THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Competitive Advantage as an Outcome of Strategic Intent: A Review of Literature

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Abstract:
Organizations throughout the world are confronted with issues coming from a high degree of competitiveness and pressure to fulfill strategic objectives in accordance with their mission and vision statements, yet they lack the capacity to reach their full potential over time. The global marketplace is characterized with reduced trade barrier, intensified competition, shortened product life cycle, and deepening industrial segmentation. In this fast-paced business environment, companies fiercely seek to secure core competence to obtain and sustain their competitive advantages. The attribute of strategic intent will help the firm to achieve performance in terms of growth since organizations know themselves and will operate with direction. Strategic intent help in determining resource allocation and competency in an organization, as organizations' resources and capabilities are necessary for a future position. Identifying the desire for the company to succeed and stay ahead of the competition as the primary incentive for strategic thinking is one of the fundamental drivers of strategic intent. Although empirical data supports the existence of performance difficulties in organizations, little efforts have been made to study how the execution of strategy intent influences the competitiveness of organizations. Consequently, the study has systematically reviewed extant literature in the field of strategic intent to develop an encompassing definition of the construct, identify the processes of strategic intent, the perspectives and measures of these perspectives. Ultimately, the review of literature has led to the development of a theoretical and empirical literature that can be used in future empirical studies. This study sought to review the development existing literature to underline the knowledge gaps appropriate to form a basis for future research work. A conceptual model was developed consisting of two constructs: strategic intent and competitive advantage as a guide for future research work in the field of strategic management.

Keywords: *Strategic intent, competitive environment and competitive advantage*

1. Introduction

Organizations all over the globe are dealing with challenges stemming from a high level of competition and pressure to achieve strategic goals in accordance with their mission and vision statements, yet they lack the capacity to achieve their maximum potential over time. Earnings, growth, and profitability, according to Ambastha and Monaya (2010); quality of products, services, and capacity to meet consumer expectations; productivity in terms of higher production and less resource use; innovation in products, services, and management processes; and image in corporate branding, trust, and reputation in relationships with stakeholders are all examples of competitiveness. Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that an organization's competitiveness should be analysed in relation to competitive strategies such as cost leadership, differentiation, and focus, rather than being limited to specific and well-known market factors.

According to Thompson and Strickland (2010), a company has a competitive edge over its competitors when it comes to securing customers and combating competitive challenges. Long-term competitive advantage is derived from core skills that deliver long-term value to the firm. Higher-quality products, better customer service, and lower prices than competitors may gain competitive advantage. In order to maintain a competitive edge, a firm must strive to provide what customers perceive as better value. This might be good quality items at a fair price or a higher-quality product worth paying a greater price for (Porter, 2008)

Because it is assumed that persistent competitive advantage is the fundamental basis of above-average long-term performance, the relevance of competitive advantage and distinctive skills as determinants of a firm's success has grown considerably in recent years. Superior value (what customers are willing to pay) is accomplished by charging less for equivalent services than competitors or by providing unique benefits that more than offset the higher price (Porter, 2008). As competitors try to level the playing field, the mere existence of a competitive advantage triggers inventive ideas that eliminate the advantage (Christiansen, 2011). As a result, there is no guarantee that today's competitive edge will be enough in the future. The strategic intent process comprises a thorough evaluation of the organization's internal and external settings, as well as meticulous and logical execution planning and the selection of relevant solutions.

Organizations should build synergy between strategy planning and execution to achieve their performance targets in order to effectively integrate their plans towards furthering their institutions' aims (Bowlby, 2011). The unrelenting pursuit of a desired strategic goal and expected business environment by meticulously interweaving and harmonizing the organization's vision, mission, and strategic objectives is one of the most important strategies (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2005).

In order to be effective in the exploitation of their resources while simultaneously driving their competitive advantage, organizations must adopt a holistic approach to the creation and implementation of their strategic intent, which influences competitive advantage (Guohui& Eppler, 2008). Organizational leaders are often responsible for providing direction, or strategic intent, and chief executive officers (CEOs) of businesses are so concerned with strategy execution that they see it as the most difficult issue in management (Fourie & Westhuizen, 2008).

The notion and practice of strategic intent has gained popularity internationally and across sectors due to its perceived contribution to corporate performance. Organizations in the private and public sectors have taken strategic goal as a strategy for gaining a competitive advantage seriously (Robert and Peter, 2012). It all comes down to remaining one-step ahead of the competitors and dominating the market. It exemplifies and depicts the process of attaining a competitive advantage (Brand, 2003). This is because, in order to be a market leader, a company must possess unique qualities that others do not possess or cannot easily duplicate.

To achieve strategic aim, some level of effort (strategic action) and behaviour is required. Examples of such activities include management focusing the organization's attention on the essence of winning, motivating people by communicating the target's value, leaving room for individual and team contributions, maintaining enthusiasm by providing new operational definitions as circumstances change, and consistently using intent to guide resource allocation (Hamel, G & Prahalad, 1989).

The aim, mission, vision, and goals of an organization are fundamentally communicated through strategic intent, which is a declaration of direction and intent. Organizations develop strategies to compete in highly competitive markets and to enhance their performance in order to meet their objectives. Only a few businesses, however, see human capital as their most significant asset, capable of pushing them to success or, if poorly managed, leading them to collapse. If employees are unsatisfied with their jobs and are not motivated to execute their obligations and achieve their goals, the firm will fail (Ovidiu, 2013).

The strategic intent of an organization is a crystallized picture of its planned growth path, and it is critical in deciding resource allocation and capability development. Firms with a weak strategic purpose, on the other hand, sometimes fail to set successful goals due to a ‘lack of drive.’ Strategic purpose aims to outwit competition and seize market share. It is a plan for getting a competitive advantage that depicts and explains a method for gaining a competitive edge (Brand, 2010). This is because, in order to succeed, a company must possess unique qualities that others lack or cannot simply duplicate.

2. Statement of the Problem

The current business climate is rapidly changing, making it difficult for businesses to accurately forecast their future. Economic changes, technological changes, political changes, social changes, and legal changes all contribute to the business environment's dynamism. Commercial organizations are concerned about their stability because of these difficulties, prompting the formulation of a strategy. The once-stable ease of doing business has been thrown into chaos because of these events. Businesses must always maintain their competitiveness qualities in order to survive and flourish in such a shifting environment (Baei, Ahmadi, Sharifi, Malafeh, &Baee, 2017).

As a result of these changes, many businesses have concentrated on being more competitive by developing competitive strategies that provide them an edge over their competitors. All of this is echoed by (Awino, Muchara, Ogutu, &Oeba, 2012), who claim that in order to compete successfully in the end; a corporation must first adopt the appropriate posture. Businesses have forced to reconsider how and at what levels they compete in order to get a competitive advantage. This rivalry is founded on the concept that every company wants to make as much money as possible. Competitive strategies are supposed to provide a company an advantage over its competitors in terms of attracting customers and fending off competitive threats (Awino et al, 2012).

Kilemi et al. (2007) and Amunga (2011) claim that research, service quality, and community service have been highlighted as crucial measures of university competitiveness in the context of learning institutions. On the other side, the government is revising university competitive criteria in order to regularly monitor and quantify those activities that meet with government mandates, such as teaching and research quality, as well as those that enhance the institution's reputation and national standing. According to Miller (2007), successful organizational competitiveness is based on a set of linked behaviors that link strategy execution, performance, and, eventually, organizational excellence. The competitive business environment, according to empirical research, has pushed universities to deliver on their strategic goals throughout time (Reyes, Ulhi, & Madsen, 2013); despite the fact that many of them believe, they cannot sustain competitiveness at their greatest capacity.

Different aspects of strategic purpose have received varied degrees of attention. For example, Hamel and Prahalad (1989) discovered that in order for an organization to achieve its strategic intent, it must focus on strategic actions such as motivating employees by communicating the importance of the organization's goals, encouraging teamwork by providing innovative functional descriptions as environments change, and consistently monitoring resource allocation using intent. A number of studies have underlined the importance of strategic goals in understanding organizational relationships (Mantere&Sillince 2007; Ryals & Davies, 2013). Few studies, however, have looked at the influence of important strategic aim determinants on organizational performance. Following the recommendations of a few studies, it is clear that there is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled (Mantere&Sillince 2007 2007; Odita and Bello, 2015). Furthermore, only a few studies have looked at strategic purpose from a multi-factor viewpoint.

With the available evidence revealing divergence of thought, it is unclear how the dimensionality of strategic purpose execution may influence Kenyan institutions' competitiveness (Owino et al., 2014). Furthermore, despite widespread recognition of strategic intent's importance in influencing management decisions, theoretical viewpoints have neglected its execution as a contributor to organizational competitiveness, which is a potentially fatal oversight (Ryals & Davies, 2013). According to the American Management Association (AMA), the presence of strategic purpose in an organization has no bearing on its competitiveness, but inability to deliver might be attributed to a lack of execution (AMA, 2007). As a result, the goal of this research is to fill up the gaps described above by investigating the influence of strategic intent execution dimensions on competitive advantage in businesses.

3. Conceptual Literature

3.1. Concept of Strategic Intent

Hamel and Prahalad (1989) disputed ideas like ‘strategic fit’ (the relationship between resources and opportunities), ‘generic strategies’ (low cost versus distinctiveness versus emphasis), and the ‘strategy hierarchy’ in their original piece (goals, strategies, and tactics). In today's turbulent, unpredictable, complicated, and ambiguous environment, choosing a general approach to establish long-term success is unlikely to yield the intended results. In order to manage change and culture, firms should instead focus on strategy execution based on people, partners, and procedures. Hamel and Prahalad (2005) describe strategic purpose as more than just unbridled desire, pointing out that many firms have ambitious strategic aim yet fail to achieve their objectives. Notably, the concept of strategic intent has gained considerable attention in research due to its implication on performance of business organizations (Gabow& Kinyua 2018; Wanjiku, Kinyua &Kahuthia, 2020)

The idea of strategic intent has long been acknowledged in the strategic management literature as critical to understanding a company's overall path (Sneddon, &Mazzarol, 2002). Hamel and Prahalad (1989) introduced the notion of strategic intent into the literature, defining it as a long-term preoccupation with winning at all levels of the business. A win-at-all-costs mentality ignores the constraints imposed by existing resources and capabilities. Strategic intent reflects in the organization's purpose, vision, and aim because it expresses future-oriented behavior (Brand, 2012). The key explanation of an organization's strategic stance is its mission and vision statement (Candemir&Zalluhoglu, 2013). In these organizational declarations, the viewpoint of strategic aim is broadly articulated in the numerous definitions of the idea.

It is the organization's purpose, a declaration of objective defined by management, and an organization's vision of what it wants to achieve in the long-term (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). Strategic intent is a dream, an emotion, a distillation of strategy, a goal, and a mission (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). (Kotter, 2002; Moroe, 2012). The goal of strategic aim should be to reach a conclusion. That is the organization's mission; it is what the organization aspires to be in the long run (Jyothimon, 2014). Strategic intent, according to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), is important to a firm's long-term survival, especially for those aspiring to global leadership. The organization's strategic purpose is the intended path it will take. It's a brief, inspirational, and motivating declaration of what the company wants to be and achieve in the future, generally expressed in competitive terms.

Strategic intent expresses future-oriented behavior; as a result, strategic intent is reflected in the organization's purpose, vision, and goal (Brand, 2012). The key explanation of an organization's strategic stance is its mission and vision statement (Candemir&Zalluhoglu, 2013). In these organizational declarations, the viewpoint of strategic aim is broadly articulated in the numerous definitions of the idea. The idea of strategic intent has long been acknowledged in the strategic management literature as critical to understanding a company's overall path (Sneddon, &Mazzarol, 2002). Hamel and Prahalad (1989) introduced the notion of strategic intent into the literature, defining it as a long-term preoccupation with winning at all levels of the business. Limits are undermined by a fixation with winning.

According to Hamel and Prahalad (2005), strategic intent is a revolutionary theory in the field of strategic management that has resulted in significant changes in organizational operating styles because of its multiple findings. Hamel and Prahalad (1989), who defined it as an obsession with winning at all levels of the firm, first, introduced the strategic intent concept. The researchers found three features of strategic purpose. To begin, strategic purpose entails a sense of direction that offers an integrated and personalized view of the future, and for which top management should give foresights. Second, it encourages all workers to experiment with new ideas and innovation. Third, strategic purpose has a sense of destiny, or an emotional edge, since it emphasizes its distinct character and a competitively exclusive vision of the future by encouraging all employees to explore new ideas and innovation that are distinctive. According to the two experts, strategic purpose indicates a significant stretch for the company's resources. The strategic intent model is linked to competitive advantage and hence organizational performance in theory (Odita& Bello, 2015).

Strategic intent is a critical component of understanding an organization's common direction, according to strategic management literature (Odita& Bello, 2015). Strategic intent is also important for organizational performance since it is used to specify the needs for improved strategy execution, which is mostly accomplished through communication and synchronized systems and processes (Andolsen, 2007). Furthermore, the concept of strategic intent permits the introduction of important core competencies that aid in the enhancement of competitive advantage and, as a consequence, performance.

According to the literature, strategic intent is a precise and thoughtful future-aspired obsession in which the organization envisions gaining competitive advantage (and eventually success) primarily through careful risk assessment and innovation, resulting in a competitive advantage that rivals find difficult to imitate (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hamel &

Prahalad 2005; Brown, 2015; Odita& Bello, 2015). Strategic purpose, or the 'dream' that propels a corporation to a desired future, is the term for this preoccupation (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; 2005). As a result, strategic purpose acts as a distillation of a company's strategic performance, providing overall direction, focus, and drive (Brand, 2010).

Strategic intent execution, on the other hand, is advantageous to every successful firm, and therefore, exceptional CEOs know what it takes to have a great strategic intent and put it into action (Neilson, Martin & Powers, 2008). As a result, it becomes clear that the ability to execute a sound strategy aim, rather than possessing a sound strategic goal, is what separates winners from losers. Execution of strategic purpose is far more crucial since it necessitates putting plans into action in order to meet predetermined goals (Levy, Powell & Worrall, 2005; Fourie & Westhuizen, 2008). As a result, CEOs should concentrate on future opportunities rather than current challenges, which are frequently handled through company visions and missions (Rui & Yip, 2008).

Many managers struggle to duplicate their global competitors' competitive advantages or, alternatively, to formulate and effectively implement the organization's 'dream' or strategic aim. Therefore, strategic intent motivates businesses to face the challenges of change in the business environment while maintaining purpose and objective consistency. (Mantere&Sillince, 2007; Kapferer, 2012).

In a competitive environment characterized by high uncertainty, organizations employ their resources and skills to continuously improve their course in the direction of the strategic goal. Organizations must achieve their strategic goals in order to meet their stakeholders' expectations, and as a result, they must stretch their current position in order to compete effectively in the future (Brown, 2015). Organizations, on the other hand, are usually lacking direction (Fourie & Westhuizen, 2008). Defining organizational resource allocation and competency advancement at such circumstances requires a strategic objective (Hamel & Prahalad, 2005). According to Brown (2015), organizations that lack a true strategic goal suffer from a lack of ambition, which stops them from building the resource stocks that may lead to future success.

3.1.1. Perspectives of Strategic Intent

When a company has to catch up and become the industry's worldwide leader, the Strategic Intent perspective is applied (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989, 1994; Hart, 1992). Companies detect strategic purpose by posing a series of business problems, such as 'entering new markets, growing capabilities via learning and obtaining new information, establishing resource and experience bases, and accomplishing a firm's strategic transformation' (Rui & Yip, 2008, p. 215).

The term 'strategic intent' has been used in the literature to describe a variety of concepts, including aggressiveness (Chen, Lin, & Michel, 2010), managerial intentionality (Thomas, Pedersen, &Volberda, 2007), strategic renewal (Riviere &Suder, 2016; Schmitt, Raisch, &Volberda, 2018), strategic flexibility (Santos-Vijande, López-Sánchez (Lau & Bruton, 2011; Scott-Kennel & Giroud, 2015).

Due to their ownership disadvantage and strong proclivity to catch up with advanced economy rivals, this paradigm has been common in EMNE research (Cui & Jiang, 2009b; Lu et al., 2011; Luo et al., 2011). EMNEs' long-term strategic aims, which cannot be effectively articulated by short-term strategic planning, are conceived as their strategic purpose from this perspective (Cui, Meyer, & Hu, 2014; Rui & Yip, 2008). Dunning's (1993) FDI motivational theory inspired the elements of strategic purpose.

Strategic intent is a crystallized vision of an organization's desired growth path, and it is crucial in determining resource allocation and capability development. Firms with poor strategic purpose, on the other hand, have a 'lack of desire' and typically struggle to create successful goals. The goal of strategic purpose is to outsmart the competitors and take the market. It represents and describes a strategy for gaining a competitive edge (Brand, 2010). This is because, in order to prevail, an organization must have specific capabilities that others do not have or cannot readily and quickly copy. Some degree of activity (strategic action) and conduct is necessary to accomplish strategic aim. Management focusing the organization's attention on the essence of winning, motivating people by communicating the target's value, leaving room for individual and team contribution, maintaining enthusiasm by providing new operational definitions as circumstances change, and consistently using intent to guide resource allocation are examples of such activities (Hamel, G & Prahalad, 1989).

Strategic intent is a strategic goal defined with the 'essence of winning' in mind, with the goal of maximizing overall performance rather than establishing the most efficient affiliate in a specific market (Deng, 2004). When companies need to catch up and want to be the industry's worldwide leader, they adopt the strategic purpose perspective (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989, 1994; Hart, 1992). It is the organization's purpose, a declaration of objective defined by management, and an organization's vision of what it wants to achieve in the long-term (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). Strategic intent is a dream, an emotion, a distillation of strategy, a goal, and a mission (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). (Kotter, 2002; Moroe, 2012). The goal of strategic aim should be to reach a conclusion. That is the organization's mission; it is what the organization aspires to be in the long run (Jyothimon, 2014). Strategic intent, according to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), is important to a firm's long-term survival, especially for those aspiring to global leadership. The organization's strategic purpose is the intended path it will take. It's a brief, inspirational, and motivating declaration of what the company wants to be and achieve in the future, generally expressed in competitive terms.

Corporate Vision is one of the indicators of strategic intent. An organizational vision is frequently connected with the organization's founder(s) and signifies. The lack of originality and the prevalence of copycat methods in Western businesses is the first critique leveled by Hamel and Prahalad (1990). A simple copy of a similar product or service is the same as following another company's guidelines. As a result, there will be no competitive edge; rather, there will be 'competitive suicide' (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). An organization that just imitates the market leader is unable to develop its own competency. The follower organization becomes trapped in a reactive mode, continually lagging behind the leader and unable to acquire clients based on its own distinctive skill.

Typical competitor studies undertaken in the 1980s, according to Hamel and Prahalad, focused solely on the presence. While the future is unpredictable, plans should take into account the organization's resourcefulness, or the rate at which new competitive advantages are developed. Furthermore, senior management should strive to forecast the competitive environment and resource availability in the future, as well as speculate on the influence these factors may have on the business. This examination of competition and resources from a future viewpoint focuses management's emphasis on the organization's resourcefulness and extends the managerial vision decades into the future.

Top management, on the other hand, needs a good awareness of the company's procedures and internal affairs to be able to generate such a rich image of the firm and its surrounds; unfortunately, this is rarely the case (Hamel, 1996). Even today, senior management in many firms is completely unaware of the organization's skills and internal procedures. Despite the fact that revolutionaries may be found in any company, organizational barriers such as high hierarchies and non-existent or too formal communication channels keep them quiet. As a result, the functional level believes that executives are out of touch with the company and that, rather than cooperating; executives are dictating to lower-level employees and dismissing their suggestions.

Due to the fact that Strategic Intent is a long-term process, it may be required to train individuals and supply resources as needed. Because all employees in the business are aware of their employer's long-term strategic goals, they strive to achieve them. Instead of precise planning, Hamel and Prahalad (1989) argue that employees are the greatest experts in their jobs and should be allowed to deploy resources as they see fit.

To guarantee that workers are working toward a unified objective, Hamel and Prahalad (1994) suggest taking little steps at a time and setting clear goals and review procedures for all employees, as well as aligning performance assessments with the organization's strategic aim. In circumstances when resource allocations are in dispute, aligning each employee's activities and responsibilities toward the same corporate purpose reduces interdepartmental animosity for resources and offers a direction.

Another feature of the strategic intent method is that it pushes employees to seek out and create new competitive advantages on a regular basis. Because competitive advantages have a finite lifespan and are only valuable for a short period of time, the organization must develop procedures that allow for the continuous generation of competitive advantages (Hamel & Prahalad, 1990). Mergers and acquisitions of companies with similar long-term strategic goals can give synergistic competitive benefits and resources (Srinivasan & Mishra, 2007). Research with the broad theme of management as a key component has demonstrated competitive advantage and firm performance as possible observable outcomes of critical aspects of strategic management as strategic intent, strategic choices and strategic fit among others (Abdi & Kinyua, 2018; Kiprotich, Kahuthia& Kinyua, 2019; Moki, Ndung'u& Kinyua, 2019; Njoroge & Kinyua, 2020; Kung'u, Kahuthia& Kinyua, 2020; Mbugua & Kinyua, 2020; Muthaura & Kinyua, 2021; Oketch, Kilika& Kinyua, 2021).

3.1.2. Dimensions of Strategic Intent

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), having visionary leadership that can drive the organization's mission, sharing the vision with employees who are the vision's implementers, and aligning business processes to the organization's vision and goals are all aspects of strategic intent execution (AMA, 2007). In today's complex environment, a business strategy cannot succeed unless it is executed flawlessly (Hrebiniak, 2013). This premise is backed by research by Neilson, Martin, and Powers (2008), who discovered that great companies cannot accomplish results without the right strategic direction, and that even the best strategy will fail if it is not implemented by strong operations. In an ideal world, managers would carefully develop and implement strategic objectives in order to sustain their competitive advantage.

Organizations, on the other hand, operate in a world that is always changing because of technological breakthroughs, shifting regulations, and shifting consumer tastes. As a result, the execution of strategic intent must meet the following criteria: a preconceived plan, group commitment, visionary leadership, corporate culture, resources, and proper communication; top leadership should execute strategic intent, and as situations change, they must anticipate advanced information, make mid-course adjustments, and get the right timings; top leadership should execute strategic intent, and as situations change, they must anticipate advanced information, make mid-course adjustments, and get the right timings (Sull, 2007). According to Mihaiu, Opreana, and Cristescu (2010), the process of strategic intent execution may be measured in terms of economic efficiency and operational timeliness.

Excellent leadership abilities and a relentless pursuit of the desired goal by the organization's chief executive officers are also required for strategic purpose execution (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2013). CEOs must also provide the emotional and intellectual vibrancy necessary for the adventure of uncovering a compelling long-term vision for the company (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). Furthermore, CEOs must communicate the strategy aim to employees in a clear and understandable manner (Dibble & Langford, 1994). In order to integrate their strategic purpose with the strategic goal, CEOs must meticulously interlink and harmonize the business vision, mission, and deliberate objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 2001).

The Strategic Intent Elements (vision, mission, and objectives) are utilized to bring ideas and resources together in a single direction. At various levels, these components function as both beginning places and milestones. These elements form the foundation for activity planning and guidance. Strategic intent also sets the way and ensures that all operations are focused on attaining the organization's objectives. Strategic purpose should be appropriately conveyed to all stakeholders to reaffirm their belief in the company's services and its ability to lead the particular industrial sector.

3.1.3. Adoption of Strategic Intentin Strategic Management and Outcomes

Odita and Bello (2015) found that strategic intent and its dimensions (mission, vision, and objectives) had a substantial and positive relationship with organizational performance in their study on strategic intent and organizational performance in banks. Furthermore, they discovered that strategic intent accounts for 34% of the variance in organizational performance in their study. The mission, vision, and objective components, respectively, account for around 47 percent, 19 percent, and 58 percent of the variance in organizational performance. They then suggested that strategic intent be reflected on and included in an organization (Odita& Bello, 2015).

The link between strategic intent and organizational performance has been studied in some depth. Edison (2007) explored the link between work team strategic intent and work team performance. In a military acquisition university executive level, six-week management program in six sites in San Diego, the study was done on 57 student project teams in 12 courses (327) respondents. In all 15 hypotheses evaluated, the study found a substantial direct association between work team strategic intent and team performance. This indicates that both composite and dimensional evaluations of strategic purpose revealed a strong link. The tool employed to determine strategic intent is a flaw in this study. Strategic intent can be found in mission, vision, and objective statements, but not all mission, vision, and objective statements have strategic intent. Strategic purpose entails both a declaration of goal and a plan of action. The study's measure, on the other hand, was a mission, vision, and objective statement that did not communicate strategic purpose.

Fawcett, Smith, and Cooper (1997) conducted a poll of 131 senior executives to see if there was a link between strategic aim and company success. They discovered that sustaining focus and consistency across strategic goals and value-added capabilities appears to be the most significant barrier to competitive success. They concluded that what is measured matters more to employees than the declared strategic aim. Laguinto (2011) explored the association between desired strategies and manufacturing business performance in Japan. This mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) study showed that planned strategies have a genuine influence on company performance, and that this impact is dependent on environmental conditions, in this case, the current business climate, using order of entrance (pioneering and leapfrogging).

Monroe (2002) conducted an empirical study of strategic intent in New Zealand organizations and discovered a link between strategic intent possession and usage and organizational performance. Successful businesses were said to have varied degrees of strategic aim. Those that had a high level of strategic purpose also had a strong emotional bond with their staff. Richard (2013) looked at the link between strategic aim and organizational performance in the pharmaceutical business, among other things. Three hypotheses on strategic purpose and organizational performance were investigated in the qualitative study. These were (a) firm-level strategic intent is negatively related to short-term firm performance, (b) there is a negative relationship between strategic intent level and magnitude of short-term performance, and (c) the negative short-term effects of firm-level strategic intent will attenuate over time. The first two hypotheses were validated by the data, while the third hypothesis was not. Richard's (2013) research was innovative. It goes beyond a simple analysis of the direct link between strategic purpose and organizational performance.

3.2. The Concept of Competitive Advantage

Competitiveness is defined by the strategic management school of thinking as the capacity to financially develop and deliver value through cost leadership and/or product differentiation. This viewpoint indicates that a firm's cost and demand structure are directly influenced by the elements that determine its competitiveness (Porter, 1980). Bellendorf (1993) defines competitiveness as a firm's or industry's ability to thrive in a competitive environment, as well as to battle for and strengthen their respective market positions against competitors. Competitiveness, according to Barney (1991), is defined as a company's capacity to adapt and evolve in response to changing situations.

Earnings, growth, and profitability, according to Ambastha and Monaya (2010); quality of products, services, and capacity to meet consumer expectations; productivity in terms of higher production and less resource use; innovation in products, services, and management processes; and image in corporate branding, trust, and reputation in relationships with stakeholders are all examples of competitiveness. Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that an organization's competitiveness should be analysed in relation to competitive strategies such as cost leadership, differentiation, and focus, rather than being limited to specific and well-known market factors.

According to Thompson and Strickland (2010), a company has a competitive edge over its competitors when it comes to securing customers and combating competitive challenges. Long-term competitive advantage is derived from core skills that deliver long-term value to the firm. Higher-quality products, better customer service, and lower prices than competitors may gain competitive advantage. In order to maintain a competitive edge, a firm must strive to provide what customers perceive as better value. This might be good quality items at a fair price or a higher-quality product worth paying a greater price for (Porter, 2008).

According to Porter (2008), strategists must investigate the factors influencing competitiveness in their industry and assess their firm's strengths and weaknesses. Strategists can then devise a plan that involves, for example, positioning the company so that its capabilities provide the best defense against the competing force, affecting the balance of forces by strategic maneuvers, and so enhancing the company's position. Furthermore, strategists can anticipate and adapt to changes in the forces that underpin them, with the objective of capitalizing on change by choosing a strategy that is appropriate for the new competitive balance before competitors notice (Porter, 2008).

The concept of competitive advantage is rooted on value creation, unique resources, innovation, and distribution, all of which are crucial to a company's success. Competitive advantage, according to Hui-Ling (2014), is a combination of characteristics that a business creates or possesses in order to surpass its competitors. Competitive advantage, according to Ahmad and Khalaf (2010), is an organization's ability to participate in value-added activities that allows it to gain a competitive edge over its competitors. A competitive advantage, according to Heizer and Render (2006), is the design of a system that has an incomparable edge over competitors. Competitive advantage, according to Day and Wensley (2008), is a strategic configuration that helps a firm sustain its viability over its competitors.

Because it is assumed that persistent competitive advantage is the fundamental basis of above-average long-term performance, the relevance of competitive advantage and distinctive skills as determinants of a firm's success has grown considerably in recent years. Superior value (what customers are willing to pay) is accomplished by charging less for equivalent services than competitors or by providing unique benefits that more than offset the higher price (Porter, 2008). As competitors try to level the playing field, the mere existence of a competitive advantage triggers inventive ideas that eliminate the advantage (Christiansen, 2011). As a result, there is no guarantee that today's competitive edge will be enough in the future. In terms of a company's performance, Chan (2001) stated that competitiveness is a tool for achieving the ultimate aim, which is the company's and industry's performance in the targeted market. According to this study, the performance of Kenyan tea companies should be judged in terms of the company's long-term growth and success, and competitiveness should be assessed as a long-term benefit rather than a short-term gain.

Competitiveness refers to market economic issues in general, but it may also be broken down into three categories: company competitiveness (microeconomic level), industry competitiveness (mezzo-economic level), and national economy competitiveness (macroeconomic level) (Dre scher& Maurer, 2005). According to Waiganjo (2013), business competitiveness is a common concept examined by academics, consultants, and practitioners due to frequent and uncertain changes, increased competition among firms, the need for continuous innovation, quality enhancement, and cost reduction, all of which force companies to face the challenge of improving their competitiveness and, as a result, their performance both locally and globally. Because pricing establishes a firm's competitive position in the market, this research uses price as a measure of competitiveness. When businesses fight for the same clients with homogenous product offers, pricing determines the competitive position and becomes a potent competitive instrument, according to Fratto, Jones, and Cassill (2006), as referenced by Waiganjo (2013).

A corporation must get an edge over its competitors in order to survive and win. According to Rothaermel (2013), competitive advantage is the process through which a company develops and implements a strategy that results in better performance. A mediating variable is useful when a researcher wants to know how two variables are linked, for example, when one variable affects a mediating variable, which then causes the dependent variable (Mackinnon, 2011). The job of competitive advantage as a mediator is to provide benefit to the client (differentiation and low cost) and to explain the link between the independent and dependent variables.

According to Tovstiga and Tulugurova (2009), in small and medium businesses, the internal resource base is a deciding element of competitive advantage. A company makes advantage of its unique resources to generate products and services that are more valuable to consumers. Furthermore, as significant as a corporation's resources are, a competitive edge might help the firm perform better.

According to Wiklund and Shepherd (2003), competitive advantage has an impact on business performance. According to Jeen et al. (2010) and Martinette and Leeson (2012), there is a positive relationship between competitive advantage and the success of SMEs. Lopez-Gamero et al. (2009) also investigated the link between environmental factors and company performance, using competitive advantage and firm resources as mediator variables. The results reveal that a company's resources and competitive advantage operate as mediator factors in the link between environmental preservation and financial performance.

Kamukama et al. (2017) investigate the influence of managerial competency on company performance, utilizing competitive advantage as a mediating factor. The outcomes of the study show that competitive advantage functions as a mediator between managerial competency and company success. Entrepreneurial skill has a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage, according to Rungwitoo's (2012) research, however the correlation is weak. Entrepreneurial talents, on the other hand, have no noticeable influence on competitive advantage.

3.2.1. Measuring Competitive Advantage

Barney (2002) outlines four approaches to determining a company's competitiveness. These indicators include the firm's viability, stakeholder approach, fundamental accounting measurements, and modified accounting measures. In terms of liquidity position, Feurer and Chaharbaghi (1994) employ profit, ability to obtain capital, and cash flow to measure competitiveness. Soliman (1998) considers cost, quality, delivery reliability, flexibility, and innovation as factors for creating a competitive position. According to M. Porter (1985), a company has a competitive advantage when 'its actions in an industry produce economic value and when few competing firms are engaged in similar actions.' A business has a competitive advantage, according to De Wit and Meyer (1999), Buffam (2000), and Christensen (2001), when it can outperform competitors while competing for client favor.

According to Barney (2002), a firm achieves competitive parity when its actions produce economic value that is applied by a number of other businesses engaged in similar activities. One of a corporation's most important aims is to enhance shareholder profits. Because shareholder value is the net present value of expected future earnings, short-term profitability optimization does not always indicate optimal shareholder returns. One of the techniques that represents the shareholders return is the Balanced Scored Card (BSC) as an indicator of the firm's competitive advantage.

Past performance, indicators or projected competitiveness indicators might be used to assess competitive advantage (Frohberg& Hartmann, 1997). For instance, market share, productivity, product cost, gross margin, returns on assets, net income, unit cost ratio (Toit, Ortmann&Ramroop, 2010); total factor productivity (Yee, Ahearn & Huffman, 2004); financial performance (profit, sales growth, returns on investment), non-financial performance (customer satisfaction, employee growth) (Rahman & Ramli, 2014); benchmarking, balanced scorecard (Kozena&Chladek, 2012).

Another method of determining competitiveness is benchmarking. Benchmarking was still a procedure of business owners analyzing their competitors' tactics in the early 1900s. However, as mechanical engineering progressed, so did benchmarking methods. Businesses began reverse engineering competitor items in the mid-nineteenth century. Companies may compare themselves to competitors or internally on nearly any criterion, they want. Benchmarking will become less about evaluating hundreds of data points and more about how data is analysed as technology advances. Big data will bring never-before-seen insights, while smart analytics will allow businesses to focus on niche and personalised outcomes.

Organizations have been forced to evaluate and adopt a larger array of creative management philosophies and approaches in today's highly competitive, fast changing global market. Benchmarking has received a lot of attention as a strategy because of its efficacy (Yasin, 2002; Sisson et al., 2003; Rohlfer, 2004; Anderson and McAdam, 2004; Huq et al., 2008; Likierman, 2009). Benchmarking is a method that is frequently employed when businesses compete with one another. Benchmarking is often used to gain insight through comparison research and then apply that knowledge to improve processes, goods, or services. Land surveying gives rise to the notion of a benchmark, which is a point of reference for known altitude against which other things are measured. A benchmark became the competency criterion by which a work might be accomplished when Frederick Taylor used the phrase in his scientific management techniques. McNary (McNary, 1994). According to Powers (1998), the whole quality management movement, which commonly employed physical measurements and concrete data as metrics, adopted benchmarking as a comparison procedure to examine quality. Metrics recognized high-performing companies as well as the 'magnitude of the potential' for others (Landry, 1993).

4. Literature Review

The core construct in this conceptual study drove an intensive review of the enormous amount of relevant theoretical and empirical literature. As a result, the theories that support the constructs of strategic purpose and competitive advantage, as well as relevant empirical material, are presented in this section.

4.1. Theoretical Review

Two theories namely, Strategic Intent Modeland theory of competitive advantage were reviewed as presented in the preceding section.

4.1.1. Strategic Intent Model

The strategic intent model generates a pattern of connection by interpreting the relationship between strategic goal and organizational performance. This notion focuses on how businesses can position themselves strategically in order to stay competitive. The basic premise of the model is addressed by the connections between the purpose, vision, intended goals, strategic imperatives, strategic tactics, measurement, and resource allocation, which are all assumed to impact organizational performance (Mariadoss, 2014). This model combines characteristics that illustrate how firms evolve from one stage to the next since strategic intent execution is a long-term process.

Companies, according to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), require a new model of strategic purpose to survive global competitiveness; they must embrace daring vision beyond the confines of present competences and resources to reinvigorate corporate performance. The journey begins with a clear understanding of the organization's mission and vision statements. A broad vision, a mission statement, or a comprehensive strategy with precise objectives and targets are used to represent the aim. Consequently, strategic intent is used to develop the elements that define people's beliefs, goals, and behaviors throughout the organization.

Strategic intent refers to predetermined goals that guide efforts toward desired outcomes or actively planned actions (Chia & Holt, 2006). The strategic intent model explains how strategic intent affects performance theoretically, highlighting the need of addressing this from an outcome-based viewpoint (Romar, 2009). The model's outcomes represent the desired changes that occur because of a certain collection of programs or activities that have a long-term impact. Finally, the desired goals and achievements must be measurable and trackable, as well as conveyed to all parties involved. Strategic imperatives are high-level goals that must be met through effective methods. As a result, it is vital to understand that outstanding firms or virtuous change forecasters have one characteristic: a strong strategic purpose.

According to Mariadoss et al. (2014), an organization's strategic purpose may affect its performance in a competitive environment by combining and using its central resources, capabilities, and vital skills to achieve the vision, mission, and objectives. This situation demonstrates how strategic intent is all about winning competitive battles and building a leadership position by leveraging organizational resources, and when done right, strategic intent may lead to remarkable results (Chia & Holt, 2006).

Eckerson (2009) used the strategic intent model to demonstrate how efficient resource allocation leads to high-performing businesses by ensuring high-quality customer service, process innovation, cost effectiveness, human resource management, and product innovation. The distribution of resources is viewed as critical to achieving the strategic goal (Hussain et al., 2013). Therefore, Bergh et al. (2010) utilized the model to create a framework within which institutions such as colleges may operate and follow a predetermined route to achieve their goals. The strategic intent model assists organizations, such as colleges, in focusing on critical tasks and implementing innovative but simple processes that drive their strategic purpose in order to develop talent and capacities and stimulate innovation.

4.1.2. Theoryof Competitive Advantage

According to the idea, the type of rivalry and the source of competitive advantage changes between industries and between segments within the same industry. Porters (1980) claimed that a company might develop an impregnable position in the market by working alone or with other organizations in the same industry to outperform the competition (Thompson, and Strickland, 2007). Day created the term 'competitive advantage' in 1984. He claimed that the sort of strategy used by a company might help it maintain its competitive edge in the marketplace.

Porter proposed this concept in 1990. Governments and firms, according to the theory, should pursue policies that generate high-quality goods that can be sold at high prices in both domestic and international markets. This implies that competitive advantage may keep you ahead of your existing and future competitors, resulting in superior performance and market leadership. The theory also describes how a company's resources and business strategy influence its competitive advantage and competitiveness. This concept underpins the five-force model of industrial competitiveness. According to the five forces model, each industry's structure is comprised of five competitive variables that influence a company's strategy and competitiveness. Competitive considerations include the firm's buyers or markets, suppliers, competitors, substitute goods, and the possibility of new entrants.

Each of the five factors has an impact on how firms price their products, as well as the costs and investments they undertake to develop and maintain entry barriers in the industry. The buying power of a company's consumers determines its market pricing. The buyer's power increases as the firm's capacity to price high decreases. The power of suppliers determines the cost of production on the firm's inputs. The more the expenses, the greater the supplier's influence. This discovery is similar to the current scenario of Kenyan tea producers, who are dealing with escalating production costs, and the price of tea at auction is decided by the customers' purchasing power. The breadth and intensity of competitive competition effect earnings not just through restricting a firm's ability to price, but also by limiting its costs and investments. Close substitutes determine and limit the pricing of a company's goods and services without generating market erosion or substitution. Profitable firms are more likely to recruit newcomers. (1985, 1990, 2000; Porter, 1985, 1990, 2000).

According to Altman (2005), the global tea market offers a number of opportunities for Kenya, which may be taken advantage of using market focus and product differentiation approaches. The concept of competitive advantage was relevant to this study because, despite its high quality, Kenyan tea is failing to meet changing customer demands, necessitating product innovations, market diversifications, and strategic planning. Three of the study's goals are based on this concept: strategic planning, product development, and market expansion. Kenya has long been recognized for its black CTC tea, which is exported in large quantities to consumers all over the world. This means that it is unable to keep up with changing consumer tastes and preferences, resulting in a loss of competitiveness.

4.2. Empirical Literature Review

4.2.1. Organizational Vision and Competitive Advantage

'Vision and Mission in Organization: Myth or Heuristic Device?' by Taiwo and Lawal (2016). The overall goal of this research was to look at the impact of vision and mission statements on achieving competitive advantage. This research relied on primary data. The major source of primary data was a questionnaire. The null hypotheses were tested using ANOVA. SPSS was used to compile the results. According to the findings of this study, correctly created and implemented vision and mission statements may affect organizational employees in their day-to-day activities and aid in the achievement of organizational goals using the mission and vision as a guiding light.

In their work 'Impact of Vision, Strategy, and Human Resource on Non-profit Organization Service Performance,' Liao and Huang (2016). The goal of this research is to order to uncover suitable management approaches, this study investigates the causal links between organizational vision, management strategies, and human resource management on NPO service performance. A total of 529 people from five non-profit organizations agreed to take part in the study. They are all workers who work in the field of international affairs. The quantitative data was collected via questionnaires, and the SEM analysis was performed using AMOS software. The findings revealed that the organization's vision has a positive significant influence on management strategies, and management tactics have a positive significant influence on human resource management. In non-profits, however, vision, strategies, and human resources have no discernible impact on service quality.

4.2.2. Organizational Mission and Competitive Advantage

In their study 'Impact of mission statement components on social enterprise success, 'Berbegal-Mirabent, Mas-Machuca, and Guix (2021). The goal of this research is to look at the relationship between mission statements, performance, and competitive advantage in social companies. This study used a descriptive research approach. There are 39 social enterprises in the sample, all of which are situated in Spain. The findings revealed that companies with mission statements that clearly reflect consumers and product/service offerings are more likely to have stronger economic performance and competitive advantage.

'Revisiting the connection between mission statements and organizational performance in the non-profit sector: The mediating role of organizational commitment,' by Macedo, Pinho, and Silva (2016). The goal of this study is to see how important a mission statement is in determining an organization's success and competitiveness.' This study offers data from a representative sample of 112 non-profit health care groups operating in Portugal, using a quantitative scientific approach. The findings showed that the effect of organizational commitment, as a mediating component of the aforementioned connection, improves understanding of the relationship between mission statements and organizational competitive advantage.

4.2.3. Organizational Objectives and Competitive Advantage

In their paper 'Value-focused objectives for CRM system adoption,'Pedron, Picoto, Dhillon, and Caldeira (2016). The goal of this research is to define objectives for CRM system adoption. In Europe, the authors conducted a sequential multi-method study. A total of 62 in-depth interviews were conducted during the first qualitative phase. The authors created 102 CRM system adoption objectives using Keeney's (1992) value-focused thinking technique. A more condensed list of objectives was generated using quantitative purification techniques and a sample of 210 organizations. The entire collection of objectives was divided into two categories: basic and means objectives. Therefore, three basic and three means objectives were offered. These goals enable CRM system adoption to be effective. The three main goals are to improve CRM organizational culture, maintain a productive relationship with CRM suppliers, and reduce CRM project risks. Maximize CRM utilization, maximize relational marketing capabilities, and maximize CRM orientation are the three main objectives.

In their work 'Impact of training on employees' performance (Evidence from pharmaceutical businesses in Karachi, Pakistan),' Hafeezand Akbar (2015). The purpose of this research is to look at the influence of training as an organizational goal on employee performance and competitiveness in the pharmaceutical business in Karachi, Pakistan. Four pharmaceutical firms have been chosen. A survey of 356 workers was done using a self-administered questionnaire and a random sample approach, with a response rate of 96 percent. Two sets of hypotheses are created, one for each of the study topics. For reliability, descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis, SPSS 19 is employed. The results suggest that there is a positive substantial association between them, and that the more training a person receives, the more efficient their level of performance will be.

4.3. Proposed Theoretical Model

Theoretical model is imperative in helping to reveal the relationship between independent variables, moderating variables, mediating variables and dependent variable. In the case of this independent study, a theoretical model was proposed that illustrated the relationship between strategic intent and competitive advantage. This relationship is demonstrated in a chart marked as Figure 5.1.

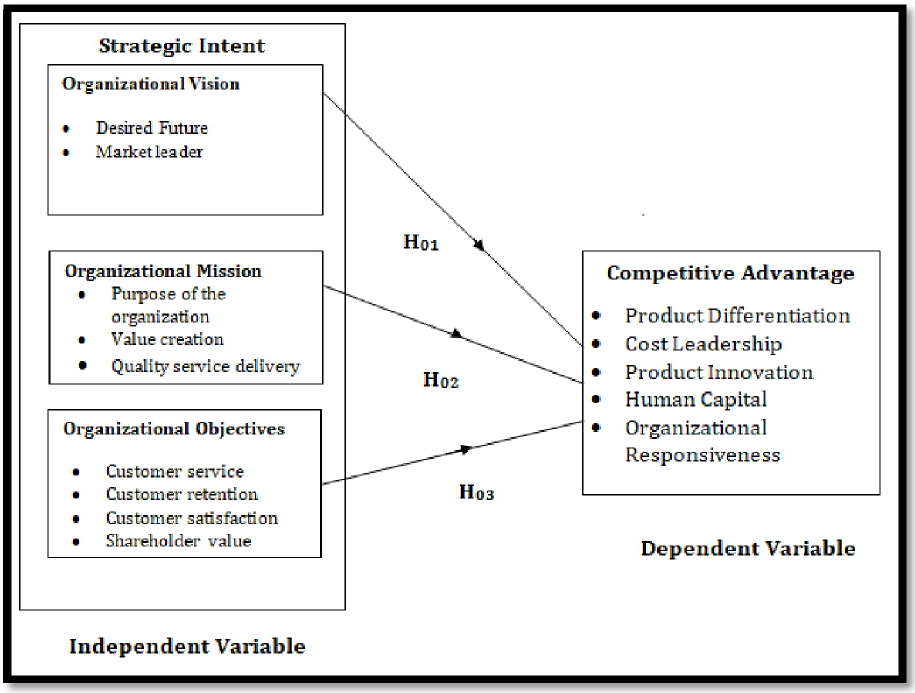

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Model
Source: Author (2022)

Strategic purpose is the independent variable in the proposed model, whereas competitive advantage is the dependent variable. Strategic intent is measured in this study by the organization's vision, mission, and organizational objectives. Organization Vision is a critical component of strategic intent. This strategic asset contributes in the building of a company's reputation and gaining social support. Organizations may use their visions to better align their strategy and achieve better results.

Organizational objectives and missions, as part of strategic intent increase the organization's performance. This enhances an organization's internal capabilities, allowing it to function better. Because the viewpoints and perceptions of the people who execute the strategies are considered, employee engagement in the creation and execution of an organization's strategy increases the organization's performance.

5. Conclusion

This independent study examines the link between strategic intent and competitive advantage. The study's major purpose was to provide the best theoretical model for illustrating the link between strategic intent and competitive advantage. This independent study analyzed the aspects of strategic intent, including its dimensions, and understood how they affects competitive advantage through a survey of theoretical and empirical literature. The strategic intent model and the notion of competitive advantage served as the study's guiding concepts and theories.

An adequate theoretical model is presented in the study, and it aids in explaining the link between the independent and dependent variables of strategic intent and competitive advantage. Organizational Vision, Organizational Mission, and Organizational Objectives were identified as key characteristics of strategic intent that have the capacity to influence organizational results in a review of the literature. Product differentiation, Cost leadership, organizational responsiveness, product innovation and human capital were also identified as potential markers for assessing competitive advantage in the literature review. The study's conclusions, in addition to adding to the empirical and theoretical literature on strategic intent and competitive advantage, will help scholars in the field of strategic management conduct prospective studies with the potential to influence organizational outcomes and market performance in a variety of industries and sectors.

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