UNDERSTANDING STRATEGY THROUGH NARRATIVE AND, COMPLEXITY THEORY

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ABSTRACT

Whilst a wide body of literature exists on organisational strategy formulation and implementation, it remains not well understood how a responsive strategy evolves and communicated to counteract dynamic market processes. This thesis, at the *micro level*, shall, through the lens of the theories of Narrative and Complexity, investigate the appropriation of these theoretical domains towards a greater understanding of strategy, both in communicating and implementing it, which is lacking across the strategy and organisational literature.

The conceptual framework reviews the duality of the macro and microelements of strategy to illustrate a more storied, meaningful strategic discourse model for the practicing manager. To this end, this thesis has taken Complexity Theory adopted by Goodwin, Kaufmann and Stacey as well as Narrative Theory through the interpretation of Ricoeur to analysis the self-organising and social interaction aspects of the organisation. From the *macro* or Market Process perspective, this study has drawn on the teachings of the School of Austrian Economics to better understand the dynamic market processes and discovery of entrepreneurial innovation within the hotel industry.

The proposed methodology and research process uses Ethnography. This participative enquiry involves issued-focussed interviews to identify factors seen to optimise strategic capabilities and to describe the effect of these factors.

Finally, it aims to generate a strategy development framework, principally for hotels, but equally applicable for other industries and organisations to develop the resonances being advocated by Complexity Theory and Narrative awareness.

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I would like to thank Dr. Geoffrey Drummond for guiding me on the domains of Narrative and Complexity Theory. This researcher has accumulated an unique insight on how best to understand the interactive properties of Narrative Theory and thus formulate a more refined thinking in the development of a new conceptual framework. With this in mind, I believe that I have been armed with an excellent grasp of critical thought on emergent strategy development as a process of perpetual forming and re-forming themes and stories. In particular the advice of my industry supervisor, Paul Gibson, has been quite insightful, who at times attempted to elucidate a clearer thinking on the conceptual model.

As I consistently wrestled with my own articulation and narrative presentation of seemingly endless variations of apparently identical and conflicting themes, I was always to rely on my wife and life partner Barbara Kündig for her profound, realistic grounding which only she is able to bring forth. It is to her that I dedicate this gratifying scholastic attempt to add my own verse to the vast body of research. Finally to those whom have gone before me and enriched me with such insightful and wondrous works, without which I would not have been able to crystallise my own interpretation of research, I am in your debt and gratitude.

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

Melbourne, 8th December 2008

I, John G. Ortner, student ID 214 2902, declare that this thesis to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made on the text of the examinable outcome.

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