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What Drives Emerging Market Supplier Upgrading Pathways in Global Value Chains (Gvcs)? Evidence From Fuzzy-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Fsqca)

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Abstract

Fast growth in large emerging markets, such as China and India, has led an impressive number of emerging market suppliers in GVCs to upgrade. However, current frameworks of analysis do not sufficiently elaborate on this phenomenon from a comprehensive perspective. The literature has focused on pre-defined and sequential pathways, as well as the net effects of single factors. Instead, this study draws upon a configurational framework and proposes that supplier upgrading does not depend on a single condition but on interactions among governance mechanisms, technological capabilities, and environmental dynamics. Applying fsQCA to 67 suppliers in China, this study identified three pathways that could impel emerging market suppliers to upgrade: innovation-capability, technological-breakthrough, and symbiotic-developmental orientations. The results show that emerging market supplier upgrading could result from different configurations of antecedents. The findings enrich the literature and provide implications for emerging market suppliers upgrading within GVCs.

Keywords: global value chain (GVC); emerging market supplier; upgrading pathway; fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA)