

**STRATEGIC POSITIONING AS A SOURCE OF SUSTAINABLE
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AT THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE
COUNCIL, DOLO ADO- ETHIOPIA**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for the award of degree in any other university or institution for any other purpose.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my dear departed father, Mohamed Farah, my daughter Hanaan, family and friends for their support during the entire period I was working on this project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The process of this master's management project writing has been a wonderful learning experience in my academic life. It was filled with both challenges and rewards. The completion of my present study leads to a new beginning and a step forward in my endeavors.

I am grateful to God almighty the one above all, who has always been there in my endeavors in life including this study. My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr R. Musyoka and moderator Professor Z. Awino for their insightful guidance through the whole process of project writing. Am thankful for the corrections they made on my drafts, their continuous encouragement, support and guidance in writing this project. I am also indebted to my family, my colleagues at my place of work and friends whom I may not mention in person for their material and moral support which enabled me to complete my MBA course successfully.

ABSTRACT

Today, the nonprofit sector plays an increasingly important role in the provision of vital services in fields such as health, social services, and education. However, the sector has been experiencing dwindling funding in the recent past due to the economic slowdown in the donor nations and the increased demand from the many organizations that have come up during the period. The effectiveness of non-governmental organizations as actors in development and change depends on successful engagement with both internal and external management questions and also on the successful articulation between issues of internal and external management. The objective of the study was to determine the role of strategic positioning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage at Norwegian Refugee Council, Dolo Ado- Ethiopia. The research design was a case study. The study used primary data which was collected using an interview guide. Content analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The study found out that product differentiation involves differentiating wide range of housing units produced by the organization and other humanitarian providers. NRC was found to have worked with all local institutions, opinion leaders and beneficiaries as determined by the ever changing situation on the ground. The study found out that the factors considered by NRC in pursuit of strategic positioning were the emergencies that occurred in the region of its operations, stakeholders and the strategic planning process. The study achieve competitive advantage through working relationship with the local communities in organizational projects to ascertain progress, challenges, successes and other issues around implementation. NRC was found to have documented organizations strategic capability which has ensured, resources were examined for their full potential. The study recommends that for success in strategic position of the organization it should develop further its ability to marshal resources needed to support its strategies as well as introduction new products and services to create a sense of value which guarantees better performance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.1.1 The Concept of Strategic Positioning.....	3
1.1.2 Competitive Advantage.....	4
1.1.3 Strategic Positioning and Competitive Advantage.....	6
1.1.4 Non-Governmental Organizations in Ethiopia.....	7
1.1.5 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Dollo Ado - Ethiopia	8
1.2 Research Problem	9
1.3 Research Objective	12
1.4 Value of the Study	12
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Theoretical Foundation	14
2.2.1 Resource Based View	14
2.2.2 Institutional theory	16
2.3 Strategic Positioning Strategies	16
2.4 Strategic Positioning as a Source of Competitive Advantage in Organizations.....	19
2.5 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps	21

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	23
3.1 Introduction.....	23
3.2 Research Design.....	23
3.3 Data Collection	23
3.4 Data Analysis	24
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	25
4.1 Introduction.....	25
4.2 Interviewees Profile	25
4.3 Strategic Position Practices Adopted by NRC.....	26
4.4 Relationship between NRC with its Beneficiaries.....	30
4.5 Role of strategic positioning as a source of competitive advantage at Norwegian Refugee Council.....	32
4.6 Discussion of the Findings.....	34
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	37
5.1 Introduction.....	37
5.2 Summary	37
5.3 Conclusion	39
5.4 Recommendation Policy Implications	40
5.5 Limitations of the Study.....	41
5.6 Suggestion for Further Research.....	41
REFERENCES.....	42
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	46

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ARRA	-	Administration of refugees and returnee affairs
DRC	-	Danish Refugee Council
ICLA	-	Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance
NGO	-	Non-governmental Organization
NRC	-	Norwegian Refugee Council
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commission of Refugees
WASH	-	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Organizations today operate in fairly competitive environment which makes it necessary for them to put in place strategies that enhance their competitiveness. Companies that invest in well informed positioning strategies are in a better position to compete for the scarce resources available and are better placed to deliver high results. According to Zineldin (2006) companies that focus on positioning strategy stand a high chance of achieving long-term growth as opposed to those that opt for operational efficiency. Pashiardis (2009) noted that for an organization to achieve competitive advantage it must put in place strategies that position itself in market dominance and improve the firm's overall performance. Strategic positioning has been recognized as a vital tool to confront the competitive pressure in the market environment and also as a tool of improving the performance of these firms.

The study is guided by resource based view and institutional theory. The resource based view which is a theory of firm performance focuses on the resources and capabilities controlled by a firm as sources of competitive advantage. Gnyawali and Stewart (2003) claim that a firm should develop its own resources, skills and strategy in order to sustain its competitive advantage over competitors. Furthermore, the competitive advantage derived from unique and rare resources will depend on the extent to which the resources help the firm reduce the cost structure or help to produce differentiated products compared to the competitors. The ability of Non-Governmental Organizations to learn and leverage knowledge provides competitive advantages because

knowledge is often complex, tacit, and embedded in products and organizational practices making it difficult for competitors to copy. The institutional theory posits that organizational actions and processes are driven by their actors in order to justify and plausibly explain their actions. According to this perspective, strategic positioning is rationally accounted for by organizational actors and rooted in the normative and social context that motivates actors to seek legitimacy (Bhasin, 2010).

The research is undertaken as an attempt to better understand the strategies that have been adopted by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Dolo Ado- Ethiopia in serving people who have been displaced due to conflict and violence, as well as recurrent drought and floods. While the immediate focus for the council is to attend to the refugees, the number is increasing thus the need for more resources and assistance from the Government of Ethiopia and Somalia in ensuring that the refugees are secure, they face a number of challenges that necessitates positioning strategies.

The Norwegian Refugee Council has over the years undertaken humanitarian assistance in the horn of Africa, however in the recent past it has increased its capacity to respond to and meet the basic emergency needs of conflict and natural disaster affected, focusing on all 5 of the core competencies: Shelter, Education, Food Security (inc Livelihoods), WASH and ICLA. The attainment of the objectives of the council has however been hampered by include issues of insecurities, authorities (local, de facto state authorities and strong governments, other local humanitarian actors where there is a lack of coherence among humanitarian actors and their behavior, the activities of some can complicate access for other actors. The humanitarian response in the horn of Africa region consistently fails to meet basic standards and to reach all of

those in need, with some areas completely neglected and others disproportionately benefiting from timely assistance. In such cases, one of the rescue measures could be the adoption of strategic positioning. Such a strategy is concerned with the impact of the external environment, internal resources and competences, and the expectations and influence of stakeholders on the performance and viability of the firm.

1.1.1 The Concept of Strategic Positioning

The concept of strategic positioning is concerned with the decision to determine the place that its brand and corporate image occupy in a given market including the type of benefits to be stressed and the type of segments to be targeted (Douglas and Crai, 2005). Therefore, positioning is described as a strategy to identify and direct resources among intended market segments. Under this strategy as termed as “segmentation-based strategic positioning”, the firm would cause the development of homogeneous responses for demand that differs from responses received from other market segments. According to Hooley *et al.*, (2004), strategic positioning is outward-focused as opposed to inward looking and recognizes market environment within which an organization operates (Hooley *et al.*, 2004). Positioning defines an organization’s specific niche within its sphere of influence. With a strong strategic position, the organization is poised for ongoing success, sustainability, and distinct competitive advantage (Kalafatis *et al.*, 2000).

Organizational positioning defines its identity and helps to create distinction in a competitive environment and that a well-positioned organization allows it to achieve strategic goals in a seemingly effortless manner. Pashiardis (2009) points out that, defining the strategic position of the organization is the base of effective strategic planning since before any decision is made; the organization will need to know about its environment and also adapt to it. Experts in strategic

management believe that strategic positioning is the most serious phase of strategic planning process (Kalafatis *et al.*, 2000) since organizations enhance their chance of developing strategies that optimize the environmental opportunities by analyzing their competitive position.

Companies' that are positioned in strategic groups, in turn, are argued to influence firm actions and firm performance. Strategic groups represent a range of viable strategic positions firms may stake out and use as reference point (McNamara, Deephouse, and Luce, 2003). By signaling what issues are important, top managers establish the strategic reference points for their firms – the benchmarks against which people gauge appropriate action and behavior. Aligned with that, the prospect theory suggests that behavior will be risk seeking when the individual or organization finds itself below its reference point, and risk-avoiding when above. To a great extent, therefore, the firm's strategic behavior and performance are influenced by the reference points which are consciously or unconsciously adopted (Fiegenbaum *et al.*, 2006).

1.1.2 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is the ability of the firm to occupy a superior position in an industry and outperform its rivals on the primary performance goal- profitability. A company's superior competitive position allows it to achieve higher profitability than the industry's average (Porter, 1985). Firms strive to survive and succeed in competition by pursuing strategies that enable them to perform better than their competitors. Barney (2008) defines competitive advantage as being sustainable if competitors are unable to imitate the source of advantage or if no one conceives of a better offering. Barney (2008) distinguishes between two types of competitive advantage: temporary and sustainable competitive advantage. Competitive advantage typically results in high profits, but these profits attract competition, and competition limits the duration of

competitive advantage in most cases, therefore most competitive advantage is temporary. On the other hand, an organizations competitive advantages are sustainable if competitors are unable to imitate the source of advantage or if no one conceives of a better offering (Barney, 2008).

Competitive advantage is the pursuit of finding a competition position in an industry, the fundamental arena in which competition takes place. Competitive advantage results in performance outcomes that include: superior customer satisfaction; customer loyalty; market share; and enhanced financial performance (Miles and Covin, 2013). Therefore the purpose of the competitive strategy is to create a profitable and sustainable position against its competitors. The commonly accepted three ways to create competitive advantage, by Porter (1985), are cost efficiency, differentiation, and focusing. Competitive advantage can arise from various sources. According to Porter (1985), a firm can achieve a higher rate of profit (or potential profit) over a rival in one of two ways: either it supplies an identical product or service at a lower cost, in which case the firm possesses a cost advantage; or it can supply a product or service that is differentiated in such a way that the customer is being able to pay a price premium that exceeds the additional cost of the differentiation advantage. Once established, competitive advantage is subject to erosion by competition. This arises because a company with a competitive advantage earn higher than average profits. These profits send a signal to rivals that the company is in possession of some valuable distinctive competence that allows it to create superior value (Hill *et al.*, 2001).

1.1.3 Strategic Positioning and Competitive Advantage

Strategic positioning and competitive advantage is a result of the relative superiority in the skills and resources a company utilize (Day and Wensley, 2008). The superiority of the skills and resources is the consequence of former investments made to improve the competitive position. And in order to make the positional advantage sustainable, the company must continue to invest into the sources of advantage. According to Barney (1991) a firm is said to have a sustainable competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating positioning strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when these other firms are unable to duplicate the benefits of this strategy. The strategic positioning of a firm will build competencies that other firms will not be able to imitate. According to Porter (1980) a firm can position itself in the market based on cost leadership, differentiation and market focus. This according to porter can build competitive advantage which will give the firm an edge over its competitors.

Kotler and Keller (2006) noted that managers examine their value chain activities by looking at the sources of their competitive advantage; in which case they query their position by providing rapid response capability, low cost and differentiation. Companies may evaluate their plans and how they respond to aspects of geographical expansion, financial reformation, infrastructure fortification which looks into making a strong and efficient company, consumer marketing, differentiation or in often cases market focus. Companies that want to gain a competitive position must deliberately engage in value creation. A company must look into new customer benefits from the customer's view; make use of the company's core competencies in its business

domains; choose and manage business partnerships from its collaborative networks (Ibrahim Aksel and Muhtesem Baran, 2006).

1.1.4 Non-Governmental Organizations in Ethiopia

The NGO sector in Ethiopia is characterized with strong competition for funds from donors with some NGOs being forced to exit while others strive and make their presence stronger. The result is higher competition to appeal to donors and funding. To survive, the NGOs have to change with the dynamics of the industry. This, therefore, leads to the need to have in place strategies that will enable these NGOs to survive in the competitive environment. In 1995, the NGO sector in Ethiopia was nascent and just emerging. It did not have an identity of its own, and NGOs operated in isolation. While NGOs had good ideas and were committed to serving communities, they were severely constrained in both resources and capacity.

Johnson and Prakash (2009) noted that the government that came to power in Ethiopia in 1991 encouraged INGOs to come and be partners of new development programs subject to enforcing strict financial and administrative accountability on them. NGOs typically collaborate with the government and communities to achieve their developmental goals. In the case of Ethiopia, projects may include: providing agricultural extension services to farmers; basic infrastructure building; providing education about soil/water conservation; family planning and HIV prevention; drilling water wells; providing rehabilitation programs for homeless children in urban areas; attending to refugees who have been displaced, educating farmers about better farming techniques and increasing access of children to primary education (Abdel-Kader and Billy, 2011). Funding trends however point to a change in the role of NGOs as they no longer hold the privileged position they once had, instead donors are looking toward local governments

and local NGOs as key development actors. While the Non-governmental sector has grown quickly, serious questions have arisen in recent years about the funding and management of these organizations such that their sustainability has been put to question.

1.1.5 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Dollo Ado - Ethiopia

Norwegian Refugee Council was established in 1946 under the name Aid to Europe, to assist refugees in Europe after World War II but transformed itself to presently an independent, private foundation. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) is an independent, humanitarian, non-profit, non-governmental organization which provides assistance, protection and durable solutions to refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide. NRC cooperates closely with the UN and other organizations around the world as well as in Norway. NRC promotes and protects the rights of people who have been forced to flee their countries, or their homes within their countries. It is the only Norwegian organization that specializes in international efforts aimed at this target group. Its programme activities are concentrated on five core areas: Shelter, Education, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Food security, Information, Counseling and Legal Assistance (ICLA). With a clear vision to guide it in its day to day activities, which is “Rights Respected and People Protected”, NRC is currently present in around 20 countries worldwide. It has projects running in countries in Africa, America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. In addition they maintain offices in Norway, Switzerland and Belgium.

While responding to the needs identified in Dollo Ado Ethiopia, NRC has implemented programmes that have helped alleviate the suffering of the refugees and the host community surrounding the area. Most of those refugees were displaced from Somalia and are largely dependent on food aid and other assistance. The increasing 2011 camp population in Dollo due to the famine in Somalia put a lot of strain on the existing services.

Organizations were on the ground in Dollo Ado Ethiopia to provide help to the refugees. But they did not act as fast as NRC in terms of delivering the needed services. NRC before its intervention in Dollo Ado conducted a thorough needs assessment that made its delivery of services strategic and relevant. NRC prepositioned its Emergency shelter in due time and addressed the emerging needs of the refugees. More so, NRC deployed well versed and experienced staff on the ground which was essential as they knew the context well and operated with relative ease compared to other more experienced organizations that had no background information. NRC was able to establish positive close relations with authorities, partners and opinion leaders which were managed carefully by specific individuals through advocacy. This provided NRC with added acceptance, information and eventually supported its credibility.

1.2 Research Problem

Every firm whether it is in profit or not profit industry has the responsibility of creating competitive advantage. Organizations are increasingly working towards positioning themselves strategically in the fields that they work in. Sachs, Loske, and Linz (2012) notes that in the competitive environment, firms must engage in different positioning strategies by engaging in strategies that overcome competitors' barriers, competing successfully which would entail pre-empting competitors remaining unpredictable or by misleading them or by overcoming

competitors market based moves. Ferrel and Hartline (2008) support this argument by encouraging companies to assess their competitive advantage over other firms in the market and consequently applying positioning strategy if they are not doing well. They noted that companies formulate their strategic position by finding the best defensive position against competitive forces, by swaying the balance of the forces to enhance the company's position, and by choosing a strategy for competitive balance prior to opponents' movement. In this view, the strategic positioning of a firm reflects the firm's ability to generate competitive advantage.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) as an independent, humanitarian organization, has increased its capacity to respond to and meet the basic emergency needs of conflict and natural disaster affected populations in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia) and Yemen, focusing on all six of the core competencies areas that include Shelter, Education, Food Security (inc Livelihoods), WASH and Information counseling and legal assistance (ICLA). With its widespread coverage and diverse humanitarian activities, NRC needs to strategically position itself in order to adapt to the increasingly complex patterns of emergencies and more so maintain its position in the stiff donor competition and internal management issues which is threatening the achievement of its objectives.

International studies that have been undertaken on strategic positioning include Arnott and Easingwood (2011) study on positioning strategies of international and multicultural-oriented service brands. The study established that while no single positioning strategy is significant across the four card brands (Visa, MasterCard, Amex and Diners Club), "the brand name" positioning strategy appears to be the most preferred among Visa, MasterCard and Amex and not

Diners Club. Darley and Smith (2013) undertook a study on strategic positioning and sustainable competitive advantage in food industry in Denmark and established that competitive advantage by the firms was achieved through product development, good quality products, resource utilization, innovation, market sensing capability, differentiation strategy, cost efficiency and pricing strategy. Minhas and Jacobs (2013) researched on strategic positioning and quality determinants in banking service in Turkey. The findings of the study was that the banks position themselves in terms of price, market niche, technological innovative, excellent product service quality, bank for SMEs and mortgage bank, credit availability, delivery system, promotion, and reputation and for differentiation. Lederer, Mirchandani and Sims (2011) researched on the effect of strategic positioning on performance of Airline industry in Korea. The findings of the study were that price competitiveness, production and service cost advantage, and operation cost advantage. Unique products and services, unique business processes, and unique technology was used to improve performance of Airlines.

Local studies in Kenya that have been done in the area of strategic positioning include Kasyoka (2011) study on the use of strategic positioning to achieve sustainable competitive advantage at Safaricom limited and the findings were that cutting edge technology employed by the firm was giving it the necessary competitive advantage and coupled with the widespread acceptability of its Mpesa service; the firm has been able to maintain its competitive advantage. In addition, Muriel (2011) researched on strategic positioning and performance of commercial banks in Kenya and found out that strategic positioning positively and significantly enhances organizational performance through performance measurement. Nyakondo (2010) researched on the factors influencing banking industry to adopt strategic positioning on mobile banking. He

found out that some banks had adopted mobile banking to a moderate extent with emphasis on the implementation of mobile banking as a method of strategic positioning as a source of revenue, image and to increase customer satisfaction. Gichungu (2012) undertook a study on strategic positioning as a basis of building sustainable competitive advantage in Uchumi supermarkets in Kenya. The findings of the study were that the supermarket competitive advantage strategies including, rebranding, customer service, recapitalization, sales management and cost maximization.

On the basis of the above studies and by the position that the researcher has not come across studies that have been conducted on the strategic positioning in the Non Governmental Organization, this study will therefore seek to establish the role of strategic positioning as a source of competitive advantage at NRC Dolo Ado. This research will be guided by the following research question: what is the role of strategic positioning as a source of competitive advantage at the NRC Dolo Ado?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of strategic positioning on NRC competitive advantage.

1.4 Value of the Study

The management of the NGOs will be able to assess how effective they have been in forging strategic positioning for sustainable competitive advantage in the ever dynamic environment. The study will act as a basis upon which improvement can be sought in effective fundraising, client service delivery, donor satisfaction as well on the company's return on investment. In

addition, the research will be able to bring in current statistics that the government can utilize in analyzing the NGOs in the country and also financing partners and donors in assessing whether their funds will be utilized effectively by these NGOs by having in place effective strategic marketing practices.

The government and regulators of the NGOs will also find invaluable information in how good strategies can be adopted and as a result put in place policies that will guide and encourage other organizations within and out of the government sector in implementing their strategies.

For academicians, this study will form the foundation upon which other related and replicated studies can be based on. Investors can also gain an insight on the NGO and its strategic position within the environment, which can assist them in determining viability of their investments.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information from publications on topics related to the research problem. It examines what various scholars and authors have said about the role of dynamic capabilities as a strategic tool. The chapter reviews the theoretical foundation, strategic positioning strategies, strategic positioning as a source of competitive advantage and empirical studies and research gaps.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

The study will be guided by the resource based view theory and the institutional theory. This are discussed below.

2.2.1 Resource Based View

The resource-based view regards the firm as a cognitive system, which is characterized by idiosyncratic and context-dependent competences that are core to strategic purpose. These are conditioned by hierarchical capabilities, or sets of routines, involved in the management of the firm's core business processes that help to create value. Competences typically involve the development of specialist expertise, and firms may become locked into a trajectory that is difficult to change effectively in the short to medium-term (Amit and Schoemaker, 2003). The premises of the resource-based view is that successful firms develop distinctive capabilities on which their future competitiveness will be based; which capabilities are often idiosyncratic or unique to each firm, and may also be tacit and intangible in nature (such as knowledge) (see

Teece *et al.*, 2007). This view understands strategic resources as tangible and intangible assets that when combined will help to constitute a firm's competitive advantage (Teece *et al.*, 2007). The softer components of organizational resources, such as staff and skills, and how these are managed in operational teamwork against top-level targets and longer-term strategy, are central to the management of strategic resources.

Competitive advantage is seen to be founded on a complex of competences, capabilities, skills and strategic assets possessed by an organization, or in other words from the astute management of physical and intellectual resources which form the core capability of the business. Such capabilities or core competences are not built on discrete independent skills but are “the synthesis of a variety of skills, technologies and knowledge streams” (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). Companies formulate their strategic position by finding the best defensive position against competitive forces, by swaying the balance of the forces to enhance the company's position, and by choosing a strategy for competitive balance prior to opponents' movement (Oliver, 2007). In this view, the strategic positioning of a firm reflects the firm's ability to generate competitive advantage. Strategic positioning is thus the output of a complex understanding of market structure and conditions that determine the sustainability of firm performance (Petricket *et al.*, 2009). The competitive strategy view maintains that resources are the results obtained from the implementation of strategy and/or purchase from the environment. Consequently, resources cannot achieve an independent status in relation to firm performance (Pike and Ryan 2004).

2.2.2 Institutional theory

The institutional theory recognizes the embedment of institutional actors in an environment of formal and informal rules. Institutional theorists suggest that organizational actions and processes are driven by their actors in order to justify and plausibly explain their actions. According to this perspective, strategy implementation are rationally accounted for by organizational actors and rooted in the normative and social context that motivates actors to seek legitimacy (Dacin, Oliver *et al.*, 2007).

Companies try to fit in with the norm by adopting strategy implementation that validates them as part of the organizational field. In essence, traditional institutional theory believes that organizational fields become structured by powerful influences among organizations. The adoption of a system such as strategy implementation is highly dependent on the extent to which it is institutionalized by legitimacy. Legitimacy concerns lead organizations to adopt practices that “conform to the mandate of the institutional environment” (Kraatz and Zajac, 2006).

2.3 Strategic Positioning Strategies

In searching for a company-positioning strategy, a number of positioning strategies are available. Effective positioning strategies may be achieved if the specific differentiating characteristics are appreciated by the marketer (Blankson and Kalafatis, 1999). Positioning enables companies to plan their quality and productivity and their competitive marketing strategies. It involves changing one’s existing position in the mind of the customers.

Costing strategy involves the firm winning market share by appealing to cost-conscious or price-sensitive customers. This is achieved by having the lowest prices in the target market segment, or

at least the lowest price to value ratio (price compared to what customers receive). To succeed at offering the lowest price while still achieving profitability and a high return on investment, the firm must be able to operate at a lower cost than its rivals. According to Calin (2004), one of the major functions of marketing strategies is the proper positioning of the organization in order to create the best competitive advantage. Promotion on the other hand is the function of informing, persuading, and influencing the customer's decision process. It includes such areas as advertising, personal selling, public relations, and discounts. Of which, advertising is considered as the most powerful promotion strategy.

According to Allen *et al.*, (2006), when a firm designs, produces and markets a product more efficiently than its competitors such a firm has implemented a cost leadership strategy. Cost reduction strategies across the activity cost chain will represent low cost leadership. Attempts to reduce costs will spread through the whole business process from product design to the final stage of selling the product. Any processes that do not contribute towards minimization of cost base should be outsourced to other organizations with the view of maintaining a low cost base (Akan *et al.*, 2006). Low costs will permit a firm to sell relatively standardized products that offer features acceptable to many customers at the lowest competitive price and such low prices will gain competitive advantage and increase market share. These explains that the cost efficiency gained in the whole process will enable a firm to mark up a price lower than competition which ultimately results in high sales since competition could not match such a low cost base.

Provision of quality services should exceed customer's expectation as customers' compare the perceived service with the expected service. If the perceived service is below expectation; they lose interest with the provider while the opposite creates loyalty. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, (1991) five determinants of service quality by order of importance are reliability, responsiveness, (willingness to help customers and prompt service assurance), the ability to convey trust, empathy and individualized attention to customers.

According to Kotler (2002) service companies face three tasks i.e. competitive differentiation, service quality, and productivity. Differentiation is where the service provider adds secondary service features to the primary service. Delivery differentiation is where the company hires and trains people to deliver the services or through image differentiation by symbols and branding. Tax and Brown (1998) found that companies that encourage customers to complain achieve higher profits. Well managed service companies carry internal marketing and provide employees with support and rewards for good performance. Karl Albrecht (1992) observed that the unhappy customers could be 'terrorists'. According to Berry Parasuraman (1992) in order to exceed customer expectation, companies need to present a realistic picture of their service to customers by checking the promotional messages for accuracy, performing the service right to customers by stressing to employees to provide reliable service, effectively communicating with customer to ascertain their needs by using the service delivery process as an opportunity to impress on customers and also continuously evaluating and improving their performance against customer expectations.

Product differentiation positioning strategy is mainly involved with the merchandise assortment that retail offers its customers. According to Porter (1980), differentiation strategy involves creating a product that is perceived as unique. The unique features or benefits should provide superior value for the customer if this strategy is to be successful. Because customers see the product as unrivaled and unequaled, the price elasticity of demand tends to be reduced and customers tend to be more brand loyalists. This can provide considerable insulation from competition. Valley and Rafiq (2004) describe product differentiation as the stocking of unique or exclusive products or brands, own branded products, and unusually broad and deep merchandise assortment.

Services are largely intangible offerings and they are normally experienced simultaneously with the occurrence of production and consumption. Often, the interaction between the buyer and the seller renders the service to customers. Since the interactions between a customer and a service provider create opportunities for customers to evaluate services, service quality can be broadly conceptualized as a customer's overall impression of the relative inferiority/superiority of the organization and its service provisions (Gronroos, 2000).

2.4 Strategic Positioning as a Source of Competitive Advantage in Organizations

Strategic fit is a core concept in strategy formulation, and the pursuit of strategic fit has traditionally been viewed as having desirable performance implications. Companies formulate their strategic position by finding the best defensive position against competitive forces, by swaying the balance of the forces to enhance the company's position, and by choosing a strategy for competitive balance prior to opponents' movement (Kipley and Lewis, 2009). In this view, the strategic positioning of a firm reflects the firm's ability to generate competitive advantage.

The competitive strategy view and the resource-based view emphasize different sides of the same coin (Wernerfelt, 2004). The competitive strategy view focuses on the influence of industry structure on firm performance, whereas the resource-based view maintains the role of firms' heterogeneous resources in determining firms' sustainable competitive advantage.

The competitive strategy view maintains that resources are the results obtained from the implementation of strategy and/or purchase from the environment (Porter, 1991). Consequently, resources cannot achieve an independent status in relation to firm performance. The importance of resources is understood only in conjunction with the capability of those resources to support the strategy pursued or the fitness of those resources for a particular industry structure (Spanos and Lioukas, 2001). When resources fail to support a strategy or enhance a company's fit for an industry, they are useless. By focusing on the element of value, managers link the analysis of internal resource and capabilities with the analysis of environmental opportunities and threats. Changes in a firm's environment may reduce or increase the value of a firm's resources in their current use, while leaving the value of other resources unchanged.

The company's positioning strategies are its response to the situation in the competitive environment. These are important, as with the implementation of the right positioning strategies, the company can sustain its positive growth and high rates of return- the two most important value drivers (Kolleret *et al.*, 2010). According to Reilly and Brown, (2009), a company can either position itself to deflect the effect of the competitive forces in the industry (defensive strategy) through investing in technology that will lower production costs or through increased advertising and creating a strong brand. Both, the defensive and offensive competitive strategies can incorporate low cost and differentiation strategy.

Every firm whether it is in profit or not profit industry has the responsibility of creating a competitive advantage. Ferrel and Hartline (2008) noted that Not-for-profit organizations are entities with diverse funding portfolios which in some cases influence the direction of strategy that these organizations engage in. These diverse sources of funding increase the level of expected outcomes and objectives of the donors which leads to political lobbying and difficulties in setting a clear strategic plan. The underlying factors make it necessary for the not-for-profit organizations to have competitive strategies that make them distinct in competing for funding. Hutt and Speh (2007) look at two perspectives as being instrumental in gaining competitive position; building on a unique competitive position by globalizing of businesses that have unique businesses and product lines by enjoying a meaningful advantage on either differentiation or cost leadership, and maintaining a consistent positioning strategy to reinforce its distinctive offerings while maintaining a larger international opportunity.

2.5 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps

Strategies create a fit among company's activities. The success of a strategy depends on doing many things well - not just a few- and integrating them. If there is no fit among activities, there is no distinctive strategy and little sustainability. A number of empirical studies have been undertaken by different sectors to test different dimensions of positioning. McAlexander and Becker (2003) conducted an empirical study focusing on healthcare professions and specifically on practicing dentists in the USA and found a significant correlation between positioning strategies and financial performance.

Fahy and Hooley (2004) study on market focused revenues, competitive positioning and firm performance established that positioning couples the understanding of the marketplace (including customers and customer segments) with the appreciation of the product (including its competitors) and guides the development of the marketing message.

Ansari, Economides, and Ghosh, (2011) study on strategic positioning for sustainable competitive advantage among commercial banks in India established that the banks were pursuing differentiation, hybrid strategy, head to head strategy, attribute or benefit strategy, quality/pricing strategy, strengthening current position and repositioning strategy. The differentiation approach is influenced by the needs of the customer and the competitors. The aim of the company to achieve competitive advantage is then realized through offering better products and services to the target clients than those of the competitors by either providing the same price or enhancing margins by pricing slightly higher

With the existence of numerous organizations in the humanitarian arena, competition for the same pot of money is high as each organization must demonstrate what is unique and distinct about their organization. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Dollo Ado – Ethiopia is conscious that it works in a dynamic environment that requires them to be well placed in order to not only attract donor funding but to also make a difference in the lives of the people they serve. It is as a result of this that the study investigates the strategic positioning strategies used by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) Dollo Ado – Ethiopia to sustain its competitive advantage.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology that was used to carry out the study. The chapter describes the proposed research design, data collection instruments and how data was analyzed.

3.2 Research Design

The research design adopted was a case study. A case study is an in-depth investigation of an individual, institution or phenomenon. The primary purpose of a case study is to determine factors and relationships among the factors that have resulted in the behavior under study. A case study was adopted since not all the potential population of the study were not knowledgeable of such innate factor as a firm's competitive positioning.

Case studies are particularly popular in organizational research and is well suited to capturing the social world of people in understanding a real life situation (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). In light of this therefore, a case study design was deemed as the best design to fulfill the objective of the study as the results was expected to provide an insight in understanding how the organization uses its dynamic capabilities as a strategic tool.

3.3 Data Collection

The study made use of primary data which was collected through a face to face interview with the researcher and that the interview guide consisted of questions that the interviewer asked the interviewees. The interview guide was made up of three sections namely; interviewees' profile, organizations strategic positioning strategy and the organizations strategic positioning as a

source of competitive advantage. The researcher believes that this was made it possible to obtain data required to meet specific objectives of the study.

The interviewees were the top managers and functional heads in management position within NRC, those in charge of human resource, program development unit, advocacy and information and finance departments. External partners to be interviewed were a field based donor, a government agency and the beneficiaries. These were considered to be key informants for this research. Key informants are also a source of information that can assist in understanding the context of an organization or clarifying particular issues or problems of the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interview guide was analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative analysis was adopted in this study because the researcher was able to describe, interpret and at the same time criticize the subject matter of the research since it was difficult to do so numerically. It also enabled the researcher to make individualistic judgment on the research subject matter. The qualitative analysis was done using content analysis. Content analysis is the systematic qualitative description of the composition of the objects or materials of the study. It involves observation and detailed description of objects, items or things that comprise the object of study.

Content analysis, as a class of methods at the intersection of the qualitative and quantitative traditions, is used for rigorous exploration of many important but difficult-to-study issues of interest to management researchers (Carley, 2003). This approach is more appropriate for the study because it allowed for deep, sense, detailed accounts in changing conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The research objective was to establish the role of strategic positioning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage: a case study of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Dolo ado- Ethiopia. This chapter presents the analysis and findings with regard to the objective and discussion of the same.

4.2 Interviewees Profile

This part of the interview guide was intended to assess the capacity of the interviewees to answer the questions on the interview guide and also whether they are versed with the subject matter of the study. The research aimed at interviewing eight senior managers who are heads of human resource, program development unit, advocacy and information, logistics and finance departments. All the eight interviewee were available for the interview and therefore a 100% response rate was achieved. In terms of the job experience, the interviewees had all worked for a cumulative 22 years in different levels in the NRC. In addition, it was found that five of the interviewees had worked in other Non-governmental organization that provide similar services as NRC and in addition depend on sourcing funds from donors to finance their operations.

In terms of the interviewees' professional and academic qualification, it was found that six of the interviewees had a bachelors degree in business related fields as well as operations while one had a diploma but had gained a wealth of experience in the NGO. Having worked in the organization for such a period, the researcher believes that the interviewees were well suited in answering the

questions appropriately. Generally with this solid background in form of the interviewees academic qualification and work experience, it was felt that the interviewees were knowledgeable enough on the research subject matter and thus of help in the realization of the research objective.

4.3 Strategic Position Practices Adopted by NRC

This section of the interview guide sort to establish the strategic positioning practices that the Norwegian Refugees Council had adopted, what influenced the choice of the position strategy and also how the strategic position practice has influenced NRC in realizing its objectives? Strategic positioning defines an organization's specific niche within its sphere of influence. With a strong strategic position, the organization is poised for ongoing success, sustainability, and distinct competitive advantage. Positioning more fully defines the organization's identity and helps to create distinction in a competitive environment because organizations that are well positioned have a presence which allows them to achieve strategic goals in a seemingly effortless manner.

On the question of the strategic positioning that the NRC had adopted, the interviewees pointed out different practices that the organization had employed. They did appreciate the need for the organization to continually position itself according to the changes that occur in the operating environment. As a humanitarian organization, they noted that in times of disaster the assistance that they provide to the refugees, especially from Somalia is the provision food and shelter. For the organizations strategies to be implemented effectively, it was found that NRC endeavors to work with all local institutions, opinion leaders and beneficiaries as determined by the ever changing situation on the ground. As the lead shelter agency for the refugees, NRC was found to

have adopted gradual growth strategy starting with implementation of shelter programmes that were less political and highly visible to build rapport with different stakeholders then gradually going into less visible, higher impact programme. NRC also positioned itself strategically with administration of refugees and returnee affairs (ARRA) and the United Nations high commission of refugees (UNHCR) in supports them with its own fund initially before embarking on country level fundraising strategies. It was noted that traditionally, the NGOs have tended not to consider quality service as an ingredient in their service delivery mandate since vulnerable groups have had little time to demand of the same. However, it was pointed that NRC has made it a priority offer quality service to its customers (refugees) and this has distinguished its operations from the other NGOs in the sector.

A good strategy should also have the capacity to scan the environment accurately and come up with contingency measures under different anticipated conditions. On this aspect of environmental scanning, the study found that the organization has set up clear financial, logistics and monitoring & evaluation policies, all with robust systems to collect evidence, capture challenges, successes and best practices that lead to improved programming and advocacy of the organizations objective. NRC was found to have adopted strategic position as a quality service provision organization in all the core competencies provided in Dollo Ado with the focus being to offer sustainable solutions and long term programmatic strategic thinking by incorporating beneficiaries' needs that are relevant in addressing their needs. This has been achieved by encouraging their involvement in all stages of the project life cycle. In summary therefore, NRC strategic positioning practices involve having in place clearly defined core competencies, being beneficiary focus, growth and quality service delivery, strategic planning to review POA and gaps to remain relevant under each market dynamism.

In developing a strategic positioning plan, there is always a driving force behind the move. Because of this, the researcher sought to find out what factors influenced NRC to adopt the strategic positioning practices. As an organization mainly tasked with providing shelter to the Somalia refugees, the interviewees noted that the determining factor in most of the times is the emergencies that occurred in such regions as Gedo, Bayo, Kobe camp, Hiloweyn and Buramino regions and under such conditions, the mostly affected members are women and children and this requires the firm to have dynamic strategic and there was shortage of shelter to cater for their needs. With the changing environment, it was therefore incumbent upon the organization to have a strategic plan that changes with the demands of the time. The leadership and regional politics keep on changing and this affects the demands of the populace in these regions and with this, there is need to have the NGOs plan that can work closely with key stakeholders in the region and from this to handle more effectively the changing demands.

For an effective implementation of strategic plans, there is need to involve all the stakeholders in decision making process. In recognition of this, the interviewees observed that the need for NRC to continually position itself has been influenced by the desire to have a beneficiary led evidence based quality programming which results in an in-depth interaction with project beneficiaries, engagement with donors, government and other stakeholders and; participation in communities of practice. A case in point is the adoption of active learning network for accountability and planning (ALNAP) where best practices on quality programming are learnt. In addition, benchmarking the organizations strategic plans with that of NGOs in the same sector came out as a factor that influencing NRCs strategic plans. The interviewees for example noted that doing need assessment and reviewing the past work of partners on the ground enables NRC to

implement education effectively by taking cognizant of the background checks of the students and their future aspirations.

The other important factors that influences the strategic position of the organization was found to be its strategic planning process whereby NRC conduct annual strategic plan to review priorities and gaps that are present in the present set up and how the same can be adjusted to match the expectations of the present day refugees. With this, it was appreciated that, the organization has been able to make a strong presence in the Horn of Africa region with regard to providing shelter to the Somali refugees. The implementation of an organizations strategic plan is dependent upon the availability of adequate resources. They interviewees noted that NRC resource allocation is based on a plan of action that is reviewed annually which also is dependent on donor trends. Hence, it was noted that availability of adequate resources to implement the set strategies will determine the strategic plan that the organization develops and also helps the organization remain relevant in its area of intervention.

The aim of an organization in coming up with a strategic plan in the first place and also to strategically position itself to the changing operating environment is to be able to realize its objectives effectively and effectively. The researcher sought to establish how differently, the strategic positioning practices adopted by NRC has enabled it to achieve its objectives. The interviewees pointed that with an effective strategic positioning plan, Shelter focus strategy that allowed the organization to include livelihood processes with the refugees by transitioning from temporary shelters that were more of emergency to a more durable engagement in Dollo. They noted that transitional shelters were a form of a campaign whereby, NRC, DRC and ARRA were told to come up with a prototype shelter (transitional). They further pointed that while both DRC

and ARRA built great prototypes, NRC worked closely with the host community and in the end came up with a more appropriate housing unit that served the needs of the communities. Hence by taking the views of other stakeholders in the organizations NRC, it was found that its projects are widely accepted by the local communities. The other benefits of communities' involvement in the strategic process include the improved project ownership and sustainability, achieving more for less, synergistic approaches to project development, and increased community cohesion. However, this involvement leads to a slow implementation at the onset due to extensive consultations and deliberations, and capacity stretch and staff turnover due to expectations to achieve more with less.

4.4 Relationship between NRC with its Beneficiaries

The success of an NGO will depend on its working relationship with the local communities that it works with. To this extent, when the researcher sought to establish the state of the working relationship with its customer, the interviewees pointed out that they currently have a good working relationship with the refugees that they serve, albeit the challenges that they face. A lot of effort went towards improving the working relationship between NRC and the local communities. As a way of involving the communities in the organization projects, NRC allowed them to prepare the land meant for constructing the houses, after which they were given the building materials and the organization was only tasked with supervision work. After settling the communities, the organization moved to the next phase that involved providing education to the affected children, a step that was only possible after settling the parents. The involvement of the beneficiaries has enabled the organization to better have a clear and visible project concept and context and therefore better implementation, monitoring & evaluation process.

In addition, during implementation, beneficiaries are involved in routine monitoring of projects, to ascertain: implementation is as anticipated, progress is well tracked, challenges, successes and other issues around implementation are identified in advance to ensure that among other things; corrective measures are taken early where necessary, project accountability against outputs is conducted and, reporting is adequately done. In addition, it was found that beneficiaries are involved in evaluation of the projects through outcome monitoring (to measure change in perceptions, attitudes and behavior and also to ascertain beneficiaries satisfaction with services provided) and impact evaluations (to measure the relevance, effectiveness efficiency and sustainability of the projects).

Community involvement was throughout the interview observed to play a central role in the organizations' strategic process. When asked on what steps the organization has taken to improve the relationship, the interviewees pointed that NRC has instituted training, meeting programmes aimed at creating awareness on the part of local communities on what the organization is currently undertaking and plans to achieve in the future. Community elders and organizations (CBO) as well as local opinion leaders were also pointed out to be an invaluable source of gaining legitimacy within the communities. NRC has also started a complaints Response and Feedback Mechanisms that aims at ensuring accountability on project implementation. All projects are expected to ascribe to the organizations accountability framework which outlines the organizations commitments to the beneficiaries. This is further supported with the setting up of Complaints Response and Feedback mechanisms which give beneficiaries a voice towards the goods and services they are receiving from the organization as per the shared commitments. Further, the organizations monitoring and evaluation framework

clearly stipulates beneficiary involvement in all stages of the project, which consequently calls for frequent and active interaction between staff and beneficiaries.

4.5 Role of strategic positioning as a source of competitive advantage at Norwegian Refugee Council

This section of questions in the interview guide sought to establish how the organizations strategic positioning practices identified by the interviewees are being used as a source of competitiveness. The researcher wished to determine specific strategic decisions and moves that come about from the strategic positioning.

NRC was found to have various packages within the organization that differentiates it from other humanitarian organizations. One such package is the quality of service certification system that is administered to community members and is based on membership standards. This tool is administered to the community member to ensure that they self reflect and be accountable as well as to ensure that the project implementation process follows the organization's policies and principles in providing with the aim of providing the highest level of quality. From the findings, the interviewee noted that they appreciated the need of the organization to strategically position itself and its role in the strategic planning process. As one form of the NRC positioning strategy, the interviewees noted that to maintain the organizations advantage against the other humanitarian organizations, NRC has purposed to recruit the best trained manpower and remunerate the staff adequately. They noted that this is one of the ways in which the organization can achieve its mandate. Three of the interviewees pointed out those resources on their own do not create value for the firm. Rather, it is the ability to combine effectively these resources that is

of importance to the organization. Thus the managers of the organization have an important role in configuring these assets

The organizations capacity to positioning itself fast enough were identified has having played an important role in the strategic process of the NRC. One respondent noted that the organization capacity to position itself has enabled it to align its strategies to ensure that the NRC can always adapt to any changes in the operating environment. Strategies that are rigid and not adaptive cannot withstand the changes and the challenges that come about by the same movements in the operating business environment. In recognition of the position that NRC operates in an ever changing humanitarian environment, it incorporates the capacity of its strategies to adapt to under different changes in the operating environment. In addition, the interviewees pointed out that the existing level of stakeholder collaboration has enabled NRC to meet its obligations to the customers (refugees) in terms of service delivery. Product marketing positioning skills was also identified as core competence in the organization in sourcing funds to undertake its projects.

The capacity of the organization to strategically position itself was also found to have been helpful in reducing the operating costs. The NRC was found to have made a deliberate move to shape, transform and combine these resources to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. This step was exhibited through a number of moves that were taken by the organization including documenting the organizations strategic capability. During this documentation, a lot of critical thinking is applied, that ensured, these resources were examined for their full potential. Management of talent has been made a priority in the organization in which it has made a deliberative move to recruit, develop and retain all the staff through such exercises as recognition and rewarding them and feel appreciated for their input. In addition to make the organization

adaptive to the changing business environment, the interviewees pointed out that its capabilities have kept on changing depending on the challenges that keep facing the organization. Several interviewees identified these factors to include technology, changes in the refugee's expectation, declining finances, stringent prudential guidelines and also changing stakeholder requirements.

4.6 Discussion of the Findings

The study sought to establish the role of strategic positioning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage: a case study of Norwegian refugee council, Dolo ado- Ethiopia. The interviewees noted that organizational positioning provides the framework upon which to build and coordinate the elements of the firms operation to implement the positioning strategy and facilitate fine tuning of strategy due to experience gained by being close to the target clients. Although the underlying concepts of a firms market positioning are similar in consumer and business strategy and that differential approaches are needed during implementation, the Norwegian Refugee Council adopts a combination of features perceived to be desirable by the target clients. The findings are consistent with Day and Wensley (2008) findings that positional and performance superiority is a result of the relative superiority in the skills and resources a company utilizes. The superiority of the skills and resources is the consequence of former investments made to improve the competitive position.

The study revealed that product differentiation involves differentiating wide range of housing units produced by the organization and other humanitarian providers, and there is need to introduce new products and services in order to demonstrate the unique aspects of their product and create a sense of value which guarantees better performance. The findings are consistent with Porter (1980) who opines that differentiation strategy involves creating a product that is

perceived as unique. The unique features or benefits should provide superior value for the customer if this strategy is to be successful. Costing strategy involves the firm winning market share by appealing to cost-conscious or price-sensitive customers. This is achieved by having the lowest prices in the target market, or at least the lowest price to value ratio (price compared to what customers receive). To succeed at offering the lowest price while still achieving profitability and a high return on investment, the organization must be able to operate at a lower cost than other providers in the same segment. According to Calin (2004), one of the major functions of marketing strategies is the proper positioning of the organization in order to create the best competitive advantage and the findings of the study revealed that cost strategies are very important in enhancing the performance of top humanitarian organization as they inform the and create a competitive advantage relative to other organizations.

Service quality is the discrepancy between what customers expect and what customers get. Accordingly, organizational competitiveness is possible to support humanitarian organizations to provide high service quality to customers and markets in order to encourage a competitive advantage and receive a superior performance. The study thus sought to find out how perceived service quality has enhanced organizational performance within the study scope. All the dimensions of service quality like offering reliable services, conveying trust to its customers, are responsive to its customers, to employees to provide reliable service, effectively communicating with customers to ascertain their needs. Tax and Brown (1998) found that companies that encourage customers to complain achieve higher profits. Well managed service companies carry internal marketing and provide employees with support and rewards for good performance. Pricing strategies, which do not reflect organizational goals, can detrimentally affect performance outcomes. The consequences of pricing strategies have important managerial and

public policy implications. The results are consistent with Kimes and Wirtz (2002) findings that an organization that incurs a low cost will achieve better organizational performance.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter gives the summary, conclusion, recommendations of the study and suggestion for further research.

5.2 Summary

The study showed that majority of the interviewees are graduates and therefore they have knowledge on the need to strategically position the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in a situation where the humanitarian conditions change continuously. The results indicate that majority of the interviewees have worked in the organization for a longer duration and therefore they understand influence of strategic positioning on the organizations competitiveness. The study found out that NRC had operated successfully in Ethiopia for more than 10 years and therefore can be said to have adequately gained insight on how their mandate can be achieved through strategically positioning their operations.

The study found out that positioning strategies adopted by the organization provides a framework upon which to build and coordinate the realization of the NGOs mandate which majorly relate to providing housing to the refugees. It was found out that NRC endeavors to work with all local institutions, opinion leaders and beneficiaries as determined by the ever changing situation on the ground. NRC was also found to have adopted gradual growth strategy starting with implementation of shelter programmes that were less political and highly visible to build rapport with different stakeholders then gradually going into less visible, higher impact

programme. Quality of service provision is essential to an organization and NRC was not left behind as the study found out that it offers quality service to its customers (refugees) and this has distinguished its operations from the other NGOs in the sector.

The study found out that the factors considered by NRC in pursuit of strategic positioning was the emergencies that occurred in the region of its operations and under such conditions, the mostly affected members are women and children and this requires the firm to have dynamic strategic and there was shortage of shelter to cater for their needs. The key stakeholders of the organization plays a crucial role in delivery of service by NRC there is need to have the organization plan that can work closely with key stakeholders in the region and from this to handle more effectively the changing demands. The study further establish that strategic planning process was another factor that influence strategic positioning as NRC conduct annual strategic plan to review priorities and gaps that are in the present set up and how the same can be adjusted to match the expectations of the present day refugees

The success of an NGO will depend on its working relationship with the local communities that it works with. It was found out that as a way of involving the communities in the organization projects, NRC allowed them to prepare the land meant for constructing the houses, after which they were given the building materials and the organization was only tasked with supervision work. In addition, beneficiaries are involved in routine monitoring of projects, to ascertain progress, challenges, successes and other issues around implementation. Community elders and organizations as well as local opinion leaders were also pointed out to be an invaluable source of gaining legitimacy within the communities.

The organizations capacity to positioning itself fast enough were identified has having played an important role in the strategic process of the NRC. The study noted that to maintain the organizations advantage against the other humanitarian organizations, NRC has recruited the best trained manpower and remunerate the staff adequately. In addition, the study established that the existing level of stakeholder collaboration has enabled NRC to meet its obligations to the customers (refugees) in terms of service delivery. Product marketing positioning skills was also identified as core competence in the organization in sourcing funds to undertake its projects. In addition to make the organization adaptive to the changing business environment, the study established that its capabilities have kept on changing depending on the challenges that keep facing the organization

5.3 Conclusion

The most powerful tactic for NRC growth in the current market conditions is through development of strategies which assist in positioning its competitiveness. From the findings, it was established that strategies adopted by the organization provides a framework upon which to build and coordinate the realization of the NGOs mandate which majorly relate to providing housing to the refugees and facilitate recruitment of competent staff that are able to guide the organization to face the elements of the marketing mix to implement the positioning strategy.

Based on the research findings and theoretical discovery of other researchers, it can be concluded that organization should strive to adopt strategies in order to achieve their objectives in a short period. In addition, any company interested in the entrance of current market should have unique strategies which will enable in establishment of company's growth. The competitive advantage

of NRC not only plays the role housing to the refugees but also leads towards the growth of the whole sector which ultimately leads towards the overall prosperity of the economy.

5.4 Recommendation Policy Implications

The study established that the NRC have ventured into markets had achieved competitive advantage over its competitors and it is recommended that others who have the resources to consider venturing to other markets in order to improve their performance. It is recommended therefore that for success in strategic position of the organization it should develop further its ability to marshal resources needed to support its strategies as well as introduction new products and services to create a sense of value which guarantees better performance.

The study found that pricing strategies reflect organizational goals and contributed a lot in supporting the product's quality positioning to the situation in the competitive environment thus organization should consider the strategy as a key vital in positioning the competitive market. The study also recommended on the differentiation strategy which resulted to achievement in the differentiating wide range of housing units produced by the organization and other humanitarian providers, and there is need to emphasis on effectiveness performance in the organization.

Further the study shown NRC been an NGO it poses a strong, good relationship with the refugees they have in their premises apart from the challenges faced. This shows organization should practice the same in order to improve the relation with the local communities.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The major weakness in this study is that it was limited in scope. This means that the findings cannot be over generalized. The study was undertaken at NRC and therefore there no room for comparison of findings with other refugees councils.

This study was also limited by other factors in that some interviewees may have been biased or dishonest in their answers considering that they were all commenting on their employer. More interviewees would have been essential to increase the representation of interviewees in this study and allowed for better check of consistency of the information given. However, despite the above limitations, the findings presented in this paper have important policy implications

5.6 Suggestion for Further Research

The study was undertaken on role of strategic positioning as a source of sustainable competitive advantage in Norwegian refugee council. The study recommends that a further study should be carried out to establish the impact of strategies positioning on the organizational performance in NGOs, hence a further study should be carried out to investigate on the strategy implementation and performance on public institution.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

The interview guide will seek to achieve the following objective;

- i. To establish the role of strategic positioning in gaining sustainable competitive advantage within NRC.

SECTION A: Demographic Data

1. How long have you worked with NRC Dollo Ado?
2. What is your position and for how long have you been holding the current position?
3. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?
4. Which department are you in?

Section B: Strategic position practices adopted by NRC

5. Has NRC adopted strategic position practices? If yes, which strategic positioning practices have they adopted?
6. What influenced NRC to adopt the practices?
7. How differently have these strategic positioning practices enabled NRC to achieve its objectives? (advantages and disadvantages)

Section C: NRC relations with its beneficiaries

8. How is the relationship between NRC and its beneficiaries? Are beneficiaries involved at any stage of the project cycle?

9. Are there factors in place to ensure there is smooth relation between the NGO and its beneficiaries?
10. Has NRC received credibility and opportunities for learning and improvement through contact and relations with beneficiaries? If yes, how?
11. Has contact and relations with beneficiaries helped NRC to do their work more efficiently?
How?
12. Have alliances with beneficiaries' increased NRC ability to pursue more effectively their missions?

Section D: NRC Program Coverage

13. Do you think operations in Dollo have informed/are linked to Ethiopia office organizational growth? If yes, how?
14. How are the needs on the ground advising NRC's growth strategy?
15. How does the council ensure projects they undertake are quality?
16. How does NRC measure;
 - A. Efficiency of projects
 - B. Effectiveness of projects
 - C. Relevance?
 - D. Impact?
 - E. Sustainability?
17. How has measuring of project's quality worked for the organization's working relationship with other stakeholders? (e.g. government, donor)

18. What is the organization policy on the balance between program cost and administrative cost during budget allocation?
19. What impact has the implementation of this policy had in regards to funding?
20. What effect has implementation of this policy had in regards to your working relationship/involvement of beneficiaries and other stakeholders?
21. In your opinion, has implementation of this policy given you comparative advantage during project development?

Section E: Role of strategic positioning in achievement of competitive advantage by NRC.

22. Has relations with beneficiaries and other stakeholders resulted in improving organization's competitive advantage? How?
23. Has quality of projects implemented resulted in opportunities for funding for the organization? How?