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**The Use of Strategy Tools and Frameworks by SMEs in the Strategy Formation Process**

**Abstract**

*Purpose*

To examine the use of tools and techniques of strategy and strategic analysis within SMEs as part of the strategy formation process.

*Methodology*

A qualitative, multiple-case-based investigation utilising semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources to create a context-rich insight to the area examined.

*Findings*

The findings indicate a strong orientation towards operational tools deployment aligned with financial management and resources and process planning, monitoring and control. Strategic perspectives of the respondents indicate an implicit, rather than explicit deployment of strategy tools and unstructured deployment, but general awareness of the resulting component issues. Clearer strategic approaches and strong implementation appear to positively influence success, when measured by growth.

*Limitations*

This study is limited to nine organisations within a UK geographic region and therefore larger scale investigation would be beneficial to extend and confirm the findings in differing contexts.

*Practical Implications*

With resource scarcity potentially stymying the opportunity for owner-managers to develop more structured approaches to strategic analysis and development, consideration should be given to how owner-managers can further develop their strategic thinking in order to support enhanced strategic outcomes for their organisations. Furthermore, strategy educationalists may wish to reflect upon the manner in which they prepare delegates for strategic roles, where the SME context may differ radically from corporate experience.

*Originality*

Themethodology for this study differs substantially from previous investigations within the field, which has had relatively few contributions, as it utilises in-depth context-rich qualitative techniques to investigate the micro processes at play. The conclusions capture new insights, indications and identify areas for further investigation, hence adding to our understanding of a complex and heterogeneous field.

**Key words**

Strategy Tools, Frameworks, SME, Strategy Formation Process

**Authors**

* Professor Lawrence Bellamy, Associate Dean, Warrington School of Management, University of Chester, UK
* Dr Nii Amoo, Senior Lecturer, School of Accounting, Finance and Economics, Leads Beckett University, UK
* Dr Kieran Mervyn, University of Roehampton, UK
* Jacqueline Hiddlestone-Mumford, University of Liverpool, UK