

NAVIGATING GLOBAL HYPERCOMPETITION THROUGH SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

William J. Jones Ph.D

Assistant Professor,

Mahidol University International College, Thailand

Email id: william.jon@mahidol.ac.th

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformative impact of globalization and the resulting state of global hypercompetition, which has rendered traditional leadership models, often rooted in Taylorist illusions of absolute control fundamentally obsolete. As market stability is replaced by fleeting, temporary advantages and rapid innovation cycles, organizations face multi-dimensional pressures ranging from aggressive pricing and innovation demands to severe psychological tolls on employees, including burnout and exhaustion. The author argues that classical leadership, which emphasizes top-down strategy from an isolated center, is ill-equipped to handle the volatility and contingency of the modern era. To address these challenges, the research proposes a framework of sustainable leadership and sustainable management as a strategic architecture for long-term economic success. Utilizing a qualitative synthesis of systems theory and sustainability principles, the paper advocates for a radical inversion of the traditional center-periphery model. Within this framework, the periphery is recognized as the primary source of actionable intelligence regarding customers and products, while the center is redefined as a moderator of informational flow rather than a commanding authority. The methodology emphasizes that sustainability must move beyond ethical aspiration to become an operational mechanism fueled by transparency, professionalized communication, and trust. By fostering a culture of self-management and decentralized responsibility, organizations can integrate collective knowledge into a continuous web of problem-solving. Ultimately, the paper concludes that embracing these sustainable methodologies is a strategic imperative for any firm seeking to navigate the structural disequilibrium of the globalized economy.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Sustainability, Hypercompetition, Management Theory, Sustainable Leadership**Introduction**

Businesses and their employees face immense pressure to cope with the changing nature and environment of global and time-compressed competition (Kaehler, 2014). This paper delves the question of how leadership can help attenuate this pressure and manage businesses successfully. After a more in-depth exploration of the challenges of globalization and the multifaceted effects of global stress on companies in part one of the paper, classical leadership approaches will be presented in part two. The author will argue for an approach of sustainable leadership management, which offers economic success under the premise of globalization. The advantage lies in its multilevel application to institutional learning that is complemented by comprehensive communication strategies. This framework provides the necessary conditions for an environment in which cooperation between employees and stakeholders is built on trust and can lead to business success.

Literature Review: Sustainable Leadership in Hypercompetitive Contexts

The conceptual landscape of modern management is defined by the tension between the aggressive requirements of hypercompetition and the long-term imperatives of sustainability. D'Aveni (1995), who provided the seminal framework for this field, argues that the pursuit of permanent competitive advantage is an obsolete goal in volatile markets; instead, firms must survive by utilizing the 'New 7S's Framework' to create a series of temporary advantages through deliberate market disruption. While D'Aveni emphasizes speed and surprise, later research by Pacheco-de-Almeida (2010) introduces a more nuanced perspective through mathematical modeling, suggesting that industry leaders may deliberately slow their renewal pace, which the author refers to as 'self-displacement,' to optimize investment timing against the high costs of innovation. This suggests that what appears to be a loss of dominance is often a rational strategic calculation rather than a failure to adapt.

Finally, Nisha et al. (2022) emphasize a synergistic relationship, finding that sustainable leadership directly enhances core competencies, which together secure a sustainable competitive advantage in rapidly evolving sectors like information technology. This research seeks to insert sustainable leadership as a necessity in order to overcome the leadership trap of standardization brought about by hypercompetition.

Research Methodology: Sustainable Leadership and Hypercompetition

The research methodology utilized in this paper is a qualitative and conceptual synthesis that merges systems theory with the principles of sustainability management. This approach is designed to provide a theoretical solution to the failures of classical leadership paradigms when they are applied to the intense contingency of global hypercompetition. The methodology explicitly critiques the traditional focus on individual control, which is a legacy of Taylorist management practices. By addressing the instability of modern markets, the study establishes a framework where sustainability serves as a value-oriented guide for organizational behavior.

The conceptualization of leadership serves as the structural foundation of this methodology. Drawing on the theories of Charles Handy, the methodology identifies that the traditional centralized control of organizational development is no longer possible under contemporary economic conditions. Instead, the theory focuses on the decentralization of power and the active coordination of information circulating throughout the organization.

A key methodological element is the deliberate inversion of the center-periphery model. In standard leadership models, the strategic center commands the operational periphery. This study argues that the periphery actually holds the most vital information regarding product innovation and customer needs. Consequently, the methodological framework redefines the center as a moderator of informational flow. This ensures that feedback from the periphery is integrated into a continuous web of problem-solving.

Leadership is further conceptualized as starting with self-management, where the leader acts as a model of behavior for all subordinates. Rather than imposing rigid rules, this approach seeks to activate personal responsibility and decentralized action. This structural orientation is presented as the only way for a company to survive an age of insecurity. To support this architecture, the methodology incorporates professionalized corporate communication and absolute transparency. These elements are essential for maximizing institutional learning from the discrepancies between the organization and its environment. By fostering a culture of trust and consistent corporate behavior, the organization to maintain sustainable and cooperative relationships with all stakeholders. This comprehensive methodological framework provides a systemic mechanism for achieving long-term economic success amidst the pressures of globalization.

This paper fills a modest gap in the broad literature on sustainable leadership by providing a structural architecture for the implementation of sustainable management. While existing studies focus on defining sustainability or identifying successful leadership traits, this document identifies a critical theoretical gap: the persistent Taylorist illusion of control that hinders modern organizations from adapting to hypercompetitive volatility. It argues that the mere theoretical adoption of sustainability is insufficient without a radical decentralization of power, which it operationalizes through the inversion of the center-periphery model. By recasting the leader as a moderator of information rather than a persistent crisis manager, the document explains how firms can practically tap into the actionable intelligence residing at their operational peripheries to navigate global contingency. This paper also adds a layer to the literature by positioning corporate communication and transparency not merely as ethical values but as critical engines for institutional learning.

This synergy between sustainable methodologies offers a robust answer to the *how* of leadership moving beyond the empirical benefits noted in the broader literature to provide a systemic mechanism for surviving the psychological and economic pressures of hypercompetition. Through this lens, the document transforms sustainable leadership from an ethical aspiration into a strategic, resilient architecture capable of thriving in a globalized economy.

Globalization and Hypercompetition

After the collapse of the communist world, capitalism expanded globally (Ritzer, 2011). Possibilities for new supply chains, business alliances, key markets, and so forth opened up for well-established companies. New economic possibilities, however, enticed new businesses to emerge (Lang & Rybnikova 2014). Further multiplied by a boost in information technology during the 1990s, within a few years, globalization had a strong grip on most branches and markets all around the world. The speed by which the process expanded was a massive surprise to most (Eden & Lenway, 2001). It led to an increase of markets, an increase of customers, and an even stronger increase of economical actors. What had started as an enlargement of capitalistic endeavors resulted in a global competition on as many levels as never before seen.

Contemporarily, competition penetrates virtually all aspects of business life. The premise of capitalism is that it produces efficiency; hence, competition should be welcomed due to its tendency to efficiently allocate resources (Wohland & Wiemeyer, 2006). The more companies exist, the more jobs are created. Initially, these processes could be easily welcomed as they brought wealth to many formerly poor countries. However, once the balance between profit opportunities and market actors overbalances towards market actors, the scarcity of resources will cause an even fiercer competition. As the current process of globalization was accompanied

by a breakthrough in information technology and the incredible expansion of the Internet, the development of big multinationals was paralleled by the massive growth of options for new market entries (Dung Le & Rothlauf, 2008).

Correspondingly, the developments triggered by globalization vary, simultaneously creating and restricting different possibilities (Bremmer, 2014). This has culminated in a state of hypercompetition, driven by the accelerating life cycles of innovations, the rapid pace of modern market entry, and the volatility of global trends amplified by new media.

Originally described by Richard D'Aveni, 'hypercompetition' defines a market environment where structural stability is replaced by fleeting, temporary advantages. This high-velocity competition contributes to structural disequilibrium, lowers entry barriers, unseats industry leaders, and undermines long-established national oligopolies (Thomas & D'Aveni, 2004). As globalization opened key markets, decentralized production facilities, and unified national regulations (Ritzer, 2011), the force of hypercompetition swept across national borders to become a definitive global phenomenon.

The Multi-Dimensional Pressures of Hypercompetition: From Market Dynamics to Individual Impact

Hypercompetition was first described as a set of features that certain markets developed due to the parallel emergence of technological advancements and economic opportunities. The degree of hypercompetition affects all business forces to which a company is subject. Under circumstances of the current wave of global hypercompetition, nine distinct dimensions of business pressure on companies can be identified (Meyer, 2009). (1) Companies face pressure to innovate because technology develops rapidly and customers adapt quickly, resulting in an equally advanced demand for state-of-the-art products. Simultaneously, this leads to shorter life cycles for products and innovations, further increasing market acceleration (Gassmann & Enkel, 2004). (2) Once demands are saturated, marketing departments are pressured to open new market realms by generating demand for new products among customers. (3) Stakeholder expectations have risen over the years, with corporate social responsibility being one of the key concepts behind this development. This pressures companies to comply with social norms and submit to the social power of new media (Matten & Moon, 2005). (4) Globalization has introduced new market actors, pressuring companies to seek new suppliers, customers, and key markets. If companies hesitate, competitors will be the first to contact cheaper suppliers and win over customers. (5) Due to informed consumers and international competition, there is more pressure on pricing today than ever before. (6) Consequently, this creates pressure on costs, which rise due to the maintenance of international sales and distribution networks. (7) If a company is unwilling to compete by decreasing prices, pressure to differentiate arises because products and services are otherwise easily replaceable by those of competitors (Porter, 1980). (8) When executed properly, the initiatives mentioned above lead to a pressure toward professionalization. In part, this tendency consists of creating new brands and meeting higher expectations from trading partners. Additionally, a professionalized company's value chain becomes more complex, leading to higher demands and a greater effort in managing this complexity. (9) In order to run a company capable of coping with these pressures, the urgency to attract young professionals arises. Competent employees with the necessary skills in management, communication, and technology must be retained by the business and integrated into the staff; otherwise, they will apply elsewhere in the global job market. The mention of company staff relates directly to the second dimension of pressure that hypercompetition induces.

Secondly, economic pressures give rise to pressures on individuals—managers and employees alike. Here, at least four additional pressures should be mentioned. (1) The more pressure a company faces, the greater the workload often becomes for employees and managers. They attempt to save the business from collapse by expanding assets, distribution, and turnover and by introducing new management procedures and modes of production. As money is often scarce in struggling companies, an increasing workload must often be accomplished by the same number of staff. This may result in burnout and exhaustion, a syndrome that has become a major topic since its discovery in the 1970s (Freudenberger, 1974). (2) A higher workload and subsequent mental and physical suffering might also result from increasing competition among employees. In a globalized world where English is the lingua franca, potential employees from many countries compete with each other. This causes stress due to the importance of maintaining one's position against new job applicants. (3) For well-qualified employees, winning this competition often demands sacrifices in terms of flexibility. The decision to work elsewhere or work unusual hours, perhaps even during holidays, poses challenges to employees as well as their families. Again, burnout and depression are possible outcomes (Sennett 1998). (4) If competition becomes too intense or unfair, mobbing might result, which increases stress and pressure on individuals even further. Substance abuse may also be a consequence of such pressures, but it can also be a cause of stress, thus complementing the diagnosis of pressures on individuals in the business world today (Schaufeli, Leiter & Laslach 2009).

Leadership as the Focal Point for Navigating Hypercompetition

Given the nature of hypercompetition and the multiple levels at which it exerts pressure on companies and employees, a remedy is required. Ultimately, a company must combat these challenges by adopting new strategies, reorganizing business processes, or approaching new key markets; the options are as numerous as books on economics. One focal point crucial for the realization of all these options is leadership (Wassermann, Anand & Nohria, 2010). The practice of leading a company sits at the very heart of any business. Thus, reflecting on leadership is pivotal when exploring how to successfully embrace hypercompetition.

From Ecology to Economy: The Principles and Challenges of Sustainable Leadership

The decisive idea among leadership theorists for implementing contingency into the framework of organizational regulation was to turn their attention to systems theory, among other approaches. This perspective allows for an understanding of self-organization cycles capable of forming stable systems despite the unpredictability of their individual elements. Briefly, sustainable management attempts to integrate the knowledge, experiences, and abilities of all organizational members into a process from which well-reflected and deliberated decisions are derived (Witzer, 2005). Such a formal approach to coping with contingency, however, is not always particularly appealing to companies. Apart from the procedural precepts of openness and inclusion, it does not provide significant guidance regarding the actual content of organizational strategies. One approach that can complement sustainable leadership because it allows for the combination of procedural openness with concrete management strategy is sustainable leadership. This concept will be presented first, followed by an explanation of sustainable management, which complements sustainability with a prolific theoretical leadership framework.

Sustainability has been described and discussed by so many scholars that a universally accepted, comprehensive definition is still missing (Meppem & Gill 1997). The fundamental idea, however, is widely shared. First, sustainability is often used synonymously with sustainable development, implying that it is a continuous process rather than a static state. More precisely, sustainability represents an attitude toward the world and its organic and inorganic resources, seeking to consume and deplete as few of these resources as possible. The ecological impact of organizational behavior is a major aspect of this paradigm. Conceived from a scientific perspective, sustainability can be defined as "the use of the vital functions of our biophysical surroundings in such a way that they remain indefinitely available" (Huetting & Reijnders 1998, p. 139). Many companies, however, are not primarily involved with ecological questions or have only a minimal impact on their biophysical surroundings. Thus, the concept of sustainability would not have spread so massively among corporations in recent years had it not been properly adapted to economic contexts.

Davies (2007) has applied the concept of sustainability to economics and leadership. He identified nine key factors to transfer the ecological idea of sustainability into the wider realm of leadership. According to Davies, applying sustainability to the economy ought to entail the following:

1. Measuring outcomes and not just outputs.
2. Balancing short- and long-term objectives.
3. Thinking in terms of processes, not plans—the way that leaders involve their colleagues is more important than the documents they write.
4. Having a passion for continuous improvement and development.
5. Developing personal humility and professional will as a means of building long-term leadership capacity.
6. Practicing strategic timing and strategic abandonment.
7. Building capacity and creating involvement.
8. Developing strategic measures of success.
9. Building in sustainability.

When translated from ecology to the economy, sustainability becomes a means of balancing goals of varying origins and different time scales. The task of balancing such heterogeneous aims, however, encounters two primary problems. First, the reconcilability of these various goals is inherently complex. This complexity arises directly from the nature of the concepts that must be balanced. For instance, if one attempts to reconcile the goals of profitability and fairness, it is not only difficult to find a viable trade-off, but achieving a clear understanding of each goal is highly demanding in itself; at what exact point is an organization considered objectively fair or profitable? Answering such questions in a profound and definitive manner is immensely challenging. The second problem, however, poses even greater difficulties. Finding a balance between two goals at the point where both can be equally maximized might theoretically be predictable. Yet, as soon as more than

two goals are involved, achieving this equilibrium is no longer possible without deliberately prioritizing them. One could argue that such considerations do not need to be calculated by theorists, as they will naturally resolve themselves through free-market forces (Harris, 2003). This common view, however, has proven to be far less effective than suggested by neoclassical theorists. In response to the shortcomings of libertarian economic models, economic sustainability solves the task of prioritization by incorporating various ethical norms. These include valuing fair employment as a basis for long-term cooperation, avoiding extreme imbalances between economic actors, and promoting the equal distribution of goods and opportunities. Ultimately, this establishes durable, cooperative relationships across companies, industries, and even national borders (Raskin et al. 1998).



Navigating Contingency and Sustainability in Organizational Leadership

Virtually everyone outside the inner strategic headquarters is categorized merely as the periphery—essentially, individuals executing what the center commands. Yet, how does the center know what is best for the organization? Conventional leadership theory traditionally relied on a leader's individual skills and talents, emphasizing how these frameworks helped leaders determine exactly what was in a company's best interest (Grote & Hering, 2012). However, when perceived correctly, the center-periphery model reveals that it is actually the periphery that possesses the most accurate knowledge regarding the customers, the products, and the distribution process. Sustainable leadership takes this insight seriously by inverting the traditional hierarchy. Under sustainable leadership theory, the peripheries are acknowledged as the primary realm where business is conducted, information is gathered, and success is monitored. The center's task shifts to coordinating the informational flow so that, for instance, customer feedback successfully finds its way to the product designer (Baecker, 2011). Thus, the center moderates information. To do this effectively, however, the entire organization must be acutely aware of its information feedback processes. It must recognize the vital importance of the peripheries to the organization's overall development. Hence, the primary task of sustainable leadership entails cultivating a shared attitude among employees and establishing spheres of effortless communication. Consequently, sustainable leadership begins with the leader leading themselves (Witzer, 2005). Self-management is inevitable, as leaders serve as models of thought, behavior, and attitude for all subordinates. Like all impulses generated by a charismatic leader, these examples do not impose rigid rules on others; rather, they seek to activate the employee's personal sense of responsibility (Witzer, 2005). However, one must be precise here: the encouragement of decentralized, responsible action is not merely a means to increase efficiency or provoke job satisfaction, as it is conceived in the traditional empowerment model of leadership (Blanchard, Carlos & Randolph, 1996). Under sustainable conditions, integrating everyone's knowledge into a web of problem-solving processes is the only way a company can survive in an age of unreason and insecurity (Handy, 1990). Thus, regarding institutional procedures, corporate identity must be given particular consideration. This encompasses the establishment of a professional corporate communication department that intertwines internal informational processes and crafts a corporate image to interface with the external environment. Because of the omnipresence of contingency, internal and external communications will inevitably differ; the sheer complexity of organizational interactions makes it impossible to simply create, communicate, and act according to one identical, static image (Baecker, 2011). Honesty and transparency are particularly critical under these circumstances in order to maximize learning from the discrepancies between the inside and the outside of the corporate system. Corporate behavior, another crucial concept for managing a company under the premise of sustainability, accentuates the consistent behavior of management and staff in their interactions with all stakeholders. Through this consistency, trust and reliability are generated, functioning as key values once they are embedded within a corporate culture of sustainability (Baecker, 2011). This is the very engine of business sustainability. Trust can only be maintained if the delicate balance between stakeholders' interests, profits, values, and leadership goals is successfully managed. Ultimately, corporate social responsibility and sustainable supply chain management complement sustainable leadership in achieving this overarching goal.

Conclusion

Globalization has irreversibly transformed the corporate landscape, accelerated market dynamics and giving rise to the pervasive phenomenon of hypercompetition. As demonstrated throughout this paper, this high-velocity environment imposes severe, multi-dimensional pressures on organizations ranging from the relentless demand for innovation to the complexities of global supply chains while simultaneously exacting a heavy psychological toll on individuals, often manifesting as severe stress, burnout, and exhaustion. Faced with these daunting challenges, classical leadership paradigms have proven to be fundamentally ill-equipped to handle modern contingencies. Rooted deeply in Taylorist illusions of absolute control, traditional theoretical models disproportionately focus on the 'charismatic' capabilities of individual leaders to dictate strategy from an isolated, centralized headquarters.

The sheer unpredictability of the globalized market necessitates a radical paradigm shift away from centralized authority and toward systemic adaptability. Sustainable leadership offers a robust, value-oriented compass by prioritizing long-term ecological, social, and economic viability over fleeting, temporary competitive advantages. However, the mere theoretical adoption of sustainability principles is insufficient without a structural mechanism to practically implement them within large, complex organizations. This is precisely where sustainable management becomes an indispensable theoretical and practical tool. By intentionally disempowering the traditional leader and recasting them primarily as a moderator of information, organizations can tap into the vital, actionable intelligence that actually resides at their operational peripheries. The synergy between sustainable objectives and sustainable methodologies creates a highly resilient organizational architecture. When leaders focus on facilitating effortless communication, establishing strict transparency, and cultivating a shared sense of personal responsibility among employees, they successfully invert the outdated center-periphery model. This decentralized approach empowers the entire workforce to navigate complexity organically by integrating everyone's knowledge into a continuous web of problem-solving processes. Ultimately, the true engine of this modern paradigm is trust a critical asset that can only flourish within a transparent, consistently managed corporate culture of sustainability. To survive the era of hypercompetition, companies must abandon the antiquated pursuit of rigid organizational control. Embracing sustainable management and sustainable leadership is no longer merely an ethical consideration, but a strategic imperative for enduring economic success under the premises of globalization.

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