



Reconciling exploration and exploitation

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Abstract

This study examines the socio-organisational practices that underpin harmonic ambidexterity, i.e., the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation within a single organisational unit. Through an in-depth case study of the renowned *haute pâtisserie* organisation, *Maison Pierre Hermé*, we identify three key socio-organisational practices - *codifying, testing and visualising*. These practices are defined by their ubiquity, versatility and intertwinement, collectively shaping organisational actions and behaviours to seamlessly balance exploration and exploitation. Adopting a practice-based approach, we extend the conceptualisation of harmonic ambidexterity as a socio-organisational phenomenon, emphasising the role of collective practices over individual actions. By introducing an ambidexterity-as-practice perspective, we offer a more granular understanding of how organisations achieve harmonic ambidexterity through the interplay of these ubiquitous, versatile and intertwined practices. Our findings advance ambidexterity research by shifting the focus from leadership and contextual antecedents to the socio-organisational foundations that underpin the integration of innovation and efficiency in everyday activities.

Keywords

ambidexterity, paradox, practice-based approach