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Abstract

Successful business strategy requires awareness about the company's external environment, including its customers, competitors, industry structure, and competitive forces. It is particularly important in a global economy, where companies are faced with such challenges as multicultural communication, cross-border knowledge transfer and global supply chain management. To deal with these challenges, companies have rigorously developed their knowledge management capabilities in recent years. Competitive intelligence has emerged as a systematic way to better find and take advantage of vital information in the external business environment of the company.

This thesis is a conceptual analysis of competitive intelligence. The thesis examines various definitions of the concept found in the literature and develops a synthesis thereof. The thesis then describes the functions and practices that comprise the concept of competitive intelligence and explains their historical development. The study of competitive intelligence in the literature has mostly remained on a pragmatic level. Unlike many previous studies, therefore, the main objective of this thesis is to examine the theoretical foundations of the concept. Especially, the thesis aims to examine the concept in the context of competence-based competition and the resource-based view of the firm. Furthermore, competitive intelligence is particularly significant and valuable in global markets, since global competition exhibits challenges arising from different languages and cultures, regulatory environments, as well as special issues related to the management of international organizations. Therefore, the thesis also examines the concept of competitive intelligence in the context of globally operating companies.

A conclusion of the thesis is that competitive intelligence is a sub-discipline of knowledge management. Competitive intelligence particularly serves strategic decision-making as well as the participants in the innovation processes that ensure and develop a company's competitiveness. It is furthermore shown that competitive intelligence is practically a necessity in order for a company to sustain its competitiveness in global markets.

Key words	Knowledge management, competition, multinational corporations
Further information	