The advantages and limitations of developing an external perspective for analysing corporate strategic alignment

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Abstract: Increasing economic, political and social interdependencies within global society, together with the current dynamics of structural change within the European context, indicate an urgent need for fast and effective organizational change. Current resources and power relationships must be considered as key catalytic factors within the complete spectrum of policy-making activities intended to create new regulations and conditions guaranteeing sustainability within different social and economic fields. Is one single company capable of creating these new circumstances in the light of the various environmental changes? Which external resources would come into question? How would company stakeholders behave given the various possible internal transformations? With environmental change, it is always a challenge for any one single company to understand and to react to the environmental change in order to ensure its own economic survival. This article highlights the importance of developing external perspectives for analyzing the strategic alignment of a company within the context of environmental change according to its resource allocation activities, with a theoretical base which includes the Stakeholder Approach, the Resource Dependence Theory, and the Resource-based Theory, offering a conceptual lens through which particular management phenomena can be observed.

Keywords: Environmental Change, External Perspective, Power Relationships, Stakeholders, Strategic Alignment, Resource-based Theory, Resource Dependence Theory

1. Introduction

Focusing on a company’s resource allocation activities is vital when evaluating corporate strategy. However, the announcement of the company’s new corporate strategy, together with the successful completion of its strategic steps, also requires an acceptance on the part of the company’s interest groups controlling the resources the company needs to implement its strategy. Clearly there are certain power mechanisms within the company’s environment which must be
considered in order to achieve the best possible performance, or even the survival of the company (Ansoff, 1979: 97-106; Freeman, 1984: 61ff.; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 48ff.; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer, 1992). Consequently, Resource Dependence Theory, Resource-based Theory and the Stakeholder Approach can be used to provide an appropriate theoretical basis for developing an in-depth understanding of the strategic alignment of the company. The following paper introduces a possible consolidated approach for using the above mentioned methods.

2. Understanding corporate strategy as an initial point and resource allocation perspectives

Despite the fact that, in the opinion of some authors, the various views on corporate strategy are complementary, the following question appears. Are the established definitions and views on corporate strategy sufficient to understand and develop an external perspective? (For instance, “to see if certain definitions hold up better in particular context (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1996: 2)).” Pfeffer and Salancik, the most well-known advocates of the Political School (Mintzberg, 1990), suggest that company strategy (or, in the broader sense, of an organization) is “courses of actions”, i.e. “formulating actions” and “making decisions” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 62-63), for “bringing stability and certainty to their environments” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 70). In other words, corporate strategy is a way to survive, since the existence of companies is “constantly in question, and their survival is viewed as problematic” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 2). This interpretation of corporate strategy could be the starting point for the development of an external perspective. The concept of corporate strategy “forces continuous sensitivity to changes taking place in the company’s environment and resources” (Andrews, 1980: 451). In this section, it is attempted to define the term “resources”, and its importance for a company’s survival, in order to develop an external perspective.

The concept of a resource-based view (Müller-Stewens and Lechner, 2003: 356-359; Schreyögg, 1997: 483-486; Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 49-53) is based on the idea that the success of a company is not solely determined by its competitive position within various markets. The existence of certain qualities and features within a company can make it superior to its competitors while making its products unique in comparison to what other companies are bringing to the markets. Examples of such qualities and features could include improved internal
structures and processes, resource endowment and access to additional resources. Thus, a resource-based view focuses “on the key success factors of individual firm behavior to achieve firm-specific advantages by a portfolio of differential score skills and routines, coherence across skills, and unique proprietary know-how (Mahoney and Pandian, 1992: 369).”

Consequently, it becomes apparent that a company’s competitive advantage results from the quality of its internal resources and competencies (Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 49). Within this context the term “resource” of the firm has to be understood in a broad sense, including “all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge etc. controlled by a firm that enable the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness (Barney, 1991: 101).” In order to link these thoughts to the case-related external perspective, it is important to mention that Barney’s term “controlled by a firm,” in response to the broad definition of the company’s resources, can also refer to the relationships between the company and its external environment.

These relationships can extensively improve the company’s competitive advantage by, for example, providing the company with access to additional resources. Consequently, its relationships to the external environment should play an important role in the company’s success. While it may be possible for the company to control relationships with its external environment, the question is whether the company able to determine its resource allocation decisions without influence from its external environment. This issue will be discussed later, with the intention of building a bridge between Resource-based View and Resource Dependence Theory. In spite of various scientific opinions about the differences between the Resource-based View and the Resource Dependence Theory (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 453-463), it is tried to develop a complementary perspective of the both theories.

The success of a multi-business company is created by the productive functioning of its businesses. Within the context of a variety of different strategic decisions and activities, the company can be confronted with a scarcity of resources. This can force the company to economize on certain parts of its economic potential. In other words, the company starts to save its own resources (Boehi, 1995: 73ff). However, in the case of a large company, resources the company needs for its business are often owned by certain groups, for example, by investors, shareholders and governmental authorities. Consequently, the owner of company’s resources may demand fast rationalization steps from the company. Thus, the allocation of scarce resources
becomes the central issue regarding the formulation and implementation of corporate strategy. The basic idea of this argument is that “the organization does not control the resources it needs”, otherwise resource acquisition would not be “problematic and uncertain” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 258).

If one, or many, elements of the external environment cease to exist, the established environmental framework will change. This means that, with the disappearance of certain environmental elements, a particular company will be excluded from its resources for a certain period of time, during which it will try to adapt to the new circumstances. In other words, within the context of environmental change, “the supply of resources becomes more or less scarce” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 3). The acquisition of scarce resources makes it necessary for the company to interact with groups from the external environment which own, or control, these resources. The idea that “organizations depend on their environments” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 258) provides a basis for the understanding of Resource Dependence Theory.

Putting it simply, resources are crucial for the company not only because a lack of access threatens its survival (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 258). A scarcity of resources leads to the appearance of power relations between the company and its external environment and, consequently, creates a basis for control over a particular resource (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 48). Four sources of control over resources have been identified (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 47-50). Firstly there is possession. For instance, “knowledge” is possessed “in a direct and absolute manner” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 48). Secondly there is access to a resource. Access to a resource can in some cases compensate for the absence of possession. Thirdly control over a resource is “the actual use of the resource” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 48). If someone can use a resource, this user has a certain degree of control over it, regardless of whether there is someone else who possesses it or not (cf. Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 49: “The ability to control the use of a resource is a major source of influence for some interest groups.”). Finally there is ability to regulate: “the ability to make rules or otherwise regulate the possession, allocation, and use of resources and to enforce the regulations” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 49). The aforementioned sources of control over a resource should signify the existence of power relationships between a company and its external environment and build bridges towards the understanding of an external perspective.
3. Resource dependence theory

Similar to the aforementioned Resource-Based View, Resource Dependence Theory (Kuepper and Felsch, 2000: 101-109; Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 452-480; Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 258-262; Schreyögg, 1997: 481-483) emphasizes the term “resource” as an important feature within the context of the formulation and implementation of corporate strategy in order to generate persistent competitive advantages (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 454). However, unlike the Resource-Based View, Resource Dependence Theory looks at the company from an external perspective (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 454). Thus, the dependence of a company on external resources allows it to acquire new businesses, to create co-operations and strategic alliances, and to merge with other companies. These strategic decisions show how the company could decrease uncertainty about its future development - in other words, how the company “manage[s] to survive” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 2).

In addition, Pfeffer and Salancik developed a basic concept for the understanding of relationships between a company and its external environment, i.e., “effects of environments on organizations, and effects of organizations on environments” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 10-16). This concept, which helps to develop the external perspective, includes the following key elements: organizational effectiveness, organizational environment and constraints. The discussion of these key elements, and the aforementioned idea of uncertainty reduction, are a subject of the rest of this section.

Resource Dependence Theory implies that a particular company’s resource allocation has the potential to create conflict and confrontation between the company and the various stakeholders who control the resources it needs (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 462). Before looking at the question of how the company can reduce uncertainty resulting from potential confrontations with its external environment, it is important to establish possible reasons for such confrontations. One such reason is the fact that the company must acquire resources in order to ensure its own survival. Since these resources are possessed by other groups, the company “must interact with others who control those resources,” consequently becoming more dependent on its external environment. This also means that the more interactions or negotiations the company undertakes with its external environment, the more assured it will become in response to its
access to resources, and the more dependent it becomes on the groups which own the resources it needs (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 258).

According to theory, the company is independent from the influences of its external environment if it does not demand any resources from the stakeholders. (cf. Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 12: “Thus, one reason why elements of an environment may have little impact is that the organization is isolated or buffered from them.”) In the case of, for example, an international multi-business company with a need for additional capital and certain profitable circumstances, this idea appears to be unrealistic. The argument is further supported by the idea of resource scarcity: “If the resources needed by the organization were continually available, even if outside their control, there would be no problem (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 3).”

It is clear that a certain level of dependence on the external environment is important for a company’s survival: if the company does not accommodate the interests of its stakeholders, they could react with resistance and pressure which could endanger it (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 464-466, 477-478). In this sense, the quantity of interactions of a particular company with its external environment could indicate the degree of dependence of the company on its external environment. However, the relatively high degree of dependence of the company on its external environment does not save it from potential conflict. The company is constantly being watched by the external groups which control its resources, and are therefore able to influence the entire resource allocation process (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 462). Considering that conflicts or confrontations could directly lead to an increase in company uncertainty, it is important for the company to be able to accurately interpret its environmental circumstances in order to eliminate, if possible, potential sources of conflict, and to influence how the relevant stakeholders interpret the various processes and functioning of the company.

It is also important to mention that the external environment does not consist of the same groups and organizations with the same, or substitutable, resources. In this case, a certain company decision could be accepted by one group, but interdicted by another. This fact shows that a company “cannot survive by responding completely to every environmental demand” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 43) since demands often conflict. This argument shows how complex, multifarious, and sometimes even controversial, the issue of uncertainty reduction for the company can be. Consequently, the company should constantly be observing, and adjusting, its dependence relationships to the external environment, selecting the more relevant
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environmental issues to focus on, and ignoring the irrelevant ones, in order to ensure its own survival.

Resource Dependence Theory considers the term “environment” from the institutional perspective: the environment consists of identifiable institutions and actors, such as companies, authorities, labour unions, etc (Schreyögg, 1997: 482). In a broader sense, the company’s environment could be described as “every event in the world which has any effect on the activities or outcomes” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 12). Such a broad definition of the environment does not specify the groups that control the resources the company needs, but implies the broader range of possible interactions between the company and its external environment. As the company cannot respond to every environmental impact, it is important for the company to distinguish between “little” and “large” impacts of elements from its external environment (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 12). Large impacts should receive most of the company’s attention. For this purpose, the company should constantly observe and analyze its external environment in order to “protect the internal operations from external influences” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 13), because external influences can lead to instability and uncertainty about the company’s future (cf. Van de Ven, 1992: 178: “Influences in the external environment or within the entity itself may create instabilities …”).

The company’s performance is measured by different types of “effectiveness,” meaning “its ability to create acceptable outcomes and actions.” Effectiveness is an “external standard” for evaluating a company’s performance. It shows how well the company “is meeting the demands of the various groups and organizations that are concerned with its activities.” It implies the company is successful in influencing and manipulating appropriate interest groups by creating acceptability for its decisions and activities: for instance, motivating customers to buy more expensive products, or maintaining favorable relations with the government (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 11). Unlike effectiveness, efficiency is an “internal standard” for evaluating a company’s performance. It is “measured by the ratio of resources utilized to output produced” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 11), or in other words, it shows “how much produced at what cost” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 34). Thus, the degree of efficiency is an irrelevant term for the interest groups which own resources the company needs (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 458-459). While Pfeffer and Salancik strongly distinguish between the terms “effectiveness” and “efficiency” (“Organizations can be both efficient and effective, neither efficient nor effective,
effective but not efficient, or efficient but not effective” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 35)), it may be more appropriate to consider the fact that the two terms “effectiveness” and “efficiency” are strongly interrelated. Both are indicative of standards of company performance, and cannot be ignored when looking at a company’s relationship with its interest groups.

Indeed, it is standard practice for both the company, and its external environment, to closely monitor efficiency, as efficient processes ensure a company’s success. After all, the company itself does not only want to survive, it also intends to make profits (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 459). Both internal and external standards of company performance are relevant for creating advantageous relationships between the company and its environment. Within the context of the earlier mentioned relevance of allocation of scarce resources, it is important to stress that, to avoid possible conflicts, efficient and effective allocation of such resources to the company should be adjusted and tested for the degree of complementarity: the higher the degree, the lower the risk of emergence of internal and external conflicts. For example, if the company focuses more on increasing efficiency by reducing both the cost and usage of scarce resources, it could negatively affect other relevant company strategic issues. In other words, if a certain resource allocation decision can be considered unnecessary or wrong - i.e., inefficient for internal process activities of the company - it could, nevertheless, be accepted as an effective decision in response to corporate strategy (Boehi, 1995: 73-74). Thus, it becomes apparent that a company should always consider potential conflicts arising from the efficient and effective allocations of scarce resources if they are not adjusted to each other, and to the actual demands of the external environment.

The idea of behavioral constraints is an important key element of the concept which develops an external perspective of a company. Constraints help in understanding the behavior of the company within a particular context. They create a certain framework for a company’s activities and determine its behavioral pattern. “Actions can be said to be constrained whenever one response to a given situation is more probable than any other response to the situation, regardless of the actor responding (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 14).” Thus, unlike the term “dependences”, constraints are explained as natural and inevitable consequences of the need for behavioral actions. They are also important for determining actions and making predictions: “in most cases action is not possible without constraints, which can facilitate the choice and decision
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process” (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 15). The idea of constraints should support the statement that not every dependence or requirement can endanger a company’s survival.

4. Stakeholder theory

The importance of Stakeholder Theory has been widely discussed (Chakravarthy and Lorange, 1991: 16-18; Freeman, 1984; Müller-Stewens and Lechner, 2003: 268-269; Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 165-174), and it has a complementary role in the further development of an external perspective. A company is more or less embedded in the different economic, societal, cultural and political contexts of its environment due to the large variety of potential environmental elements and their contrasting natures and purposes (Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 165). Given a company is not fully isolated from its environment, these elements can either affect a company’s business field (both positively or negatively) or be irrelevant for the particular company. The idea of being affected by environmental elements can be found in probably the most widely quoted definition of the term “stakeholder”: “A stakeholder in an organization is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives (Freeman, 1984: 46).”

A company could have many different stakeholders: stockholders, customers, competitors, suppliers, employees, managers, media, political groups (Freeman, 1984: 55), consequently “any other group that ha[s] an interest, or stake, in the success or performance (Miller and Dess, 1996: 13)” of the company. The role of stakeholders, and their different possible impact, should allow the company, firstly, to determine the total amount of relevant stakeholders, and, secondly, to distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” stakeholders, in order to identify their degree of relevance for the company (Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 166-174). Environmental dynamics should allow the company to observe changes in order to adapt to new circumstances: “there must be an explicit process for checking the degree of fit of the strategic budget with the degree of importance of stakeholders (Freeman, 1984: 160).” The stakeholder approach is a sustainable tool that can be used by the company to observe and analyse its stakeholders in order to meet their needs (Miller and Dess, 1996: 32-33).
The emphasis of Resource Dependence Theory on the company’s dependence on its relationships with critical resource holders (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 46-47) shows that the Stakeholder Theory and the Resource Dependence Theory are closely related: “if a particular stakeholder is vital to the future success of a firm, resources must be allocated to deal with that group (Freeman, 1984: 169).” It is the importance of “power” (Ansoff, 1979: 97-106; Medcof, 2001; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992, 1998) that creates a crucial link between Stakeholder Theory and Resource Dependence Theory. Resource Dependence Theory refers to the influence of external groups on the company’s resource allocation process, and implicitly starts to deal with the term “power”: “Any process that affects the allocation of a resource provides some degree of control over it (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 48).” According to Ansoff, power is the “ability of a group or an individual to affect any aspect of strategic behavior (Ansoff, 1979: 97).”

In response to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003), the concept of Resource Dependence Theory is concerned with organization-environment interactions, implicating the dependence of the organization on actors who provide the critical resources the organization needs to survive. The authors “do not explicitly define” the term “stakeholders” (Freeman, 1984: 42). Even so, their definition of interest groups, in terms of power and resource dependence, is at least implicitly very close to stakeholder approach (Freeman, 1984: 43): “Our position is that organizations survive to the extent that they are effective. Their effectiveness derives from the management of demands, particularly the demands of interest groups upon which the organizations depend for resources of support (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 2).”

Since some case studies are not investigating the company’s relationships with abstract and homogeneous external environments, but are rather trying to find evidence of concrete interest groups, such as shareholders, policy makers, authorities, employees, and competitors, it is important to support the resource dependence approach with elements of Stakeholder Theory in order to be able to investigate the resource allocation process from an external perspective. The fact that a company is dependent on stakeholders who control resources the company needs means that the stakeholders have power over the company.

The countervailing factor to the power of stakeholders is the power of a company itself, in other words, the company’s ability to avoid, or reduce, influences from the stakeholders, since the size of a company and its market share are not the factors which guarantee the company’s success in the long run (Welge and Al-Laham, 2001: 5). Consequently, a company recognizes the
environmental constraints, adapts itself to the environmental reality and then tries to manipulate its external environment and existing constraints. The description of constraints should support the statement that not every dependence or requirement can endanger the company’s survival. Moreover, the company should always consider a certain trade-off between its autonomy and survival, especially within the context of resource scarcity and environmental instability. “Stability and change […] are explained by the relative balance of power between opposing forces. […] Change occurs when these opposing values, forces, or events go out of balance (Van de Ven, 1992: 178).”

The power interdependencies between a company and its stakeholders determine the strategic outcome, and can explain particular resource allocation decisions and company behavioral patterns such as mergers (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 114-126), joint venture activities (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 152-161; Freeman, 1984: 144), diversification (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 126-131) and organizational growth (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 131-139). A company undertakes all these strategic steps in order to enhance stability and reduce uncertainty, trying to manage its interdependencies with stakeholders and to decrease its dependences on certain external resources.

Since many existing research methods are based on exploring multinational and multi-business companies, it is appropriate to mention the following observations that refer to power relations between a large multinational company and its stakeholders. Firstly, a multinational company interacts with many, various, international stakeholders regarding different, and frequently controversial, interests (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 96, 131, 135-136; Freeman, 1984: 11-22). Secondly, the large size of a company provides “advantages in stability and the reduction of uncertainty (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 138),” and “more power and leverage (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 139)” over the company’s environment. Finally, a company with “a variety of outcomes that are being disposed of in a variety of markets (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 46)” is less dependent on the external resources than a company that, for instance, sells only one product (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 46-47). Thus, the term “power” refers both to Resource Dependence Theory and to Stakeholder Theory, and can be used to connect the theories.
5. Conclusion: advantages and limitations of developing an external perspective

Using arguments from previous chapters, in this article it has been attempted to discuss the advantages and limitations of the external perspective developed by Resource Dependence Theory and Stakeholder Theory, supported by the concept of Resource-based Theory. Unlike the resource-based view of corporate strategy, Resource Dependence Theory develops an “external look” into company’s activities from the position of company’s stakeholders (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 462). Thus, it is also appropriate for any outside-in analysis of the resource allocation process of the company.

However, the external (outside-in) view of a company’s strategy and its resource allocation activities, developed by a researcher, can differ from the (internal) corporate management view. The external perspective does not allow the researcher to consider the external environmental groups as “faceless actors” (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 456). It implies that every external group should be treated and influenced individually by a company. Within the context of developing an external perspective, focusing on the stakeholder approach allows the linking of a resource dependence perspective to the investigation of particular stakeholder groups. Additionally, important strategic steps such as mergers, joint ventures, acquisitions of and participation in other companies can be explained by Resource Dependence and Stakeholder Theories (Knyphausen-Aufseß, 1997: 456).

Resource Dependence Theory could be used to help determine whether or not a particular company is strongly interrelated with its external environment, with the intention of looking for potential conflicts which could increase a company’s uncertainty. However, unlike the resource-based view, Resource Dependence Theory does not include the generation of internal resources as an important task in response to uncertainty reduction within a company (Schreyögg, 1997: 483). As discussed, if a company is able to generate the resources it needs, it not only enhances its competitive advantage. From an external perspective, its demand for external resources decreases, and, as a result, the company becomes less dependent on its external environment (Schreyögg, 1997: 483-484). This argument implies that the resource-based view and the Resource Dependence Theory are related due to their “nearly identical meanings of certain of their fundamental concepts (Medcof, 2001: 1002).” Consequently, by analyzing strategic
alignment, it is appropriate to consider the fact that external and internal factors are interrelated with regard to a company’s success or failure.

In conclusion, the proposed theoretical framework of this paper allows the development of the following statements which should be taken into consideration when investigating the strategic alignment of a company in response to its environment. Firstly, the resource allocations of a particular company can potentially result in conflict and confrontation between a company and the various stakeholders who control its resources. Secondly, a high level of relationships and interactivities between a company and its external environment indicates a company’s dependence on external resources. Thirdly, a company’s behavioral patterns such as mergers, joint ventures, diversification and growth are the consequences of a its attempt to manage its interdependencies with stakeholders, and to decrease its dependences on certain external resources, in order to reduce uncertainty. Finally, the question of how frequently the corporate strategy should be changed is directly related to the company’s ability to manage interdependencies with the external environment and to reduce uncertainties (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 70-71).

Answering research questions on strategic behavioral patterns requires understanding the context of a company’s behavior: “[…] to understand the behavior of an organization you must understand the context of that behavior […].”(Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003: 1). Consequently, the combination of Resource Dependence Theory and Stakeholder Theory, in order to develop an external perspective on the company’s resource allocation process, becomes an appropriate guiding theme in the analysis of issues of corporate strategic alignment.

Literature


Korzyści oraz ograniczenia rozwoju perspektywy zewnętrznej dla analizy strategicznej współpracy przedsiębiorstw

**Streszczenie**

Rosnąca gospodarcza, społeczna oraz polityczna współzależność w ramach globalnej gospodarki wraz ze współczesną dynamiką zmian strukturalnych w kontekście europejskim wskazują na pilną potrzebę szybkich oraz efektywnych zmian organizacyjnych. Bieżące powiązania dotyczące zasobów oraz energii muszą być rozważane jako kluczowe katalityczne czynniki w ramach całego spektrum działalności politycznej ukierunkowanej na stworzenie nowych regulacji i uwarunkowań gwarantujących zrównoważony rozwój różnych dziedzin społecznych i gospodarczych. Czy pojedyncze przedsiębiorstwo jest zdolne do wykrywania tego typu warunków w świetle różnorodnych przemian środowiskowych? Które z zasobów zewnętrznych powinny być brane pod uwagę? Jak zachowali by się udziałowcy przedsiębiorstwa w obliczu różnych możliwych przekształceń wewnętrznych? Dla pojedynczej firmy zrozumienie oraz właściwa reakcja na zmiany środowiskowe będzie zawsze wyzwaniem, zwłaszcza z punktu widzenia przetrwania w sensie ekonomicznym. Niniejszy artykuł podkreśla znaczenie rozwoju zewnętrznej perspektywy dla analizy porozumienia strategicznego przedsiębiorstwa w kontekście przemian środowiskowych, z uwzględnieniem działalności polegającej na alokacji zasobów firmy i przy wykorzystaniu teoretycznej bazy obejmującej Podejście Udziałowca, Teorię Zależności od Zasobów (ang.: Resource Dependence Theory) oraz Teorię Zasobową (ang.: Resource-based Theory), oferujące konceptualne spojrzenie, dzięki któremu można zaobserwować szczególne zjawiska związane z zarządzaniem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zmiany środowiskowe, perspektywa zewnętrzna, relacje energetyczne, udziałowcy, porozumienie strategiczne, teoria zasobowa, teoria zależności od zasobów.