Site-shifting as the source of ambidexterity: The strategy-as-practice perspective

Abstract

Ambidexterity, defined as the capability to simultaneously explore knowledge to identify new market opportunities and exploit knowledge to capitalise on a firm's existing niches, is considered to be crucial in todays competitive marketplace. However, there is relatively limited research on how such a capability can be developed, and even less on the role of IT-enabled practices in promoting this. Drawing on the strategy-as-practice perspective, we investigate how interrelationships amongst practitioners, IT-enabled practices and praxis create a particular site of practice. More importantly, we consider how a site gets shifted over time through the emergence of changes in the interrelationships between practices, practitioners and praxis in conjunction with exploiting affordances offered by the use of different types of IT. Building on the findings derived from a case study of DaM[1], the leading ticketing company in China, we explain how the phenomenon of site-shifting can provide a useful conceptual lens for explaining ambidexterity. In doing this, we bring to the fore the importance of IT in achieving an ambidexterity capability.

Key words: ambidexterity, strategy-as-practice, site, information systems strategy, case study.

1. Introduction

A firm's capabilities related to exploring knowledge to identify new opportunities whilst simultaneously exploiting knowledge to improve efficiencies in existing niches (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Galliers, 2011; He and Wong, 2004; Kang and Snell, 2009; Leidner, et al., 2011; March, 1991; Ramesh, et al., 2012; Tarafdar and Gordon, 2007) is key to competitiveness in a fast changing environment. This is referred to as 'being ambidextrous' (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). Ambidexterity, then, relates to creating and using knowledge and there is considerable theory and research that addresses strategies that can foster simultaneous exploration and exploitation. Two dominant strategies are presented in the management literature: focusing on contextual ambidexterity, that allows adaptability within organisational units that can then both explore and exploit knowledge as needed (e.g., Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1994 and Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004); or focusing on structural ambidexterity, so that some parts of the organisation focus on knowledge exploration for fostering innovation while other parts focus on knowledge exploitation for improving efficiency (e.g., Adler, et al., 1999 and Duncan, 1976). There is also a third, emerging stream of literature, which focuses on the dynamic interplay between knowledge exploration and exploitation (Cao, et al., 2009; Galliers, 2011; He and Wong, 2004).

In the IS literature, there has been some focus on contextual factors that support ambidexterity (e.g., Ramesh, Mohan and Cao, 2012), but the main focus has been about the need for different IS strategies in relation to knowledge exploration versus exploitation. For example, Galliers (2011) argues that a repository strategy (a deliberate codification and standardisation strategy) is more important for facilitating knowledge exploitation while a network strategy (encouraging emergence through supporting communities of practice and

[1] We have disguised the name based on the request of the case organisation.

organisational learning) is more important for facilitating knowledge exploration; with both needed to foster ambidexterity (Durcikova, Fadel, Butler and Galletta, 2011). Despite these useful insights, however, few studies have explained what people actually do to accomplish ambidexterity.

In this paper, we draw on the strategy-as-practice perspective, thus, putting people, who perform and engage in strategy practices, back to the centre of focus (Jarzabkowski, 2004; 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 1996). The strategy-as-practice view contrasts with the dominant paradigm of perceiving a strategy as a grand vision which is formally planned and executed to guide an organisation's collective action in a top-down manner (e.g. Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). Instead strategy-as-practice emphasizes the day-to-day activities of practitioners who shape, refine and actualize strategy through what they do (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 1996).

Based on this strategy-as-practice perspective, a strategy (or better strategizing) is an emergent set of practices, which are constantly in the making (Jarzabkowski, 2004) and Whittington (2006) outlines the need to examine three conceptual elements and their interactions, namely strategy 'practitioners', 'practices' and 'praxis'. Importantly, in terms of practices, we here focus on IT-enabled practices, which can be defined as the 'regular ways of acting' (Nicolini, 2012) afforded by the day-to-day enactment of IT (Galliers, 2011). Given the ubiquity of the strategic potential of IT generally (Nolan, 2012; Peppard and Ward, 2004; Ward, 2012) and the role of IS/IT specifically in fostering knowledge exploration and exploitation (Durcikova, et al., 2011; Galliers, 2011; Hansen, 1999; Leidner, et al., 2011), the need to examine IT-enabled practices in the context of ambidexterity is clear. Indeed, we were surprised in our review of the management literature on ambidexterity that very little of this considered the role of IT in fostering ambidexterity.

To extend the perspective of strategy-as-practice, we incorporate the notion of 'site' (Nicolini, 2011; Schatzki, 2001) to serve as the ontological boundary for theorizing the interrelationships amongst practitioners, practices and praxis. Nicolini (2012) suggests that a site can be understood as a theatrical stage where actors/actresses (practitioners) have different parts in a particular play (practices), which they perform (praxis) on different occasions. Each time the play is acted, the performance will be slightly changed, for example because an actor fumbles his lines. Praxis (the performance) is, then, always emergent (unlike in a film where, once created, the performance is identical each time) because of the specific interrelationships between practitioners (actors) and their practices (the role that they are playing). Building on the accounts of Whittington (2006) and Nicolini (2011), the research question that we aim to address is: how do shifts in an IT-enabled site of practice relate to ambidexterity?

To provide the empirical insights to support, elaborate and enrich our conceptualisation, case study research of the leading ticketing company in the live performance segment of China's cultural industry was undertaken. By examining how the practitioners, IT-enabled practices and praxis of ticketing interrelate, we are able to see how the site of ticketing practices shifts over time. Our findings reveal that while the capability to explore, facilitated by IT-enabled networking practices, might be the driving force to create a shift in the site, the capability to exploit areas of improvement within the existing site, is crucial to strengthen the knowledge base about the site, and can help to generate the momentum for further exploration to emerge. Also, our findings showcase that the role played by IT is not merely to enable exploration or exploitation. Rather, IT can afford the simultaneous development of knowledge exploration and exploitation by providing a multifaceted platform where different types of innovation can be added on and then integrated with existing practices and exploited to improve efficiency. Our findings echo the recent view that to compete effectively in an increasingly digitalized landscape an organization needs to create a seamless fusion between

business and IT strategy (Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou and Venkatraman, 2013). Through our strategy-as-practice lens, we are able to capture how this can be achieved over time.

The structure of this paper is as follows. We first introduce the intellectual traditions that form the basis of our conceptualisation of how site-shifting can become a source of ambidexterity. Second, we outline the methodological details and rationale that underlie the selection of our research context, data collection methods and data analysis processes. Third, to elaborate our case findings, we develop a storyline consisting of three distinct phases of ticketing practice. Fourth, in the discussion section, we illustrate how the bundling of IT-enabled practices and practitioners (i.e., a site of practice) is shifted through on-going praxis, and how this is related to ambidexterity. We conclude by identifying theoretical implications of our findings and areas where future research will be required.

2. Intellectual Traditions

The main objective of this paper is to explore how shifts over time in the interrelationships amongst practitioners, IT-enabled practices and praxis relate to ambidexterity. To illustrate and reflect prior studies that influence and shape our conceptual foundation, we discuss the concept of ambidexterity, the perspective of strategy-as-practice and the notion of site, in turn. Areas where further research effort is required are also identified.

2.1. Three foci of ambidexterity Literature

The capacity to explore and create new knowledge is a very different to the capacity to exploit and reuse knowledge, reflecting the tension between efficiency and flexibility (Thompson, 1967), hence exploration and exploitation were originally viewed as a trade-off that needed to be carefully balanced (March, 1991). Thus, aggressively exploring knowledge related to new opportunities might be too risky to yield sufficient returns to sustain a business, while extensively exploiting knowledge to enhance returns in an existing market might be equally risky, leading to missing out on emerging opportunities (He and Wong, 2004; March, 1991; Ramesh, et al., 2012). The capability to simultaneously nurture, mobilise and most importantly achieve the balance between exploration and exploitation – i.e., ambidexterity (Cao, et al., 2009; Duncan, 1976; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Napier, et al., 2011; Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996) – is therefore presented as increasingly necessary.

Reflecting on the theoretical landscape of ambidexterity, three distinctive foci in conceptualising ambidexterity can be identified. The first group focuses on characteristics of organisational context that enables ambidexterity (e.g. Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Napier, et al., 2011; Ramesh, et al., 2012). The second group focuses on the design and deployment of different structural arrangements to achieve ambidexterity (e.g. Adler, et al., 1999; Gulati and Puranam, 2009). Acknowledging the importance of an organisation's structure and context, an increasingly important third stream of literature focuses on how ambidexterity results from the dynamic interplay between the practices of knowledge exploration and exploitation (Cao, et al., 2009; Galliers, 2011; He and Wong, 2004). Even though these three categories of literature are differentiated for reviewing and analytical purposes, they are highly related. We briefly discuss each, in turn, next.

According to Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004), ambidexterity derives from a firm's context, and is understood as 'the behavioral capacity to simultaneously demonstrate alignment and adaptability across an entire business unit' (p. 209). Adaptability and alignment are essentially the ability to reconfigure internal activities and processes to cope with changing demands from the environment. Contextual elements, such as trust, support, stretch and

discipline (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1994), are essential to co-develop alignment and adaptability. Furthermore, a top management team's diversity of experience (Beckman, 2006) and cognitive ability in processing paradoxical information (Smith and Tushman, 2005) are empirically found to be crucial contextual conditions for ambidexterity. In the IS literature, context is also seen to be important in facilitating knowledge exploration and exploitation (Ducikova et al., 2011). For example, both Ramesh, Mohan and Cao (2012) and Napier, Mathiassen and Robey (2011) look at how performance management and the more general social environment can be arranged to support contextual ambidexterity that allows for the simultaneous exploration and exploitation of knowledge (in these cases in software firms that need to both refine and improve existing approaches to building software, as well as identify and develop radically new approaches in order to remain competitive).

While the notion of contextual ambidexterity has been supported by some literature (e.g. Chang, et al., 2009; Im and Rai, 2008; McCarthy and Gordon, 2011; Napier, et al., 2011), others have challenged this idea. For instance, Schreyögg and Sydow (2010) question the feasibility of developing a universal organisational context that is capable of generating predictable yet flexible behaviours that are suitable for whatever situations/ demands are encountered. The IS literature has also questioned the feasibility of creating a single context that can stimulate all kinds of innovation. For example, Carlo, Lyytinen and Rose (2012) studied three different types of IT innovation in software firms and showed that there were distinct antecedents for each. They found, for example, that depth of knowledge had a direct positive effect on base innovation (changes to computing capabilities and related architectures); but a direct negative effect on process innovation (new ways of designing and implementing software). While this study was not directly about contextual ambidexterity, the results do support the conclusion that a single set of contextual supports for both exploitation and exploration, may not work in practice.

The second focus of ambidexterity literature considers a firm's organisational structure, whereby dual structures allow the firm to deal with different demands (Duncan, 1967; Gibson and Birkinshaw, 2004; Gulati and Puranam, 2009). For instance, a firm can allocate different tasks to different units or functions (Adler, et al., 1999). Nevertheless, studies have also made clear that dual structures alone will not be sufficient for achieving ambidexterity. Rather, ambidextrous organisations require specific capabilities (irrespective of structural and contextual factors) that allow them 'to allocate, reallocate, combine, and recombine resources and assets across dispersed exploratory and exploitative units' (Jansen et al., 2009, p. 806). This indicates the need to conceptualise ambidexterity as a specific capability (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Cao, et al., 2009), rather than simply considering the structures or contexts that might promote ambidexterity.

Recognising the importance of structural and contextual features, the third focus in the literature emphasises how ambidexterity stems from the interplay of exploration and exploitation capabilities and it is this stream where the IS literature has contributed the most. This builds on the seminal work of March (1991) who argued that for a firm to compete it is important to maintain a balance between the exploration and exploitation of knowledge. Galliers (2011) indicates that this balance can be achieved by setting up different IS strategies for encouraging exploitation (e.g., Knowledge Management Systems, standardized procedures and rules) and exploration (e.g., community of practice, knowledge brokers, cross project learning). Other IS research has similarly endorsed this idea. For example, the accounts of Prieto, et al. (2007) and Kathuria (2012) both suggest that different types of IT resources and capabilities are required to develop and facilitate exploration and exploitation. More specifically, Prieto et al., (2007) distinguish between divergent and convergent IT. Divergent IT represents tools and solutions used to collect, index and manage information and explicit knowledge. By contrast, convergent IT represents tools and solutions that

facilitate the analysing, sensemaking and sharing of tacit knowledge. While divergent IT is essential for exploitation, convergent IT is needed for exploration. While different concepts are used in Prieto et al., (2007), the study reinforces the distinction between repository approaches to managing knowledge for exploitation, and network approaches for exploration (Galliers, 2011).

However, even though the simultaneous pursuit of, and continuous balancing between, exploration and exploitation is commonly agreed and recognised (Andriopoulos and Lewis, 2009; Durcikova et al., 2011; Galliers, 2011; He and Wong, 2004), our understanding of how this can be achieved remains limited. An empirical study by Cao, et al. (2009) did reveal that the two capabilities can potentially become complementary. As they find, through the process of exploitation, a firm can also enhance its effectiveness in exploring new knowledge. This is achieved by a firm, over time, better understanding the knowledge base that it has developed, which, in turn, allows the firm to spot emerging opportunities to extend this knowledge base. The importance of this conceptualisation lies in the fact that it surfaces the need to move beyond examining ambidexterity as a 'blackbox', within which the relationship between explorative and exploitative capabilities, which are traditionally considered to be contradictory capabilities, is mysteriously resolved. Put differently, simply describing that there is a tension between knowledge exploration and exploitation that can yield an ambidextrous capability or advising firms to develop both an exploratory and exploitative knowledge strategy does not explain how this occurs. Instead, we need to study how the potential complementary effect is achieved through everyday practices performed by strategy practitioners.

Very few prior studies, however, with the notable exception of Adler, et al. (1999), explain how ambidexterity is created through what people actually do, including what they do with IT (even Galliers, 2011 in his discussion of strategizing rather than strategy, does not get into the detail of what this involves in practice). Here we consider how this complementary effect between explorative and exploitative capabilities is achieved by drawing on the 'strategy-as-practice' literature (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2007). This allows us to examine how IT-enabled practices are enacted and refined by strategic practitioners over time and how this produces an ambidexterity capability.

2.2. Strategy-as-practice and Site of Practice

The strategy-as-practice literature focuses on studying: practitioners (the people who do the strategy work); practices (the routines - social, symbolic and material - that guide the strategy work); and praxis (the flows of actual activity through which strategy is achieved) (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009, p. 70). In this paper we focus specifically on IT-enabled practices. We do this because IT is so ubiquitous in organisations today, especially work that focuses on exploring and exploiting knowledge (Tarafdar and Gordon, 2007). However, in the IS literature itself, the idea of examining everyday IT-enabled practices as a source of strategizing has only recently come to the fore (Galliers, 2011), and there is very little empirical work that has been undertaken.

'Strategy practitioners' include actors who are directly engaged in the shaping and actualising of strategy, as well as individuals and often institutions, such as policy-makers and regulatory bodies, which have direct or indirect influence on what might be feasible and legitimate (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008). Practices are 'embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding' (Schatzki, 2001, p. 2). Practices can best be understood as institutional routines (Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007). These behavioural routines provide a guide to what should be done in a

particular context based on existing cultural rules, languages and procedures and supported by material objects, in particular in today's work environment, IT. The distinction between practice and praxis is essentially the difference between the routine that guides activity and the actual activity itself (Reckwitz, 2002); the script and the actual play in our theatrical analogy. It is necessary to distinguish between the practice and the praxis because the praxis, the actual activity at any point in time, may be more or less similar to the practice, i.e., to the anticipated routine. This is because strategy praxis, like the play in the theatre, provides room for interpretation (even when actors are following a script) and because there may be a need to improvise due to unanticipated circumstances (e.g., because a prop is mishandled); praxis thus depends on the unique interplay of practices and practitioners in each rendition of the play. Most importantly, praxis accounts for the fact that while organisational activities may be institutionalised (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), these routines nevertheless can transform quite dramatically over time (Feldman and Pentland, 2003).

When applying strategy-as-practice as a theoretical underpinning to conceptualise ambidexterity, three requirements are clear. First, there is a need to identify strategy practitioners who are engaged in the shaping of ambidexterity. Second, when perceiving ambidexterity as something people do, rather than merely a firm's structural or contextual attributes, it is crucial to take into account the emergent nature of practice (Engeström, 2001; Nicolini, 2011) that allows practitioners to simultaneously explore and exploit knowledge. Third, drawing on the essence of ambidexterity as the concurrent enactment of knowledge exploration and exploitation to achieve complementary effects (Cao, et al., 2009), we need to look not at single practices, but rather examine the ways practices are bundled and re-bundled together over time.

While the strategy-as-practice literature has acknowledged the importance of looking at bundles of practices (rather than single practices) and how this changes over time, (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009) in order to accomplish a strategic intent (Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007), little research has actually examined this empirically. In order to examine this bundling and how it changes over time, it is necessary to conceive a boundary that enables the researcher to focus on a defined set of practices and practitioners. The practice literature suggests the notion of 'site' (Nicolini, 2011; Schatzki, 2001, 2002; 2005) that we use here to extend the strategy-as-practice perspective – see Table 1 for summary definitions.

The important aspect of a site is that it is a social and relational locality where *different* practices come together as practitioners with different but complementary interests put their efforts together (in more or less harmony) in order to achieve particular (more or less agreed) objectives. Nicolini (2011), for example, examines a site of knowing in a hospital where different practices of various professional groups (e.g., nurses and doctors) are played out (i.e., the praxis) to achieve (mostly) successful patient-care practice. If one were only to look at the practices of doctors, rather than the practices of doctors in conjunction with the practices of other practitioners in a particular site of knowing, one would achieve only a partial understanding of practice.

Even though a site might serve as the intellectual basis where practices can be situated and made sense of, it is not a stable entity. Instead, given the fluid and emergent nature of praxis (Chia and Holt, 2008; Schatzki, 2006) a site can shift over time (Nicolini, 2011) in the sense that new practices and practitioners and new relationships between practices and practitioners are introduced. When a site shifts, some of the taken-for-granted assumptions and norms of practice can potentially become invalid and create a margin for contestation among its engaged practitioners (Contu and Willmott, 2003; Green, 2004); site shifting thus potentially allows for the emergence of new capabilities.

Table 1. Definitions of key conceptual elements

Key Concept	Definition
IS Strategy Practices	Institutionalised routines that guide IS strategic activity, based on traditions, norms and procedures that exist both within the organisation and beyond its boundaries
Strategy Practitioners	Those individual actors who shape and actualise IS strategy, including actors within a focal firm but also, for example, external policy makers, regulatory bodies, competitor organisations
IS Strategy Praxis	The actual activity of creating and enacting an IS strategy that may be more or less similar to the institutionalised routines because of the sensemaking/ interpretation of the particular practitioners involved and because of unanticipated events that can disrupt routine practices
Strategy Site	The social and relational space where IT-enabled practices are bundled together in particular ways by the practitioners involved and that can change over time as an outcome of praxis

Nicolini (2011) has outlined valuable insights in applying the notion of site for theorising practices and knowing. However, his account does not explain how new practices are introduced by practitioners and how these new practices get re-bundled with some of the existing ones in ways that can cause a site to shift. In our empirical analysis, we focus on examining the shifts in a site of practice, that is the points where we can see new interrelationships (created as a product of praxis) amongst strategy practitioners and IT-enabled practices. Moreover, we examine how these shifts produce new capabilities for exploring and exploiting knowledge. Before we present our findings, the following section depicts the relevant details and rationale behind our methodological considerations.

3. Methods

As reflected in our research questions, our aim is to conceptualise how the bundling of IT-enabled practices get shifted by practitioners and how, through this site-shifting, the capability of ambidexterity is created. The case research method is particularly relevant to this study for two reasons. First, our research aims to unpack a 'how' question (Pan and Tan, 2011; Yin, 1994) that cannot be easily quantified. Second, given the dynamic, fluid and emerging nature of the research phenomena, the case research method is powerful in unravelling the sense-making and critical reflections of key practitioners where other methods are less suitable (Kaplan, 2008; Pan and Tan, 2011). Even though the use of a single case might be limited in its generalisability (Denzin, 1997), it does provide one particular advantage in that "many contextual variables are kept constant which helps to rule out possible alternative interpretations of the data" (Tan, Pan and Hackney, 2010, p. 184).

3.1. Research Context

The live performance segment of China's cultural industry continues to expand. With its growing market size and customer demand, companies that handle the ticketing of these live performance events are also presented with stronger financial incentives to increase their market share. In particular, due to the dominance of two state-owned ticketing companies in the past, the segment had not encountered major changes, and so provided a blank canvas for new comers, such as the case organisation- DaM. With a total workforce of 550 and a branch network of 32, as of March 2011, DaM was handling over 10 million tickets annually. DaM is the market leader, having about three times the market share of the second place competitor in

this industry. In its segment, DaM is also a trend setter that has fundamentally changed the practice of ticketing; hence our selection of this case for our research.

3.2. Data Collection

The main data collection for this study took place between December 2011 and March 2012. Multiple sources of data were collected, including semi-structured interviews, documentations, on-site observation and informal dialogues. The use of multiple sources enriched our findings and allowed us to triangulate (Denzin, 1997). In total, 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Mandarin with strategy practitioners of DaM, including top management and personnel from the IT, Marketing, Web, Operations and Communications Divisions. Questions were asked primarily to uncover the rationale behind particular strategic initiatives and the long-term capability development that was anticipated from these initiatives. We rely heavily on interviewees' retrospective insights to trace our inquiry back to DaM's initial establishment in 1997, albeit this data is triangulated with documentary data, such as annual planning documents, project files and planning meeting minutes. On average, each interview lasted 90 minutes and was recorded, with permission. Follow-up questions were asked via emails, phone calls, as well as during informal dialogues. All interview recordings were transcribed in Mandarin and then selectively translated to English when constructing the paper.

By drawing on the rich retrospective insights from the interviews and informal dialogues, in conjunction with the documentary data, the researchers were able to make sense of how the past development provided the foundation for DaM to develop its ambidexterity capability and become a market leader in China.

3.3. Data Analysis

Instead of grounding a new theory from the collected data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), our aim is to explore and conceptualise how the bundling of practices gets shifted and how the capability of ambidexterity derives from the phenomenon of site-shifting. Thus, we use existing strands of literature, primarily ambidexterity, strategy-as-practice and more general practice theorising, to examine our data. Given that the role of IT has hardly been discussed in the ambidexterity management literature, we also analysed our data to articulate and unpack the influences of technology on the exploration and exploitation of knowledge. Thus, we used the conceptual components set out in Table 1 above as 'sensitizing devices' (Klein and Myers, 1999) to guide our data analysis and interpretation.

Our data analysis consisted of four interrelated steps, including summarising, clustering, displaying and comparing the data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991; Pan and Tan, 2011) in order to reveal the strategy practices, practitioners and praxis (Whittington, 2006,) in our case. Key points from each interview transcript, document and field note were summarised by one of the researchers. The summarising process was carried out primarily to reduce over 500 pages of data (179 pages of them were interview transcripts) into a more manageable chunk. After going through each page of the collected data, key facts and points were highlighted, such as 'first concert hosted as tier-one agent in 2004', 'rationale to introduce online ticket sales in 2004', 'first nation-wide branch network established in 2007' and 'vision of expansion into leisure market'. Each summarised point was assigned a code which contained the source and page number, for instance (I16, p.4) to represent interview No. 16 transcript page 4, so that we were able to find the original data when needed.

Following the process of summarising, the next step was to cluster the data based on the points summarised. The clustering process permitted us to analytically identify and highlight

areas of data that could be abstracted to elaborate our key constructs. For instance, we focused on identifying and clustering (1) engaged practitioners (e.g. performing artists, event organisers, ticketing agents and venues), (2) different activities, norms and procedures of IT-enabled ticketing practices (e.g. online seat selection and using micro-blogs to manage fan clubs), (3) roles played and influences created by technology (e.g. using the internet and social media to afford exploratory and exploitative innovations), (4) strategic intents outlined by the practitioners and actualised through the ticketing practices (e.g. streamlining the event organisation and ticket sales to create a unique experience for the customers), (5) incidents of strategy praxis (e.g. using information collected from online ticket sales to afford the development and management of customer relationship), as well as (6) the phenomena of site-shifting, promoted by changes in the inter-relationships between practitioners and practices as the result of some praxis (e.g. expansion of ticketing site to include fans who provide input into what concerts to host). Furthermore, we highlighted different technological and process innovations introduced (e.g. using social media to engage fans and revamping the ticket issuing process to avoid forged tickets and reduce operational costs).

We displayed the clustered data according to the various practitioners involved, the IT-enabled ticketing practices and the interrelationships between the practitioners and the practices, in order to visually represent the site of ticketing practices. Our chronological analysis enabled us to identify 3 distinct sites of ticketing practice that were apparent at different points in time. Through displaying the clustered data as Figure 1, 2 and 3, we were able to showcase the unique composition of the site of ticketing practice at different points of time and identify the affordances promoted by the introduction of new technology. Furthermore, we identify different themes, namely being transactional, relational and experiential, to symbolize the orientation of each site of ticketing practice.

The three distinctive phases were developed based on the chronological ordering of the themes, which provided the basic structure for constructing the underlying storyline of the case. Once the underlying storyline was established, we were able to cross-check and compare our data to ensure that we had not missed out any key points that might potentially alter our findings and conceptualisation. Results of our analysis and their interpretations are detailed in the next two sections.

4. Case Findings

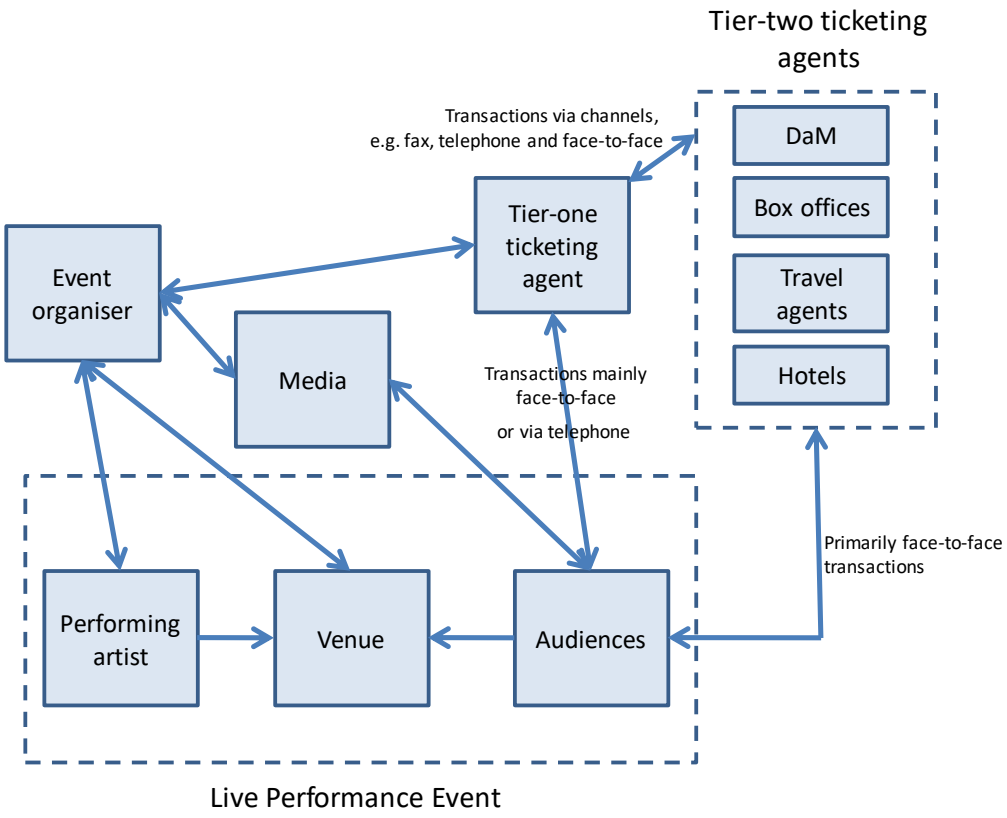
10,000 tickets for Chris Lee's 2009 concert in Beijing were sold out in the first 24 hours of their release. This concert's remarkable ticket sales illustrated how a new generation of music fans were willing to pay above the industry's previous ceiling price for a live performance, and also confirmed the strong potential for growth in China's live performance segment. However, what was less visible was the growing maturity and on-going shift in the way this segment operated, in particular its ticketing practices. Three phases are used to depict the changing practices.

4.1. Phase one- Ticketing as transactional practices

Figure 1 represents the conventional pattern of ticketing practices prior to 2004; the arrows represent the interactions between different strategy practitioners.

Figure 1. Conventional pattern of ticketing practices[2]

[2] Before 2004, tier-one ticketing agents were predominantly stated-owned enterprises.



An event would be initiated by an event organiser. This practitioner plays the central role in coordinating with most of the other practitioners in this site, except the audience, where the ticketing company is the central practitioner. After finalising the date(s) and venue, what is of most concern to the organiser and performing artist is the actual ticket sales. Once a ticketing company is selected and signs the contract with the event organiser, it becomes the tier-one agent, responsible for producing and distributing tickets to its distribution network of tier-two agents, e.g., small box offices, travel agents, hotels' travel desks and often its competitors. Even though these tier-one agents are the main and initial contact point for ticket purchases, they play a rather invisible and background role for most customers. In most cases, these agents only emerge to the foreground, when problems occur, e.g. failing to hand tickets over to customers on-time or circulation of forged tickets.

The tier-one agent's practice involves authenticating the tickets that are printed and sold or sold via their agents, before audiences enter the event venue. Prior to 2004, ticketing practices were essentially transactional - audiences' payments were collected by ticketing companies and their affiliated agents on behalf of the event organiser as a means of gaining permission to attend a live performance. Up until 2004, state-owned enterprises had been the key players in organising ticket distribution. However, after 2004 their market share was gradually eroded by newcomers, such as DaM. The practice of ticketing had, up until this point, been extremely stable for over two decades, and very little innovation and change had been introduced. DaM's operation manager recalled:

> 'Even though it still remains as an essential part of our operation, back to the first half of 2000s, getting genuine tickets to customers timely and safely was our main operational concern… Started as a courier in Beijing back in the 90s, we have our in-

house capacity to fulfil such a demand. As a transaction-based operation, it was about the volume, profit margins, cost of operational errors and efficiency.'

One of the turning points to stir up the segment was marked by DaM's introduction of online ticket sales for Faye Wong's 2004 concert in Beijing. This changed practice was accompanied by several related innovations, such as using data gained from online transactions for customer profiling and targeted marketing communications. These practice changes shifted the competition landscape of ticketing in China, as described next.

4.2. Phase two- Ticketing as transactional and relational practices

Faye Wong is a well-known Chinese, female performing artist, so the success of her ticket sales was predicted. This was the largest event that DaM had ever been assigned as the tier-one ticketing agent (previously it had been mostly a tier-two agent). Ensuring the smooth and successful operation of the ticket sales for this concert was one of the greatest challenges that the DaM management team had encountered, because the event could make or break DaM's reputation. There were several changes and challenges associated with the move from a tier-two to a tier-one ticketing agent. Firstly, a tier-one agent was responsible for producing tickets that were distributed and sold to tier-two agents and customers. Substantial investment in ticket production facilities was required, in particular for producing tickets that were less likely to be forged. Secondly, distribution costs became a major concern as a tier-one agent had to deal directly with a greater number of agents and customers than was the case for a typical tier-two agent. Thirdly, a tier-one agent was responsible for authenticating tickets when audiences entered the venue and it was crucial to develop a system capable of doing this accurately, reliably and efficiently. To highlight its added value in bidding for the contract, the founder of DaM had decided to introduce online sales. As recalled by three of the interviewees, the proposal to introduce online ticket sales was a crucial factor in the event organiser's decision to assign DaM as the tier-one agent for Wang's concert. The introduction of online sales became a headline on its own, as it was the first ever attempt in China. The amount of media attention and coverage was argued by one of the Directors to create a 'win-win situation for DaM as well as for Faye Wang'.

As a complement to its existing distribution network, the online channel was exceptionally well received. To purchase tickets online, a customer was required to register and open an account with DaM. Compared with buying tickets via channels such as the telephone or queuing at box offices, where for a popular event long wait times were common, the online sales system allowed DaM to smoothly handle a large number of transactions as customers clamoured to get tickets during the first few hours of ticket release. Moreover, the introduction of online sales was important not only in terms of its benefits for tickets sales but also because it subsequently afforded other innovations. For example, it provided a crucial mechanism for DaM to systematically develop, understand and maintain relationships with its customers, which it could then leverage for ticket sales of future events. The following year, a large 3-month long event called 'Global Festival', targeting school children for the summer holiday period of 2005, sold more than 4 million tickets via the online channel. This provided even more relationship-building opportunity as the manager for online sales recalled:

'Being our first large outdoor event which was targeted at families and school children, it was new territory for us. With the cost of RMB50 per ticket, it was well predicted that there would be a lot of repeat customers over its 3 months of duration. Given that the profit margin for each ticket was small, how to stimulate the volume and support the logistics cost-effectively was key to us… The success of the online

> channel for Faye Wong's concert had informed us that customers in our market were ready for it… In addition to its cost-effectiveness, what gave us the most added value was the data our customers provided during the online transactions. With this data, we were able to target each customer segment more precisely when planning and promoting events' ticket sales. Also, what has not been done before was to start a new era by building relationships with our customers.'

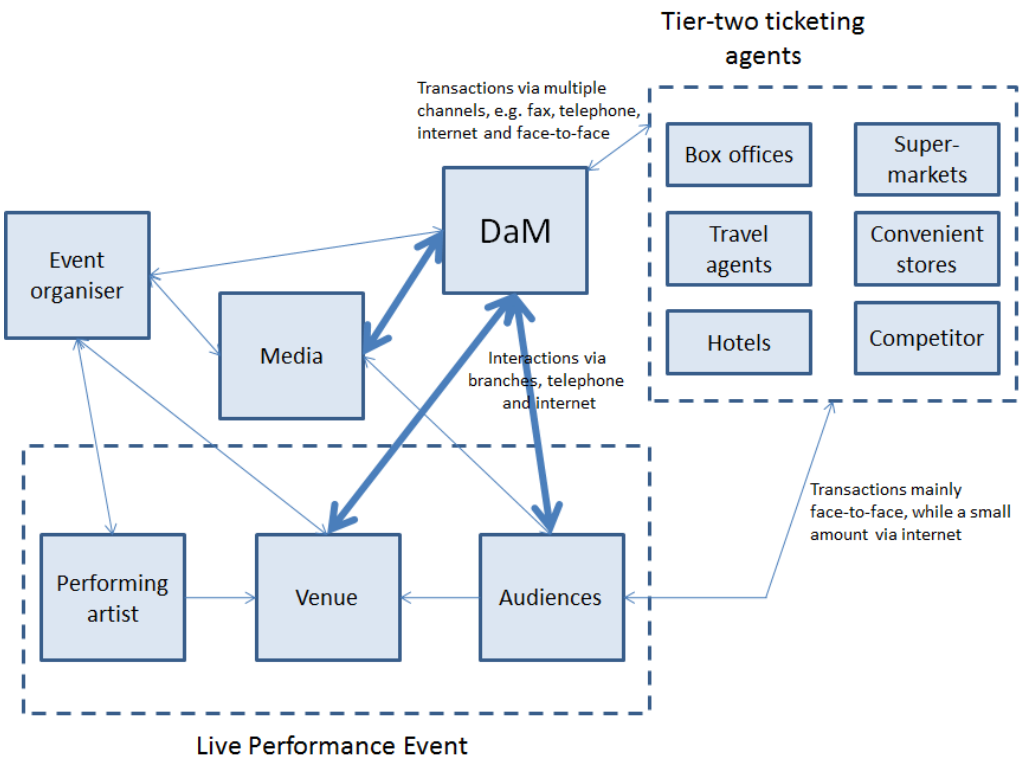
These innovations were key elements in supporting DaM's rapid yet organic growth in this market. DaM managers used these technological and process innovations as strategic tools to improve competitiveness by adding value for customers and event organizers and allowing DaM to differentiate itself from the previously dominant state-owned players. As the CIO explained, the data that the firm had collected and analysed from its online presence had given DaM a competitive edge over other tier-one agents, helping the company to secure deals with event organisers. The data collected through the online system had enabled DaM to understand the market, forecast ticket sales and reach targeted customers more effectively than its competitors. In addition to technological innovation, another critical change in practice in DaM involved expanding its reach outside cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai. As explained by the general manager:

> '2007 was another major milestone in DaM's history. Acting as the tier-one agent for Jacky Cheung was a true test in our reach, because his concerts were held in 30 different cities in China. We had to start building our relationships with local media and venues from scratch… This contract was clearly the main trigger for our expansion… With a branch network in 25 cities, we do have the broadest coverage and deepest reach in China.'

As illustrated in Figure 2, the added value and differentiation achieved by DaM resulted from developing relationships with its customers, with the media, with venues, and with its expanded distribution and branch network.

Figure 2. DaM's relational approach towards the practice of ticketing[3]

[3] To contrast with Figure 1, we increase the weighting of three arrows in this Figure to show two additions of relationships and changes in the interaction channels between DaM and the audiences.



A key difference between Figure 1 and Figure 2, is the relational dimension that the new bundle of practices affords. Two aspects are particularly worth mentioning. First, relates to the relationships that DaM has built over the years with different venues. As explained by one of the product managers:

> 'High profile venues are often an attraction in their own right. Using the Great Hall of the People as an example, many people would come to watch whatever is on show to simply say that 'I have been to the Great Hall of the People', because of its symbolic importance to the nation. For this precise reason, these high profile venues are also politically sensitive places where there is virtually no tolerance for any error to occur. If anything goes wrong, it will be over all the media… One of our competitors was on national news a couple of times because of this reason… Their system was no longer permitted to use in the Great Hall of the People. Ours is the only one that survives and stays… You cannot under-estimate how important these relationships are. We bring high profile events to them and they secure the best time slots for us. It is a win-win situation and mutually beneficial.'

Second, is the increasing contribution that DaM brings to the event organisers. One of the most challenging aspects of organising an event is to estimate the potential ticket sales. For this, knowledge of local markets and previous experiences of handling ticket sales for similar events are crucial. DaM's emerging practices involving the collection and analysis of data for each event, enabled by its online system, had become a vital source of intelligence for the firm.

From Figure 2 it is also clear that the role played by a tier-one ticketing company was changing. In particular, we see how DaM, as a tier-one ticketing agency, has moved from playing a peripheral role in the live concert segment, to occupying a more strategic and central role, influencing the financial results of events. The following section will depict another new phase, which illustrates how DaM once again redefined the practice of ticketing.

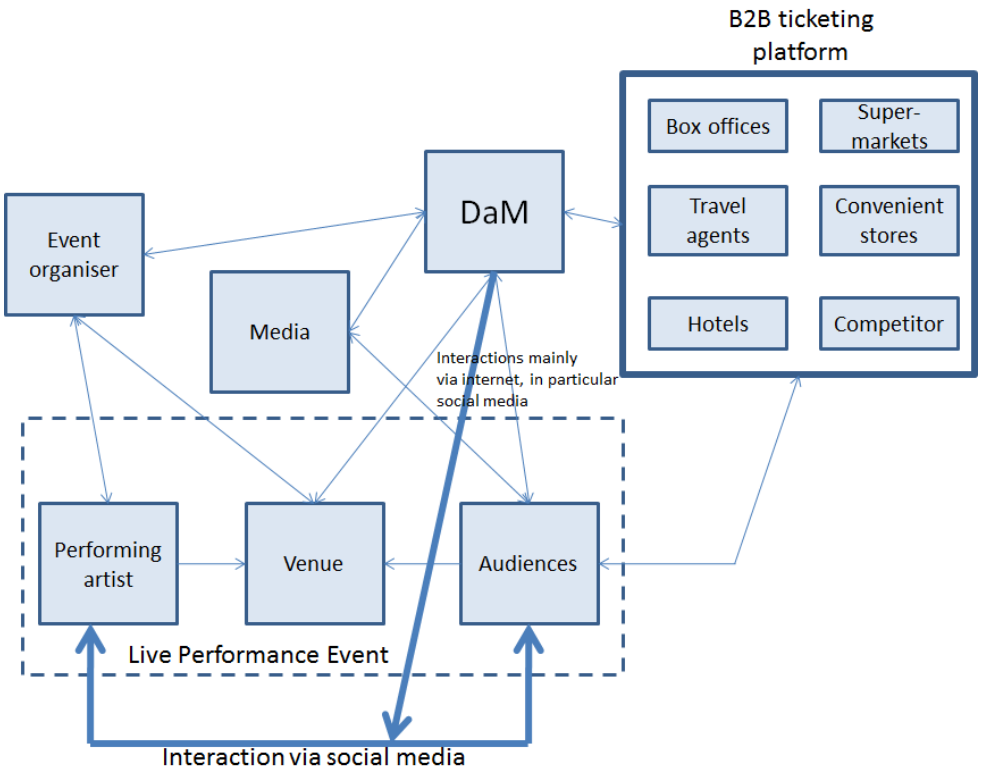
4.3. Phase three- Ticketing as transactional, relational and experiential practices

2009 marked another key milestone when several strategic initiatives were launched by DaM, including a B2B ticketing platform, e-tickets, online seat reservations and mobile check-in (see Figure 3). The B2B ticketing platform was developed to streamline the transactional aspect of ticketing. Through this platform, the practice of issuing tickets changed since tickets could now be created, distributed and processed electronically with a minimal level of human intervention. By installing software and printers for each agent, the agents are able to issue tickets in-situ. This new practice not only significantly reduced the delivery cost, but also helped to enhance customers' satisfaction. The second change that was afforded by this adoption of a B2B platform was that DaM ventured into new areas of practice that included issuing tickets for different types of events and services, such as spa trips, skiing passes, city breaks and tourist attractions. The rationale behind this new practice was that the basic elements of ticketing are largely similar across a wide range of products and services. In addition, the B2B platform was introduced to address the intrinsic dilemma between DaM and its distribution network, or between all tier-one and tier-two agents. On the one hand, tier-two agents can help to expand the distribution of tickets to a wider range of customers. On the other hand, they also eat into tier-one's profit margin. The paradoxical nature of this relationship and how to overcome it, is explained by the sales director:

> 'In extremely simple terms, the more people share the pie, the smaller piece each one will get. So what is the solution? You make the pie bigger. The pie can only get bigger when we have more tickets, such as skiing passes, city breaks and spa trips, to sell through us. By having a B2B platform, we are able to standardise our process and operation. We can remain efficient and transparent, regardless how many new products we add to the platform.'

Figure 3. DaM's experiential approach towards the practice of ticketing[4]

[4] To contrast with Figure 2, we increase the weighting of two arrows to emphasise the additions of new relationship and the outline of B2B ticketing platform.



Continuous innovation was thus crucial to secure DaM's position as the trend-setter by shaking up its market segment through establishing new practices. Similar to the previous phase, new technological solutions continued to be developed and integrated by DaM to stimulate customer demand through using multiple channels, such as the internet and mobile phones. However, the most significant difference in this phase was the changing expectations from customers and event organisers. As the marketing director pointed out:

> 'It is such a peculiar market where people just cannot get enough of new ideas. You can sense a strong craving out there. You simply know that once you stop coming up with new tricks, your customers will soon move away to find something new.'

New IT-enabled practices that added value (such as online seat reservation, celebrities' news updates through blogging, and organising group purchase discounts) were continuously created and refined in order to enhance customers' general experiences of purchasing tickets. However, these new IT-enabled practices that enhanced the customer experience also had value for DaM. Working on an all-inclusive basis, DaM introduced a new practice of dedicating a team of event organisers, communication specialists, graphic designers and technologists to provide planning and promotion services to each event where it was selected as the tier-one ticketing agency. As the general manager of DaM stated:

> 'Ongoing innovation is key to us, and helps us to set the trend and new standards in our market… For instance, Chris Lee's 2009 concert was the first live performance which allowed audiences to select their seats online when purchasing their tickets... Developed and run by our in-house team, the ability to enhance the experience of engaging our stakeholders, ranging from our customers, suppliers and agents, remains unmatched by other competitors in our market.'

Continuing from the previous phase, the emphasis on developing practices that help to build and sustain relationships with its customers, was also refined during this phase, in particular through the use of social media. As shown in Figure 3, facilitated largely by the extensive use of social media, interactions between the performing artists and their fans have increased. Fan involvement in social media sites like Sina (a micro-blogging site similar to Twitter) have become key in determining ticket sales. As the product manager suggested, on average DaM can expect fans to purchase at least 20% of the total tickets, and for some of the smaller events this can increase to over 50%. Most of the other players in this segment did not feel that it was worth investing significant resources in social media, because most events will take place only once. However, this is not how DaM approached it. Instead, while recognizing that strategically attempting to influence fan-star interactions through social media is extremely resource demanding, DaM nevertheless made this investment, believing that it could yield commercial gains. They employed a team of 12 full-time and 55 part-time staff in a social media division. This team is responsible for over 1,300 accounts for different performing artists and celebrities on Sina's micro-blog site. The focus of the practice of these employees was to participate in various fan group blogging sites, posting messages and replies and generally monitoring activity. In particular, when there is an upcoming event, they will get very active in that musician's site, encouraging fans to get excited about the event. They do this even for celebrities whose events they are not organising, in the hope that knowledge gained through such activity may help them to organise events in the future, if the celebrity's fan base increases to a sufficient size. As the manager responsible for micro-blogging explained:

> 'Six out of ten global social media sites are prohibited to provide services in China... The main reason to use Sina's micro-blog is mainly because it is free and an open platform which has the highest number of micro-blogging users in China. Their users also have the highest level of resonance to the general profiles of our customer bases. Those people are likely to attend live performance events, even though some of them might not be able to afford it just now… Through micro-blogging, we are able to feed them the latest information, find out what the fans are up to, know how they react to different news and who they then pass the news onto… Managing these micro-blog accounts is essentially to take a more proactive approach to grow our customer base, and an extremely valuable way to grow our knowledge and understanding about them.'

In addition to building and sustaining relationships with fans, another benefit enabled by the practices instituted with regard to social media generally and micro-blogs specifically was to nurture and consolidate the fans into a community. By encouraging fans to share their event photos, to gossip, to provide feedback and helping to organise fans so that they could purchase tickets together to get discounts, DaM was able to enhance the experiences of its customers at the same time as it strengthened its relationships with them. Clearly, the transactional aspect of ticketing practice remains essential for commercial purposes. However, what we observe is how relational and experiential aspects had been simultaneously incorporated to create a complex bundle of new ticketing practices.

From the case, it is clear that IS strategy can be an important driver for business strategy (see papers in MIS Quarterly's special issue on 'Digital Business Strategy' by Mithas, Tafti and Mitchell, 2013; Woodard, Ramasubbu, Tschang and Sambamurthy, 2013). However, it is equally clear from the case that IS strategy is not simply a plan that needs to be aligned with the business strategy to promote exploration and exploitation. Rather, for DaM, IS

strategizing created opportunities for innovation *and* efficiency and so was key in developing an ambidextrous business strategy, as we discuss next.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The three phases described above, and the changes they portray, provide insight about how ticketing practice has evolved during the past few years in China's live performance segment. Drawing on prior studies in the areas of ambidexterity, strategy-as-practice and site, this section addresses how the capability of ambidexterity emerges through two distinctive yet interrelated issues, namely the bundling of IT-enabled practices as a site and the phenomenon of site-shifting. Following that, we discuss the notion of site-shifting as the source of ambidexterity.

5.1. The bundling of practices as a site

From the perspective of strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski, 2004, 2005; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 1996, 2006), the case has provided a useful illustration of what the bundling of practices looks like at three distinctive phases. In this section we consider three ways in which perceiving a site as the bundling of, practitioners, IT-enabled practices and praxis helps us to understand ambidexterity.

First, it permits us to look at the practice of ticketing by examining the "interrelatedness" (Schatzki, 2001) of its practitioners and practices (Marabelli and Newell, 2012; Nicolini, 2011; Whittington, 2006). This means that, instead of seeing the growing dominance of DaM in the Chinese market as solely determined by its continuous introduction of technological and process innovations, we are able to unpack the case of DaM in relation to other practitioners in the industry, its influence in shaping and changing the norms and rules of ticketing practices and the effects created by its enactment of strategy praxis to redefine the entire industry. Using the notion of site to represent the bundling of practices and practitioners allows us to draw a contextual boundary around ticking practices and consider how this changes over time.

Second, echoing Nicolini's (2011) argument about perceiving a site as more than a passive background, we see how the site of ticketing practices is a source of energy and inspiration for redefining the competitive landscape. By adding exploratory and exploitative innovations to the site, practices of ticketing and their associated meanings are redefined. Specifically, these innovations fuel the emergent strategy praxis that, overtime, destabilises the norms and expectations associated with practices within the site. By investing and innovating in technologies that help to redefine the site, a practitioner, such as DaM, is able to grow its capacity to detect and depart from the general direction of where the site is heading.

Third, the notion of site, defined in terms of the bundling of IT-enabled practices and practitioners, also brings out the situated and relational nature of IS strategy (Nicolini, 2011; Schatzki, 2001). These characteristics remind us that what might seem to be a highly effective IT strategy for DaM might not necessarily be applicable in other contexts. For example, Ticketmaster, one of the largest ticketing companies in the world, has also grown and flourished based on IT-enabled practices, but DaM's IT-enabled strategy practices are very different. Ticketmaster, for instance, does not have the same degree of involvement in organising the events and in building and maintaining the relationships between performing artists and their fans. The notion of site leads us to examine the unique aspects of a particular social and relational context that helps us understand why the particular bundling of IT-

enabled practices, and the shifts in this over time, have been successful in this context and may not be elsewhere. In China, for example, DaM was able to build relationships with performing artists because they could provide these artists with unique access to event venues and fans. IT-enabled practices had enabled DaM to build these relationships over time and a new entrant would find it very difficult to copy this. Moreover, in a different context, say the USA, artists have developed relationships with fans directly through social media, so that ticketing organisation practitioners are unlikely to now be able to intercede in this.

5.2. The phenomenon of site-shifting through re-bundling

By reflecting on the evolution of the three phases, we outline four characteristics related to the phenomenon of site-shifting and its enabling mechanisms. Table 2 provides a short synthesis of these four characteristics.

Table 2. A synthesis of the key characteristics of IS strategizing as site-shifting that promote ambidexterity

Key characteristics	Summary of relevant findings	Comparison with some of the existing IS literature
Being cumulative rather than having separate exploitation and exploration strategies	New IT-enabled practices, strategic foci and shared values emerging from site-shifting often add to and refine, instead of replacing, previously established practices, strategic foci and shared values.	There is a tendency to overemphasise distinctive capabilities gained from the strategic deployment of IT for exploration and exploitation (e.g. Tarafdar and Gordon, 2007), but under-address how new capabilities relate to and change existing bundling of practices.
Being relationship-driven and emergent rather than punctuated	Creating new or changing existing relationships amongst different practitioners of a site can potentially serve as a trigger to shift an existing site, as different modes of engagement in practices are enabled by different practitioner relationships.	IT is commonly prescribed as a solution for exploration and exploitation (Alavi and Leidner, 2001), while the role of relationship between different practitioners to afford ambidexterity has been neglected (Napier, et al., 2011).
Being expectation-centric and context specific rather than perceiving context as a passive background	Along with the shift of an existing site, practitioners also change their expectations towards the new practices and practitioner relationships, and continuously redefine the shared norms.	Even though the importance of context is recognised by many IS strategy scholars (e.g. Galliers, 2011; Mithas, et al., 2013), it is commonly perceived as something passive. Its proactive influence on practitioners' knowing and sensemaking has been ignored (Nicolini, 2011).
Being opportunity-generative rather than aligned with an existing business strategy	The shifting of an existing site can potentially unleash new opportunities for some practitioners to redefine their roles and to experiment and engage in different practices associated with the new roles.	Even with the progressive thinking in seeking more seamless fusion between business and IS strategy (e.g. Bharadwaj, et al., 2013), the distributed nature of IS strategizing amongst practitioners has not been fully examined.

5.2.1. Characteristics of site-shifting

First, practices present in a previous phase are not completely replaced by emerging practices in a new phase. Rather, these established practices provide a basis for the new

practices to be added on, creating a different and more complex bundle of practices than existed in the previous phase. In other words, over time, the phenomenon of site-shifting unfolds in a cumulative manner. For instance, the increasing emphasis on relational practices during the second phase does not remove the transactional aspect of ticketing practice, which was the main and sole focus of the first phase. Similarly, the emergence of IT-enabled practices that enhance the experiential dimension during the third phase, did not negate the continued importance of the transactional and relationship aspects of ticketing practice, which remained essential to the construction and refinement of the practice bundle. It is this cumulative nature of IS strategizing that accounts for ambidexterity, rather than having distinct strategies for exploration and exploitation.

Second, the trajectory of how the three phases evolved shows that it was new connections amongst different practitioners engaged in the practice of ticketing that were fundamental to developing the practice bundle, and most importantly the shifting of a site. In other words, the phenomenon of site-shifting is heavily relationship-driven. For instance, beginning at the second phase, online ticket purchasing provided DaM with a new mechanism to become more effective in understanding and building relationships with its customers. Also, by strengthening its relationships with different venues, DaM was able to increase its bargaining power with the event organisers, helping it to secure good performance slots. DaM later chose to invest significant resources in practices that enabled it to monitor and influence relationships between artists and fans. Through investing resources in these IT-enabled relationship practices, DaM was able to harvest benefits from its growing influence over other practitioners in the site of ticketing and so create a more complex bundling of practices, which its competitors were not able to easily replicate. This demonstrates how IT strategy for promoting ambidexterity should not be conceptualised as simply investing in technologies that can promote exploration and exploitation. Rather, it is the relationships enabled by these IT-investments that are essential for ambidexterity – the relationships opening up new opportunities for innovation while simultaneously making it more efficient to operate in the site of practice.

Third, the three phases of site-shifting reveal that when the site of ticketing practices has been altered and transformed, it is not only the underlying complexity that has changed. Also, what has emerged are new expectations among the different practitioners. In other words, the phenomenon of site-shifting is fundamentally expectation-centric. For example, following DaM's introduction of a one-stop service practice, which involved for example, organising promotions, managing the media, and identifying and negotiating with the venue, event organisers now expect such service when they wish to put on shows in China; tier-two ticketing agents now expect transparent, efficient and secure transactions with tier-one agents, not just with DaM; and finally the audience now expect to participate in the organisation of an event, for example by engaging in talking points in the media and so influencing for example, the celebrity souvenirs created for the event. These expectations are illustrations that the site of ticketing practice has shifted since they were totally absent during phase one. While these practices, and their associated expectations, might be feasible in the Chinese market, it does not necessarily means that practitioners in other markets, such as Ticketmaster, performing artists and fans in Western society, will have similar expectations. The bundling and shifting of IT-enabled ticketing practices is historically and contextually situated (Nicolini, 2011). A site is, thus, more than a neutral container. Rather, it serves as a source for practitioners to make and give sense to what they do and expect.

Fourth, when a site gets shifted, opportunities can also emerge for some practitioners to reset their roles and develop and enact a new strategy praxis that provides competitiveness. In other words, the phenomenon of site-shifting represents an opportunistic moment, which entrepreneurial practitioners have taken advantage of in some way. These opportunities are

widely available to all practitioners, not only to those players who are central at a particular point in time (DaM was not a central player prior to 2004). In other words, the opportunities to explore and exploit existing practices and relationships are distributed rather than monopolised within a site. For instance, through social media, such as micro-blogging, fans are able to generate collective voices to express their desires for certain performances to be staged. By consolidating their voices, the role of audiences has been transformed from a passive consumer to a proactive 'event planner'. However, this 'voice' was dependent on other practitioners in the site, in this case DaM, sensing the opportunities that could emerge from attempting to shift the site and having the capability to build the IT-enabled practices that allowed such opportunities to be materialised. Strategizing, then, is a distributed process within a site, whereby changing inter-relationships between practices and practitioners generates new opportunities. As such, IS strategizing is not simply following the business strategy, but generating the business strategy.

5.2.2. The effects of strategy praxis as the enabling mechanism of site-shifting

Our analysis indicates that the way a site gets shifted is far from being a strategic grand design that can be prefabricated even by central practitioners. Instead, it often emerges from the constant exploration of new opportunities and the continuous reconfiguration of the relationships within a site. This does not suggest that formal strategic planning for enabling innovation and improving efficiency does not exist in the case organisation. Rather, this formally planned strategic direction serves as the guiding 'script', which provides room for DaM's practitioners to improvise as they use IT to build relationships and expectations across the site of other practitioners, including artists, venues and fans.

To trigger and fuel a site to shift, some enabling mechanism is required. As shown in the case, the initiation of phase two was largely triggered by DaM's new role, as a tier-one agent, that involved a different set of responsibilities and expectations. To fulfil these responsibilities and expectations, DaM could have followed its competitors without initiating any new practices. However, the decision was made to introduce a new practice - the introduction of online ticket sales. Similarly, at the third phase, the new role, as the owner of a B2B ticketing platform, yielded a new set of opportunities, as well as challenges. New IT-enabled practices and relationships emerged from this. To theorise what practitioners actually did in the case to create such shifts, the notion of strategy praxis appears to be the most relevant. Strategy praxis is essentially the everyday enactments that are afforded by the introduction of IT, that lead to relationship changes, redefined expectations and emergent opportunities.

It is important to note that in this paper, since it is based largely on retrospective data, we do not see the details of praxis as it unfolds in real time, only its effects. Our analysis has zoomed-out (Nicolini, 2007) to examine the shifting site of ticketing practice over time. What is needed, to examine the actual mechanism of praxis 'at-work', is a zooming-in to the everyday unfolding of practice that can help us identify when and why certain practices were changed or introduced over time. For example, Pickering (1995) discusses how practices emerge as a result of a 'mangle' where resistance (often from a material object) on the path to some predefined goal leads to attempts to accommodate and so changes practice. The mangle is the mechanism here – the praxis that leads to the emergence of new practices. In order to get beyond the general idea of praxis being the mechanism of site-shifting, therefore, we advocate more ethnographic studies that can zoom-in to observe how practices are changed over time. Our contribution is to identify IT-enabled site-shifting as the basis from which ambidexterity is achieved.

5.3. Site-shifting as the source of ambidexterity

As our discussion illustrates, exploratory and exploitative innovations afforded by new technologies have to work side-by-side in order to enable the shift and subsequent temporary stabilisation of a new site. Thus, even while strategic initiatives, such as the introduction of online ticket sales, online reservations, creating fan communities through social media and the launch of a B2B ticketing platform, are primarily exploratory in their characteristics, exploitative innovations are also evident in our case. For example, using social media to help manage the relationships between performing artists and their fans was a very fundamental exploratory innovation, triggering the site to shift to the third phase. Being able to disseminate performing artists' latest updates through Sina's micro-blogs, incorporating fans' inputs into the organisation of concerts and consolidating fans through photo sharing and joint purchases, were all crucial in the shift to a new site. However, this did not mean that the importance of exploitative innovation was being ignored. Rather, DaM engaged in continuous refinements in the day-to-day operation of the B2B ticketing platform, such as improving the platform's security, efficiency and processing capability. These refinements in practice, in turn, stimulated explorative innovation, for example, allowing DaM to expand the scope and variety of tickets that could be managed through the platform.

When taking into account the dynamic process by which a site is constructed and shifted, we argue that the notion of perceiving site-shifting as the source of ambidexterity can serve as a useful conceptual representation, pinpointing that the accomplishment of ambidexterity is constantly 'in-the-making', as detailed in the three phases of the case. Moreover, being ambidextrous is practiced by being able to initiate a shift in the site of practice. To do so, an organisation, such as DaM, has to destabilise and change existing practices, redefine the meanings associated with the practice (here, 'doing ticketing') and establish new connections, so that existing relationships amongst practitioners in the site are reconfigured. This shift in meanings is achieved and sustained by continuously redefining the roles different practitioners are expected to play.

As our case demonstrates, such a shift is often associated with the introduction and usage of IT, a point not recognised in much of the management literature on ambidexterity. Thus, despite the fact that technology is only one of the many elements that constitute a site, it plays multiple roles, including affording the actualisation of new IT-enabled practices (such as reflected in the example of the B2B ticketing platform), redefining the power relationships and dynamics amongst different practitioners (as shown in the changing relationships amongst the case organisation, performing artists and their fans enabled by social media) and ultimately affording a shift in IT-enabled practices (such as a new bundle of practices that followed the introduction of online ticket sales). Furthermore, technology also affords changes in the interrelationships amongst practitioners and practices. For instance, our analysis reveals that it was the actual use of technology that changed relationships amongst practitioners and facilitated the emergence of new practices. In particular, DaM's one-stop service to event organisers and its dominance in the fan networks, based on its use of IT, helped to propel a shift in the site of ticketing practice from a simple transactional practice to a much more complex relational and experiential bundle of practices (that also included efficient transacting).

When applying the distinction between divergent/network and convergent/repository technology (Prieto, et al., 2007; Galliers, 2011) to analyse our case, we see how both convergent and divergent technologies are involved in site-shifting and so ambidexterity. While convergent/network technologies enable the establishment of new practices and new relationships amongst different practitioners, as reflected in the notion of 'connectedness' (Jensen, et al., 2009), divergent/repository technologies provide the essential tools for

practitioners to systematically collect and analyse information generated from the new site. Importantly, even though new applications of convergent technologies to an existing site play a vital role in site-shifting, convergent technologies themselves, such as online channels and social media in this case, are highly commoditised. Therefore, for practitioners, such as DaM, the ability to effectively combine convergent and divergent technologies to afford and leverage its ambidexterity will be crucial not only to gain and sustain dominance in a site, but also to create the ability to shift a site.

6. Conclusions

Our overarching aim was to enrich the existing intellectual landscape of ambidexterity by drawing on the perspective of strategy-as-practice to investigate how ambidexterity is developed through strategy practitioners' on-going efforts in shaping, refining and enacting IT-enabled practices. The paper, thus, symbolises our attempt to give the concept of ambidexterity a 'practice turn' (Schatzki, et al., 2001) and to emphasise the importance of IT in our theorisation of ambidexterity.

Despite limitations, such as our ability to generalise our findings to different contexts and settings and our lack of zooming-in to see praxis in real time, we believe that this study has yielded some valuable contributions and implications, in particular in extending our understanding of how strategy practitioners perform IS strategizing practices.

First, while the values and strengths of practice theory for IS have been previously addressed (e.g. Orlikowski, 2000), applying this theoretical approach to empirically examine IS strategizing practices remains limited. By using the lens of strategy-as-practice to detail and theorise the case, our study provides an empirical account of IS strategizing research. However, we suggest that our contribution lies not simply in demonstrating the value of strategy-as-practice to the IS research community. Rather, we believe that our study can act as a crucial reminder to strategy-as-practice researchers of the importance of taking into account the distinctive and vital role of IT, especially given the growing level of fusion between technology and business strategies (Bharadwal, et al., 2013).

Our second contribution is to strengthen the perspective of strategy-as-practice by addressing some of its apparent shortfalls. By taking into account how material artefacts, in this case IT, are woven into practices and their bundling, we are able to elaborate the relevance and intrinsic roles of these material actors. Specifically, our illustration, of how the growing and changing usage of IT shaped and shifted the site of practice and the way in which practices are bundled, has surfaced the distinctive role that IT can play in affording ambidexterity.

Third, while researchers have commonly pointed out the importance of ambidexterity in turbulent business environment, few have provided a meaningful way to explain how such turbulence is related to what practitioners actually do. The notion of site and our extended development of this concept to consider site-shifting has surfaced the proactive roles practitioners play in shaping their external environment and creating the turbulence that disrupts the competition. The dominating role that our case organisation came to occupy is very similar to players, such as Apple, Amazon and eBay, in their given markets. While these players are great examples to learn about market dominance on a global scale, their strategies may not fully explain how players gain their dominance in domestic markets, in this case in China. Our case, thus, emphasises the situated characteristics of ambidexterity. As we have shown, ambidexterity was achieved through leveraging different IT-enabled platforms that allowed the focal organization to develop different relationships amongst practitioners. Can ambidexterity scholars in the management research community continuously ignore the role

of IT in their theorisations? We believe that our account has shown that this is not possible, since in our case, IT-enabled practices formed the essential fabric of a site and provided the key ingredient to trigger site-shifting that allowed DaM to practice ambidextrously.

We believe that this study also has implications for strategy practitioners. True to the ethos of strategy-as-practice theorists, we do not suggest insights yielded from the case can be treated as a prescribed strategy recipe. What we can say is that, for strategy practitioners to develop ambidexterity, understanding their existing site has to be the first step. Our study shows that exploration and exploitation capabilities can be developed in a site through changes in IT-enabled practices; some of these changes can be planned, but it is also crucial to recognise that IT can produce emergent changes in relationships and expectations. Such emergence should be encouraged rather than prevented.

Based on this paper, we believe that future research might extend our understanding by identifying how different strategy practitioners react to and enact the phenomenon of IT-enabled site-shifting through their actual praxis. For instance, how do different practitioners support, resist or oppose the shift? When alternative sites are available to different practitioners, what will influence their selection? Moreover, in this paper we have illustrated the importance of site and how practitioners can potentially yield strategic gains from shifting the site by exploring and exploiting IT. However, what we have not managed to examine fully is how a site can be systematically architected by a strategy practitioner or through a network of practitioners to actualise their strategic intent.

As explained in the Methodology and Analysis section, the paper has taken a 'zoomed-out' approach to investigate the effects of praxis, and we have not 'zoomed-in' to investigate how praxis unfolds within a site and stimulates a shift between sites. What will be extremely valuable is for future research to inquire into and theorise how different elements of IT-enabled practice, such as shared understanding, frames and norms, are changed through everyday praxis.

Finally, in terms of the role of IT, while we have illustrated its agency in relation to the phenomenon of site-shifting and the capability of ambidexterity, we have not explored whether different types of IT, and their characteristics and compositions, are more likely to create the effects of site-shifting, as well as shaping and reshaping the practice of ambidexterity. Future research can certainly expand our understanding by investigating and comparing the technological features of different sites. Given the relational nature of a site and its shift, investigating and theorising these technological features will have to take into account the dynamic interrelationships between different engaged practitioners, as well as the IT-enabled practices that they enact. Given the near-absence of discussion of the role of IT in relation to ambidexterity capabilities, we believe that this can provide a fruitful area for future IS and management strategy research.

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