

It is worthy to mention that, this integration enables scholars and practitioners to explore how institutional pressures affect the acquisition, development, and deployment of resources within organizations. Moreover, it facilitates a deeper understanding of how organizations strategically adapt to institutional environments to achieve competitive advantage while maintaining legitimacy and conforming to societal expectations. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, scholars can gain valuable insights into the complex interplay between institutional forces and resource-based strategic choices, thereby advancing our understanding of organizational dynamics in contemporary contexts. In response to this integration, research and practitioners have explored various implications and avenues for research and practice:

Enhanced Understanding of Organizational Dynamics:

Researchers have leveraged the integrated framework to delve deeper into the intricate interplay between institutional pressures and firm-specific resources and capabilities. This has led to a more nuanced understanding of how organizations navigate their external environments while leveraging internal strengths to achieve strategic objectives.

Strategic Decision-Making

Organizations have used the integrated framework to inform their strategic decision-making processes. By considering both institutional pressures and resource-based advantages, firms can develop more robust strategies that align with external expectations while capitalizing on internal strengths to gain competitive advantage.

Organizational Adaptation

The integrated framework has provided insights into how organizations adapt to changing institutional environments. By understanding the mechanisms through which institutional pressures influence resource allocation and utilization, firms can anticipate and respond effectively to regulatory changes, industry trends, and shifts in societal expectations.

Innovation and Differentiation:

The integration of neoinstitutional Theory and the Resource-Based Theory has shed light on the role of innovation and differentiation in organizational success. By leveraging unique resources and capabilities to differentiate themselves from competitors, firms can carve out distinctive market positions and achieve sustained competitive advantage.

Managerial Practice

Practitioners have utilized the integrated framework to inform managerial practice in areas such as strategic planning, organizational design, and performance management. By considering both institutional context and internal capabilities, managers can make more informed decisions that drive organizational success.

Overall, the response to the integration of neoinstitutional Theory and the Resource-Based Theory has been positive, with scholars and practitioners recognizing the value of combining insights from both perspectives to gain a more holistic understanding of organizational behavior and strategy. This integrated approach holds promise for advancing both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in the field of organizational studies.

B. Heterogeneity and Isomorphism

In the context of neoinstitutional theory, heterogeneity refers to the inherent diversity among organizations in terms of their structures, strategies, and cultures. Organizations exhibit varying configurations, ranging from their internal processes and decision-making mechanisms to their external relationships with stakeholders. Neoinstitutional theory underscores the significance of heterogeneity in shaping organizational behavior and outcomes, as it recognizes that no two organizations are identical in their responses to institutional pressures or strategic choices. Similarly, within the resource-based theory framework, heterogeneity manifests in the unique bundle of resources and capabilities possessed by each organization. Firms differ in their resource endowments, which may include tangible assets like physical infrastructure and financial capital, as well as intangible assets like intellectual property, human capital, and organizational knowledge. This heterogeneity gives rise to differences in competitive advantages, as organizations leverage their distinctive resources to pursue different strategies and achieve varying levels of performance [18].

For neoinstitutional theory, heterogeneity underscores the need to account for the diverse responses of organizations to institutional pressures. It highlights the complexity of organizational dynamics and the importance of considering contextual factors in understanding organizational behavior. Recognizing heterogeneity allows scholars to explore how organizations navigate their institutional environments while maintaining their unique identities and strategic orientations. In the Resource-Based Theory domain, heterogeneity emphasizes the strategic significance of firms' resource endowments. It suggests that competitive advantage stems from leveraging unique resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. By acknowledging heterogeneity, Resource-Based Theory highlights the importance of developing and deploying resources in ways that are difficult for competitors to replicate, thereby sustaining a competitive edge in the market [19].

Contrary to heterogeneity, isomorphism represents the tendency of organizations to converge towards similar structures, strategies, and cultures in response to institutional pressures. Neoinstitutional theory identifies three main forms of isomorphism: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Coercive isomorphism occurs when organizations comply with external regulations and mandates to avoid penalties or sanctions. Mimetic isomorphism involves organizations imitating the behaviors and practices of successful peers due to uncertainty or lack of information.

Normative isomorphism occurs when organizations internalize prevailing norms and values, seeking legitimacy and social acceptance [20]. In the resource-based theory framework, isomorphism can manifest in competitive pressures that drive firms to imitate successful competitors' strategies or adopt industry standards and best practices. This can lead to a convergence of strategic approaches and resource allocation decisions within an industry, as firms seek to emulate what they perceive as successful models [20].

Isomorphism presents challenges for both neoinstitutional theory and resource-based theory. For neoinstitutional Theory, isomorphism raises questions about the extent to which organizations retain their autonomy and distinctiveness in the face of institutional pressures. It highlights the tension between conformity to external expectations and the preservation of organizational identity and strategic differentiation. In the context of Resource-Based Theory, isomorphism can erode firms' competitive advantages by encouraging imitation and replication of valuable resources and capabilities. This underscores the importance of developing resources that are truly rare and difficult for competitors to duplicate, as well as the need for firms to continuously innovate and differentiate themselves to maintain a sustainable competitive edge.

C. Conformity and Differentiation

In the context of neoinstitutional theory, informed by the Resource-Based Theory perspective, conformity reflects the strategic alignment of organizational behaviors, structures, and practices with prevailing institutional norms and expectations, while leveraging unique resources and capabilities to

maintain a competitive edge. This approach recognizes that organizations operate within institutional environments characterized by regulatory frameworks, industry standards, and cultural norms, which exert coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures. When viewed through the lens of Resource-Based Theory, organizations conform to institutional expectations while strategically leveraging their unique resources and capabilities to achieve differentiation [21]. For instance, organizations may comply with regulatory requirements and industry standards, ensuring they meet minimum expectations for legitimacy and acceptance. Simultaneously, they strategically deploy their distinctive resources and capabilities to differentiate themselves from competitors, thereby enhancing their competitive positioning and performance.

Differentiation, within neoinstitutional theory informed by the Resource-Based Theory perspective, involves deviating from industry norms and standards to introduce innovative practices, products, or strategies that leverage the organization's unique resources and capabilities. This approach recognizes that sustainable competitive advantage stems from possessing and leveraging resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable [22]. From the resource-based theory viewpoint, differentiation entails leveraging unique resources and capabilities to create a competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to replicate. organizations strategically invest in developing and enhancing their distinctive resources, such as proprietary technologies, specialized knowledge, or unique organizational cultures. These resources enable organizations to differentiate their offerings, attract customers, and command premium prices in the marketplace [23].

By strategically balancing conformity with differentiation, organizations can navigate institutional environments effectively while simultaneously leveraging their unique resources and capabilities to create value and differentiate themselves from competitors. This approach enables organizations to maintain legitimacy and acceptance within their institutional contexts while also achieving strategic differentiation that drives innovation, growth, and superior performance over time. Overall, the integration of neoinstitutional theory with the resource-based theory enriches our understanding of how organizations strategically manage the tension between conformity and differentiation to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic and uncertain environments. It underscores the importance of aligning organizational behaviors with institutional expectations while leveraging unique resources and capabilities to drive strategic differentiation and long-term success.

Conclusion

The neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory serves as a cornerstone in advancing our comprehension of organizational dynamics. This synthesis illuminates the multifaceted nature of organizational behavior, offering insights into how organizations navigate the complex interplay between external pressures and internal resources to achieve competitive advantage. By scrutinizing the dialectical tensions of heterogeneity versus isomorphism and conformity versus differentiation, scholars have unveiled the intricate mechanisms through which organizations strive for legitimacy, innovation, and sustainability. Neoinstitutional Theory underscores the adaptive strategies employed by organizations to respond to external institutional pressures, while the Resource-Based Theory emphasizes the strategic leveraging of internal resources and capabilities to attain competitive advantage.

Moreover, this synthesis elucidates the dynamic interplay between conformity and differentiation, highlighting how organizations reconcile the imperatives of institutional legitimacy with the pursuit of strategic distinctiveness. Similarly, the tension between heterogeneity and isomorphism underscores the balance organizations must strike between embracing diversity and conforming to institutional norms. As researcher navigate an increasingly complex and dynamic business environment, the insights gleaned from this synthesis are paramount. By understanding the nuances of organizational behavior through the lens of neoinstitutional theory and the Resource-Based Theory, scholars and practitioners alike are better equipped to navigate the strategic challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. However, further empirical research is needed to explore the practical implications of these theoretical perspectives in diverse organizational contexts.

In essence, the synthesis of neoinstitutional theory and the resource-based theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricacies of organizational behavior and strategic management. It underscores the importance of balancing external pressures with internal capabilities, and conformity with differentiation, to achieve sustained competitive advantage in today's dynamic marketplace. To sum up, identify potential avenues for future article that could further enrich our understanding of the interplay between neoinstitutional theory and the Resource-Based Theory in the context of heterogeneity versus isomorphism and conformity versus differentiation, suggesting areas for theoretical refinement or empirical investigation.

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