

Designing a Model of Factors Influencing Strategic Agility in Small and Medium-Sized Sport Enterprises

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Abstract

The aim of present study is to design a model of factors influencing strategic agility in small and medium-sized sport enterprises. The present study was carried out using a mixed method (qualitative-quantitative). Its quantitative section was descriptive-survey in terms of data collection method. In the first (qualitative) section, to do field interview, the statistical population of the study included prominent professors in the field of sport management who were specialized in sport enterprises and owners of sports enterprises. They were selected in two primary and secondary phases using purposeful and snowball methods, respectively, for qualitative interviews in the study (14 interviews continued until researcher reached saturation). In the second section (quantitative), after collecting the information in the qualitative section, a questionnaire was made (included 36 items in three general components of organizational culture, organizational structure, organizational agility and strategic agility) and distributed among small and medium-sized sport enterprises in Tehran (n=269). Kurtosis and Skewness indices were used to examine data distribution (natural or abnormal) and SPSS version 24, PLS version 2.0, and MAXQDA version Pro software was used to examine and answer research questions and draw and develop measurement model and structural model. The results showed that organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational agility are among the factors influencing strategic agility. The results of the structural equations confirmed the relationships in the research model.

Keywords: Organizational Agility, Organizational Structure, Organizational Culture, Competitive Advantage

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a growing industry and its global value has been estimated at \$ 600 billion. Sports enterprises in the service and industry sectors are not exception in this regard and can be involved in the sustainable development, because the share of involvement of sports enterprises in the service and industry sector is significant ^[1]. In fact, the sport industry is one of the most important and attractive industries in the world, whose products face high competition in the world ^[2]. Sport is a long-term investment leading to growth and development ^[3]. At current time, \$ 152 billion sport industry in the United States has grown by 50 percent, so that 4 million jobs indirectly and 24000 people are directly involved in this industry, as one of the top ten industries in the United States ^[4]. The strong dependence of Iran's sports industry on the government has created the conditions that require the cooperation of researchers and experts in this field and managers with professional experience in this industry to study and analyze the complexity of Iran's sports market in this sector so that large amount of money and the people involved in it can be managed scientifically and properly ^[5]. In the sport field, entrepreneurship is booming. Given the

extensive dimensions of physical education and sport, it can be considered as one of the fastest growing sectors related to the economic, social and political sectors in the world ^[6]. There are many job opportunities and achievements in sporting events. In other words, increasing entrepreneurship skills and processes in sports and events is creating a variety of new opportunities ^[7] which can be a factor to improve the entrepreneurial status in sports and by students in the field of

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physical education. However, being an entrepreneur is rooted in people inclinations and motivations^[8]. Also, many young people studying nowadays at universities and scientific centers in all fields of study, such as sports science hope to enter the job market as soon as possible after graduation. There are many problems for them in this path. An entrepreneurial view to employment phenomenon will greatly reduce the problems of young people in future. Accordingly, entrepreneurship development at the individual, organizational, national and even international levels is being seriously addressed by countries^[9].

One of the issues tied to the entrepreneurship issue is small and medium-sized enterprises or SMEs. Small and medium-sized enterprises are now considered as a major factor in the growth of industrial structures in many countries. These industries are crucial for many developing countries that are trying to revive their economic structure. These enterprises require less investment and are more efficient, creating jobs, providing conditions for innovation and invention, and increasing the exports of countries. Various statistics have indicated that small and medium-sized enterprises account for a large share of GDP in different countries. For example, in Germany, more than 99% of companies are SMEs, 52% value added and 61% industrial employment are created in this field. In Malaysia, more than 99.2% of companies are SMEs, and 32% of GDP, 56% of industrial employment and 19% of total exports are created in this field. In OECD countries, small and medium-sized enterprises account for about 60 percent of the total turnover of all countries, and in smaller economies (such as Luxembourg, Estonia and Latvia), they account for about 80 percent of turnover (OECD report, 2017). Although small industries in Iran may be equal to other countries in terms of number, it is far from advanced countries in terms of return, so that small industries, despite a 92% share in industry, account for only 24% of investments in industry. Thus, small and medium-sized enterprises are crucial in this regard^[10]. One of the areas of activity in small and medium-sized enterprises is sports. Spending free time with sports is expanding today, and this trend could be fruitful in creating new sport jobs. For example, the Puerto Rico Olympic Committee research found that the demand for sports activities was \$ 700 million per year. In 2008, sports-related activities supported more than 10000 jobs directly and indirectly in the local economy. These jobs paid more than \$ 150 million to its employees, with an economic impact of more than \$ 300 million per year. Also, the mentioned study found that retailing and sport-related business activities had a sale of \$ 249 million^[11]. Therefore, the presence of small and medium-sized sports enterprises can be a very good way to get out of the problem called unemployment of sports graduates. However, in general, the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Iran has not been at satisfactory level^[12]. Based on National Statistics Center of Iran (2015), the average cost of sports for Iranian athletes in urban areas was about 311900 Rials per month. Thus, assuming that there are eighteen million athletes based on data of National Statistics Center of Iran, the turnover generated in this area is

about seventy thousand billion Rials. Based on Parliament's Research Center of Iran (2016), this figure has the potential to create more than 300000 jobs, which has not been realized in the country so far. Thus, it is necessary to examine the solutions to the get out of the current situation in small enterprises, considering the unemployment and economic situation in our community.

One of the methods to get out of problems governing the small enterprises is strategic agility. Strategic agility has been defined in different ways. Since the late 1990s, the strategic agility has been defined as an ability to reform, modernize, and recreate the organization, business models and strategies in line with environmental change. It is realized through continuous prediction and adaptation to customer trends and needs without leaving the organization's perspective^[13]. It can be stated strategic agility is a way to manage unpredicted changes, manage organizational risks and thus improve competitive performance^[14]. Strategic agility is manifested in five abilities that complement each other. They include clarity of vision, understanding core capabilities, selected strategic targets, shared responsibility, and action^[13]. In fact, the ability to be agile is directly associated with the performance, processes, and technologies of the organization^[15].

According to Doz & Kosonen (2010), strategic agility can be achieved through the presence of three metacognitive skills (strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource availability) that enable an organization to act faster^[16]. Also, strategic agility requires the internal and external business environment to predict strategic understanding, flexibility, and sensitivity^[17]. Various studies have emphasized the importance and effectiveness of strategic agility on the success of competitive capabilities^[18, 19], efficiency^[20], gaining competitive advantage^[17] and performance^[21-23]. However, the components influencing the strategic agility in small and medium-sized sports enterprises have not been investigated and identified so far. Although Kozechian et al (2014) found that all three individual, environmental and capital factors are influential in creating sports enterprises, but these studies do not answer the main question of the present study^[24]. Increasing number of university graduates, the diversity of needs, and inappropriateness of today's business environment have made it difficult for many people interested in this area to invest in this sector, and even sport enterprise owners leave this competitive environment for a variety of reasons, such as inflation and economic recession. However, some people stay in this environment by gaining success. Due to current needs, the researcher's interest, and lack of finding similar research in this area, the results of the present study can be effective for success in sports enterprises and conducting new research and establishing a link between science and industry in sports. In the present study, the model of factors influencing strategic agility in small and medium-sized sports enterprises will be analyzed. Given what was stated above, the present study aims to provide a scientific explanation of the concept of strategic agility and its

components and to identify the factors influencing strategic agility.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted using a mixed (qualitative-quantitative) method. Its quantitative section is descriptive-survey in terms of data collection method. In the first stage, a qualitative method of content analysis was used to construct the model and a correlational type of descriptive-analytical quantitative method was used to test the model based on the structural equation model. The research method was sequential exploratory type of mixed study, meaning that qualitative method was first used and then quantitative method was used. In the first (qualitative) section, to do field interview, the statistical population of the study included prominent professors in the field of sports management specialized in sports enterprises and owners of sports enterprises. They were selected in two primary and secondary phases using purposeful and snowball methods, respectively, for qualitative interviews in the study (14 interviews continued until researcher reached saturation). Accordingly, 5 samples were purposefully selected first and then, the next samples were selected with the help of 5 selected samples. In the second section (quantitative), it was distributed among small and medium-sized sport enterprises in Tehran. Among 1750 companies, 317 were selected through Morgan's table by a convenience random sampling. Out of them, 269 questionnaires were returned correctly. In this study, two sections of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. In the descriptive statistics section, descriptive tables and graphs were used to express the demographic and descriptive characteristics of the research. Kurtosis and Skewness indices were used to examine data distribution (natural or abnormal) and SPSS version 24, PLS version 2.0, and MAXQDA version Pro software was used to examine and answer research questions and draw and develop measurement model and structural model.

To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the coefficients of factor loads, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used. To measure the content validity, CVI

and CVR were used. The CVR value, according to the number of professors (n=8) was obtained at 0.79 and the CVI value was obtained more than 0.78. Thus, the content validity the research tool was confirmed. Convergent and convergent validities, which are related to structural equations, were measured.

RESULTS

Descriptive results of demographic characteristics of the research samples in the interview section showed that 7.1% of samples of the study were female and 92.9% were male. 21.4% of the samples had a history of less than 10 years, 50% had a history of 11 to 20 years and 28.6% had a history of more than 20 years. Also, 50% of the sample were university professors and the rest were prominent sport business owners. In the first step of coding, each of the main categories related to the factors influencing strategic agility was extracted. It was done in the form of answering the main research question of what are the factors influencing strategic agility in small and medium-sized sport enterprises. After the codes were labelled to the initial codes based on events and facts, the initial codes were formed. Then, three experts reviewed the initial code and modified and moderate them based on their coding on the documents. Therefore, in the quality assessment section of the initial codes, triangulation method was used. Next, based on Corbin & Strauss (2008) theory, the relationship between the initial codes was examined and categories were created [25]. Axial coding begins during the open coding process. The open coding process connects a category to subcategories, and this is done through items that describe the relationships between them. It involves searching for clues in the data that show how core categories relate to each other. The axial coding process combines data obtained from open coding. This technique classifies data and establishes a link between categories and subcategories. One category is the categorization of ideas that emerge through continuous comparative analysis. Axial coding categorizes ideas into fewer categories compared to open coding, and provides a more abstract framework [25].

Table 1. Open and axial coding of the interviewees

axial code	categories	Characteristics extracted from theological propositions (concepts)
organizational culture		Cooperation and participation in the company
		The performance of work teams
		Having a common vision among the members of the company
		Agreement on issues (problems) in the company between employees and managers
		Compatibility and flexibility of the company against change
organizational structure		having a vision and long-term plan
		Organizational levels in organizational structure
		Distribution of manpower in the company
		Performance control based on job descriptions
	the way of making decisions by company managers	

		Freedom of action of company managers
organizational agility		rate of responding to organizational opportunities and threats
		Performing operations in the shortest time, at the lowest cost and with high quality
		having qualified, skilled and knowledgeable employees in the organization
		Ability to increase production and operating capacity in response to environmental fluctuations
		Timely delivery of products and services
strategic agility	clarity of vision	Having a clear concept of target
		Explain targets clearly to others
		Agree on behavioral principles
		Proud of achieving targets as a business unit
	core capabilities	Expressing your skills and special knowledge to maintain your competitive advantage
		Identifying processes for budget allocation
		Understanding the right skills and knowledge for customers
		Awareness of the credibility of your business unit among customers
	strategic targets	Identifying market / customer segments with high value in providing services
		Recognizing the importance of each of the core capabilities of the business unit for the customer
		Recognizing the competencies and processes needed to strengthen or expand customer service
		Establishing service identification and development processes
	shared responsibility	Using mistakes as an opportunity to learn and improve services
		easily providing of information interested by customers
		Encouraging project team members to improve customer behavior
		Involving clients in planning and implementing projects.
	action	Familiarizing project team members with strategies and targets
		Adopting strategy tailored to changing market conditions
		The involvement of key people in the organization strategies
		Discussing on the strategies with project team members

Thus, the results of 14 interviews through content analysis and open and axial coding (using MAXQDA Pro software) showed that organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational agility are the main factors influencing strategic agility. Strategic agility components include clarity of vision, understanding core capabilities, selected strategic targets, shared responsibility, and action. Then, SPSS software was used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the research samples and then PLS software was used to analyze the results of the questionnaires and answer the question. Descriptive results of demographic characteristics of samples in the quantitative section showed that 11.2% of the participants in the study were female and 88.8% were male. 24.5% of the samples had a history of less than 10 years, 38.4% had a history of 11 to 20 years and 37.1% had a history of more than 21 years. According to Hair *et al.* (2012), skewness and kurtosis indices were used to determine the normality of the data. The results showed that skewness is not between -3 and 3 and kurtosis is not between -5 and 5 (related to organizational culture) and the number of research samples is more than 200 people and there are 3 items for each variable. However, Jarvic *et al.* (2003) stated in their research that it is better for exploratory and qualitative studies to use PLS software to examine the questions, because the research model is not still in the maturity stage. If the research model is confirmed with variance-based software (PLS), in the next

research, covariance-based software should be used. In this study, although the research model was confirmed by theoretical foundations, variance-based PLS software would be used, because the model is a new one and has not yet reached maturity.

To measure the fit of the measurement models, three criteria of reliability, convergent validity and divergent validity are used, and their reliability is measured by examining the coefficients of factor loads, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, composite reliability. The criterion value for the suitability of factor load factors is 0.4. For all questions, the factor load factor is greater than 0.4, which indicates that this criterion is suitable, so no question is eliminated here.

The Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability values of the variables in all three variables are higher than 0.7, which indicates the appropriate reliability of the model. In this study, the reliability of the variables is at the desirable level. Since the reliability is confirmed, hypotheses can be examined by structural equations and the result can be generalized to the whole population. The second criterion for examining measurement models is convergent validity, which examines the correlation of each variable with its questions (indicators). According to *Fornell-Larker* model, the appropriate value for AVE is 0.4 and higher. For all four

major variables, the AVE value is greater than or equal to 0.4. Divergent validity is the third criterion used for examining the fit of measurement models. In this study, in both sections, the first method (questions related to each variable are more correlated with its own variable than with other variables) and the second important criterion determined by divergent validity is the degree to which a variable relates to its questions compared to that of other variables, so that the acceptable divergent validity of a model suggests that a variable in the model interacts more with its own questions

than with other variables. Divergent validity is at the acceptable level when the AVE level for each variable is greater than the variance common between that variable and the other variables in the model. After examining the fit of the measurement models, the fit of the structural model of research is examined. As stated before, the structural model section, unlike the measurement models, does not deal with the questions (observed variables) and only deals with latent variables and the relationships between them.

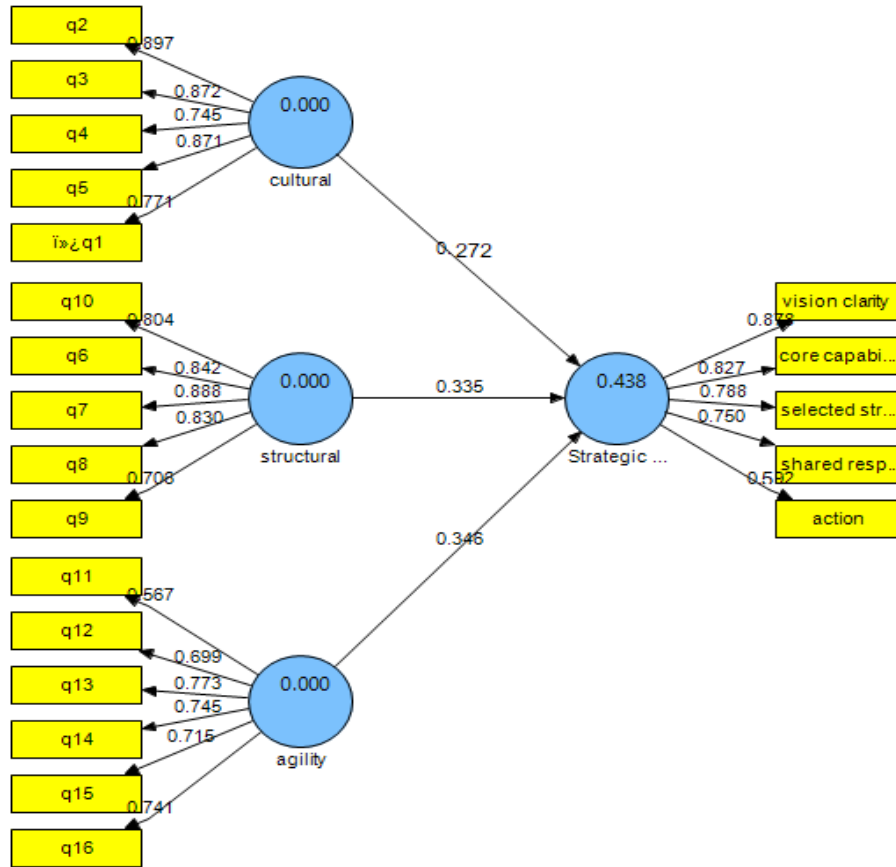


Figure 1. Measurement model

Several criteria are used to evaluate the fit of the structural model of the research. The first and most basic criterion is the significant coefficients t or t-values. If the value of this criterion exceeds 1.96, it indicates that the relationship between the variables is correct and the research hypotheses

is confirmed at the confidence level of 0.95. However, it should be noted that the numbers only show the accuracy of the relationship and the intensity of the relationship between the variables cannot be measured with it.

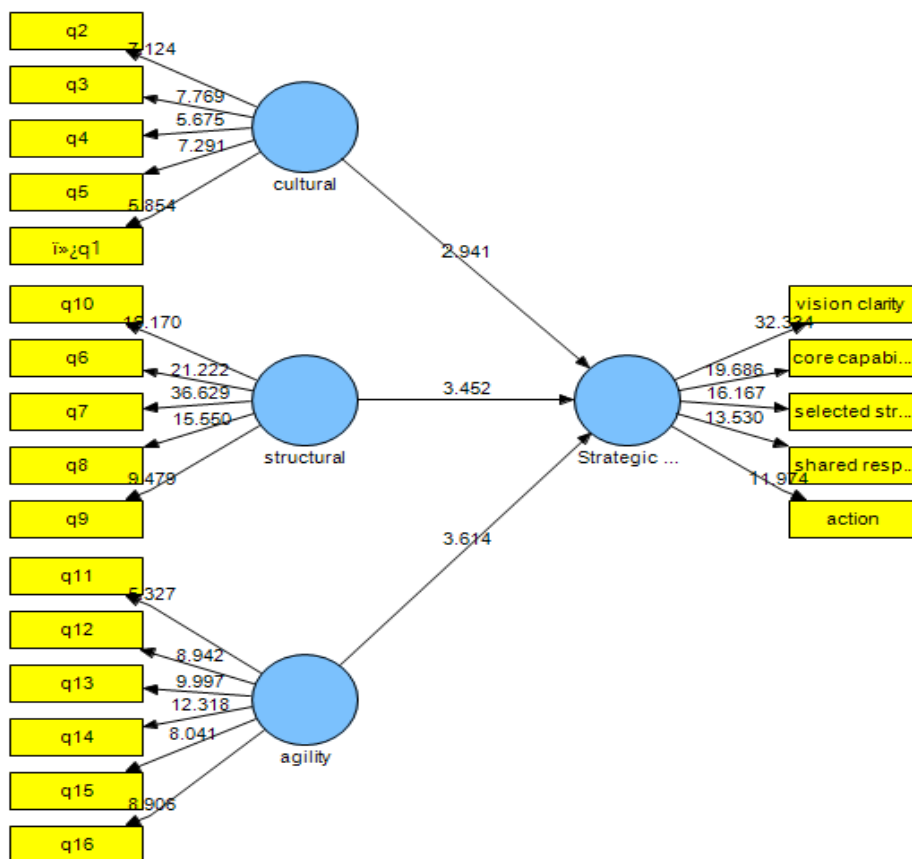


Figure 2. Significance coefficients t (t-values)

The value of R2 for exogenous or independent variables is zero. In this section, the value of R2 for the endogenous variable of the model is greater than 0.32 and is equal to the strong value. Q2 value: This criterion for both endogenous variables is more than 0.15, indicating that the exogenous (independent) variables in predicting the dependent variable are moderate, and it confirms the appropriate fit of the structural model again (Results are reported in Table 2)

Endogenous variable	R ²	Q ²
strategic agility	0.438	0.273

Goodness of fit of model: The goodness of fit of model includes both parts of measurement and structural model, and by confirming its fit, examining the fit is in a model is completed. According to the three values of 0.01, 0.25 and 0.36, which are introduced as weak, moderate and strong values for GOF, in the dependent variable, a value greater than 0.36 was obtained, indicating strong goodness of fit of the model.

General of fit formula (GOF):

$$GOF = \sqrt{R^2 * Communality}$$

$$GOF = \sqrt{0.438 * 0.579} = 0.503$$

Next, the relationships in the research model are investigated

Table 3. Investigating the relationships in the research model

relationships in the research model	path coefficient	T-VALUE	result
1. Organizational culture has a significant effect on strategic agility.	0/272	2/941	confirmed
2. Organizational structure has a significant effect on strategic agility.	0/336	3/452	confirmed
3. Organizational agility has a significant effect on strategic agility.	0/346	3/614	confirmed

Based on table above, the value of T-Value for all three relationships in the research model is more than 2.58, so the relationships in the research model were confirmed at the level of 0.99.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Success of small and medium-sized enterprises in any country has significant impacts on its social, economic and cultural dimensions. Most researchers agree on the economic development of an enterprise and consider its economic importance more than any other case. Given the high impact of small and medium-sized sports enterprises in Iran's economy and reducing the unemployment rate, the aim of this study was to design and develop a model of factors affecting strategic agility in small and medium-sized sports enterprises. The results of the present study revealed that organizational culture, organizational structure and organizational agility influence strategic agility. Clarity of vision, core capabilities, selected strategic targets, shared responsibility, and action are also key categories of strategic agility. Culture is a model of the basic assumptions considered and developed by a certain group as what they have learned to deal with foreign issues in addition to maintaining their internal cohesion [26]. Thus, organizational culture in small and medium-sized sports enterprise, as one of the components influencing strategic agility, can play a significant role in the organizational goals of these enterprises. When the culture of the organization is based on work and effort and agile cooperation, an agile enterprise can be expected. Enterprises face many problems due to their newness. It can be stated small and medium-sized sports enterprises can overcome the problems in light of organizational culture.

Also, organizational structure is an important factor in strategic agility. In the present study, it was considered as a factor influencing the strategic agility. As long as the organizational structure of small sports enterprises do not have a flexible structure, we cannot expect strategic agility from them. Such enterprises have a flexible and open structure that does not fall within the framework of administrative bureaucracy and rigid structure. Moreover, organizational agility is one of the factors influencing the strategic agility. Small and medium-sized sports enterprises need to be organizationally agile so that they can have a freedom of action to make sudden decisions. Thus, to achieve strategic agility, it is necessary that the factors influencing it, including organizational culture, organizational structure, and strategic agility be well formulated, trained, and finally evaluated. It is especially true for small and medium-sized sports enterprises that are considered as start-ups. Creating strategic agility at the age of innovation economics is a challenge that most companies and organizations cannot cope with it successfully, and even some companies cannot maintain it after acquiring it, so organizations need to be constantly aware of their strategic agility as a dynamic capability by measuring it [27]. This is also true in small and medium-sized sports enterprises. According to research literature and approval of experts (through interviews), the components of strategic agility included clarity of vision, core capabilities, selected strategic targets, shared responsibility and action. The results of this study are in line with those of the studies conducted by Bandarian (2016), Brueller *et al.*

(2014), and Lewis *et al.* (2014), and no result was found to be inconsistent with results of this study [28-30].

The positive and significant impact of factors influencing the strategic agility was confirmed in the present study, which is in line with the results of the research conducted by Bavaghar (2018). A strategic agility is not achieved in an organization or enterprise as long as the organizational culture governing the enterprise is not based on cooperation and participation of employees and work teams, there is not shared vision, there is not adaptability and flexibility, organizational structure is rigid and bureaucracy is high, and all decisions are made by top managers to subordinates, and there is no organizational agility, which results in low rate of meeting the customers' needs, high operating costs, and inability to increase production capacity and manpower. Hence, given the positive effects of strategic agility in small and medium-sized sports enterprises, small and medium-sized sports enterprises' managers are recommended to identify the factors influencing the strategic agility governing their enterprises and try to improve or reform it and develop strategic vision through a high-quality conversational process with internal stakeholders (employees or possibly shareholders) and external stakeholders (customers and suppliers). In fact, conversation and communication between members of the senior management team, internal and external stakeholders of the organization can help to express thoughts and views about the future of the organization and the ideals of the organization. The communication can be face-to-face and virtual. They are also recommended to have a speed of action in doing executive actions to show fast response to changing market demands by having flexibility in allocating and reorganizing the organization's resources and creating structure within their organization to gain more motivation to use more strategic agility techniques.

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