

**FACTORS DETERMINING SUSTAINABLE
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR THE INSTITUTE
OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY LTD**

BY

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**UNIVERSITY OF KENYA
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**A MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN
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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented to any university for any award or anywhere else for academic purposes.

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This project has been submitted for examination purposes with my approval as University Supervisor.

Signature *GLjl JL* Date

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DEDICATION

To my dear mother Jane Wanjiru for your keenness and determination in ensuring that your children pursue and excel in higher education. You are my inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to my project supervisor Mr. E.O. Mududa for his invaluable guidance and support throughout the project. He not only guided me well, but also showed very keen interest in the project work, and ensured that I was on the right track throughout.

The managers at The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd were a source of information for this project. The time they gave through the filling of the interview guide was truly invaluable and I would like to say thank you very much.

My gratitude also extends to my MBA classmates who were a great inspiration. The guidance through valuable suggestions, the testing of the interview guide as well as moral support is greatly appreciated

My family will forever be in my heart for their support in every way. Above all, to God be the Glory for thus far He has brought me. I am forever grateful.

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at identifying the factors determining sustainable competitive advantage for The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd guided by the theory of Sustainable Competitive Advantage. Seeking and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage has become the concern of every organization that is alert to the realities of the industry. It is neither acceptable to assume that that good products will sell themselves nor advisable to imagine that the success today will be carried forward into tomorrow. The objective of this study was to determine the factors that provide The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry.

The research design adopted in this study was a case study of the Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd (IAT) which is a middle level tertiary training institution located in Nairobi, with branches in Nakuru and Mombasa. The data was collected from 5 managers namely: The Dean ICT programs IAT campus, The Operations Manager F.nd User and Corporate Training IAT Pension towers, The Test center Manager IAT, The Center Manager IAT Yaya center and The Front office Manager IAT Thika road campus. The managers were selected on the basis of availability and willingness to assist. The data was analyzed by use of content analysis due to the fact that the data was qualitative in nature.

This study established that there are various factors that determine sustainable competitive at IAT. They are quality management systems, convenient locations, market relevant programs, customer care, international affiliation, collaboration with local universities, teaching for understanding teaching methodology and issuance of workbooks and training materials. It was also established that the environment is dynamic thus the need to improve on these factors. The factors determined had a positive effect on organizational performance and profitability. The respondents recommended that the quality management system should be improved further to ensure total employee involvement in all its processes, staff development, intensify marketing activities and expand the institution into a university. The objective of this study was achieved.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPR	Business Process Reengineering
EBCL	European Business Competence License
GM	General Manager
IAT	Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd
ICDL	International Computer Driving License
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRD	Innovation, Research and Development
ISO	International Standards Organization
MOL	Management of Learning
PA	Personal Assistant
TFU	Teaching For Understanding
TQM	Total Quality Management
UK	United Kingdom

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The tough economic times in the country have endeared firms to reconsider their options in order to maintain sustainable competitive advantage. The success of any organization is hinged to a large extent on sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations operate in competitive environments and therefore they require organizational resources or inputs in order to be competitive in the same industry. It is important therefore, for organizations to establish competitive advantage which is sustainable, meaning; it is not easily eroded by environmental changes or imitated by existing or potential competitors (Porter, 1980). Core competence and competitive advantage have been popular concepts in the contemporary strategy analysis since the late 1980's. Sustainable competitive advantages are factors that determine a firm's ability to survive and prosper which in turn, help to identify the potential for competitive advantage (Grant, 2005).

The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd (IAT) is a middle level tertiary training institution located in Nairobi with branches in Mombasa and Nakuru Kenya. It was established in 1991 and has grown to be the leading computer-training organization in East and Central Africa. The institute has now diversified and has opened a school of business. The rapid growth in the middle level tertiary training industry has attracted many new colleges into the industry, for example; Wang Point, New Horizons, Computer Pride, Computer Learning Center, among others, however, The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd (IAT) has been able to build a strong brand. IAT has managed to retain and expand its market share in addition maintains high profitability even in the face of stiff competition in the market. The middle level tertiary training industry has experienced a high rate of new entrants into the market and retention of existing competitors, however, IAT has never felt the pressure to compete on price. In this case therefore, this study was interested in finding out the factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage for the Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd.

1.1.1 Sustainable Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is a lead over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value, either by means of lower prices or by providing greater benefits and service that justifies higher prices. Gaining competitive advantage has become the key concern of many companies given the rise of environmental turbulence, decrease in business opportunities and increase in competition. Every organization strives to acquire or develop an attribute or combination of attributes that allows it to outperform its competitors. Environmental changes, new entrants into the market and scarce resources are a key concern to many organizations thus they strive to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1980).

Sustainable competitive advantage is a key tool in strategic management which any serious organization cannot afford to ignore. Organizations have found that they need to develop distinctive strategies to stand apart from the crowd of competition and overcome the negative challenges of the environment (Ikonya, 2008). The source of sustainable competitive advantage is found firstly in the ability of the organization to differentiate itself, in the eyes of the customer from its competition and secondly by operating at a lower cost and hence at greater profit.

Seeking a sustainable competitive advantage has become the concern of every manager who is alert to the realities of the marketplace. It is no longer acceptable to assume that good products will sell themselves, neither is it advisable to imagine that success today will carry forward into tomorrow, without assuring sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 2001). At its most elemental, commercial success derives from either a cost advantage or a value advantage or, ideally, both. This means that successful companies either have a cost advantage or they have a value advantage, or a combination of the two, in order to reach the sustainable competitive advantage. Cost advantage gives a lower cost profile while the value advantage gives the product or offering a differential "plus" over competitive offerings.

There are various factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage. Among such factors are cost leadership, differentiation strategy, focus strategy, positioning of the

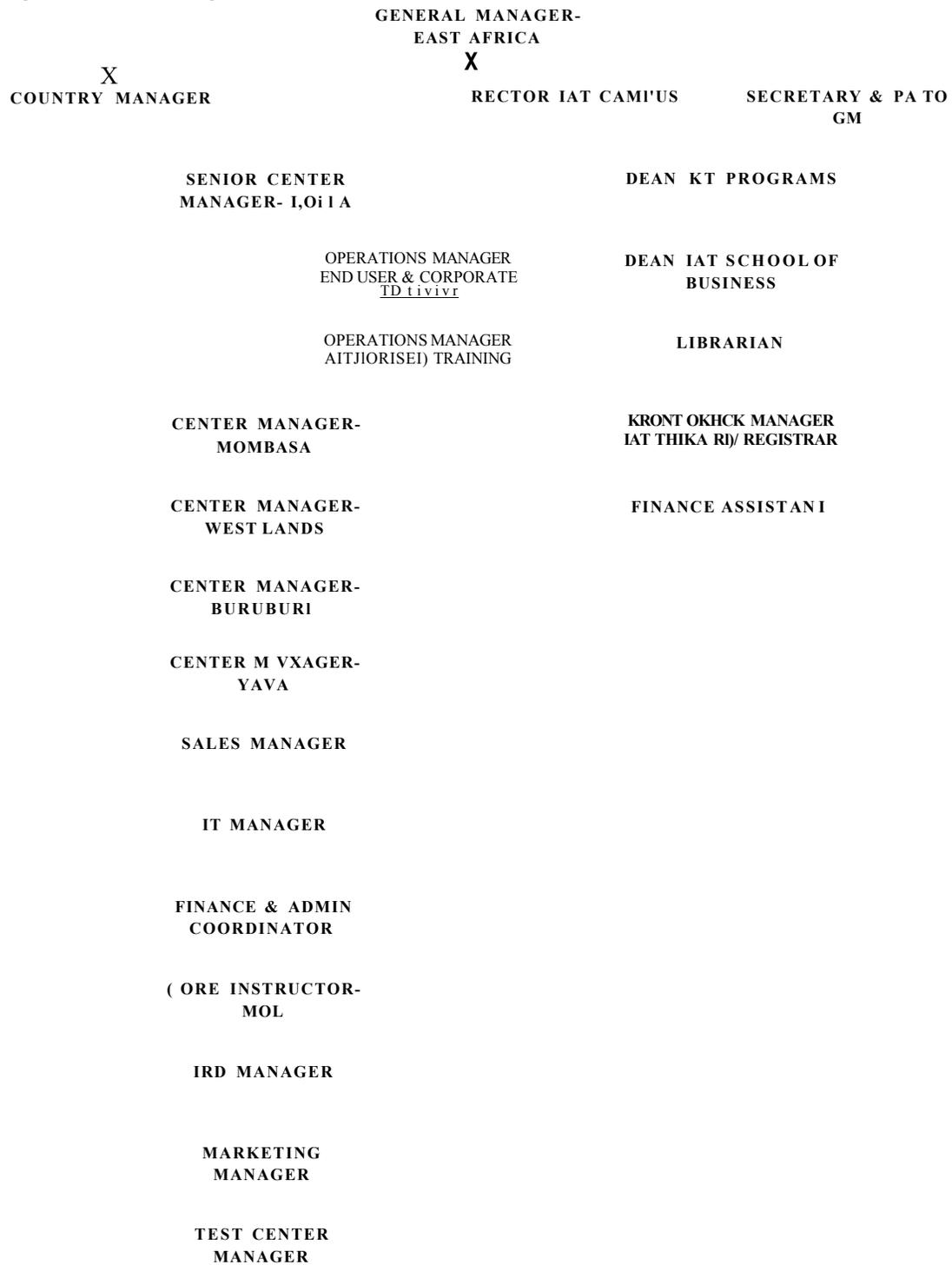
firm's product or service, environmental analysis, internal analysis, intensive sales and marketing, dynamic employee sourcing and development, stimulating innovativeness and change, strategic alliances, structure and process alignment, cultivating a global mindset, financial performance measurement, corporate social responsibility, technology improvement, quality management, customer service, responding to globalization and formulation of a global strategic plan etc

1.1.2 The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd

Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd (IAT) was established in 1991 and has grown to be the leading computer-training organization in East and Central Africa. IAT's vision is "To be recognized as Africa's center of excellence, role model and authority in education and training". IAT's mission is "To delight our customers, enhance stakeholders social and economic well being and continuously expand our market share by aligning our training with industry best- practice benchmarks and providing world class quality education and training through modern and conducive learning environments".

IAT offers a wide range of quality Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Computer and Business training and education. IAT offers End User, Professional, Career Training and Education to individuals as well as Public and Private corporate organization seeking to develop their personnel. IAT is well known in the Kenyan ICT and Business job market for producing high quality graduates who are skilled and proficient in their areas of study. IAT has been conducting ICT and Business courses successfully in partnership with distinguished international and local partners since 1991 and have gained valuable experience in this area. IAT's collaborating partners include Maseno University, St' Paul's University, NCC Education (UK), the European Business Competence License (EBCL), International Computers Driving License ICDL, Comptia+, Microsoft, Cisco among others. IAT is also a Microsoft Certified Gold Partner in learning solutions. IAT was awarded the Microsoft Citation of Excellence for being the best Certified Technical Education Centre of the year in the West, East and Central Africa region for 4 years in a row and is a Gold Certified Partner. IAT's main competitors are Computer Pride, New Horizons, InfoTech, Computer Learning center and Kenya Institute of Management.

Figure 1 : IAT Organizational structure



Source: Adapted from The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd Hmplaycc Handbook (2008)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is important to establish a competitive advantage which is sustainable meaning it is not easily eroded by environmental changes or imitated by existing or potential competitors (Porter, 1980). Core competence and competitive advantage have been popular concepts in the contemporary strategy analysis since the late 1980's. Sustainable competitive advantages are factors that determine a firm's ability to survive and prosper which in turn, help to identify the potential for competitive advantage (Grant, 2005). The tough economic times in the country have endeared firms to reconsider their options in order to maintain sustainable competitive advantage.

The rapid growth in the middle level tertiary training industry has attracted many new colleges into the industry e.g. Wang Point, New Horizons, Computer Pride, Computer Learning Center etc however IAT has been able to build a strong brand. A strong brand is a set of assets linked to a brand's name and symbol and that adds value to the product i.e. brand name, brand loyalty, brand perceived quality and brand associations (Aaker, 1996). The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd has managed to retain and expand its market share. IAT has been able to maintain high profitability even in the face of stiff competition in the market. The middle level tertiary training industry has experienced a high rate of new entrants into the market and vigorous existing competitors however IAT has never felt the pressure to compete on price. When new entrants reduce average profit margins within an industry companies respond by differentiating their products, cutting prices or both at the same time (Spanos, Zaralis & Lioukas, 2004).

So far there are no similar studies that have been conducted on The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd however Kundu (2008) focused on competitive strategies and choice of competitive strategies adopted by Mission hospitals in Kenya. The study established that mission hospitals in Kenya have adapted a mix of various competitive strategies namely cost leadership, focus cost leadership and focus differentiation. Ikonya (2008) focused on logistics services where the findings were contribution of the third party logistics services as a tool for competitive advantage and buyers agree to willingly recommend services to potential buyers however, Michieka (2008) focused on Safaricom airtime dealers in

Nairobi CBD with emphasis on the Porters five forces model. His findings were that the availability of substitute products from other network operators has affected the Safaricom dealers only to some extent. In light of the above, this study determined the factors that IAT has put in place so as to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. What factors provide the Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this study was to determine the factors that provide The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry.

1.4 Importance of the Study

The findings of this study are of great significance to the top management at The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd to determine factors that provide sustainable competitive advantage to the organization. This will be a strategic management tool that will be used in maintain sustainable competitive advantage. This study will also be beneficial to other players in the middle level tertiary training field as they will be able to identify the critical success factors in the industry as well as serve as a benchmark in the industry. Strategic management executives will use the findings to enhance high quality and better service provision in their respective fields. The study will also serve as a stimulus for scholars to carry out further research in the same and related industries so as to increase the existing body of knowledge. This study will identify prospects for the future by providing a base of factual and analytical data on the factors that provide The Institute of Advanced Technology ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry. The government may use the findings to formulate policies so as to encourage investing in the middle level tertiary training industry.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is, in very basic words, how a firm manages to keep making profits and sustain its position against its competitors. Competitive advantage occurs when an organization acquires or develops an attribute or combination of attributes that allows it to outperform its competitors. These attributes can include access to natural resources, such as high grade ores or inexpensive power, or access to highly trained and skilled personnel human resources. This can also include new technologies such as robotics and information technology either to be included as a part of the product or to assist making it.

A competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors gained by offering consumers greater value, either by means of lower prices or by providing greater benefits and service that justifies higher prices. Gaining competitive advantage has become the key concern of many companies given the rise of environmental turbulence, decrease in business opportunities and increase in competition. Every organization strives to acquire or develop an attribute or combination of attributes that allows it to outperform its competitors. Environmental changes, new entrants into the market and scarce resources are a key concern to many organizations thus they strive to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Porter, 1980)

Competitive Advantage is a key tool in strategic management which any serious organization cannot afford to ignore. Organizations have found that they need to develop distinctive strategy to stand apart from the crowd of competition and overcome the negative challenges of the environment (Ikonya, 2008). The source of sustainable competitive advantage is found firstly in the ability of the organization to differentiate itself, in the eyes of the customer, from its competition and secondly by operating at a lower cost and hence at greater profit.

The term competitive advantage is the ability gained through attributes and resources to perform at a higher level than others in the same industry or market (Chacarbaghi & Lynch, 1999, p 45). The study of such advantage has attracted profound research interest due to contemporary issues regarding superior performance levels of firms in the present competitive market conditions. A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential player. (Barney, 1991). Successfully implemented strategies will lift a firm to superior performance by facilitating the firm with competitive advantage to outperform current or potential players. To gain competitive advantage a business strategy of a firm manipulates the various resources over which it has direct control and these resources have the ability to generate competitive advantage. Superior performance outcomes and superiority in production resources reflects competitive advantage (Day & Wensley, 1988)

The above writings signify competitive advantage as the ability to stay ahead of present or potential competition, thus superior performance reached through competitive advantage will ensure market leadership. Also it provides the understanding that resources held by a firm and the business strategy will have a profound impact on generating competitive advantage. Business strategy is the tool that manipulates the resources and creates competitive advantage, hence, viable business strategy may not be adequate unless it possess control over unique resources that has the ability to create such a unique advantage (Powell, 2001, p.132). Summarizing the view points, competitive advantage is a key determinant of superior performance and it will ensure survival and prominent placing in the market. Superior performance being the ultimate desired goal of a firm, competitive advantage becomes the foundation highlighting the significant importance to develop same. In the event competitive advantage is gained by a firm wouldn't it be necessary to sustain such value creating advantage for desired periods of time in order to gain maximized superior outcomes. Sustainable competitive advantage is a journey not a destination- it is like tomorrow which is inescapable but never arrives (Chaharbaghi & Lynch, 1999, p. 45). Thus stressing the idea that once reached, all attempts should be made to sustain competitive advantage. Apparently academics view and stress the idea of sustaining competitive advantage.

"Porter's five forces" is a framework for the industry analysis and business strategy development developed by Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School in 1979. It uses concepts developing Industrial Organization (10) economics to derive five forces that determine the competitive intensity and therefore attractiveness of a market. Attractiveness in this context refers to the overall industry profitability. An "unattractive" industry is one where the combination of forces acts to drive down overall profitability. A very unattractive industry would be one approaching "pure competition".

Strategy consultants occasionally use Porter's five forces framework when making a qualitative evaluation of a firm's strategic position. However, for most consultants, the framework is only a starting point or "checklist" they might use. Like all general frameworks, an analysis that uses it to the exclusion of specifics about a particular situation is considered naive. Porter's five force include three forces from 'horizontal' competition are threat of substitute products, the threat of established rivals, and the threat of new entrants and two forces from 'vertical' competition i.e. the bargaining power of suppliers and the bargaining power of customers.

2.2 Porter's Five Forces

This is a framework for the industry analysis and business strategy development developed by Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School in 1979. It draws upon Industrial Organization (10) economics to derive five forces that determine the competitive intensity and therefore attractiveness of a market. Attractiveness in this context refers to the overall industry profitability.

2.2.1 The Threat of Substitute Products

The existence of products outside of the realm of the common product boundaries increases the propensity of customers to switch to alternatives. This is reduced by reducing buyer propensity to substitute, monitoring relative price performance of substitutes, increasing buyer switching costs, determining the perceived level of product differentiation from the consumer. Design is particularly important as competition intensifies because it helps in making and marketing retail services, apparel, packaged goods, and durable equipment (Kotler, 2003).

2.2.2 The Threat of the Entry of New Competitors

Profitable markets that yield high returns will draw firms. This results in many new entrants, which will effectively decrease profitability. Unless the entry of new firms can be blocked by incumbents, the profit rate will fall towards a competitive level (perfect competition). Threats are curbed by the existence of barriers to entry (patents, rights, etc.), Economies of product differences, Brand equity, increasing of Switching costs or sunk costs, huge capital requirements to invest in the industry, owning distribution channels, customer loyalty to established brands, absolute cost advantages and practicing economies of scale, learning curve advantages, expected retaliation by incumbents and government policies.

2.2.3 The Intensity of Competitive Rivalry

For most industries, the intensity of competitive rivalry is the major determinant of the competitiveness of the industry. Competition is reduced by sustainable competitive advantage through improvisation, creativity and innovation. A starting point to analyzing the industry is to look at competitive rivalry. If entry to an industry is easy then competitive rivalry will likely to be high. If it is easy for customers to move to substitute products for example from coke to water then again rivalry will be high. Generally competitive rivalry will be high if there is little differentiation between the products sold between customers, competitors are approximately the same size of each other, if the competitors all have similar strategies, it is costly to leave the industry hence they fight to just stay in i.e. existence of exit barriers.

2.2.4 The Bargaining Power of Customers

The bargaining power of customers is also described as the market of outputs i.e. the ability of customers to put the firm under pressure, which also affects the customer's sensitivity to price changes. This is influenced by buyer concentration to firm concentration ratio, degree of dependency upon existing channels of distribution, bargaining leverage particularly in industries with high fixed costs, buyer volume, buyer switching costs relative to firm switching costs, buyer information availability, ability to

backward integrate, availability of existing substitute products, buyer price sensitivity, differential advantage (uniqueness) of industry products.

2.2.5 The Bargaining Power of Suppliers

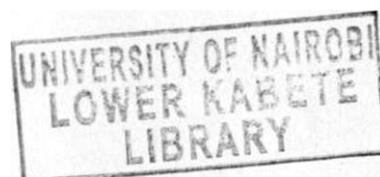
The bargaining power of suppliers is also described as the market of inputs. Suppliers of raw materials, components, labor, and services (such as expertise) to the firm can be a source of power over the firm. Suppliers may refuse to work with the firm or charge excessively high prices for unique resources. This is influenced by supplier switching costs relative to firm switching costs, degree of differentiation of inputs, presence of substitute inputs, supplier concentration to firm concentration ratio, employee solidarity (e.g., labor unions).

2.3 Theory of Generic Strategies

According to Michael Porter in his *Theory of Generic Strategies*, there are three methods of creating a sustainable competitive advantage that are commonly used by businesses to achieve and maintain sustainable competitive advantage. These include cost leadership, differentiation strategy and focus strategy.

2.3.1 Cost Leadership

Cost advantage occurs when a firm delivers the same services as its competitors but at a lower cost. This calls for efficiency and economies of scale. This strategy emphasizes efficiency. By producing high volumes of standardized products, the firm hopes to take advantage of economies of scale and experience curve effects. The product is often a basic no-frills product that is produced at a relatively low cost and made available to a very large customer base. Maintaining this strategy requires a continuous search for cost reductions in all aspects of the business. The associated distribution strategy is to obtain the most extensive distribution possible. Promotional strategy often involves trying to make a virtue out of low cost product features. To be successful, this strategy usually requires a considerable market share advantage or preferential access to raw materials, components, labor or some other important input. Without one or more of these advantages, the strategy can easily be mimicked by competitors.



2.3.2 Differentiation Strategy

Differentiation advantage occurs when a firm delivers greater services for the same price of its competitors. They are collectively known as positional advantages because they denote the firm's position in its industry as a leader in either superior services or cost. Differentiation is aimed at the broad market that involves the creation of a product or services that is perceived throughout its industry as unique. The company or business unit may then charge a premium for its product. This specialty can be associated with design, brand image, technology, features, dealers, network, or customer service. Differentiation is a viable strategy for earning above average returns in a specific business because the resulting brand loyalty lowers customers' sensitivity to price. Increased costs can usually be passed on to the buyers. Buyer's loyalty can also serve as an entry barrier to new firms who must develop their own distinctive competence to differentiate their products in some way in order to compete successfully. Physical products vary in their potential for differentiation in that at one extreme you could find products that allow little variation such as chicken, steel and aspirin yet even here, some differentiation is possible (Kotler, 2003).

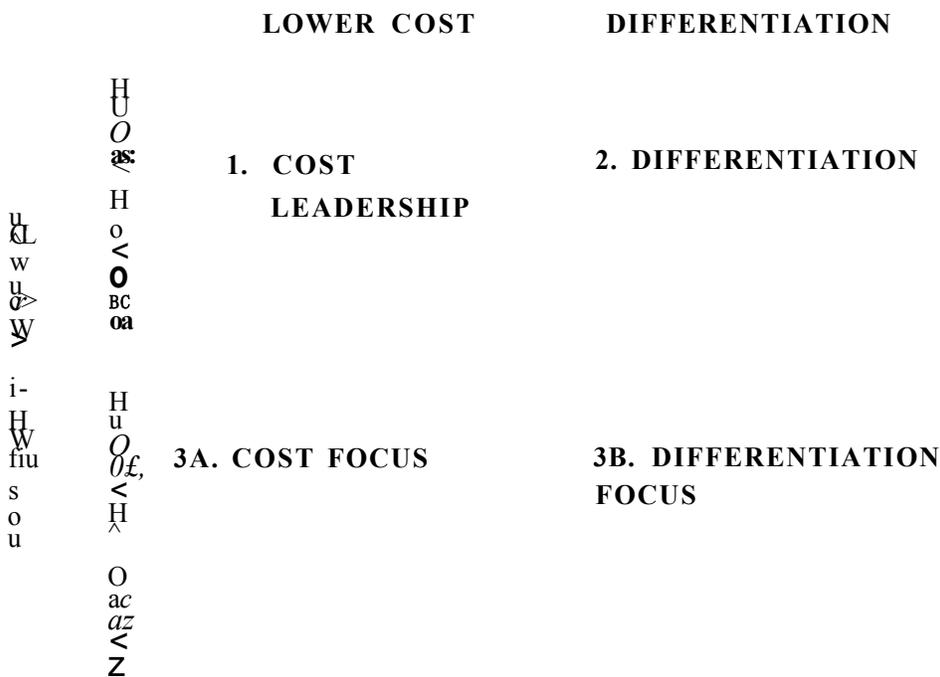
2.3.3 Focus Strategy

A focused approach requires the firm to concentrate on a narrow, exclusive competitive segment (market niche), hoping to achieve a local rather than industry wide competitive advantage. There are cost focus seekers, who aim to obtain a local cost advantage over competition and differentiation focuser, who are looking for a local difference. Many forms of competitive advantage cannot be sustained indefinitely because the promise of economic rents invites competitors to duplicate the competitive advantage held by any one firm.

A firm possesses a sustainable competitive advantage when its value-creating processes and position have not been able to be duplicated or imitated by other firms. Sustainable competitive advantage results, according to the resource-based view theory in the creation of above-normal (or supernormal) rents in the long run. It is also called a segmentation strategy or niche strategy. It is hoped that by focusing your marketing

efforts on one or two narrow market segments and tailoring your marketing mix to these specialized markets, you can better meet the needs of that target market. The firm typically looks to gain a competitive advantage through product innovation and/or brand marketing rather than efficiency. It is most suitable for relatively small firms but can be used by any company. A focus strategy should target market segments that are less vulnerable to substitutes or where a competition is weakest to earn above-average return on investment.

Figure 2: Porter's Generic Strategies



Source: Adapted from Porter, M.E., "Competitive Advantage. Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance," (1985), p. 12

Michael Treacy and Fred Wiersema and Tarun (1993) have modified Porter's three strategies to describe three basic "value disciplines" that can create customer value and provide a competitive advantage. They are operational excellence, product leadership, and customer intimacy.

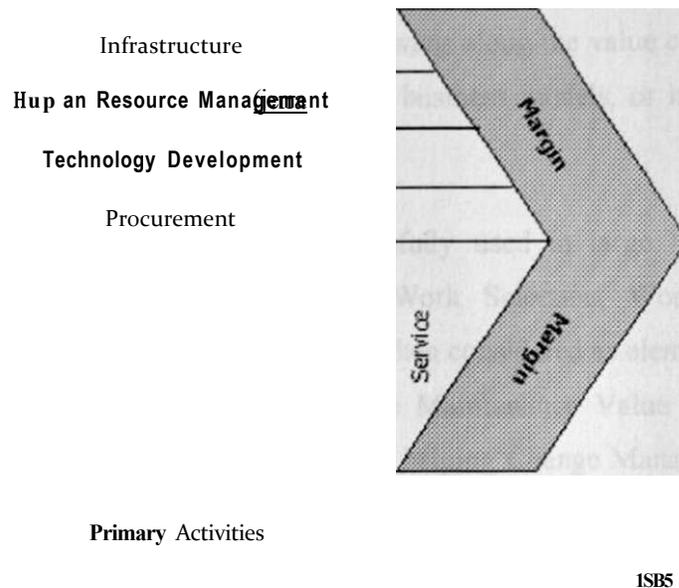
2.4 Value Chain Analysis

The value chain, also known as value chain analysis, is a concept from business management that was first described and popularized by Michael Porter in his 1985 best-seller, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*.

A value chain is a chain of activities for a firm operating in a specific industry. The business unit is the appropriate level for construction of a value chain, not the divisional level or corporate level. Products pass through all activities of the chain in order, and at each activity the product gains some value. The chain of activities gives the products more added value than the sum of added values of all activities. It is important not to mix the concept of the value chain with the costs occurring throughout the activities. A diamond cutter can be used as an example of the difference. The cutting activity may have a low cost, but the activity adds much of the value to the end product, since a rough diamond is significantly less valuable than a cut diamond. Typically, the described value chain and the documentation of processes, assessment and auditing of adherence to the process routines are at the core of the quality certification of the business e.g. ISO 9001.

The value chain categorizes the generic value-adding activities of an organization. The "primary activities" include: inbound logistics, operations (production), outbound logistics, marketing and sales (demand), and services (maintenance). The "support activities" include: administrative infrastructure management, human resource management, technology, research and development and procurement. The costs and value drivers are identified for each value activity.

Figure 3: Value Chain Analysis



Source: Adapted from Porter, M.E., "Competitive Advantage. Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance," (1985), p. 37

2.4.1 Significance of Value Chain Analysis

The value chain framework quickly made its way to the forefront of management thought as a powerful analysis tool for strategic planning. The simpler concept of value streams, a cross-functional process which was developed over the next decade had some success in the early 1990s. The value-chain concept has been extended beyond individual firms. It can apply to whole supply chains and distribution networks. The delivery of a mix of products and services to the end customer will mobilize different economic factors, each managing its own value chain. The industry wide synchronized interactions of those local value chains create an extended value chain, sometimes global in extent. Porter terms this larger interconnected system of value chains the "value system." A value system includes the value chains of a firm's supplier (and their suppliers all the way back), the firm itself, the firm distribution channels, and the firm's buyers (and presumably extended to the buyers of their products, and so on).

Capturing the value generated along the chain is the new approach taken by many management strategists. For example, a manufacturer might require its parts suppliers to be located nearby its assembly plant to minimize the cost of transportation. By exploiting the upstream and downstream information flowing along the value chain, the firms may try to bypass the intermediaries creating new business models, or in other ways create improvements in its value system.

Value chain analysis has also been successfully used in large Petrochemical Plant Maintenance Organizations to show how Work Selection, Work Planning, Work Scheduling and finally Work Execution can (when considered as elements of chains) help drive Lean approaches to Maintenance. The Maintenance Value Chain approach is particularly successful when used as a tool for helping Change Management as it is seen as more user friendly than other business process tools. Value chain analysis has also been employed in the development sector as a means of identifying poverty reduction strategies by upgrading along the value chain. Although commonly associated with export-oriented trade, development practitioners have begun to highlight the importance of developing national and intra-regional chains in addition to international ones.

2.5 The Resource-Based View (RBV)

This is an economic tool used to determine the strategic resources available to a firm. The fundamental principle of the RBV is that the basis for a competitive advantage of a firm lies primarily in the application of the bundle of valuable resources at the firm's disposal. To transform a short-run competitive advantage into a sustained competitive advantage requires that these resources are heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile (Barney, 1991, p105-106; Peteraf, 1993, pi80). Effectively, this translates into valuable resources that are neither perfectly imitable nor substitutable without great effort (Barney, 1991, pi 17). If these conditions hold, the firm's bundle of resources can assist the firm sustaining above average returns.

A competitive advantage can be attained if the current strategy is value-creating, and not currently being implemented by present or possible future competitors. Although a competitive advantage has the ability to become sustained, this is not necessarily the case. A competing firm can enter the market with a resource that has the ability to

invalidate the prior firm's competitive advantage, which results in reduced rents (Barney, 1986b, p658). Sustainability in the context of a sustainable competitive advantage is independent with regards to the time-frame. Rather, a competitive advantage is sustainable when the efforts by competitors to render the competitive advantage redundant have ceased (Barney, 1991, p102; Rumelt, 1984, p562). When the imitative actions have come to an end without disrupting the firm's competitive advantage, the firm's strategy can be called sustainable. This is contrary to other views e.g. (Porter, 1985) that a competitive advantage is sustained when it provides above-average returns in the long run.

2.6 Factors Determining How Firms Build Sustainable Competitive Advantage

There are various factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage. Among such factors is cost leadership, differentiation strategy, focus strategy, positioning of the firm's product or service, environmental analysis, internal analysis, intensive sales and marketing, dynamic employee sourcing and development, stimulating innovativeness and change, strategic alliances, structure and process alignment, cultivating a global mindset, financial performance measurement, corporate social responsibility, technology improvement, quality management, customer service, responding to globalization and formulation of a global strategic plan etc

2.6.1 Cost Leadership

This is done through cutting down on costs. This calls for efficiency and economics of scale so as to price the goods or service at a competitive rate (Porter, 1985). High costs lead to high pricing that is not attractive to the consumer. Cost advantage occurs when a firm delivers the same services as its competitors but at a lower cost. This strategy emphasizes efficiency. By producing high volumes of standardized products, the firm hopes to take advantage of economies of scale and experience curve effects. The product is often a basic no-frills product that is produced at a relatively low cost and made available to a very large customer base. Maintaining this strategy requires a continuous search for cost reduction in all aspects of the business.

2.6.2 Differentiation Strategy

Here the firm endeavors to differentiate its products from other firms in the same industry. They gain competitive advantage if they are able to differentiate their product successfully. When differentiation is done successfully the organization enjoys the benefits of branding e.g. Gillette and Coca Cola. Differentiation is aimed at the broad market that involves the creation of a product or services that is perceived throughout its industry as unique. The company or business unit may then charge a premium for its product. This specialty can be associated with design, brand image, technology, features, dealers, network, or customer service. Differentiation is a viable strategy for earning above average returns in a specific business because the resulting brand loyalty lowers customers' sensitivity to price. Increased costs can usually be passed on to the buyers. Physical products vary in their potential for differentiation in that at one extreme you could find products that allow little variation such as chicken, steel and aspirin yet even here, some differentiation is possible (Kotler, 2003).

2.6.3 Focus Strategy

A focused approach requires the firm to concentrate on a narrow, exclusive competitive segment (market niche), hoping to achieve a local rather than industry wide competitive advantage. There are cost focus seekers, who aim to obtain a local cost advantage over competition and differentiation focuser, who are looking for a local difference. A firm using a focus strategy often enjoys a high degree of customer loyalty, and this entrenched loyalty discourages other firms from competing directly (Porter, 1985). Because of their narrow market focus, firms pursuing a focus strategy have lower volumes and therefore less bargaining power with their suppliers examples include Roll Royce and Lientley.

2.6.4 Positioning of the Firm's Product or Service

Positioning of the firm's product or service is done by strategically positioning the firm's product making them easily accessible to the consumer. This is made possible by distribution systems that are able to penetrate more areas. This calls for brand identity. Brand identity provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. It is central to a brand's strategic vision and driver of brand equity associations which are heart and soul

of the brand (Aaker, 1996). Coca Cola has been able to achieve this such that you can find coke in any part of the continent. It is the process by which organizations try to create an image or identity in the minds of their target market for its product, brand, or organization.

2.6.5 Environmental Analysis

This is the monitoring the key drivers of change and being flexible and innovative enough to adapt to these changes. They consist of political, economic, social, technology, physical environment and legal factors. It is important to build up an understanding of how changes in the macro environment are likely to impact on individual organizations (Johnson et al, 2002). It describes a framework of macro-environmental factors used in the environmental scanning component of strategic management. Environmental changes shape opportunities and challenges facing organizations. This will also involve industry analysis which is a market assessment tool designed to provide a business with an idea of the complexity of a particular industry. Industry analysis involves reviewing the economic, political and market factors that influence the way the industry develops. This calls for matching strategy to industry conditions. Understanding industry dynamics and attractiveness is key. There is need to analyze where the giants are and look for market niches that the giants have not exploited. Other key issues are the degree of competition, dominant economic features, the key drivers of change and key factors in the industry.

2.6.6 Internal Analysis

This will constitute SWOT analysis which is the determination of the strengths and weaknesses of the firm as compared to other firms in the industry then maximizing on their competencies and strengths and coming up with measures to minimize their weaknesses. Opportunities created by the external environment must be taken advantage off by the organization while determining measures of shielding themselves against threats. It involves specifying the objective of the organization and identifying the internal and external factors that are favorable and unfavorable to achieve that objective. Value chain analysis is the analysis of the firms systems and how they add value to the product or service. This will ensure that only profitable departments are maintained and necessary measures are taken so as to curb wastage of scarce resources. A value chain is

a chain of activities for a firm operating in a specific industry. The business unit is the appropriate level for construction of a value chain, not the divisional level or corporate level. Products pass through all activities of the chain in order, and at each activity the product gains some value. The chain of activities gives the products more added value than the sum of added values of all activities. Resource based view analysis is an economic tool used to determine the strategic resources available to a firm. A firm needs to constantly match its resources and its investment ventures such that they are able to finance their investments. The fundamental principle of the RBV is that the basis for a competitive advantage of a firm lies primarily in the application of the bundle of valuable resources at the firm's disposal. The efficiency and effectiveness of physical or financial resources, or the people in an organization depends on not just their existence but how they are managed, the cooperation between people, their adaptability, their innovatory capacity, the relationship with customers and suppliers and learning about what works well and what does not (Johnson et al, 2002).

2.6.7 Intensive Marketing

This is the process by which companies create customer interest in products or services. Every organization must adopt intensive marketing. It generates the strategy that underlies sales techniques, business communication, and business development. It is an integrated process through which companies build strong customer relationships and create value for their customers and for themselves (Kotler et al, 2008). Marketing is used to identify the customer, to keep the customer, and to satisfy the customer. With the customer as the focus of its activities, it can be concluded that marketing management is one of the major components of business management.

2.6.8 Dynamic Employee Sourcing and Development

This is the identification, attracting and retaining the required competence as indicated by the strategic direction of the firm. The firm must then develop recruitment and selection strategies to deal with challenges in the industry. It also involves any attempt to improve employee's performance on a currently held job or one related to it. Managing resourceful humans requires a constant balancing between meeting human aspirations of the people and meeting the strategic and financial needs of the business (Dossier, 2005).

2.6.9 Stimulating Innovativeness and Change

This implies that today successful organizations must foster innovation and master the art of change, or they become extinct. Victory will go to organization that maintain flexibility, continually improve quality and beating competition in the market place (Johnson et al, 2002). This calls for monitoring the ever changing environment i.e. consumer tastes, technology improvement etc and coming up with products that match and meet the consumer's needs. This calls for a research and development department and an intensive market research so as to be able to identify these needs.

2.6.10 Strategic Alliance

A Strategic Alliance is where two or more organizations share resources and activities to pursue a strategy (Johnson et al, 2002). It is a formal relationship between two or more parties to pursue a set of agreed upon goals or to meet a critical business need while remaining independent organizations. Partners may provide the strategic alliances with resources such as products or services, distribution channels, manufacturing capability, project funding, capital equipment, knowledge, expertise, or intellectual property. The alliance is a co-operation or collaboration which aims for a synergy where each partner hopes that the benefits from the alliance will be greater than those from individual efforts. The alliance often involves technology transfer (access to knowledge and expertise), economic specialization, shared expenses and shared risk. Companies that have gained competitive advantages using strategic alliances include Shell and BP.

2.6.11 Structure and Process Alignment

Structure and process alignment are where most organizations fail in their attempts to maximize profitability. While they develop great strategies, they often try to fit an existing structure and process to the new strategy and ultimately fail to realize any benefits. The organization structure and processes must be aligned to the strategy in order to achieve meaningful, long-term benefits. The firm must have structures and processes that facilitate competitiveness. These structures and processes must be simple but applicable Each employee must be well trained to use the structures and processes. They must also be interconnected and interlinked such that they are able to complement each other. This calls for value chain analysis which describes the activities within and around

an organization which together create a product or service. It is the cost of these value activities and the value that they deliver that determine whether or not best value products or services are delivered (Porter, 1985).

2.6.12 Cultivating a Global Mindset

A global mindset is one that combines an openness to and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity. The external environment is extremely vast, highly complex, and rapidly changing for anybody to take in all available information before making decisions. You would be paralyzed if you tried to do so. To get around this problem, nature has programmed us to look at the world through a cognitive lens - a mindset that helps us filter and make sense of the reality. Because organizations are made up of people, the same is true of organizations. This can be both a blessing and a curse. It's a blessing because mindsets allow us to act intuitively and to make rapid decisions. At the same time, it can be a curse if the existing mindsets are rapidly going out of synch with changes in the external environment. (Wang, Govindrajana & Gupta 2008). The world today is continuously becoming global village. Organizations no longer constrain themselves to national borders, cultural differences might require managers to modify their managerial practices. The question here is does the company have a global strategic plan. The plan must be communicated to all employees so as to establish better direction and coordination. A strategic plan is also a plan for action that gives the firm a strategic objective. The strategic plan must be flexible and be able to adapt to global environmental changes.

2.6.13 Financial Performance Measurement

Financial performance measurement is where the firm monitors the performance off all its subsidiaries so as not to keep financing nonprofit making ones. There should be a standardized way of measurement that is specific, achievable, measurable and timed. The basic purpose of any measurement system is to provide feedback, relative to your goals, that increases your chances of achieving these goals efficiently and effectively. Measurement gains true value when used as the basis for timely decisions.

2.6.14 Corporate Social Responsibility

Social Responsibility of a business is the expectations that business will do more than what is required by law and profit maximization. This entails the firm's duty or obligations to make decisions that nurture, protect, enhance, and promote the welfare and well-being of stakeholders and society as a whole. This can be done by proper waste disposal, paying of taxes, reinvesting in the community, equal opportunity employer, international pay rates such that the firm does not look for countries with low labor costs. Standardization of pay is important e.g. Barclays bank should not pay a teller in Kenya less than what the same teller is paid in America.

2.6.15 Technology Improvement

Technology is a key factor to every organization. Every organization must ensure that their technology is up to date so as to improve productivity and communication (Laudon, 1996). Organizations have goals to achieve and for that case they perform activities which need technology which should thus be considered in terms of their purpose in an organization. More and more managers are confronted with the challenge of having to improve their organizations productivity and the quality of their products and services. In improving quality and productivity, they are implementing programs like Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR). ISO certification has also become very popular.

2.6.16 Customer Service

This is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation (Turban, 2002). Good customer service is the lifeblood of any business. You can offer promotions and slash prices to bring in as many new customers as you want, but unless you can get some of those customers to come back, your business won't be profitable for long. Good customer service is all about bringing customers back. And about sending them away happy - happy enough to pass positive feedback about your business along to others, who may then try the product or service you offer for themselves and in their turn become repeat customers.

2.7 Conclusion

Any company must seek to understand the nature of its competitive environment if it is to be successful in achieving its objectives and in establishing appropriate strategies. If a company fully understands the nature of the Porter's five forces, Theory of Generic Strategies, Hines Value Chain and the resource-based view (RBV) and particularly appreciates which one is the most important, it will be in a stronger position to defend itself against any threats and to influence the forces with its strategy. The situation is fluid, and the nature and relative power of the forces will change. Consequently, the need to monitor and stay aware is continuous. Identification and Implementation of sustainable competitive advantage is crucially important for organizations to build long-term business strategy rather than simply list the forces. However the Porter's five forces, Theory of Generic Strategies, Hines Value Chain and the resource-based view (RBV) are not complete on their own there should also be customer focus and quality control. The success or failure of organizations is also concerned with how well they understand customer needs and are able to meet those needs (Johnson et al, 1999).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

To ensure greater reliability of the data collection, the research adopted a case study research method involving The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd. A case study is considered appropriate since we are focusing on a single organization i.e. IAT. A case study was applied to allow an in-depth investigation of the Institute of Advanced Technology. Research design is a strategy, the plan and structure of conducting the research project. It is the logical manner in which individuals or other units are compared and analyzed. The research design must answer the research question (Beri, 2000). A case study can best be defined as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units (Gerring, 2004). Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. This will allow for a concentrated focus on a single phenomenon i.e. The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd. A case study was used in studies such as (Dwoya, 2008), (Nganga, 2008) and (Namenya, 2008).

3.2 Data Collection

Primary data was collected using a self administered interview guide (Appendix II) with open ended questions so as to investigate the factors determining sustainable competitive advantage for The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd. The data was collected from 5 managers i.e. The Dean ICT programs IAT campus, The Operations manager Hnd User Training IAT Pension towers, The Test center manager IAT, The Center manager IAT Yaya center and The Front office manager IAT Thika road campus. The managers were selected on the basis of availability and willingness to assist. The data collected was qualitative in nature.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed by use of content analysis. This is due to the fact that the data was qualitative in nature. Content analysis is a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages and using the same to relate trends. This type of analysis does not restrict respondents on answers and has potential of generating more information with much detail. Content analysis guards against selective perception of the content and has provision for the vigorous application of reliability and validity criteria. It was based on analysis of meanings and implications emanating from respondents information on the factors determining sustainable competitive advantage for The Institute of Advanced Technology ltd.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction of Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of data that was collected from the respondents. The research objective in this study was to determine the factors that provide The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with Sustainable Competitive Advantage within its industry. The data was analyzed using content analysis which measured the 'what' aspect of information obtained from the respondents. All the targeted 5 respondents were successfully contacted, thus there was a 100% response rate. This demonstrated that the respondents were very cooperative and added to the research's success.

4.2 Respondent's Profile

The respondents consisted of 5 managers i.e. The Dean ICT programs IAT campus, The Operations manager End User and Corporate Training IAT Pension towers, The Test center manager IAT, The Center manager IAT Yaya center and The Front office manager IAT Thika road campus.

4.2.1 The Dean ICT Programs IAT Campus

The Dean ICT programs IAT campus is responsible for academic programs development, implementation of quality management systems, revenue generation in the ICT programs department, budgeting and budget implementation and is involved in strategic management and strategic thinking in the organization. He has 5 years working experience in this current position.

4.2.2 The Test Center Manager IAT

The test center manager IAT is responsible for ensuring availability of exams for both internal and external candidates, implementation of quality management systems in the testing center, maintaining high integrity in the testing center and safe custody of exam results and certificates. He is also involved in strategic management and strategic thinking in the organization. He has 3 years working experience in this current position.

4.2.3 The Front Office Manager/ Registrar IAT Thika Road Campus.

The front office manager IAT Thika road campus is responsible for business development for IAT Thika road campus, implementation of quality management systems, high staff morale for the center, maintains high resource utilization, delights customers with high quality services and draw and implement annual budget. She is also involved in strategic management and strategic thinking in the organization. She has 3 years working experience in her current position.

4.2.4 The Center Manager IAT Yaya

The center manager IAT Yaya manages the day to day activities of the center, ensuring that revenue targets are met and exceeded. She also ensures adequate staffing, monitors expenses and is responsible for business development at the center. She is in-charge of implementation of quality management systems. She is also involved in strategic management and strategic thinking in the organization. She has 5 years working experience in her current position.

4.2.5 The Operations Manager End User and Corporate Training IAT Pension Towers

The Operations manager End User Training IAT Pension towers is responsible for providing high quality training in the End User and Corporate training departments, implementation of quality management systems, course development, monitoring key performance parameters, training and development. He is involved in strategic management and strategic thinking in the organization. He has 7 years working experience in his current position

4.3 Demographic Information of the Respondents

It is important for any study to do a demographic analysis of the respondents. The demographic information of the respondents covered in this study was age, level of education and work experience.

4.3.1 Age of the Respondents

Findings in the study showed that the age bracket of all the 5 respondents ranged from 30-39 years. This shows that IAT's management consists of relatively young managers. It also means that the respondents are youthful and more economically active.

4.3.2 Highest Level of Education Attained

In terms of the highest level of education attained, 80% of the respondents indicated having successfully completed postgraduate qualification, 100% had successfully completed various professional certifications and 100% were holders of undergraduate degrees. This shows that the respondents were highly qualified people in their respective fields.

4.3.3 Work Experience

In relation to the amount of time that the respondents had been in their current position it was found that 40% of the respondents had been in their current position for 5 Years, 40% indicated 3 years and 20% indicated 7 years. The mean number of years that the respondents had been in their current position is 4.6 years. 100% of the respondents indicated that they had held other positions in the organization.

4.4 Findings of the Study

The study established that there are various factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage at IAT. All the respondents concurred that there are factors that provide the institution with sustainable competitive advantage. 20% of the respondents considered that the factors determined are adequate while the other 80% of the felt that the environment is ever changing and the organization should be on the lookout for more factors. 100% of the respondents felt that the factors have been well implemented. It was also established that the factors determined were specific, measurable, realistic, timely and effective. The factors have had a positive impact on organizational performance and profitability. They have led to accessibility of cheaper inputs, an increase in customer base, decrease in costs, new business opportunities and improved technology. The respondents came up with several factors these are

4.4.1 Quality Management Systems

The IAT management is confronted with the challenge of having to improve their organization's productivity and the quality of their products and services. Maintaining high quality standards is key in their day to day activities. IAT is International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001:2008 certified and was the first middle level private training organization to attain the same. Thus IAT is a model of a good quality system and quality procedures.

4.4.2 Convenient Locations

IAT has ease of access by customers by having campuses conveniently located. There are 6 campuses located in Nairobi namely; Pension Towers, Westlands, Yaya, Buruburu, Thika road and Ecobank Towers. Other satellite campuses are located in Mombasa and Nakuru, each with one campus only.

4.4.3 Customer Care

IAT listens to their customers and strives to deliver uncompromisingly high quality services so as to meet their needs and expectations. IAT's vision is all about delighting their customers. It is all about sending them away happy - happy enough to pass positive feedback about IAT training along to others, who may then opt to study with IAT and in their turn become repeat customers. All customers get a chance to give feedback and air their complaints to management who strive to iron out the issues. IAT strives to achieve high word of mouth recommendation levels by having the motto 'do it right the first time'.

4.4.4 International Affiliation

IAT partners with key industry international bodies. These are Microsoft, Comptia, Cisco systems, National Computing Center UK, Linux, International Computer Driving Licence foundation among others. Thus a great reputation and brand identification. Persons wanting recognized professional certifications study with IAT. IAT is a Microsoft certified gold partner. These are credible certification bodies.

4.4.5 Collaborations with Local Universities

IAT has collaborated with Maseno University and St Paul's University and is offering various degrees. This is an added advantage since these universities are outsourcing to IAT so as to use high class facilities especially when it comes to the ICT courses. This helps build a strong brand

4.4.6 Market Relevant Programs

IAT continuously designs and conducts training courses that will enable the participants to improve on their effectiveness in the market. This calls for monitoring the ever changing environment, technology, consumer tastes and preferences and coming up with programs that match and meet the consumer's needs. This calls for a research and development and an intensive market research so as to be able to identify these dynamics.

4.4.7 Teaching Methodology

IAT Campus has gone a notch higher in its teaching methodology through Teaching for Understanding (TFU) which makes learning more interactive, enriching and fun. It is an educational pedagogy developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. It was developed to address the rising concern of the apparent inability of many students to apply school knowledge and skills to real life problems in workplace settings.

4.4.8 Workbooks and Training Materials

Workbooks and training materials are provided for every course. IAT has an effective research and development department that designs the same. This enhances sustainable competitive advantage since practical application is adopted in the classes are since the students already have the notes. The workbooks are also a point of reference for the student later.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study established that there are various factors that determine sustainable competitive at IAT. They are quality management systems, convenient locations, market relevant programs, customer care, international affiliation, collaboration with local universities, teaching for understanding teaching methodology and workbooks and training materials. It was also established that the environment is dynamic thus the need to improve on the factors. The factors determined had a positive effect on organizational performance and profitability.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

The factors determined in this study ensure IAT's ability to survive, thrive and prosper within its industry. Seeking and maintaining the various factors ensures that IAT is alert to the realities of its industry. IAT does not to assume that good products will sell themselves nor imagine that the success today will be carried forward into tomorrow. The objective of the study was to determine the factors that provide The Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry. The objective of this study was achieved since the respondents came up with various factors. The study was successful since there was 100% response rate by the respondents.

5.3 Recommendations of the Study

The respondents came up with recommendations that will lead to improvement of the factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage for the institution. They recommended that the quality management system should be improved further to ensure total employee involvement in all its processes. This calls for staff training and development such that the motto 'do it right the first time' is upheld. The respondents also recommended intensifying marketing activities so as to increase awareness of the organization this will lead to an increase in its market share. They also recommended that

the institution's long term goal should be to expand the institution into a university. IAT has been in the market since 1991 thus it should have by now grown into a university.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The research adopted a case study which involved study of one organization therefore the findings cannot be generalized to represent the whole industry. The interview guide was self administered thus there was no control on who filled it out. The researcher did not get the opportunity to probe for additional information or to clarify answers given. The interview guide having open ended questions a lot of unnecessary information was given that was not important to the study. The time factor was also a limitation since the respondents were very busy and finding time to fill in the interview guide was tricky.

5.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Further research should adopt a survey of the industry so as to come up with factors that determine sustainable competitive advantage in the middle level tertiary training industry. Sustainable competitive advantage is wide in itself thus further research can adopt one of the aspects of sustainable competitive advantage i.e. porter's five forces model, value chain analysis, resource based view or generic strategies. Further I recommend that sustainable competitive advantage is not the only factor that influences IAT's profitability further research can be conducted on the environment and strategic responses, strategy and strategic analysis, the balance score card among others.

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APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH DATA

Dear Respondent,

I am a postgraduate student undertaking Master in Business Administration at the University of Nairobi, School of Business. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Business Administration, I am required to conduct a case study on the factors determining sustainable competitive advantage for the Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd.

The interview guide consists of 11 pages and thus should not take more than 20 minutes to fill. Please note there is no right or wrong answer, so feel free to give the answer you think is correct. Strict confidentiality will be maintained and all the information collected through this questionnaire will remain confidential. The information you provide will not be used for any other purpose apart from its intended academic use.

Thank you for your willingness to assist.

NGETHE ELIZABETH NGENDO

E.O.MUDUDA

D61/70550/2008

SUPERVISOR

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please read the questions carefully and give your answers by putting the appropriate answer or by ticking in the appropriate box

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

DATE

DD MM YY

NAME (optional) Use Surname & Initials

GENDER (TICK) MALE

FEMALE

AGE (Tick as appropriate)

Below 20 Years

20-29 Years •

30-39 Years

40-49 Years ●

●

Over 50 Years

Designation

Academic/Professional
qualification

Duties and Responsibilities

Work experience in your current position in
years

What other positions have you previously held at The Institute of Advanced Technology

SECTION B

1. Briefly explain the factors put in place by IAT so as to maintain sustainable competitive advantage

SECTION C

In your opinion

1. There are factors put in place that provide the Institute of Advanced Technology Ltd with sustainable competitive advantage within its industry.

2. Are the above factors determining sustainable competitive advantage at IAT

a) Specific

b) Measurable

c) Realistic

d) Timely

e) Effective.

3. Do the above factors determining sustainable competitive advantage at IAT have an impact on

a) Organizational performance.

b) Sustainable competitive advantage

4. In terms of dissemination how have the above factors impacted sustainable competitive advantage for IAT within its industry in view of?

i. Increased profitability

ii. Cheaper inputs

iii. Increased customer base

iv. Decrease in costs

v. Protection of innovation through patenting

vi. New business opportunities

vii. Improved technology

viii. Any other (Specify)

Thank you very much for taking time to go through this interview guide.

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
MBA PROGRAM - LOWER KABETE CAMPUS

Telephone 020-2059162
Telegrams "Varsity", Nairobi
Telex 22095 Varsitv

P. O. Box 30197
Nairobi, Kenya

DATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The bearer of this letter, ZACHARIAH A. ITIHI

Registration No. .

is a Master of Business Administration (MBA) student of the University of Nairobi.

He/she is required to submit as part of his/her coursework assessment a research project report on a management problem. We would like the students to do their projects on real problems affecting firms in Kenya. We would, therefore, appreciate if you assist him/her by allowing him/her to collect data in your organization for the research.

The results of the report will be used solely for academic purposes and a copy of the same will be availed to the interviewed organizations on request.

Thank you.



DR. W.N. IRAKI
CO-ORDINATOR, MBA PROGRAM