

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN KENYA: A STUDY  
OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROJECTS,  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**EVANS ARABU**

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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.

Signature ..... Date .....

Evans Arabu

D61/64421 / 2011

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

Signature ..... Date .....

**Professor Evans Aosa**

**Department of Business Administration**

**School of Business**

**University of Nairobi**

## **DEDICATION**

This piece of work is dedicated to my dear parents, my adorable daughter and loving wife.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The process of writing this masters project has been a wonderful learning experience, which was coupled with both challenges and rewards. The completion of my study opens a new beginning and a step forward in my endeavors.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CS</b> .....	Competitive strategies and competitive advantage
<b>ER</b> .....	Strategic Response to Environment Changes
<b>CM</b> .....	Change Management
<b>IO</b> .....	Industrial Organization
<b>KNBS</b> .....	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<b>MBA</b> .....	Masters of Business Administration
<b>SI</b> .....	Strategy Implementation
<b>SM</b> .....	Strategic Management Practices
<b>S-C-P</b> .....	Structure- Conduct Performance
<b>SOB</b> .....	School of Business
<b>RBV</b> .....	Resource Based View
<b>TCE</b> .....	Transactions Costs Economics
<b>UON</b> .....	University of Nairobi

## ABSTRACT

Research in strategic management has changed over the years; research methodologies have been influenced by the dominant theoretical framework of the time. Early strategy scholars preferred the case method on planning formats in large and private manufacturing firms. Over time research in strategic management have changed to require multiplicity of methods and covers every industry. The objective of the study was to determine the strategic management research trends in Kenya as shown in Masters of Business Administration projects, School of Business, University of Nairobi. The researcher collected primary data from completed and submitted masters of business administration projects for period 1998 - 2012, school of business, university of Nairobi. A total of 1257 projects were selected for the study of strategic management research over the 15 years period. The literature review focused on theories anchoring strategic management research and evolution of strategic management research. Dominant theories anchoring strategic management have influenced research in designs in the field from time to time. The study found that strategy implementation, strategic response to environmental changes and competitive strategies/ advantage constituted 69% of total strategic management research projects. In addition it was observed that private firms formed 69% of researched organizations, government departments at 27% while non-governmental organizations, hybrid and religious organizations only 4% of projects selected for study. In terms of research design, case studies were the majority at average 62% and survey at 38%. Banking industries had more firms researched than any other industry in Kenya at any average of 28% per year. Others were distributed as follows: telecommunications 8%, health 9%, education 7%, energy and petroleum 7%, manufacturing and allied services 9%, transport 8%, commercial services 6%, insurance 6%, agriculture 7%, hospitality, tourism and others industries 5%. The study has elements from the theory and previous studies. For example Furrer, Thomas and Goussevskaia (2008), studying the evolution of strategic management identified six main issues: strategy and its environment, strategy process and top management, corporate strategy and financial models, growth and market entry, industry and competition and the resource-based view of the firm. In this study, main themes identified strategic management practices, strategy implementation, change management, responses to environmental changes and competitive advantage with responses to environment and competitive advantage on the rise. The study recommends that more research be done on non-governmental organizations and religious institutions to reflect their influence in Kenya society. In addition it recommends that longitudinal studies especially on resource-based view of organization be introduced and supported by the school of business. The study has suggested that further similar research could be done on MBA programs in other university for comparison purposes.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Strategic management involves organizational analysis, decisions, and actions undertaken to create and sustain advantages over competition. These strategic management aspects are characterized by top management decisions, allocation of a large amount of firm's resources, significant impact on firm's long-term prosperity and future oriented with multi-business consequences while constantly considering the external environment of the firm (Dess and Lumpkin, 2003).

Early research in strategic management focused on organizations' planning formats. Most organizations studied were large, private manufacturing companies (Aosa, 2011). Internal firm characteristics formed a crucial theme for research. Researchers were concerned with identification of practices that resulted into firms' success. The internal assets (resources) were underlined and organization's continued achievement was seen as an element of these unique and one of a kind focused assets. Development in the strategic management in 1970s was accelerated by research work on industrial organization (IO) economics. This shifted focus to structure of industry and firm's position in the industry. The research on strategic groups began and classification of firms into various categories of similarities within and differences across groups took root (Hoskisson *et al.* 1991). Re-emergence of internal firm character and resources was evident when emphasis was made on competition pressures and interactions between the firm and its environment. In examining these interactions and relationships, new emphasis was cost of transaction and firm's environment dynamics through various contracts. Agency theory was also studied where a firm as a nexus of contracts was examined.

Research in strategic management has changed over the years; research methodologies have been influenced by the dominant theoretical framework of the time. Early strategy scholars preferred the case method. The study of strategy making process was rarely abstracted except for skills on problem solving. The influence of industrial organizations (IO) economics on the field were witnessed through the scientific tools to support abstraction of the principles in view of a study of more extensive arrangements of firms (Furrer *et al.* 2008). Some of the tools employed in early researchers include cluster and regression analysis of big data sets to test a theory. The primary source of these data was secondary sources. The studies changed from inductive, contextual investigations on a solitary firm or industry to deductive expansive scale factual investigations to approve hypotheses in view of structure-conduct-performance (S-C-P) worldview. Improvement of the resource-based view (RBV) and unique and intangible characteristics of assets propelled analysts to utilize point-by-point field-based, longitudinal contextual studies and in addition to outliers samples and case surveys for testing some of the resultant resource based view hypotheses, Hoskisson *et al.* (1999), Bowman *et al.* (2002) and Herrmann (2005).

Access to university education in Kenya has been on increase over the last decade. The number of universities increased from 35 in 2012 to 52 by 2014, a 49% increase between 2010 and 2012 with an increase in student population of 35% in the last twelve months (Economic Survey, 2014). The university of Nairobi was established in 1956 as a royal technical college and became first university in Kenya. It expanded to six colleges and seven campuses in Nairobi with satellite campuses across the country. University of Nairobi's school of business offers courses both at undergraduate and graduate levels. Masters in business administration (MBA) was founded in 1972 and draws students from Eastern Africa. The two-year course has year one mandatory courses and the second year focused on specialization and electives. The fields of specialization are accounting, marketing, finance, insurance, operations management, and strategic management ([www.uon.ac.ke](http://www.uon.ac.ke)).

Masters of business administration number of graduates rose from 377 in 2008 to 1229 in 2012, an increase of 226% over the last 4 years ([www. uon.ac.ke](http://www.uon.ac.ke)). Final year project is a course requirement. This study will look into strategic management (MBA) research studies (projects) for the 1998-2012 period and highlight the evolution of research over the period. The research is designed to look at the historical and secondary data collected during this period.

### **1.1.1 Evolution of Strategic Management Research**

Research in strategic management has changed over the years. The research methodologies have been influenced by a dominant theoretical framework of the time. Common research methods have moved from case study through the scientific generalizations and back to case study. The early strategy scholars preferred the case method. The study of strategy making process was rarely abstracted except for skills on problem solving. Field of strategic management was not considered as logical and scientific field deserving of academic study due to lack of abstraction/ generalization. Induction was the primary approach to achieve generalizations (Rumelt, Schendel & Teece, 1991); Chandler's approach of multiple case comparisons of similar cases was the main approach. Much of the case studies during the foundation years viewed firms as closed systems.

Early research in strategic management's focus was on organizations' planning formats. Most organizations studied were large, private manufacturing companies (Aosa, 2011). Strategic management field was later on influenced by industrial-organizational (IO) economics approach of science-based abstraction on different groups of firms. According to Schendel and Hatten (1972) abstraction of strategic management could be derived from new theory developed from empirical observation and tests. The strategy research changed from general overview of case studies to logical and reasoned analyses for validation of performance models abstracted from industry configuration (S-C-P).

The development of the resource-based view (RBV) of an organization, nevertheless represented a noteworthy methodological issue to analysts and researchers in the field. In numerous regards, the investigation / study of the RBV requires a number of techniques and tools to recognize, measure and see firm internal resources. All the more essentially, RBV defenders recommend that every firm may have particular assets to support competitive advantages. The research methods utilizing huge information tests, auxiliary information sources and econometric investigations have all the earmarks of being lacking, especially when used to analyze elusive and innate firm assets, for example, corporate culture (Barney, 1986) or implicit learning (Kogut and Zander, 1992). However, because of nature of vital firm assets (intangible), researchers have utilized itemized field-based study, longitudinal contextual investigations, exception tests and case reviews to test asset based view hypotheses.

We are likely to see different research methodologies application in strategic management field. Choosing appropriate research methodology will be influenced by the research questions and the context of the study. The new research work with emphasis on firm internal issues will benefit from quantitative and qualitative methodological tools integration. This integration will enable the in-depth study of the resource-based view.

### **1.1.2 Concept of Strategic Management**

Strategic management involves organizational analysis, decisions, and actions undertaken to create and sustain advantages over competition. According to Dess and Lumpkin (2003) the core activities of strategic management are continuous process of analyses, decisions making and taking appropriate actions. These highly interdependent activities can also be referred to as strategic analysis involving strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring forms strategic management process.

Creation of goals, mission and vision statement, organization vision and vision statement, distilling organization values and objectives are at the core of strategic management. Internal and external environment analysis to develop goals and objectives that will minimize threats and maximize opportunities. Thereafter strategy of an organization is developed based on the information from the analyses. The strategy includes priorities and decisions to address key issues facing the organization. Once the strategy is developed, putting resources and process to actualize the organization goals, is done through creation of budgets, programs and policies. The last piece in strategic management process is monitoring of the strategy that is continuous evaluation of activities and programs through predetermined measurements and tests. Monitoring detects various gaps in the strategy and deployment of corrective measures for adapting strategy to changing trends.

### **1.1.3 Strategic Management Research in Kenyan Organizations**

Kenya (KNBS, 2013) has experienced an increase in university education access over the last decade. The number of universities increased from 35 in 2012 to 52 by 2014, a 49% increase between 2010 and 2013. University student population has also increased by 35% during the same period. Every year studies are carried out in the master of business administration projects in the country.

Students collect invaluable data, identify and highlight strategic management themes and challenges in their research. Different analysis tools and methods are applied. Therefore, the studies have a great wealth of information and data. Hoskisson et al. (2000) identified four perspectives as transaction cost economics (TCE) theory, resource based view theory (capacities and capabilities, knowledge and learning perspectives), agency theory and institutional theory as research pillars in the field. Peng et al. (2000) made similar findings for greater China and Meyer and Peng (2004) for emerging economies. Kenya as an emerging economy provides a new context to understand these different perspectives.

#### **1.1.4 School of Business, University of Nairobi**

The university of Nairobi ([www.uonbi.ac.ke](http://www.uonbi.ac.ke)) was established in 1956 as Royal Technical College and admitted its first students for technical courses in the same year. Currently, University of Nairobi, a leading university in Kenya has six colleges. One of them is college of humanities and social sciences (CHSS) that comprise of faculty of arts located in the main campus, school of law in Parklands, and school of business (SOB).

The school of business ([business.uonbi.ac.ke](http://business.uonbi.ac.ke)) formerly faculty of commerce, a founding faculty of Royal Technical College was inaugurated in 1956. Master of business administration program began from 1972/3 academic years under the faculty of commerce, Ph.D. studies started 1992. In 1998, the school introduced self-sponsored programs at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The faculty of commerce was renamed to school of business in 2006. Due to continuous improvement and development, the school of business currently houses a student population of more than 13,000 in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu campuses.

Masters of business administration (MBA) started in 1972 in the university of Nairobi's school of business as two-year course with year one focus on mandatory course units and year two on specialization and electives. Masters of business administration graduates has risen from 377 in 2008 to 1229 in 2012, an increase of 226% over the last 4 years. Final year research project is a requirement in masters of business administration (MBA) study. It gives students opportunity for in-depth study of organizations, collect data and do analysis. Since 1974, students have done research projects providing information for a longitudinal study of strategic management in Kenya.



## **1.2 Research Problem**

The core of strategic management from its beginning is an attempt to answer a fundamental question of how firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In this journey as indicated by Herrmann (2005), strategic management has developed and created theories and concepts to mainly examine the environment and look inside the firm, developing ideas and methodological advances that follow and try to predict management practice transformation. This has led to advancement of research approaches and methodologies to examine the qualities of firm's resources and its interaction with the environment. A study of MBA projects will identify the trends in research areas, design and organizations researched in Kenya under strategic management research.

The university of Nairobi, school of business get hundred of studies carried out in masters of business administration projects every year. These studies touch different organizations and businesses in Kenya and provide invaluable data and analyses that can be useful in identification strategic management themes and research designs. Different analysis tools and methods are applied during the studies. The studies have a great wealth of information and data.

Furrer, Thomas and Goussevskaia (2008) provided an analysis of twenty-six years' of research on strategic management research literature in the leading journals. Herrmann (2005) took an evolutionary and dynamic approach to describe development of strategic management and focused on the evolution of technology on the ideas that have significantly influenced both the academic and practitioner worlds. Guerras-Martin and Ronda-Pupo focused on the evolution of the strategy concept, a backbone of strategic management. Mwangi (1989) analyzed MBA management projects for the period (1981-1988) in the faculty of commerce with respect to the methodology applied, citation styles and testing for differences across the three departments of the faculty of commerce. Onguka (2012) evaluated bankruptcy models developed in masters in business administration (MBA) projects.

There are some gaps in studying strategic management research in the university of Nairobi through MBA projects from 1998 to 2012. Work has been done in the area but little documentation on the trends in MBA research projects in Kenya. What are strategic management research trends of MBA projects carried out in the period 1998 – 2012 in the school of business, university of Nairobi?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

The objective was to determine the strategic management research trends in Kenya as shown in Masters of Business Administration (MBA) projects, School of Business, University of Nairobi (1998-2012)

### **1.4 Value of the Study**

The perspective developed in the study is important for several reasons. First, University of Nairobi MBA is influential in the practice of strategic management in the country and provides empirical input as well as theoretical research through latest standards to inquire in different organizations. As an outcome, it is essential to distinguish and comprehend the changes and advancement in research displayed in these projects.

Secondly, these advancements may give bits of knowledge about the strategic management research into in Kenyan organizations by enlightening the development and nature of current methodologies specifically in implementation of strategy and broadly on strategic management practices. They may likewise demonstrate the difficulties and topics in the field.

Finally, the study will add to the body of knowledge of strategic management in Kenya and across the world. The approach and method deployed will be useful in looking at the past projects in the university of Nairobi and other business schools with economics and sociology opens opportunity for documentation of the evolving nature of management approaches used at different times.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review discusses the theoretical foundation of the study, historical development of strategic management and research evolution in strategic management, strategic management process, empirical studies and research gaps.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

The study is anchored on the strategic management concepts of strategy formulation, implementation and control. The researches in strategic management have been based on these theories; organizational economics theory, industrial organization (IO) economics, resource based view (RBV) theory, strategic leadership and decision theory and knowledge based view theory an extension of resource based theory.

##### **2.2.1 Industrial Organization (IO) Economics**

Industrial Organization (IO) Economics is about the economy-wide complexities due to various behaviors of different firms as they play different roles. Some of the roles played by firms include providing supply and demand for products and services within the economy. In providing supply and demand, the firms will interact with their environment. Studying firms in such settings, Bain (1968) looked at the industry as the core unit for analysis. The individual was studied as part of a group of competing firms or as part of industry. As Porter (1981) postulated that the firm performance was viewed as a dependent of the industry's performance. Therefore, industry structure was key determinant to the conduct of the firms, which ultimately influenced the firm's performance.

The performance of a firm can be explained by the structure of the industry. The adoption of S-C-P paradigm moved the examination center from the firm to market structure (Bain, 1956). Porter's framework is a refinement of the conventional S-C-P worldview and determines the competitive nature of the business in a more unmistakable way and perceives the part of firms in planning a proper aggressive strategy to accomplish better performance (Porter, 1981).

### **2.2.2 Organizational Economics Theory**

The second theory is organizational economics theory. Agency and transaction cost economics theories are two streams of organizational economics that developed in the mid 1970s generating a lot interest and studies in the field. Transaction cost economics theory and agency theory. The two theories put the focus on the firm as opposed to industry level and towards a firm level of analysis. Transaction Cost Economics (Williamson, 1975) research was based on an assumption of human behaviors and attributes of transactions that affect modes of transaction and outcomes.

Agency theory posits that due to separation of ownership and control in modern corporations, there is always a divergence of interest between the shareholders (principal) and managers (agent) (Fama, 1980; Jensen and Meckling 1976). A firm is considered a network of contracts according to agency theory and as such, contracts are the basic unit of analyses. Instead of industry structure variables such as market concentration and scale of economies that determine firm behaviors and performance as postulated in industrial organizational economics based research, Organizational economics performance is mainly driven by administrative intentions (advantage) and capacities (limited reality), data asymmetry, contracts requirement and execution assessment.

### **2.2.3 Resource Based View (RBV) Theory**

Third theory guiding the study is resource-based view (RBV) theory. A firm is more than an administrative unit. It is a collection of productive resources at the disposal of the firm that are for different uses and over time determined by administrative decision (Penrose, 1959). Various organizations are profitable through access of the assets that gives every firm its unique character. The hypothesis of the resource-based view of organization is premised by the thought that organizations achieve a novel character by right use of their diverse assets. Penrose (1959) likewise related the association amongst resources to firm execution.

Strategic management's salient issue is the resource – performance link. As suggested by Wernerfelt (1984) a different and modern perspective can be inferred from insights developed when evaluating firms in terms of their resources. Barney (1991) presented comprehensive and concrete framework to identify firm's resources characteristics in order to generate continued advantage over competition (Barney, 1991). The resource must have these elements: value, rareness, substitutability and inimitability.

Research on knowledge-based view of the firm an extension of the resource based view (RBV), conceptualizing firms as diverse, knowledge bearing entities will be incorporated in the study. Kogut and Zander (1992) saw firms as an active archive of capacities in which individual and social skill is changed into economically viable and profitable services. This implies by its social multifaceted nature, an organization's supply of information is as a critical pointer of its advantage.

### **2.2.4 Strategic Leadership and Strategic Decision Theory**

Fourth theory considered in the study is strategic leadership and strategic decision theory. Assortment of top administrators' roles and also the limited levelheadedness of these supervisors served as a reason for research on the impacts of the key pioneers on the frame and destiny of their associations. Significant quantities of academic studies on top officials and their associations have been done.

Organizational performance was observed to be connected with top administrators past execution record (Pfeffer and Davis-Blake, 1986), size of the top management team, tenure and composition. Top management characteristics were firm structure and strategies related. These implied impacts suggested that the relationship between key pioneers and hierarchical execution may rely on upon some possibility variables. Child (1972) contended that supervisors had prudence to settle on vital options; firm results were not to a great extent managed by outer ecological conditions.

### **2.3 History of Strategic Management Research**

The strategic management "early days" as a scholarly field (Rumelt et al. 1994) relied in investigations of financial association and organization. Various scholars who began to work on the strategic management and conceivable outcomes for vital decision explored the field. The most popular scholars are Taylor (1947), who started an 'exploration of work', Barnard (1938) concentrated on the parts of manager's roles, Simon (1947) built up a system to investigate organization, and Selznick (1957), who presented the possibility of unique capabilities. A vital commitment of these creators is their linkage of the investigation of organization with economics ideas. The introduction of the field of strategic management in the 1960s can be followed to the work of Chandler (1962) on methodology and structure; Ansoff (1965) on corporate procedure; and the Harvard course reading on Business Policy (Learned et al., 1965). Amid this time, studies about moved from a deterministic one-most ideal route way to deal with a more unforeseen point of view where organizations need to adjust to their outside surroundings. These studies were authoritatively situated, with an accentuation on regulating remedy as opposed to on investigation. The studies were constructed with little focus on analysis but mostly case studies contextual investigations of single enterprises or industries. These studies results were not really abstracted.

In light of the issue of abstractions, research trends in the 1970s, favored survey research studies. The period is described by the development of two branches of research due to different viewpoints. One view sought after a 'procedure approach', which comprised basically of investigations of how systems were shaped and executed. The examination in view of the perception of genuine authoritative basic leadership prompted to more sensible originations of process, in which methodologies were touched base at by implication and, to some degree, unexpectedly.

The second stream of research was interested in comprehending the relationship between strategy and performance likewise began to draw interest from researchers. The research trends moved from the examination of case studies investigations of firm or industry, to deductive and vast scale measurable research, which created and tried theories in view of models generated from the structure–conduct– performance (S–C–P) worldview (Bain 1956,1964; Mason 1939, 1949). The writing heavily skewed towards modern organizational (IO) economics as postulated by Porter (1981). Porter further (1979, 1980, and 1985) made the significant contributions to the field. In this way, essential focus on environment and its influence on the firm formed a critical strategic management research theme them during this period

Research in strategy started to change its direction once more from 1980s onwards. The trend switched to focus on firm's internal structure, resources and capabilities from previous emphasis on industry structure as a unit of analysis. When focus on firms' internal organization became dominant, two streams of research in organizational economics, which attracted the interest of researchers in strategic management: agency theory (Fama 1980, Jensen and Meckling 1976) and transaction costs economics (Williamson 1975, 1985). TCE provided a conceptual foundation for adoption of multidivisional structure by large diversified firms and illuminated the relationship between the multidivisional structure and firm's performance (e.g. Hoskisson *et al.* 1991). In addition, transaction costs economics explains functioning hybrid organization forms such as joint ventures and alliances as an intermediate form between markets and hierarchies (Hennart 1988;Kogut 1988; Williamson 1991).

A resource-based view hypothesis of competitive advantage additionally developed in the meantime. The concentration of the asset construct approach is in light of relationship between firm assets and execution. As indicated by Wernerfelt (1984), an asset can be either viewed as firm's strength or firm's shortcoming. Penrose (1959), original view of the assets in a firm conceptualized a firm as a bundle of useful and profitable assets with various firms having different level of these assets. New accentuation in the management of strategy has even been viewed as an outlook change (Rouse and Daellenbach 1999). The exploration center moved from the S-C-P worldview (Bain 1964; Mason 1939, 1949; Porter 1980), where competitive advantage is essentially dictated by natural elements, to the resource-based view theory which highlights how the ownership of significant, uncommon, incomparable and non-substitutable assets may bring about superior performance.

## **2.4 Research Methods in Strategic Management**

Research in strategic management has changed over the years. The research methodologies have been influenced by the dominant theoretical framework of the time. Common research methods have moved from case study through the scientific generalizations and back to case study (Hoskisson *et al.* 1991).

The early strategy scholars preferred the case method. Little effort was expended to sum up the discoveries of general making of strategy techniques and process aside from critical solving problem abilities and skills. To the degree of which abstraction was one of the objectives, it was essentially accomplished through enlistment (Rumelt, Schendel and Teece, 1991), encouraged by Chandler's approach investigations of different cases. A significant part of these studies over early years saw firms as shut frameworks.

As the field grasped industrial organizational economics, it started to underline logical and scientific abstractions in light of investigation of more extensive arrangements of firms. In addition, strategy researchers progressively utilized multivariate statistical tools with extensive information gathered from auxiliary sources to test hypothesis. The strategic management advancement into a more regarded academic field of study was in part a result of the appropriation of the scientific approaches developed in IO financial



matters. According Schendel et al. (1972) a more extensive perspective of strategic management focused on advancement of new research queries for determination and testing of theories. The technique inquired about changed from inductive, contextual investigations on a single enterprise to derivable large-scale measurable examinations based on S-C-P worldview models

The advancement of the RBV, in any case represents a noteworthy methodological issue to analysts. In numerous regards, the investigation of the RBV requires a variety of techniques to recognize, measure and see firm assets, implied to live inside the limits of the firm. All the more essentially, RBV defenders recommend that every firm may have particular assets to support competitive advantages. The research methods utilizing huge information tests, auxiliary information sources and econometric investigations have all the earmarks of being lacking, especially when used to analyze elusive and innate firm assets, for example, corporate culture (Barney, 1986) or implicit learning (Kogut and Zander, 1992). However, because of nature of vital firm assets (intangible), researchers have utilized itemized field-based study, longitudinal contextual investigations, exception tests and case reviews to test asset based view hypotheses.

In conclusion, there will distinctive research techniques in the study area of strategic management directed by research inquiries and setting. The combination of quantitative and subjective methodological instruments is probably going to be a productive course, particularly in light of the emphasis of firm's internal issues through asset-based view.

## **2.5 Strategic Management Process**

According to Dess and Lumpkin (2003) the core activities of strategic management are continuous process of analyses, decisions making and taking appropriate actions. These highly interdependent activities can also be referred to as strategic analysis involving strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring forms strategic management process.

Porter (1996) indicated that strategy is defining and communicating company's unique position, making trade offs, and forging fit among activities. The core of a leader's role is providing the discipline to decide which industry changes and customer needs organization will respond to, while avoiding organizational distractions and maintaining the company's distinctiveness. In making the choices the leader is supported by the firm's belief about customers, belief about the evolution of the industry and finally a belief about the competition. Mintzberg (1987) noted that the most basic concept of strategy making process is the intimate connection between thought and action and it's the key to crafting strategy hence strategy need not to be only deliberate but can also emerge. A realized strategy can emerge from evolving situation or it can be brought about deliberately through a process of formulation followed by implementation. A purely deliberate strategy, precludes learning once the strategy is formulated, emergent strategy fosters it.

The roles people play, the processes through which they interact and the relationships that they build are crucial to the success of the strategy. Implementation of strategy looks into structures, relationships and processes in a configuration that make them fit together and aligned to strategic objectives and goals. Successful implementation of strategy requires clarification in a way that people in an organization can rally to support its implementation. Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980) note that strategy is the framework, which guides choices that determine the nature and direction of an organization. The second element is to communicate the essence of the strategy at every level of the organization using multiple mediums. Discussions need to occur at each level, translating the organization's strategy to understandable and contextualized sound bites, which

connect to the work of individuals. Final element in implementation is cascading the strategy. Strategy monitoring and evaluation complete the strategic management process. A constant look on the implementation process to guide and form new strategies as well as mitigate any risks ensure success.

## **2.6 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps**

Furrer, Thomas and Goussevskaia (2008), concentrated on the development of the strategic management writing in light of strategic management's scientific studies in recent years published the field's key journals. According Hoskisson et al. (1999), Bowman et al. (2002) and Herrmann (2005) utilized subjective interpretation to break down the advancement of strategic management; Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004) dissect the structure and development of the strategic management field by utilizing bibliometric methods of references. Finally Phelan et al. (2002) and Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro (2004), focuses their study on single journal articles.

Mwangi (1989) analyzed MBA management projects for the period (1981-1988) in faculty of commerce, University of Nairobi focus of the study was on analytical description of the MBA projects with respect to methodology applied, citation styles and testing for differences in respect of the same across the three departments of the faculty of commerce. Onguka (2012) worked on empirical evaluation of bankruptcy models estimated by university of Nairobi masters in business administration (MBA) studies, tested the validity of models proposed by MBA students' research in Kenya. The study was focused on the bankruptcy of Nairobi stock exchange (NSE) listing companies.

There is need to specifically look at strategic management research in Kenya organizations through the work of students in MBA projects in University of Nairobi. Therefore, the study aim is to provide trends of strategic management research in Kenya through students' research work employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses research methodology use in the study. Methodology refers to a set of methods and procedures that will be used to carry out research. It also refers to the rationale and assumptions that underlie a particular study relative to the scientific method (Muganda, 2003). It will focus on the research design, collection of data and analysis methods used in the study.

#### 3.2 Research Design

Social researchers are interested in two fundamental types of research questions: What is going (mostly in descriptive research)? Why is it going on (in explanatory research)? This study asked the first question; what are the strategic management research trends in Kenya organizations as portrayed by research in the university of Nairobi MBA projects for the period 1998 to 2012? This descriptive research did not address why there are management issues.

The research used cross sectional survey design in the study. Kothari (2004) described a cross sectional study a snapshot of a population at a certain time and allows comparison of different population groups at a single time. Cooper and Schindler (2003) asserted that survey put more emphasis on full contextual analysis of fewer events or conditions then allowing conclusions about phenomena across a wide population to be drawn. A survey was important for this study since it allowed the researcher to collect information from previous completed and submitted MBA projects from university of Nairobi for the period 1998 – 2012.

### **3.3 Population**

The study's population is entire master of business administration projects in the University of Nairobi for the period between 1998 -2012. The population size for the study was five thousand three hundred and ninety seven. The population of the study was gathered from the records of all submitted, examined and library documented projects for the period of study.

### **3.4 Sampling**

In the study's focus narrowed to projects on strategic management area of specialization. Purposive sampling method was employed in the study to focus on particular characteristics of a population of interest. All projects supervised by the strategic management faculty and strategic management themes: formulation, implementation and evaluation in the title were considered for the study. Primary data from the MBA projects was used and classified into various themes and organizations researched. The primary data from submitted projects for period 1998 - 2012 was the source of information and necessary data to address the study questions. Elements of both quantitative and qualitative analysis applied to the study.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The researcher collected primary data through content analysis of completed and submitted MBA projects for the period 1998 – 2012. Submitted projects for this period were source of information and necessary data. Strategic management relevant keywords in the projects' titles were used to classify articles into five research themes then a detailed examination of the abstracts and findings was done. The five research themes identified are strategic management practices, strategy implementation, managing change, strategic responses and competitive strategies. The keywords aided purposive sampling of the projects.

Each selected project was classified multiple times according the research theme e.g. strategy implementation, competitive strategies, whether the organizations is private, religious, government department or nonprofits / non-governmental organization. In addition, the study looked at the methodology of the study especially research design.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data analysis employed during the study was two fold. First, qualitative nature of study was analyzed by content analysis. Content examination (analysis) is a strategy for outlining any type of substance by checking its different perspectives in this way empowering a more target assessment. Content analysis was used to identify core themes and strategic management research approaches used over the period. In study of strategic management research field Furrer, Thomas and Goussevskaia (2008) employed content analysis of researches published in leading journals for 26 years up to 2008.

An examination of content provided a way for the objective, deliberate and quantitative thought of MBA projects. It additionally considered interpretation of the direction in which students' research are necessitated by rapid changes in the society's priorities over time. Second, quantitative nature will be analyzed through computation of certain measures in search of patterns of relationship that may exist among data groups. The trend analyzed data was then be interpreted with respect to research question. The data was then presentation in tables and percentages.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, classification of data and analysis, key findings and discussion will be presented. The main study's objective was to determine strategic management research trends in Kenya as shown in Masters of Business Administration projects (1998-2012), school of business, university of Nairobi.

#### **4.1 Data Classification**

Primary data was collected through content analysis of the MBA projects in strategic management for the period 1998 to 2012. The data was analyzed in relation to the study's objectives and the findings are presented in various categories.

The initial phase in study was to choose MBA projects to be examined. As a result of its particular interest on strategic management, projects done under strategic management topical area between 1998 and 2012 was chosen. An aggregate of 1257 projects were distinguished and chosen for the study. Table 1 shows the number of projects and as percentages for total MBA projects per year.

**Table 1.** Projects per year and percentages of projects selected for the study

Year	Projects Selected	Percentage
1998	3	18%
1999	4	13%
2000	5	11%
2001	14	17%
2002	8	9%
2003	39	17%
2004	31	23%
2005	29	17%
2006	83	22%
2007	92	30%
2008	96	25%
2009	134	31%
2010	197	27%
2011	236	24%
2012	286	31%
Total	1257	25%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

In order to analyze the content of the MBA projects, a list of five major themes of research and keywords was developed. Therefore, study built up an underlying rundown of major catchphrases, which were iteratively picked from title and abstracts of project. The keywords were then grouped into different themes. One coder, who reviewed all 1257 selected MBA projects, examined each project. The projects were allocated independently into the subjects/ topical areas in light of a point-by-point examination of the abstracts. Project content were generally classified into only one primary category /theme. The themes identified were: strategic management practices(SM), strategy implementation (SI), change management (CM), Environment responses (EM) and competitive strategies and advantage (CS)



### **4.2.1 Classification of Projects into Research Themes**

In this research, strategic management practices (SM) is defined as study focused on the process of making strategy as well as availability of mission, vision and goals, strategic plan development and a study of any analysis tools. Projects included in the theme had studied general strategic management practices as applied by various organizations in Kenya.

Strategy implementation theme selected research work on actual implementation of either strategic plan or strategic choice selected. Under this bucket, projects titles such as “Strategy implementation in Kenya Ports Authority” were selected. Projects that explored implementation of strategies and challenges faced in the implementation process were included in this theme.

Change management research included firms’ actions either in responding to environment, implementing a new strategy or developing a competitive advantage in the competition. Projects that handle the processes of change management, challenges and different components of change management were put under this theme.

Competitive elements (rivalry and focused activity - response) an undeniably well-known research range in strategic management field advanced somewhat from Industrial Organization economics. These elements underline the firm level research in vital strategic management. The embodiment of this stream of research is an unequivocal acknowledgment that firm systems are progressive: actions started by one firm may trigger a progression of activities among the contending firms. Under competitive dynamics, there were two themes: environmental response/strategic responses to environmental changes and competitive strategy and competitive advantage. Keywords used to classify are: “strategic response” and “competitive strategies / advantage” respectively.

**Table 2.** Number of project per research theme in each year of study

Year	Strategic Planning Practices (SM)	Strategy Implementation (SI)	Change Management (CM)	Environment (Strategic Response) (ER)	Competitive Strategies / Advantage (CS)
1998	1			2	
1999	1		1	1	1
2000	1	1	1	2	
2001	6		0	3	5
2002	3	2	0	1	2
2003	13	2	5	13	6
2004	8	2	5	12	4
2005	8	7	4	9	1
2006	19	13	11	20	20
2007	13	19	8	31	21
2008	16	13	14	36	17
2009	22	22	25	31	34
2010	26	53	32	47	39
2011	37	68	47	52	32
2012	31	83	33	52	87
Total	205	285	186	312	269
Percent	16%	23%	15%	25%	21%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

Table 2's "Total" row presents number of projects grouped into each of the study themes, while percentage represent the percentage of number of projects allocated per each theme as a fraction of total project selected for the study. Strategic responses to environment denoted as environment in the table is the most frequent theme with 312 projects, strategy implementation (285), competitive strategies and competitive advantage (269), strategic management practices (205), and change management (186). These catchphrases speak to the real themes in strategic management such as the asset-based theory (Barney 1991),

which focus on capabilities (Wernerfelt 1984), S–C–P worldview (Bain 1964) especially on environmental reactions (Mason 1939), strategy and structure in strategic management forms (Chandler 1962).

Table 2 also shows that importance of all themes increasing over time with significant increases in environmental response- strategic responses to changes in operating environment including competition, technology, economic, and political environment strategy implementation and competitive strategy and competitive advantage which included: international, globalization and innovation, and that the significance of research areas are on a decline (formulation of strategy, strategic planning and management practices, mission and vision, environment, planning, typologies and mission). For different keywords, the significance is predictable and stable (subjective, rivalry, broadening, utilitarian, development, industry, best administration, philosophies, organization, authority and execution).

#### **4.2.2 Classification of Research Designs**

The research design level classification was done to identify the different methodology and research design applied to each of the projects to support trends recognition. The research designs identified were survey and case study approaches. Data collection approaches were also analyzed. Commonly used primary data collection methods are interviews and questionnaire. Table 3 shows typical coding for research design. The format was more granular in each of the themes.

**Table 3:** Research design for projects in various research themes

	Survey Research Design	Case Study Research Design
Strategic Management (SM)	110	97
Strategy Implementation (SI)	52	229
Change Management (CM)	19	112
Environmental Response (ER)	120	190
Competitive Strategies & Competitive Advantage (CS)	160	111

*Source: University of Nairobi Library.*

### **4.2.3 Classification of Organizations**

The main aim was to identify trends in organizations and industries researched in the MBA projects. To achieve this objective, the organizations studied were classified into two levels. First level was the ownership / nature of the organization depicting controlling body. Four type of organizations were identified: government, private owned entities for profit, non profit/non government organization (NGO), religious and finally hybrid organization that has both government and private ownership.

**Table 4:** Distribution of nature of organizations researched.

Nature of Organization	SM	SI	CM	ER	CS	TOTAL
Government	70	139	60	80	35	<b>384</b>
Private	109	104	60	218	235	<b>726</b>
NGO	18	22	6	10	1	<b>57</b>
Hybrid	4	4		1	1	<b>10</b>

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

The second level of collation of data was at industry level. The organizations were classified into different industries as per Nairobi stock exchange classification. The industries identified were banking (finance), commercial services, transport, energy and petroleum, agriculture, education, telecommunication and technology, health, hospitality and tourism, religious and finally manufacturing and allied services.

**Table 5:** Distribution of Industries Researched

<b>Industry</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>CM</b>	<b>ER</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Banking	25	45	42	92	64	<b>268</b>
Telecommunication & Technology	8	9	11	22	29	<b>79</b>
Health	13	18	11	25	15	<b>82</b>
Education	14	20	7	10	15	<b>66</b>
Energy & Petroleum	8	10	13	18	15	<b>64</b>
Manufacturing & Allied	9	11	12	36	19	<b>87</b>
Transport	10	12	7	21	24	<b>74</b>
Commercial Services	16	3	5	15	14	<b>53</b>
Insurance	7	9	9	18	13	<b>56</b>
Agriculture	7	13	9	18	17	<b>64</b>
Religious	2	1				<b>3</b>
Hospitality & Tourism	12	6	1	11	14	<b>44</b>
Hybrid	17		3			<b>20</b>

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

### **4.3 Strategic Management Research Trends in Kenya**

The findings and analysis of various dataset highlights the trends in the themes of research, research designs, organizations and industries studied. It was found that the strategic management research averaged 25% of total MBA projects for the period of study. It ranges from 9% in 2002 to high of 30% in 2012 and average of 28% of total projects per year for the last six years of the study period.

### **4.3.1 Strategic Management Practices Research**

Strategic management practices theme selected all projects that research on making of strategic plans, studies on the presence of vision, mission and objectives. This research area also had projects on structure of organization. It was a dominant research area in first six years in where it average 32%. However, it has declined as area of research in the last years of the study period and got average of 16% for the entire research period. During the first six years in the study period (1998-2003), strategic management practices was done through survey. This implies that the research was keen on industry level generalizations rather than firm capabilities.

In the last 4 years of study period, the research in strategic management practices has shifted to more case studies than survey on private firms and government departments with banking industry as major area for study. The shift denotes that more firm capabilities are being studied. An example of project considered in the last part of study period is strategic planning at Family Bank Limited, Kenya (Muchira, 2012) that focuses on the capabilities and planning process in the family bank.

### **4.3.2 Strategy Implementation Research**

Strategy implementation is second theme of research identified in this study. The findings show that overall it stood at an average of 23% and total of 285 projects were carried under this theme. It has gradually increased over years from zero percent in 1998 to 29% in 2011 and 2012 of strategic management research projects. The first strategic management implementation study was carried in 2000 and focus on a government department under a case study research design.

Strategy implementation theme was researched mainly by case study, which had more than 80% of projects while survey was at 19% for the entire period of study. This shows that the strategy implementation focused on firm level capabilities as opposed to industry level analysis. It was also found that the more research in this area was done on government departments than private organizations. There were 139 projects under government organizations and departments, 102 for private, 22 for NGOs, 4 hybrid

organizations and one religious institution. At industry level, the strategy implementation was distributed as shown in the table below. 28% of research was done in banking industry, which in this study incorporates both micro finance and mainstream banking. Education and health had 13% and 11% respectively.

In strategy implementation theme, the study shows that the first six years were concerned with the strategy implementation process in firms at generalized level. The projects looked at industry level strategy implementation and factors influencing it. Over the last years of the study period, the focus has been challenges facing strategy implementation at firm level. The common challenges identified include structure and bureaucracy in government organization, non-involvement of relevant stakeholders, no proper communication of the strategy to entire organizations, lack of competent staff and high turnover of employees at critical implementation stages.

**Table 6:** Industries studied under strategy implementation research

Industry	No of Projects	Percentage
Banking	45	28%
Telecommunication & Technology	9	6%
Health	18	11%
Education	20	13%
Energy & Petroleum	10	6%
Manufacturing & Allied	11	7%
Mining	1	1%
Transport	12	8%
Commercial Services & Investment	3	2%
Insurance	9	6%
Agriculture	13	8%
Religious	1	1%
Hospitality & Tourism	6	4%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

### **4.3.3 Change Management Research**

Change management as a concerted, planned effort to increase organizational effectiveness and health through changes in the organization's dynamics using behavioral science knowledge was the third theme of the study. Change was viewed as a long-range effort to improve an organization's problem solving and renewal processes.

It was found out that change management had 15% of strategic management projects and there were no studies on this theme until 2003. A total of 186 projects were selected in change management theme with 2009 -2012 contributing 74%. This implies that that change management study has significantly increased over this last four years in MBA research project in the university of Nairobi. Change management study is distributed equally between government and private organizations with 48% of the projects on government departments, 48% on private organizations and 6% non-governmental organizations.

The research design for change management themes had 85% case studies and 15% survey. 32% of researches were done in organizations in banking industry; energy and petroleum had 10%, manufacturing 10% while telecommunication and health industries followed with 8% each. Table 7 shows the full distribution of industries

Change management research looked at the managing change process, problems and practices of strategic change management in the initial years to nuanced aspects such as employee perception of change management, role of leadership in managing change, structural design and stakeholder's involvement in change management. Common approaches used in study of change management include Kotter's eight steps change model and real time strategic change management principles. The researches in these are carried by case studies and focused on the firm level capabilities.



**Table 7:** Industries Distribution Under Change Management Theme.

Industry	Number of projects	Percentage
Banking	92	32%
Telecommunication & Technology	22	8%
Health	25	8%
Education	10	5%
Energy & Petroleum	18	10%
Manufacturing & Allied	36	9%
Transport	21	5%
Commercial Services & Investment	15	4%
Insurance	18	7%
Agriculture	18	7%
Hospitality & Tourism	11	3%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

#### **4.3.4 Responses to Environment Research**

Firms largely are open systems where there is continuous interaction and interfaces with the external environment. The environment can be relatively stable or highly turbulent. Environment responses theme focused on research work done in understanding organizations responses to changes in operating environment. This theme also covered industry structure, competition, technology and government policies and regulations. Under this theme, there were studies that focus on use of Porter model in studying governmental, private, religious and non-governmental organizations. Environment responses theme had the highest number project and contributing 25% of total strategic management research over the period 1998 - 2012. It is the only research area that had a project of study in each of the years covered in the study period. A total of 312 projects were considered in this theme.

Survey research design constituted 39% while case studies were 61%. The organizations studied were mostly private enterprises at 71%, government organizations constituted 26% while NGOs were 3% of total organizations studied. In terms of industries, banking had highest percentage of 32%, Manufacturing & allied services industry with 13%, health 9%, telecommunications 8%, education 3%, energy 6%, transport 7%, commercial services 5%, insurance and agriculture contributed 6% of projects in the studied. In 1998, environment study was centered on changes in the business environment was impacting organizations at the industry level. In 2012, studies changed to focus on how an organization responded to a specific change in the environment. The keywords changed to “response strategies to particular change in the environment”. The research on environment also focused on the competition within the industries and how the firms responded.

**Table 8:** Industries Distribution Under Environment Theme.

Industry	Number of projects	Percentage
Banking	92	32%
Telecommunication & Technology	22	8%
Health	25	9%
Education	10	3%
Energy & Petroleum	18	6%
Manufacturing & Allied	36	13%
Transport	21	7%
Commercial Services & Investment	15	5%
Insurance	18	6%
Agriculture	18	6%
Hospitality & Tourism	11	4%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

### **4.3.5 Competitive Strategies and Competitive Advantage Research**

Competitive strategies and advantage research focus on a firm's advantage formed by interactions of competencies, capabilities, skills and strategic assets within an organization, or in other words physical and intellectual resources astute management form the core capability of the business. Under this theme of research, projects that studied competitive advantage, organizational capabilities, strategic capabilities and competitive strategies were considered. Competitive strategies and competitive advantage had 269 projects which contributed 21% of total projects in this study for the period 1998 -2012. It had highest increase from one project in 1999 to 89 in 2012 with average 37% increase per year.

Survey research design constituted 59% and case studies were 41%. The organizations studied were mostly private enterprises at 86%, government organizations constituted 13% while NGOs and hybrid organizations constituted 1% of total organizations studied. In terms of industries, banking had highest percentage of 27%, manufacturing & allied services industry had 8%, health 6%, telecommunications 12%, education 6%, energy 6%, transport 10%, commercial services 6%, insurance 5%, hospitality 6% and agriculture contributed 7% of projects studied.

Firms earn competitive advantage through various actions and decisions. Some of the strategies and model studied were outsourcing, differentiation, Porter generic model, strategic alliances and business process reengineering. The sources of competitive advantage were also researched and some of the areas include: knowledge management as of competitive advantage and resource based view of competitiveness.

It is contended that the peculiar qualities of firms that added to their upper hand ((Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) goes beyond the transactions costs theory and agency theory. It is based on resource-based view of any organizations. Firms are seen as a gathering of gainful assets and the variety of these assets furnishes them with their remarkable characters. The study of competitive advantage helps in coordinating the ecological attributes and firm particular assets to look at and comprehend strategic management.

**Table 9:** Distribution of Industries under Competitive Strategy & Competitive Advantage Theme.

Industry	Number of projects	Percentage
Banking	64	27%
Telecommunication & Technology	29	12%
Health	15	6%
Education	15	6%
Energy & Petroleum	15	6%
Manufacturing & Allied	19	8%
Transport	24	10%
Commercial Services & Investment	14	6%
Insurance	13	5%
Agriculture	17	7%
Hospitality & Tourism	14	6%

*Source: University of Nairobi Library*

#### **4.4 Discussion**

The study looked at various aspects of strategic management research such as formulation of strategy, strategy implementation, competitive strategies and competitive advantage, responses to environmental changes and change management. The study also looked at the research designs for various themes, types of organizations and industries studied. The distribution organizations show that government entities constitute 27%, private organizations at 69%, NGOs, hybrid and religious organizations collectively constituted 4%.

In terms of industries distribution, banking had the largest projects at 28%, telecommunications 8%, health 9%, education 7%, energy 8%, manufacturing 9%, transport 8%, commercial services 6%, insurance 6%, agriculture 7%, hospitality and hybrid organizations at 5%.

The study also found out that banking industry had the most projects in strategic management research than all other research areas. In most of the years of study, banking had more than a third of projects and organizations studied. Digging deeper revealed that the main banks had been repeatedly researched: Kenya commercial bank, Barclay Bank, National Bank, Equity Bank and Cooperative bank. The smaller banks had a little or no projects at all. Religious and non-government organizations also had very few projects compared to their impact and availability in the Kenya society

Government organizations had highest research projects on change management with little work on environmental responses and competitive strategies and competitive advantage. This period corresponds to change in political leadership in the country and several changes in management in various departments. Telecommunication industry had second highest projects on competitive advantage while manufacturing has second highest projects on responses to environmental changes. Banking sector was most researched industry across all themes.

#### **4.4.1 Comparison with theory**

In 1998 - 2005, most of the projects were done under survey research design denoting focus on the industry level research. The researchers had sample size of less than hundred projects. This focus on industrial organization (IO) economics involved strategy research through deductive and statistical analyses. The primary unit of research and analysis is the industry or competing group of firms rather than individual firm. The tenet of survey design when looking at the industry level information is that company's performance that is fundamentally a component of the business environment in which it contends in light of the fact that structure decides the conduct which in turn influence performance.

The second half of the research period (2006 -2012) was mostly case studies and focused on the private enterprise. In this period, the primary interest of research was the organization or firm. These studies revolved around two aspects of organization economics: transactions cost economics (Williamson, 1975) and agency theory (Fama, 1980). At firm level research, more effort in understanding the agency theory in different topics including innovation and application of technology to firm, corporate governance and diversification, change management and challenges associated with it, understanding the role of boards and senior leadership in the managing strategic change.

Strategic management theory shows that research rotated around the main the dominant theory of any particular. The research approaches have to revolve around these dominant theories. The first half of the study focused on the industrial organizations (IO) economics done through survey design. The second half delved into transactions costs economics and agency theory focused on the firm. This moved strategic management research from the business level accentuation of the S-C-P worldview to a firm level of investigation This study was congruent with the theory where industry level competitions are research by survey while firm characteristics and capabilities are research by case studies.

#### **4.4.2 Comparison with other Studies**

Furrer, Thomas and Goussevskaia (2008), focusing on development of strategic management in main journals for management, arranged research themes into six principle themes: environment and strategy, top management and strategy process, economic models and corporate strategy, market development and entries strategies, competition and industry dynamics and the resource based perspective of the firm. An unmistakable finding was there an expansion after some time in the number of articles dealing with alliances and capabilities, and a lessening in those concerning how firm fit in their environment.

In addition, research evolution moved towards two poles namely corporate level strategies and competitive strategies. The advancement of research implies that the examination themes represented by related keywords are increasingly considered through financial models or the resource based perspective of firm (abilities) and less and less through the methodology procedures and natural fit perspectives.

In study, researcher found that research topics representing main issues are strategic management practices, strategy implementation, change management, responses to environmental changes, competitive strategies and competitive advantage have some similarities with work done by Furrer et al. Areas of similarities include finding that more and more work is research is being done competitive strategies and resource based view. There was agreement that process of strategy development is in decline in both studies. However, one difference was on the responses to environment, which is a significant research area in university of Nairobi's school of business but had decreasing number of articles in the work done in analyzing articles published in major strategic management journals. The study also found that no financial models were used in studying strategic management at MBA level in the university of Nairobi.

Hoskisson, Hitt, Wan and Yiu (1999), looked at decades of research on strategic and found out that the research change trends in similar ways as a pendulum swing influenced by dominant theory and each swing has taken a new theoretical and methodological approach. Every change in the research trends extends the area of the field and prompts to an assortment of research inquiries. They found out that the RBV research has reversed the research trend to its initial point but with increased sophistication and maturity, Initial research was based on organization economics done through case studies. The second phases of studies were on IO economics that emphasizes industry level characteristics and environment. The research on RBV, which is a swing back to the organization economics, is based on longitudinal case studies and large survey to identify outliers.

The study found out that the research had a swing from the survey in the early part of study period that focused on the industrial organizations (IO) economics and industry level characteristics to more research on the organizational economics done through case studies focused on the firm capabilities. Despite research on resource-based view in the school of business, there were limitations on sophistication. It was found out the most of research on this area are limited to cases studies while other studies show that resource based view is better researched on longitudinal studies and large samples surveys that aid in picking the outliers.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The chapter presents summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study in line with the objective of the study. The study's objective was to establish the trends of strategic research as shown by the MBA projects, school of business, University of Nairobi.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

Summarizing the findings, the main research topical area covered in MBA projects were identified through keywords. This allowed study on development of the research over time. The key research areas representing six main issues are strategy implementation, responses to environmental changes, strategy and strategic management process, and top management, corporate strategy, growth and entry to markets, competition pressures from industry and firm's resource-based view. A key finding from this research is that there was an increase over time in the number of MBA projects on capabilities, competitive advantage and strategies, strategic responses to environmental changes and a decrease in those projects on strategic management practices like presence of strategic plan, availability of vision, mission and objectives. Further, the evolution of research agenda moved from industry level to corporate/ business level strategy and competitive strategies.

In the 15 years of strategic management research in study, it was observed that there is an increased interest in studying strategy implementation, responses to environment and competitive strategies and advantage and a decreased interest in studying general strategic management practices. This development is witnessed through the expansion of such catchphrases as 'strategy implementation' and 'strategic responses to environment' and the decrease in those of 'strategic management practices'.

The advancement of strategic management research to business / corporate level strategy and competition can be detected from changes in research methodologies and organizations. In the first half of the study period most of the research were survey design based and focused on government organizations. However, the last half of the study period had private organization with focus on case studies.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concluded that, there have been changes in the strategic management research in Kenya as shown in the MBA projects in the university of Nairobi, school of business. First, the number of research has increased from 17 and 32 in 1998 and 1999 respectively to 973 and 934 in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Consequently, the number of research projects in strategic management has increased from 3 in 1998 to 286 in 2012. Second, the research concluded that majority of organization studied were private constituting 69%, government entities constitute 27%, NGOs, hybrid and religious organizations collectively constituted 4%. In terms of industries distribution, the study concluded that banking was the most researched industry with 28% of projects, telecommunications 8%, health 9%, education 7%, energy 8%, manufacturing 9%, transport 8%, commercial services 6%, insurance 6%, agriculture 7%, hospitality and hybrid organizations at 5%.

The study also concluded that, on the basis of the research design, the first half of the study period had more survey denoting more focus on industrial economics where the strategy research was deductive and involved statistical analyses. The primary unit of research and analysis was the industry or competing group of firms rather than individual firm. The precept of survey design when looking at the industry level information is that the company's performance is fundamentally a component of the business environment in which it contends in light of the fact that structure decides the conduct which in turn influence performance. Under the study, the research was done on to check the strategic plans. Porter model was common tool for industry analysis.

In the second half of the study period, the research design was more on case study where firm capabilities were researched. The organizational economics theories guided these studies specifically: transactions cost economics and agency theory. These theories focused the research analysis on firm level and moved the strategic management research further away from the industry S-C-P worldview level. At firm level research, more effort in understanding the agency theory in different topics including innovation and application of technology to firm, corporate governance and diversification, change management and challenges associated with it, understanding the role of boards and senior leadership in the managing strategic change.

It was observed that there is increase interest in the resource based theory, corporate-level strategy and competitive advantage and decreased interest in the notion of strategy as part of environmental fit and general study of strategic planning or strategic management practice. This development is witnessed through the expansion of such catchphrases as ‘capabilities’, ‘alliances’ ‘competitive strategies’ and ‘strategic response to environment’ and the decrease in those of ‘strategic management practices’, as well as the increase in such as keywords as ‘corporate’ and ‘ competitive advantage’ and decline in those of ‘strategic management’ and strategic planning’.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The study recommends that more studies on strategic management research in Kenya be done from different universities. It also recommends that more strategic management research be done on the religious organization and NGOs in Kenya. The number research projects under the two grouping of organizations were at five percent. However, the impact and distribution of these organizations in Kenya society is significant.

The study recommends that more point-by-point longitudinal studies, exception and outlier tests based on field samples to be carried to fully understand the resource-based view of organizations. Despite interest observed in doing projects on resource-based view, the study found no MBA longitudinal studies on the field for the period 1998 - 2012. This could be explained partly by the limited time scope for projects in MBA program. School of business should consider having continuous studies on selected

organizations in which different students can plug in for their projects. This will be in line with the other studies in thematic area of strategic management especially organization's resource based view as highlighted in hypotheses and research in strategic management: change in trends of research (Hoskisson et al. 1999). The researchers postulate that research in strategic management has moved from industrial organization to industrial organization (IO) economics and back to industrial organization more specifically resource based view. The research methodologies have also changed from case studies to survey and back to combined case studies and surveys to pick out outliers and get longitudinal views.

## **5.5 Limitations of the Study**

The study was with limitations. The research was based on a survey of School of Business, University of Nairobi's MBA projects for the period 1998 -2012 and some of the findings in respect to strategic management research are not exhaustive. In primary data collections, the researcher left out certain variables that could have impact on the final findings and conclusions on strategic management research in Kenya.

The projects selected for the study were based on certain keywords in project titles. This in effect limited the breadth of projects considered and gives perspectives of only selected projects. There are other projects not considered but fall under strategic management because of they didn't have these selected keywords. These strategic management projects not considered in the study could have influence on the findings.

The researcher also faced time and resource constraints in collecting both primary data. Due to these constraints, the depth and breadth of the study was limited to few projects and data collection approach. The study would have benefited from subjecting the findings to discussions with the faculty and other students especially the doctoral students.

## **5.6 Suggestions for further Research**

The study scope was strategic management's research in Kenya which was delved into through analysis of the MBA projects and recommends that the following. First, similar studies should be done in other universities in Kenya for to allow for comparison and abstraction of findings on the strategic management research in Kenya. Other universities in Kenya will provide broad information and datasets to capture whole strategic management research in Kenya.

Second, the study suggests that further research should be conducted for all the MBA specializations in university of Nairobi to identify trends in finance, accounting, insurance and management information systems. This will provide a complete picture of evolving management in Kenya organizations and its attended challenges. In addition to studying these other disciplines, a broader faculty members should be interviewed to provide insights that may not be derived from projects and cover a larger population so at to have more inclusive findings to improve on conclusions and recommendations for strategic management research.

Finally, the study suggests that more strategic management research be done on religious and non-government organizations. Despite being playing critical role on the life of Kenyans, the research projects on these two sectors stood at 5%. More students should be encouraged to do research in these areas. The faculty should support research in these organizations to broaden the view on strategic management in Kenya.

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## **APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTION LETTER**

**EVANS ARABU**  
**P.O BOX 30197-00100,**  
**NAIROBI.**

Dear respondent,

### **RE: INTRODUCTION LETTER**

I am a postgraduate student pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at the University of Nairobi, School of Business. As part of the requirement for the award of the degree, I am expected to carry out and submit a research project. I am conducting a study on strategic planning research in Kenya organizations through studying of MBA projects, school of business, University of Nairobi. The main benefit of the research is to highlight strategic planning research trends in Kenya organizations and provide insights in current approaches. I kindly request you to provide objective answers to the following questions that will be vital information for this study. The information provided will be kept confidential and it will only be used for the intended purpose of the study.

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

Evans Arabu

## APPENDIX II: PROJECTS CLASSIFICATION GUIDE

*This classification guide is designed to collect data that to be used in strategic management research in Kenya through a study of MBA projects. The information collected to be used for academic purpose only.*

### PROJECTS CLASSIFICATION.

1. How many MBA projects have been completed in 1998 to 2013 period?
2. How many MBA projects in strategic management have been completed 1998 to 2012?
3. How has strategic planning research topics and methodology evolved over the same period?
  - a. What kind organizations do students research on?
  - b. How has the organizations selected for research changed during the period 1998 - 2012?
  - c. How has the research methodology changed over the same period?
4. How would you explain the broader significance the change in strategic planning research in the MBA projects?
5. What industries are most researched?
6. How has strategic planning practiced in Kenyan organizations changed over the period 1998 - 2012?
7. Is it possible to access MBA projects in strategic management for the period 1998 -2012? If yes, please provide me with all necessary access and support documents.
8. What are strategic management research themes for the period of study?

**APPENDIX III: CLASSIFICATION TABLE**

<b>SN</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Research Theme</b>	<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Organization Type</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>1.</b>						
<b>2.</b>						
<b>3.</b>						
<b>4.</b>						
<b>5.</b>						
<b>6.</b>						
<b>7.</b>						
<b>8.</b>						
<b>9</b>						
<b>10.</b>						