

CORPORATE LEADERS' DECISION STYLES, ENTRENCHMENT AND DISRUPTIVE STRATEGIES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

ABSTRACT

Decision making is a key responsibility of top management team (TMT) members, including CMOs (Chief Marketing Officers), yet, ineffective decision making is increasingly recognized as a problem at the top rungs of organizations. By combining insights from past literature with those obtained from a grounded study using qualitative data from 23 CMO interviews, we propose a conceptual framework for understanding CMO decision styles, appraisals of entrenchment, and disruption strategies used as well as the mechanisms that connect these concepts. Throughout we intersperse conceptual arguments with verbatim comments of CMOs obtained from our field work and develop propositions to guide future research. We also outline implications and limitations of the proposed framework.

Key words: Entrenchment; Disruptive Strategies; Innovation; Corporate Leadership; Managerial Cognition

INTRODUCTION

To lead innovation is one of the key roles of corporate leaders; yet, ineffective decision making is increasingly recognized as a problem at the top rungs of organizations. In a recent survey, only 28% of executives rated the quality of strategic decisions as “generally good” while 60% thought bad decisions were as frequent as good ones (Lovallo & Sibony, 2010). Keeping with the view that corporate decision making is a key responsibility of top management team (TMT) members (Klein & Weick, 2000), past research has focused predominantly on the characteristics, roles, and orientations of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and TMT composition (Menz, 2012). Only recently have scholars begun to focus on individual TMT members other than the CEO, such as Chief Marketing, Chief Knowledge, and Chief Information

Officers (e.g., CMO, CKO, CIO), by typically employing psychological and behavioral approaches for understanding the cognitions, heuristics, and biases that shape their decision making. Specifically, CMOs, as well as CKOs and CIOs, play an important role in leading innovations within an organization because their expertise in understanding the pulse of customer needs places them in a strategic role for identifying, selecting and bringing-to-market new opportunities (Nath & Mahajan, 2011; Boyd, Chandy & Cunha, 2010). Despite their importance, Boyd et al. (2010: 1174) note that paucity of research on individual TMT members including the CMO make them “rather enigmatic creatures in the literature.”

By contrast, studies of individual decision making in organizations have received much attention. According to one growing body of literature, decision making can be explained by dual process theories wherein individuals are thought to process information either rationally or experientially (Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Haier, 1996) or rule-based versus associative systems (Sloman, 1996), although the two systems may operate interactively as well (Epstein et al., 1996). For instance, Epstein’s Cognitive-Experiential-Self-Theory (CEST) distinguishes between analytical-rational and intuitive-experiential information processing systems (Epstein et al. 1996; Pacini & Epstein, 1999). Another promising body of work rooted in theories of expertise and cognitive inertia suggests that while expertise is particularly useful in generating innovative decisions, it can also lead to entrenchment indicated by the narrowing of schemas and choices (Dane, 2010). Experts can become cognitively or emotionally stuck in their knowledge, resulting in a reduced ability to identify optimal solutions to problems, adapt to novel situations and generate new ideas within their domain (Dane, 2010). Yet research on entrenchment among corporate leaders is sparse and an understanding of whether leaders recognize it and how they overcome it almost nonexistent.

We address the preceding gaps in the literature by connecting the disparate bodies of work on leader decision making with a focus on Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs). Nearly three quarters of CEOs rank innovation among their top three firm priorities (Andrew, Manget, Michael, Taylor, & Zablit, 2010), and look to CMOs to drive it throughout their organizations (Colony, 2011). As a member of the TMT and the most direct steward of a firm's customers, CMOs often carry great responsibility (Court, 2007). Yet, much of what is known about the CMO's decision making is anecdotal (Nath & Mahajan, 2008), and only recently been examined systematically (Moorman, 2012).

More specifically, our study develops a conceptual framework for theorizing the influence of CMO's decision styles on performance through the mediating mechanisms of entrenchment appraisal and disruptive strategies. Three aspects of our proposed conceptual framework are noteworthy. First, in bridging past research on *individual* decision styles (often in non-organizational contexts) with analysis of CMO interviews, we go beyond current literature to propose three distinct decision styles that CMOs may use in practice. In so doing, we adapt and extend Epstein's Cognitive-Experiential-Self-Theory (CEST) to posit the disparate decision styles CMOs use in making strategic decisions. Second, we use qualitative insights from CMO interviews to situate the concept of entrenchment (as developed in the literature) and propose associations between CMO decision styles and the subjective appraisal of entrenchment. We do not presume that entrenchment is an inevitable consequence of growing expertise. Neither do we presume that a particular decision style is immune to entrenchment. Third, and finally, we propose two distinct categories of disruption strategies that CMOs may use in practice, and develop how the choice of disruption strategies may be contingent on CMO's decision styles.

Throughout, we put forth propositions to clarify the proposed conceptual framework and facilitate its empirical examination.

Our paper is organized as follows. We begin with an overview of the methodological approach for the field work utilized to generate grounded understanding of CMO decision styles, entrenchment and disruption strategies. Thereafter, we explicate a conceptual framework based on conjoining the insights from literature review with the grounded insights from our field work. In this sense, our approach is consistent with a mixed method design. Rather than relying *only* on past literature or grounded study to put forth a conceptual framework for CMO decision making, we seek to conjoin the two approaches to help us draw propositions and root them in a meaningful conceptual framework. Throughout we intersperse conceptual arguments with verbatim comments of CMOs obtained from our field work. Finally, we conclude with discussion and future research directions.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Our approach combines theoretical work grounded in the past literature with grounded theory building work based on qualitative data from interviews with CMOs. For some concepts such as decision styles, significant literature is available to adapt and extend the concepts for our context of CMOs, while for other concepts, such as disruption strategies, the absence of past research requires original theory building using grounded research. Moreover, we needed a research approach that allowed us to capture the actual decision making experiences of CMOs. As a result, we utilized a qualitative approach that enabled us to capture the intricate details about individual CMO experiences and thought processes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

We interviewed 23 CMOs of for profit (21) and nonprofit (2) US organizations (see Table 1 for profile) using semi-structured interviews averaging 60 minutes, of which nine were face-to-face while the remaining fourteen were conducted by telephone. Each interview was

recorded by the principle researcher and transcribed by a professional service for analysis. The interview protocol was structured around four sections that collectively provided insight into CMO's decision style, appraisal of entrenchment and disruption strategies used (if any). In each section, we utilized probes to elicit rich detail around their narratives.

All interview transcripts were thoroughly reviewed for accuracy prior to formal analysis. Based on Corbin and Strauss, our coding and analysis involved three phases as outlined in Table 2. Our method of analysis was influenced by the principle of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), both within and between interviews to identify emergent themes (Charmaz, 2006). We also utilized iterative process of analysis to the point where we reached theoretical saturation and where no new categories emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Throughout the text, we use verbatim quotes to illustrate our theorizing (names used are fictitious to preserve confidentiality) and develop propositions. We begin with an overview of the conceptual model.

 Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THEORY AND PROPOSITIONS

Figure 1 provides the conceptual framework developed by integrating relevant concepts from past literature and from grounded theory building work using CMO interviews to address the aims of this study. We begin with a discussion of CMO decision styles.

 Insert Figure 1 about here

CMO DECISION STYLES

Within the dual process theory framework Epstein's Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory (CEST) is a useful foundation for considering the disparate styles that professionals use in day-to-day activities (Epstein, 2003). Focusing primarily on *thinking* styles, CEST distinguishes

between analytical-rational and intuitive-experiential information processing systems, where each system is independent and operates by different rules (Epstein et al., 1996, Pacini & Epstein, 1999). According to CEST, the rational system operates by abstract, general rules guided by analysis and logic (Epstein et al., 1996). Epstein further defines it as a conscious, slow, analytical and affect-free form of processing based on a person's understanding of rules of reasoning (Pacini & Epstein, 1999). The experiential system, however, is a preconscious, rapid, automatic system that operates by context-specific, heuristics and is evolutionary in nature (Pacini & Epstein, 1999). Epstein's work characterizes these two modes as jointly contributing to behavior although they operate rather independently. Epstein notes that neither system is necessarily superior; rather, "they are simply different ways of understanding the world and behaving in it" (Epstein 2003: 60).

We adapt and extend Epstein's two system approach of CEST to our professional context of corporate leaders seeking to make optimal strategic decisions. We adopt rational and intuitive as meaningful systems of information processing for professionals, but *adapt* the concept of intuitive for our context. Specifically, because corporate leaders have significant business experience, our notion of intuitive encompasses both the heuristic and expert schemas that individuals extract from experience. Dane and Pratt (2007) note that, in any domain, schemas can be either 1) relatively simple and utilize little domain knowledge as is common for naïves, or 2) relatively complex and utilize significant domain knowledge as is the case with experts. As individuals build experience, the interplay between intuition and deliberation tends to shift (Baylor, 2001). Novices tend to use intuition that is "immature" and based on little domain-specific knowledge (Salas, Rosen & DiazGranados, 2010). By contrast, with increasing experience, experts begin to chunk their information into patterns to develop heuristics that

bypass some of the analytical steps and rules that generated the information in the first place (Prietula & Simon, 1989). In this sense, experience-based intuition enables experts to quickly gain a sense of what's going on in a situation and identify cues that are important (Klein & Weick, 2000). As such, our conception of intuition is in the context of experts. In our CMO interviews, reference to intuition was grounded in their rich experience and confidence that comes from perceived expertise as evident in the following quote:

“A lot of the stuff, you just learn and experience – you just learn it over time. So you're able to quickly size something up. There are all these basic questions that over the years are just sort of engrained. You ask and answer them very quickly.”

In addition, drawing from critical analysis of CEST and our qualitative interviews, we extend CEST by proposing to include an integrative style that is distinct from rational and intuitive styles, and sufficiently meaningful and relevant for our context. Herbert Simon (1987) noted that it was a fallacy to contrast “analytical” and “intuitive” styles and contended that effective leaders use both, depending on the situation. Similarly, Klein and Weick (2000) suggested a combined approach to enhance decision-making effectiveness. Novak and Hoffman (2009) proposed synergistic effects between the dual processing styles which could function in a complementary fashion to enhance performance. In a recent study, Hoffman, Kopalle and Novak (2010) conceptualized and developed an emergent style, in the context of consumers, defined as the capability to envision how concepts might be developed by a combination of rational and intuitive processing abilities to achieve both innovative product utility and usefulness (Hoffman et al., 2010). Building on these contributions, we propose an integrative style wherein corporate leaders seamlessly blend and alternate between rational and intuitive approaches as they think and act in their day-to-day activities. We develop the characteristics of the three styles next by outlining key points of distinction.

To illustrate the distinctions, we organize the discussion of the disparate styles in Table 3 around core concepts, processes, modes and enabling conditions. While not intended to serve as a comprehensive review of the literature that grounds these styles, our discussion of Table 3 is intended to provide an overview of key attributes of each style as they relate to the study of corporate leaders' strategic decision making.

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3 highlights that the three styles emphasize different core concepts and processes. While reason and analytics are core concepts in a rational style, association and recognition are more central to the intuitive style. In this sense, rational style processes are intentional and systematic utilizing rules, logic and structures (Epstein et al., 1996). By contrast, intuitive processes are rapid and automatic, leverage experiences and engage analogies, while incorporating feelings in thinking and action. The integrative style differs from both rational and intuitive styles because it neither emphasizes reason and analytics, nor association and recognition. Rather, the integrative style favors insight and integration such that individuals flexibly move between rational and intuitive approaches as they seek to synthesize different types of information. Processes implicated in the integrative style include deliberate assimilation of reason and intuition while remaining agnostic to both, and an open and organic focus on drawing connections between unrelated aspects of a situation. In this regard, the integrative style is not simply the ambidextrous use of rational and intuitive styles. Instead, integrative thinking involves constructively bridging two opposing views and approaches (Martin, 2007).

The three styles also emphasize different modes of learning or inquiry and enabling conditions. The rational mode of learning is intentional and cognitively demanding, operating

primarily at the conscious level (Epstein et al., 1996). This mode of learning is reliant on knowledge and the ability to utilize analytical skills and tools. Comparatively, the intuitive style imposes minimal cognitive demands and operates largely at a preconscious level (Epstein et al., 1996). Evaluations tend to be made quickly and implicitly, and individual events are coded as abstract representations and generalizations that can be easily accessed (Epstein, 2003: 5). By contrast, the integrative style learning mode is both active and generative. Leaders do not set out to integrate reason and intuition, they do it generatively and naturally (Senge, 1994). The enabling conditions for the integrative mode include rational knowledge and capabilities, experience-based intuition and the ability to integrate the two in novel ways. Evidence of an integrative style emerged in our interviews as illustrated by the following quote.

“I have become much more open minded and look at things from multiple angles more than I used to. I was a very disciplined math/science/physics oriented thinker when I was in college. I think as a result I started my career being very analytical, data-driven and disciplined in looking at a problem and tended to draw conclusions very quickly. Over time, given the complexity of the business problems... have led me to open up and evaluate things in a much more broad, much more 360 degree perspective than I did in the early parts of my career. I am much better at stepping into other peoples shoes and seeing from other perspectives, asking better questions and frankly being more open minded to other forces than my own mind. ”

Based on the preceding discussion, we propose the following:

Proposition 1. Corporate leaders will utilize rational, intuitive and integrative styles in processes of making strategic decisions, such that these styles will evidence discriminant validity.

APPRAISAL OF ENTRENCHMENT IN CMO DECISION MAKING

Regardless of the style used for decision making, a provocative idea from learning theories is that experts are prone to become entrenched in their schemas of thought and action. Dane (2010: 579–580) defines entrenchment as a high level of stability in experts’ schemas in a particular domain (of expertise) such that “experts may be restricted in their ability to identify

optimal solutions to problems, to adapt to novel situations, and to generate radically creative ideas within their domain.” March and Simon maintained that decision makers bring their own set of “givens” to a situation (1958). These givens are derived from the decision maker’s cognitive base which acts as a filter to limit the decision maker’s perception of what is going on and what can be done about it (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). In other words, as they build domain expertise, experts’ thought and action schemas are apparently reaffirmed and reinforced (e.g., due to confirmation bias) thereby making them potentially more resistant to modification (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) and ultimately limiting a leader’s ability to attend to discordant stimuli and be creative in decision making (Dane, 2010). The notion that the process of entrenchment is impartial to the leader’s specific decision making style is a key insight from this literature.

However, the *subjective* appraisal of entrenchment is expected to vary for leaders with disparate decision making styles. In fact, a central question related to entrenchment is, “do experts know when they are entrenched?” That is, do experts consciously perceive entrenchment or is it below the threshold of subjective experience? In the stress literature, Lazarus and his colleagues (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) developed an appraisal theory based on the insight that individuals actively evaluate their relationship with the environment (e.g., am I performing well or am I impaired by situational demands) to assess its implications for personal well-being. To explain individual motivation for subjective appraisal, Lazarus noted that people negotiate between two complementary frames of reference: (a) wanting to view what is happening as realistically as possible to cope with it, and (b) wanting to put the best possible light on events so as not to lose hope or sanguinity. In effect, appraisal is a compromise between life as it is and what one wishes it to be (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Similarly, we posit that entrenchment represents an experts' relationship with the environment that they may actively appraise as inhibiting and possibly detrimental to their effectiveness in decision making and driving innovation outcomes. As marketing leaders scan their environment for opportunities, they strive to negotiate the same balance between a realistic appraisal of their decision making and a drive for better and superior decision making and ultimately better business outcomes. In CMO interviews, we found support for the notion that marketing leaders frequently appraised their own entrenched schemas as illustrated by the following quotes.

“Really the reason why it fell apart was that we were too far ahead of our organization...I didn't really think of those things in terms of stressing the business to the point that it couldn't perform and we had to exit. In hindsight it seemed pretty obvious, but when you're going through it the thought of trying to stretch the business outside its core competencies didn't seem like it would be an issue that would cause us to fail in it, but it ultimately did... I think that I made the mistake of overlooking, like I said, the implications on the business model, or underestimating the implications on the business model.”

“I was in charge of new products and we had two really good products to launch ... And in my overconfident youth, I did try to launch them both simultaneously... As a result, one was a failure even though both had very good test markets. But it just didn't get the execution that it needed so it failed. And we shut it down. The other went on, but was marginally successful. That is an example of something I wish I had not done.”

We also anticipate that the capacity of leaders to self-assess or appraise their own entrenchment will differ for each style. Specifically, we expect marketing leaders using an intuitive style will be less likely to appraise entrenchment because the intuitive system engages pre-conscious and automatic mechanisms to guide thought and action thereby making it less prone to counterfactuals and contradictions (Epstein, 2003). As leaders become more comfortable with the ease of intuitive processing, it can result in overconfidence (Ericsson, Prietula & Cokely, 2007; Kahneman & Klein, 2009), less openness to new experiences (Pacini & Epstein, 1999) and the failure to consider new ideas or paths (Dane, Baer, Pratt, & Oldman,

2011). CMOs articulated this dilemma in their interviews suggesting that, while the intuitive system is less open to appraisals of entrenchment, the realities of marketing decisions in organizations can challenge leaders' strongly held intuitive beliefs as illustrated in the following quote:

"I mean one issue that some have is a fixation on their own ideas or their own approaches. What's worked for them in the past is what they're gonna do next, and with very little regard to other needs of the business... – it's the old phrase, if you've got a hammer, everything looks like a nail. And so you kind of apply the same solution to every problem they come along with."

Likewise, leaders using rational styles are not immune to entrenchment as reason and analytics may be overused to the point of paralysis in a formulaic, time consuming approach that can inhibit innovative thinking (Klein & Weick, 2000); however, we expect that individuals with a rational style will be more likely to appraise their own entrenchment than those with an intuitive style. Because a rational style gives priority to logic and evidence over subjective, internalized beliefs, leaders using a rational style are likely to exhibit greater openness to counterfactuals and contradictions than those who use an intuitive style (Pacini & Epstein, 1999). Such openness may lead marketing leaders to appraise their current schemas as inadequate, incomplete or ill-suited to evolving marketing problems, and provoke a self-appraisal of entrenchment. The following quote from a CMO is illustrative.

"It probably falls back on confidence – confidence and/or opportunity for variance. So if I believe I have enough experience that the variance or the likelihood of ..the key input variables to a decision being really off the mark, or if I experience that it's, probably not gonna be that way, then you're more confident to make the decision on your own. So you're being quantitative in your head, but you're guessing at the data; and your confidence to guess at the data is based on experience."

Finally, we posit that marketing leaders using the integrative style evidence a higher likelihood of entrenchment appraisals relative to leaders using rational or intuitive style because this style is agnostic to reason or experience, which provides openness and flexibility to process

counterfactuals and contradictions when they arise (Martin, 2007; Dane et al., 2011). This process can be iterative, where leaders use their instincts and logic to engage with the emerging realities of a decision situation and then reevaluate their fundamental beliefs and knowledge (Hoffman et al., 2010) sometimes multiple times, which has been referred to in previous research as spiralling (Woiceshyn, 2009). Accordingly, marketing leaders utilizing an integrative style will be most likely to appraise entrenchment as illustrated below in a CMO quote.

“Well, I mean you’re out in the business world, and doing this triangulating, talking to people, you get ideas. ...That’s without a doubt, the biggest thing I’ve learned, just use process, do the upfront due diligence, take your time on it, ask again, and again. Get opposing thoughts.”

“I think that is an important part of decision making, being able to look at things from lots of different angles and leaving yourself the patience to do that, not to the point of indecisiveness certainly. I’ve learned to become more effective driving from lots of different angles. The ability to harness data and look at it from a lot of different perspectives is a necessity.”

The ability to perceive entrenchment is an important idea for leaders as an awareness of entrenchment offers a platform for adjusting future thinking and behavior with the goal of improving personal performance and business outcomes.

Based on the preceding, we propose that:

Proposition 2a. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use an integrative style, the higher the likelihood of appraising entrenchment.

Proposition 2b. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use an intuitive style, the lower the likelihood of appraising entrenchment.

Proposition 2c. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use a rational style, the higher the likelihood of appraising entrenchment such that this association is weaker than that for marketing leaders using integrative style.

CMO’S DISRUPTION STRATEGIES FOLLOWING ENTRENCHMENT APPRAISAL

What do marketing leaders do once they appraise that they might be entrenched? While we utilize qualitative research to obtain insights on this question, we draw parallels to the extant

literature to guide our development. Research on psychological stress suggests that individuals who appraise a situation as stressful (referred to as primary appraisal) are prompted to ask, “What can I do about it?” (referred to as secondary appraisal) which is a precursor to a coping response (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In a similar vein, entrenchment appraisals are expected to provoke consideration of action choices that overcome or disrupt the perceived state of entrenchment. After all, to appraise entrenchment (stress) is to do something about it (cope). In a recent study, Dane (2010) builds on the inflexibility byproducts of expertise to counter that entrenchment is not inevitable and individuals may use strategies to circumvent entrenchment. For instance, Dane observed that experts may deliberately attend to tasks outside of their expertise domain to experience new discoveries or ways of thinking thereby potentially loosening fixations of domain schemas and processes.

We conceptualize disruption strategies as deliberate action-plans that leaders develop following an appraisal of entrenchment with the goal of preventing it. The notion of disruptive strategies has been suggested by Kahneman and Klein (2010) who view them as deliberate “checklists” to overcome the blinds of cognitive biases including succumbing to categorization error and peripheral processing. We sought to develop a grounded understanding of disruptive strategies that marketing leaders use in practice to cope with entrenchment. Our interviews and grounded codes yielded two broad categories of disruption strategies (see Table 4): Break and Broaden and Leverage and Reframe, which we outline next. Table 5 summarizes the prototypical profiles for three CMOs with different decision styles, which we use to discuss the insights our qualitative data shed on the relationship between marketing leaders’ decision styles and disruption strategies.

 Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

Disruptive Strategies of CMOs: A Grounded Theory Analysis

Break and broaden. Break and broaden captures a CMO’s need to disrupt their own thinking by breaking away from existing knowledge and broadening exposure to new thinking and experiences. Our analysis revealed two subcategories each relating to “Break” and “Broaden” strategies. The first subcategory, *Disrupting Industry-centric Myopia*, represents breaking free from the conventional wisdom of an industry. Ken, one of the CMOs interviewed explained thus:

“If I’m not paying attention to how cars are sold or I’m not paying attention to how make-up is sold or I’m not paying attention to some of those other industries ... trying to make a connection, then we could be missing some opportunity.”

The second, *Breaking Existing Silos*, involves thinking outside of existing functional and company-specific knowledge. Strategies used by CMOs include looking to other marketers, to non-marketing professionals and external partners. Becky, another CMO interviewed, explains:

“I’ll go to my colleagues and peers [from different companies]. I’m involved in a number of CMO groups ... I ask them how they’ve solved similar problems.”

The third, *Customer-centered recalibration*, represents gaining new knowledge through regular re-engagement with customers. Several CMOs emphasized staying close to the customer and continually building customer knowledge. Jeff, a CMO we interviewed, calls customer knowledge the trump card that helps one perform better and gain organizational credibility. The final subcategory, *Broaden Experience Caliber*, pertains to expanding exposure to high-quality, novel experiences. CMOs cited experiences such as doing things outside of work, consuming a wide range of media and taking classes, as illustrated in the following quote from William:

“Every year I try to do advanced education. I’ll try to take a class in an area that is not part of my expertise.”

Leverage and reframe. Leverage and reframe, the second broad category of disruptive strategies utilized, includes leveraging information sources thoroughly and framing opportunities thoughtfully. We found two subcategories each for leverage and reframe. The first subcategory, *Leveraging Diverse Data Sources*, means gathering data from multiple sources to check one's own thinking. William emphasized his practice of triangulating data. Rather than taking action based on a single data point, he gathers data from several sources before springing into action. A second subcategory pertaining to leverage, *Understand Before Doing*, involves pausing to understand data and information prior to use. Ken talks about the importance of listening intently and not reacting too quickly. He describes having to restrain himself from reflexive responses:

“I have to refrain from a reflexive reaction to what’s being said because I could kill the idea before somebody’s even fully articulated it and I’ve understood it.”

The third subcategory, *Reframe Challenges Unconventionally*, entails looking at ideas and opportunities from different perspectives. Doug, a CMO in our sample, concealed the actual target industry for a project to induce his team to think creatively. In describing the project, he told the team that the project was for a company in a completely different industry. He feared that revealing the actual industry would have restrained the team to a certain line of thinking. Instead, he reframed its approach to enable a fresh perspective. The final subcategory, *Shape Ideas Uniquely*, refers to tailoring ideas for a specific context and set of conditions rather than relying on past use or current trends as shown by the illustrative quote below and in Table 4.

“I think for marketing people you have a big success and that’s kind of your defining success, right? I think if you move forward and you try to box the next set of ideas or opportunities into what that was, because you want to try to replicate that... [and it leads to failure]”

Based on the preceding, we propose that:

Proposition 3. Marketing leaders who appraise entrenchment will be more likely to utilize disruptive strategies such that these strategies will evidence characteristics of either (a) break and broaden, or (b) leverage and reframe.

CMO Decision Styles and Disruptive Strategies: A Profile Analysis

To understand the relationship between CMO decision styles and disruptive strategies, we extracted prototypical profiles of three CMOs based on variation in their decision styles to uncover associations that might enrich our theorizing (see Table 5). While variations exist across CMOs using the same decision styles, these profiles are prototypical of CMOs with those particular styles. Interestingly, several of the CMOs with integrative styles have been with their organizations for more than 10 years.

A review of Table 5 suggests that decision styles may play a role in the disruptive strategies chosen by marketing leaders. Mark, whose decision style is rational, employed a “break and broaden” disruptive strategy to cope with a missed opportunity. Mark appraises that his understanding and knowledge base of the market are limiting his decision making and sought to break free from his existing knowledge and seek to broaden it. Reflective of his strong analytical background, Mark’s disruption strategy rests on looking back at the models utilized and trying to figure out what they missed and how they could “built what actually happened [into] their models” to develop foresight. In this sense, Mark’s disruption strategy is intended to break free from existing knowledge structures but the approach is inherently analytical.

By contrast, Matthew, with an intuitive decision style, utilized a “leverage and reframe” disruption strategy. Matthew, who, has only been with his organization for 1 ½ years, traced his entrenchment to his adherence to knowledge from previous positions in different industries. Matthew appraised that his approach did not work because he lacked knowledge of his new organization and context. Throughout his career, Matthew has tended to rely on his “gut” feel and intuition as he approaches decision making. Interestingly, Matthew’s disruption strategy is

not to diminish reliance on intuition. Rather it appears Matthew draws on his intuition to conclude that the needed disruption is not in his idea but how it is communicated (e.g., “one-to-one sessions as opposed to mass presentation”).

Finally, William who uses a more integrative style appraises his entrenchment as short circuits in “digging deeper” and “asking tough questions” induced by reliance on “experts.” William’s disruption strategy is centered on openness to opposing points of view, even seeking them out, “even if it is not exactly what you want to hear.” William concludes that listening to opposing perspectives, especially from customers, and triangulating them with his data is needed to properly assess a situation or opportunity. William’s disruption has hallmarks of an integrative style as it reflects an openness to new ideas, perspectives and knowledge.

While each of the three CMOs profiled exhibited a different dominant decision style, each seemed to recognize the shortcomings associated with their individual approaches. As each style works towards disrupting their own entrenchment, we expect varied levels of success. Drawing from the CMO profiles, the integrative style shows the most promise for disrupting entrenchment as it involves the highest degree of openness to new information. William is proactively seeking out multiple perspectives and sources of information, which will provide him with the stronger platform for generating disruptive strategies. Comparatively, the intuitive style and rational style are less open. Both CMO profiles highlight a strategy that focuses on narrowing down information versus opening up the internalization channels for diverse information. Possibly, the intuitive style offers the weakest platform for disrupting entrenchment. As shown in Matthew’s profile, a strong reliance on intuition and gut feel can hinder a marketing leader’s ability to generate disruptive strategies as the CMO’s energy is focused on how to reframe their existing ideas and maintain their intuitive and creative persona. The rational style

offers a relatively better platform for disruption than the intuitive style as it is receptive to new information, particularly logical insights. The rational style, however, appears to constrain the search for opposing and diverse types of information to that which is useful for improved modeling. From our preceding discussion, we expect the following:

Proposition 3a. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use an integrative style, the higher the likelihood of generating disruptive strategies.

Proposition 3b. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use an intuitive style, the lower the likelihood of generating disruptive strategies.

Proposition 3c. The greater the propensity of marketing leaders to use a rational style, the higher the likelihood of generating disruptive strategies such that this association is weaker than that for marketing leaders using integrative style.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study provides new insights into the decision making of corporate leaders with a focus on CMOs. By conjoining insights from the existing literature with grounded insights from interviews with CMOs, we developed a conceptual framework (Figure 1) of leader decision making that makes contributions relating to CMOs' (a) decision styles, (b) subjective appraisals of entrenchment while making decisions, and (c) disruptive strategies utilized to cope with entrenchment appraisals.

Decision styles. Recognizing the sparse literature on CMO decision making, this study makes a contribution toward conceptualizing CMO decision making styles. By drawing from the existing literature and CMO interviews, we proposed three discrete decision styles – rational, intuitive and integrative – that CMOs may use in practice.

Subjective appraisals of entrenchment. We integrated the concept of entrenchment as developed in the literature with insights from our CMO interviews, to develop a set of testable propositions for each CMO decision style and the subjective appraisal of entrenchment.

Disruptive strategies used to cope with entrenchment. With general support from the literature for the concept of disruptive strategies, we relied on our CMO interviews to develop two unique categories of disruption strategies that CMOs may use in practice following the appraisal of entrenchment. We then developed propositions to describe the potential connecting mechanisms between CMO decision styles and the choice of disruptive strategies.

As such this study offers a conceptual framework to guide future research, and a set of testable propositions that offer meaningful insights into the CMO decision making process. We do not view the conceptual model or propositions as “finished products” that need no further development. Rather, we view them as starting points for further theorizing and development, especially in regard to the relationships involving decision effectiveness. We anticipate much development in this area as the current state of the literature is insufficient to provide useful guides for testable propositions.

Further questions for exploration may include the following. Are CMOs with different decision styles equally effective as long as they are equally effective in disrupting their entrenchment? Or is one decision styles (e.g., integrative) intrinsically more suited to CMO’s decision effectiveness relative to other decision styles (e.g., rational/intuitive)? Do CMOs with effective disruptive strategies eventually gravitate toward an integrative style, or do they become flexible in shifting between styles on demand? The posited conceptual model and its propositions do not address such interesting questions but certainly provoke them and prompt future researchers to address them.

Our study also suggests that the literature on decision styles can be advanced by extending its reach to the study of top management team members. More importantly, our grounded theory building work suggests that a third style, the integrative style, is worthy of

further study and development. We also confirm that the entrenchment literature can be enriched by advancing the concept of disruptive strategies. We have provided an organizing typology for the observed disruptive strategies. This typology can serve as a useful foundation for conceptualizing the disruptive strategy construct. Pragmatically, our study affirms that individual awareness of entrenchment requires self-reflection.

Our findings suggest other opportunities for future research. We recommend further study of the impact of decision style on entrenchment and the generation of disruption strategies. We also recommend the study of other functional top management team members to distinguish differences among functional domains.

Although our findings are promising, they are certainly not without limitations. First, our CMO profiles are derived from theorizing and grounded field work. Although we expect these profiles to be representative of CMOs with that style, we cannot attest to their validity. Our hope is that our insights will serve as a guide for future research in this area. Second, we used a non-random sample comprising of 23 marketing leaders mostly located in the Northeast and Midwest United States. The principle researcher is a CMO and it is possible that the researcher's personal opinions or experiences may have influenced the interpretation of the data. Efforts were made to eliminate researcher bias through careful reviews with a panel of advisors. We asked participants to recall successful and unsuccessful experiences from their recent past and acknowledge the potential effect of time on memory.

We believe that the limitations of this study are impetus for future researchers to contribute to the understanding of the entrenchment and disruption mechanisms of CMOs with different decision styles. CMOs are the face of marketing and a significant driver of innovation in organizations and we hope that a research stream of theoretical and empirical contributions

that builds on the proposed conceptual model will provide insights for enhancing CMO effectiveness and impact.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1
Demographic Profile of CMOs Interviewed (N = 23)

	<u>Number of Participants (#)</u>	<u>Percent of Total (%)</u>
<u>Industry</u>		
Automotive	2	9%
Broadcast Communications	1	4%
Consulting	3	13%
Consumer Goods	1	4%
Financial Services	4	17%
Healthcare	3	13%
Industrial Mfg	3	13%
Insurance	1	4%
Non-profit	2	9%
Retail	1	4%
Transportation	1	4%
Wholesale	1	4%
<u>Gender Mix</u>		
Male	15	65%
Female	8	35%
<u>Education Level</u>		
Bachelor's Degree	8	35%
Master's Degree	14	61%
J.D.	1	4%
<u>Time in Current Position</u>		
Under 2 years	10	43%
3-9 years	6	26%
10+ years	7	30%
<u>Time in Current Company</u>		
Under 2 years	6	26%
3-9 years	6	26%
10+ years	11	48%
<u>Marketing Experience</u>		
Career Marketer	8	35%
Cross-functional Experience	15	65%
<u>Industry Experience</u>		
Same Industry for Career	3	13%
Cross-industry Experience	20	87%

TABLE 2
Methodological Approach Utilized for Analyzing Qualitative Data from CMO Interviews

Data Analysis		
<p>Interview Process: Solicited subjective verbal responses of Success Story, Failure Story and Missed Opportunity without directly invoking comments related to entrenchment, disruption or decision style</p>		
Entrenchment	Disruption	Decision Style
<p>Coding – Guided by Theory Line-by-line coding of interview transcripts for each decision area (success, failure and missed opportunity) based on definitions of entrenchment as developed from the literature.</p> <p>Categorizing: Based on common themes emerging from the coding</p>	<p>Coding – Grounded Line-by-line coding based on what was said by each CMO for each decision area (success, failure and missed opportunity) as no definitions were available in the literature.</p> <p>Categorizing: Based on common themes emerging from the coding</p>	<p>Coding – Grounded Line-by-line coding inferred based on how the CMO went about making decisions for each area (success, failure and missed opportunity) as no existing definitions were available.</p> <p>Categorizing: Based on common themes emerging from the coding</p>

TABLE 3
A Comparative Analysis of Rational, Intuitive and Integrative Decision Styles

	Rational	Intuitive	Integrative
Processes	Systematic and Deliberate processes with causal, logical, hierarchical, and rule properties.	Rapid and Implicit processes with heuristic, associative, reflexive, and analogical properties.	Flexible and Deliberate processes with agnostic, connected, assimilative, and open properties.
Core Concepts	Reason and Analytics Oriented	Associative and Recognition Oriented	Insight and Integration Oriented
Modes	Deductive, Explicit, and Cold	Inductive, Implicit, and Hot	Abductive, Generative and Active
Enabling Conditions	Knowledge stocks and Analytical capabilities	Experiential stocks and Associative capabilities	Knowledge+experiential stocks and Integrative capabilities dependent on the situational requirements

TABLE 4
A Typology of CMO's Disruptive Strategies following Entrenchment Appraisal

Category 1: Break & Broaden		
Subcategory	Description	Examples
Disrupting Industry-centric myopia	Importance of looking outside your own industry	"...you don't have to be limited to your industry. In fact, you probably shortchange yourself if you limit it to the industry that you're in, because I think you can see what other industries are doing and sort of take nuggets from there and piece it together." I14 "We try and talk to potential partners or people in other industries, so I think you just have to open your mind to what's going on out there." I17
Breaking Existing Silos	Importance of looking to other marketers, professionals and partners outside your company.	"...network, but not with what I call ... your immediate peers. I much prefer ...a roundtable of people in other types of professions ...I'm much more interested in hearing the perspectives that I'm not thinking about, kind of where's my blind spot." I14 "I continually meet with new vendors, even though I'm not looking. You know, these are the kind of things that just spark innovation." I9
Customer-centered recalibration	Building understanding of your world - the business environment and customers.	"...immerse both in the organization, and ...in the customer's brain. You can read all the research you want, but until you actually get into that mindset ...you can't do it (innovation). ...it is about structured immersion, and ...there's far too little emphasis on that and there's far too much emphasis on applying." I9 "The importance of fundamental consumer knowledge or customer knowledge, whatever you want to call your end consumer. There is not substitute for information, especially strategic information. It is so valuable." I3
Broaden Experience Caliber	Importance of having experiences outside of work	"Get out of the office and go do things and have experiences that have nothing to do with work because creativity is not something that can be boxed. You have to draw on things you've seen in other categories, which is often an interesting thing." I1 "... consume media in all different ways, shapes and formsit's an idea generator. I do radio, TV, newspapers, online.that gives you a fresh well of not your own experiences, but knowledge to ... draw on when you're trying to solve the particular problem." I2
Category 2: Leverage & Reframe		
Subcategory	Description	Examples
Leverage Diverse Data Sources	Gather data from multiple sources and check it against your thinking	"I'm not just gonna rely on a consultant to tell me, and I'm just not gonna rely on one customer. So that's what I mean by getting the voice of the customer and triangulating it." I15 "look at experience that you have with similar ideas or ...in the marketplace and see if that idea looks like it's gotten traction elsewhere, and so again, you can try and use whatever data points you have to try and assess the probability of success." I17
Understand Before Doing	Listen and understand before reacting quickly or jumping into action	"Don't be early to kill an idea, don't be so early to rain on the parade because you might be wrong or it might be different from what you think or something else could happen that you could never have anticipated." I16 "Sometimes I have to tell people, don't just do something, stand there. Because sometimes we find ourselves doing stuff just because we don't know what else to do." I13
Reframe Challenges Unconventionally	Check your thinking from different perspectives	"I'm not able to make much of this or I don't have time to really make much of this, but somewhere I have a feeling that there's something there. You can give it to someone else to take a look at it and maybe have a run at it." I10 "he said the project was for a different company, a different kind of company than it was for, because he knew that if he said it was for this company, their minds would go to a certain place." I1
Shape Ideas Uniquely	Take the time to think about customizing borrowed ideas to this context	"...keeping your mind open is understanding that the answers actually may be right out there in front of you, and it's how you shape them and modify them that will actually cause them to explode." I19 "But what we did is ... we morphed the idea." I17

TABLE 5
Prototypical Profiles of Entrenchment and Disruption Strategies used by CMOs with
different Decision Styles

	Mark	Matthew	William
CMO Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year in role • 17 years in company • Industrial Mfg. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ½ years in role • 1 ½ years in company • Automotive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 months in role • 10 years in company • Industrial Mfg.
Decision Style	<p>Rational Style</p> <p>“If I just sit back ... I tend to be analytical. I told you I started out in finance. I’m a numbers guy. ...especially if you’re the type of person that’s kind of more on the analytical side of things, more on the kind of show me the logic, connect the dots side of things ... if you’re that way ... then you tend to say I don’t see it.”</p>	<p>Intuitive Style</p> <p>“I think that often ... you can’t postpone a good idea from coming. And you know, when you’re motivated ... you’re motivated. And when your juices are flowing, you should let it ride. And I think sometimes strategy, so to speak, and planning can handicap the creative process.”</p>	<p>Integrative Style</p> <p>“I’m still going to make mistakes, but I ask a heck of a lot more questions today. I’m much more disciplined in getting marketing trends, advanced marketing, competitive information, technological advances, just doing more upfront work. I’m trying to listen to why it couldn’t work as well. So everybody’s got blindspots.”</p>
Appraisal of Entrenchment	<p>High Expertise - Overreliance on Existing Knowledge</p> <p>“We only entertained it for a very short period of time, and felt that the price that we would’ve had to pay for that company did not outweigh the benefits that we saw flowing from it”</p> <p>“But it had the possibility of very rapid growth, if it took off, and I guess we failed to see that or believe that or build that into our model.”</p>	<p>Low Expertise – Deficient Organizational Understanding</p> <p>“I think there was a lot of underestimating as far as what it takes to motivate a team. And, actually, a team like this.”</p> <p>“Coming from the agency to the client side is a challenge. This is my first experience working with 75 percent blue-collar people on my team. At the end of the day they don’t really know what I’m talking about half the time”</p>	<p>Reasoning – Overlooking business implications</p> <p>“I think the lesson around innovation is the strategy was right. I think we did our homework correctly.”</p> <p>“What happened then from a business case standpoint is we under-estimated the velocity of change in technology. I believe I did not dig deep enough or ask enough tough questions. “I allowed their technical expertise to influence me. When I look back, they really weren’t experts in that.”</p>
Disruption Strategy	<p>Break & Broaden</p> <p>Trigger: Saw another company’s success</p> <p>“Fast forward six years ... somebody did acquire them.”</p> <p>“I think what we missed is that we were looking at something that was pretty different from most other things.”</p> <p>“Had we built what actually happened into our models, we would’ve bought it the same day and we would’ve been high-fiving all night.”</p>	<p>Leverage & Reframe</p> <p>Trigger: Rollout Failed</p> <p>“I over-formalized the internal brand rollout. Handing out a 12-page brand brief is an eye-roller.”</p> <p>“I thought there was a hunger for clarity and there really wasn’t.”</p> <p>“The way I overcame this was by doing it in one-on-one sessions as opposed to a mass presentation.”</p>	<p>Leverage & Reframe</p> <p>Trigger: Initiative Failed</p> <p>“You get so – I think I’m a positive-type person, and I get so positive on the upside to these that you really have to give as much time to the potential downside.”</p> <p>“Listening to people that don’t necessarily agree with your strategy, and try to understand why. My key takeaway is you gotta listen to your customers and you have to triangulate it. And if you do that you’re going to come to the right answer, even if it’s not exactly what you want to hear.”</p>

FIGURE 1
The Proposed Model for CMO Decision Styles, Entrenchment and Disruption Strategies

