

**STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY VISION INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONALS IN
KENYA TO ACHIEVE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Project is my original work and has not been presented for any award in any other academic institution

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

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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my family members for their love, support, inspiration and understanding throughout the research period. They gave the will and determination to complete this study.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.1.1 Concept of strategy	2
1.1.2 Concept of Competitive advantage	3
1.1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions	3
1.1.4 Vision Institute of Professionals	4
1.2 Research Problem.....	5
1.3 Research Objectives	7
1.4 Value of the Study	8
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study	9
2.2.1 Porters Generic Strategies.....	9
2.2.2 Institutional Theory.....	10
2.2.3 Resource based view theory.....	11
2.3 Strategy and Organizations.....	13
2.4 Competitive Advantage in Organization	16

2.5 Strategies and Competitive Advantage.....	16
2.6 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps	18
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	21
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 Research Design	21
3.3 Data Collection.....	22
3.4 Data Analysis.....	22
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	24
4.1. Introduction	24
4.2. Background Information	24
4.3. Strategies Adopted by VIP to develop competitive Advantage.....	25
4.3.1. Main People Tasked with Development of Strategies at VIP	25
4.3.2. Strategies VIP has Developed in Response to Competition.....	25
4.3.3. Aggressiveness of the Strategies Adopted by VIP	26
4.3.4. Working of the Response Strategies Adopted by VIP	27
4.3.5. Adequacy of the Resources the Organization has Devoted to Strategic Responses.....	28
4.3.6. VIP Change of Strategy	28
4.4. Factors That Influence Development of Competitive Strategies	29
4.4.1. VIP Main Competitors.....	29
4.4.2. Organization View of the Competitors	30
4.4.3. Changes in the Competitive Environment	30
4.4.4. Aggressiveness of the VIP’s Response	31

4.4.5. Influence of Various Factors on Competitive Threat	31
4.4.6. Effect of Changes in the Market Due to Competition	32
4.4.7. Changes which VIP has Initiated in Response to Changes in the Competitive Environment.....	32
4.4.8. Effect of Responses on Day to Day Running of the Organization	33
4.5. Discussion of Findings	33
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	37
5.1 Introduction	37
5.2 Summary	37
5.2.1. Strategies adopted by VIP to develop competitive advantage	37
5.2.2. Factors That Influence Development of Competitive Strategies	38
5.3. Conclusion.....	39
5.4. Recommendations	40
5.5 Limitations of the Study	41
5.6. Suggestions for Further Research.....	42
REFERENCES.....	43
Appendix 1: Interview Guide	48

ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

CHE	Commission for Higher Education
CPA	Certified Public Accountant
CPS	Certified Public Secretary
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
KATC	Kenya Accounting Technicians Certificate
MOE	Ministry of Education
PESTEL	Political Economic, Social, Technological and Environmental factors
RBV	Resource Based View
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VIP	Vision Institute of Professionals

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out the strategies VIP has adopted to develop competitive advantage, and to establish factors that influence development of competitive strategies at Vision Institute of Professionals. The research was undertaken using the case study design. Only primary data was collected and reviewed. Data from primary sources was collected using interview guides and those in charge at the various sections were interviewed. The researcher used content analysis as a method of analysing collected data. The study found that the strategic management process at VIP guided by general group wide guidelines that are developed by the senior leadership team in consultation with all employees at various levels. The study also found that VIP takes into consideration a detailed analysis of both the internal and external environment to ensure that key lessons are learnt from the past in order to inform the institution's future plans and direction. The institution usually develops five year strategic plans that are broken down into yearly targets to assist in simplifying the implementation of the strategy as well as enabling efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. The study found that VIP is currently faced by competition both from the local and international. Local ICT and accountancy institutions have aggressively opened branches directly opposite or near VIP and also in almost all other towns. The Chief Executive Officer of VIP described the situation as worrying. He indicated that the branches of the institution where the ICT students attend classes during the day has been affected with most students preferring the VIP main campus. The study found that VIP views its competitors as worrying and if new strategies are not developed the new institutions may end up closing the gap. To counter the level of competition VIP has initiated strategies that are competitive in the current environment. These strategies included offering quality education, having competitive tuition fees, innovation and offering diversified marketable courses among others. The study concluded that the strategic management process at VIP guided by general group wide guidelines that are developed by the senior leadership team in consultation with all employees at various levels. The study also concluded that VIP takes into consideration a detailed analysis of both the internal and external environment to ensure that key lessons are learnt from the past in order to inform the institution's future plans and direction. In the wake of the major happenings in the current turbulent environment, the challenges have increased and the public expectations are high for VIP to demonstrate a leadership role in learning and research. It is therefore inevitable for the institution to embark on a process of change and rejuvenation. VIP will have to develop a flexible strategic structure, which will favour the use of strategic tactics, and activities that will configure the strategies whenever the competitive advantage appears to be at threat.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Institutions in essence are dependent on events surrounding their specific environment. Changes in the environment will cause an organization to develop appropriate mechanisms to counter the changes (Ansoff and McDonnell 1990). Organizations have embraced strategic management to help in overcoming the many obstacles posed by continuous changes in the environment that they are based at. One of the major challenges includes competition from industry players, customers, new entrants, suppliers as well as substitute products. Therefore, organizations must comprehend the forces that stimulate the competition in their respective environments so that they can develop appropriate strategies (Porter, 1979).

This study was guided by Porter's competitive business strategy founded by Michael Porter in 1980, institutional theory advance by Scott (1981), as well as Resource based theory. Porter states that strategy target either cost leadership, differentiation or focus and that a firm must only choose one of the three strategies or risk waste of precious resources. Scott (1981) stated that an organization adapts to both the values of its internal groups and external society. He further argues that organizations get institutionalized by various factors such as technical, economic and physical for example in the production and exchange of goods and services. According to RBV, firms with better systems and structures perform better not because they have strategic investments that limit entry, but because they have significantly lower costs and offer higher quality or higher product performance (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997).

There has been a rapid growth in the Kenyan higher education sector. There are many colleges and this is expected to grow in lieu of increased education demand. Colleges have also been contracted by the government to offer degree programs following the influx of public universities. These universities do not meet the demand due to inadequate resources. This has since caused most students to join local colleges some of which are not registered hence lowering the quality of education. They thus pose a challenge to colleges like VIP who have adhered to the strict education policies in order to develop their programs. VIP has unfortunately found itself in such an environment. It is one of the biggest vibrant colleges. It has grown from a population of 1000 students to 2000 students. Although it may have more resources as compared to other colleges, it has not been fortunate to take advantage of existing support and own strength and there has arose speculation of its survival in the long run.

1.1.1 Concept of strategy

Strategy is a key tool in strategic management. Strategic management comprises of planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of set tasks (Pearce and Robinson 1997). Strategy is thus an action plan for conducting a firm's operations (Thompson and Strickland, 2003). The objective of competitive advantage is to position the firm where it can thrive on. To achieve success above the competitors, a firm will focus on product differentiation, cost leadership and focus. Firms achieve ultimate success due to possession of these advantages compared to their counterparts.

Grant (1998) argues that the two sources of above average performance include locating an organization where environmental conditions are favourable to enable a rate of return that is above the respective competitors. The other is for an organization to ensure that it

has advantage of position which will see it achieve returns that are above the industry's average. Therefore, the fundamental objective of a strategy is to acquire a position of having a competitive advantage.

1.1.2 Concept of Competitive advantage

Porter (1985) argues that competitive strategy is the act of the company looking for competitive position in a given industry that withstands the competitive forces. Thompson and Strickland (2013), are of the view that firms that have a competitive advantage are those that have secured their customers. Porter (1987) argues that a firm's competitive advantage stems from the customer value created by the organization that exceeds its production cost. Organizations create value by manipulating certain activities in their respective value chain.

Porter (1987), noted that the success or failure of an organization is majorly influenced by the competition factor. He argues that competitive advantage occurs where the organization is able to offer similar gains of products as rival competitors, however, at a low production cost, hence having achieved a cost advantage. Similarly, it can offer superior satisfaction compared to rival products by concentrating on a small part of the bigger market segment. He suggested that the pillars of competitive advantage are built upon innovation, firm's reputation and relationship with both external and internal customers.

1.1.3 Technical and Vocational Education and Training Institutions

Kenya's Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutions are fast developing new skill training and educational programs to meet the increasing educational demand.

They are keen to respond to this demand. TVET institutions have the ability to transform the education programs that are prevalent in the market with avid intelligence and creation of a sense of urgency. They have over the years developed content training and are promoting technical skills and have established policy implementing strategies to develop competitive advantage.

TVET is viewed as a tool for enhancing the productivity as well as reducing the poverty levels in Kenya. They provide a link in the Kenyan economy by providing a skilled workforce who can satisfy the market. The adoption of TVET in Kenya supersedes technical training institutions, MOE training and demonstration centres, youth polytechnics and National Youth Service skills development centres. Due to increased innovation in the current education sector, most of these institutions have had to develop strategies that enable them to gain competitive advantage.

The TIVETs informal sector is still spearheaded by NGO's (Tilak, 2002). Gachie (2013) is of the opinion that approximately 800 technical institutions. Many of them are registered by the Directorate of Technical Accreditation and Quality Assurance with the rest holding provisional registration. Successful candidates are often awarded certificates and diplomas. There have been recent upgrades of TVETS to university colleges. Similarly, colleges like VIP have been approached by various universities to offer degree programs. This is meant to ensure that more youths enrol in technical institutions

1.1.4 Vision Institute of Professionals

Vision Institute of Professionals has been in existence since 1997. The college was established to provide high quality professional training and skills in accountancy, ICT

and related areas through teaching, research and consultancy. It is unique in that it is established and managed by lecturers to provide high quality training and consultancy in accounting, information technology and related fields. Currently the Institute is headed by three directors. VIP first opened its doors to a handful of students pursuing KATC, CPA and CPS courses but required intensive revision and coaching. They required tuition tailored to their specific needs.

Within a short time the number of students had increased greatly. It was realized that there was a void in accountancy and IT training. It has classes, well stocked libraries, state of art computer laboratories and a well-equipped student centre. VIP is among the leading colleges in Kenya and there is need to establish how it will respond to such challenges in the wake of increased competition.

1.2 Research Problem

Organizations gain competitive advantage by drafting strategies that rival companies cannot duplicate. Firms that develop competitive advantage are said to be successful. Such strategies exist in a wide range and thus not vivid for organizations. How a firm assesses its industry and the competition affects directly how it should position itself and the kind of strategy to be adopted (Thompson and Strickland, 1997). There have been major changes in the higher learning education sector in Kenya. Since inception, CHE made sure that tertiary institutions were formed to counter demand for the higher education. CHE was established in the plight of many high school students who could not get entry into the public universities (CHE, Handbook 2008). About 20% of students who get placed in the local universities are sponsored by the government.

Colleges that have not been accredited by CHE are in modern day offering poor education quality and charging low fees to boost their numbers. Competition has intensified and Vision Institution of Professionals is not immune to this competition as other colleges have opened branches adjacent to it. These colleges have also partnered with established universities and are offering degree programs as well. Several studies have been done in the field of competitive advantage. Notably (Kasyoka, 2011) researched on strategic positioning to achieve competitive advantage at Safaricom Limited. Awori (2011) focused on strategies used by equity bank to develop competitive advantage. The researcher did not come across any research on strategies adopted by Vision Institute of Professionals to achieve competitive advantage.

Findings of the subject topics could not be replicated to VIP because of the difference in context and structure of the college business. As highlighted by (Ansoff and McDonnel, 1990), different institutions or organizations face different challenges and hence cannot respond similarly to these challenges at hand. There have been radical changes in the TVET from how it used to be. The challenges prevailing in such a market are new and thus colleges adopt new ideas in order to survive. Established colleges may take too long to respond due to internal interest and bureaucracy.

Several studies have been carried out on competitive strategies within the higher education sector. Globally, Yasar (2010) did a study on the effect of competitive strategies on firm performance while Mazzarol (1998) did a study on the factors that are critical to the competitive advantage for education and service enterprises within international market. Locally, Mathooko (2013) carried out a survey on public universities in Kenya. Kinyua (2010) explored the strategic alliance between JKUAT and tertiary institutions. Mutula

(2002) and Ndirangu and Odoto (2011) investigated the problems facing university education and the challenges in teaching and learning in Kenyan public universities respectively. Waithaka (2012) did a study on competitive strategies at the University of Nairobi, Mutunga and Minja (2014) focused on strategies that beverage firms in Kenya adopt while Kimani and Wagoki(2015) explored the competitive strategies that insurance firms have adopted to achieve competitive advantage.

VIP is among the leading colleges in Kenya and there is need to establish how it will respond to such challenges in the wake of increased competition. It is against this backdrop that this study will try to establish if VIP is able to adapt to the modern changes within the environment, the current level of competition and appropriate strategies that it will adapt to achieve competitive advantage. The study sought to answer the research question what strategies has VIP adopted to achieve competitive advantage?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study had two objectives. These are:

- i. To find out the strategies VIP has adopted to develop competitive advantage
- ii. To establish factors that influence development of competitive strategies at Vision Institute of Professionals

1.4 Value of the Study

The findings of the study would be significant to the various groups of people and organizations in the organizational sector. The study will be significant to policy makers, college administration, students, researchers that have a key interest in VIP. To policy makers, the study would shed light on VIP and its current strategic issues measures that it will take and the obstacles in the external environment. Good policies will henceforth be enhanced. Recommendations made by the researcher will also enlighten VIP on competitive edge. It would also assist in enactment of effective policies.

Students in VIP who are studying business management would benefit from the literature in this document. Information will help in further investigation and content development. Further, scholars, researchers and academicians would now be in great position, to understand and teach others the concept of competitive advantage in the education field. They would also identify key areas for further research and study. Moreover, other international as well as regional institutions wishing to form strategic alliances with TVETs in Kenya, would understand the appropriate competitive strategies to adopt in the wake of increased competition within their environment.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of the study. It will cover in depth the basis of competitive advantage strategies and the factors that influence the competitive advantages of organizations. This chapter will establish in details the concept of competitive advantage and related strategies.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

The study will be guided by three theories: Porters generic strategies, institutional theory and Resource based theory.

2.2.1 Porters Generic Strategies

Porter's competitive business strategy typology was founded by Michael Porter in 1980. Porter states that strategy target either cost leadership, differentiation or focus and that a firm must only choose one of the three strategies or risk waste of precious resources. Porter (1980) argues that competitive advantage is the superior position a firm occupies in a market, vis a vis its competitors. Porter further says that in order for a firm to occupy this position of superiority, it must employ the use of what he calls the generic strategies and these strategies are low cost strategy, differentiation strategy and focus strategy.

A firm may choose to use the cost strategy whereby it employs economies of scale to become the lowest cost producer in the industry thus attracting mass sales due to its attractive pricing. On the other hand, if a firm chooses the differentiation strategy, it will

then focus on producing a unique product and in this case, its target market is usually not price sensitive. Finally, a firm may opt to use focus strategy whereby it chooses a niche market and endeavours to serve it exclusively. A firm may therefore use any of the three generic strategies to achieve competitive advantages in the market.

A firm's relative position within its industry determines whether a firm's profitability is above or below the industry average. The fundamental basis of above average profitability in the long run is sustainable competitive advantage. Porter's theory is useful in understanding the competitiveness of organization suggesting that competitive advantage stems from the competitive strategies adopted to deal with strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing an organization. Porter's generic strategies have been widely accepted by researchers. However, his typology also has critics in the literature, especially the assertion that the generic strategies are mutually exclusive. A number of scholars argue the pursuit of a single generic strategy may lead to lower performance O'Regan et.al (2012), and Ansoff (1965).

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

Scott (1981) advances the institutional theory by stating that an organization adapts to both the values of its internal groups and external society. He further argues that organizations get institutionalized by various factors such as technical, economic and physical for example in the production and exchange of goods and services. Others include social, cultural legal and political factors where organizations give in to pressures to conform to norms, values and beliefs upheld by the society they operate within.

Scott (2008) avers that organizations in different types of economies react differently to similar challenges. He further argues that social economic and political factors make up an institutional structure of a particular environment which gives firms an advantage of engaging in different types of activities within that environment. This advantage makes organizations perform more efficiently when they receive institutional support. Therefore, organizations must conform to rules and beliefs of the environment and that this institutional isomorphism helps organizations earn legitimacy.

Institutions from organization's aspect are the rules, norms, and beliefs that describe reality for the organization, explaining what is and what is not, what can be acted upon and what cannot, Hoffman (1999). Institutions act as kinds of forces upon organizations by creating pressures and limitations. They form boundaries for what is accepted and not accepted. Organizations are buried in environments fixed up as networks Pfeffer & Salanick (1978). The connections of these networks are seen as inter dependent to other connections. This requires an understanding of the environment in order to understand the organization itself. Institutional theory deals with how organizations are affected by external and internal forces which locate beyond its own control.

2.2.3 Resource based view theory

Resource based view (RBV) examines the combination of assets, skills and capabilities in an organization to identify its strategic advantages. It identifies strategic resources in the firm that are necessary to create competitive advantages that are sustainable to ensure achievement of superior performance. According to this perspective, firms with better systems and structures perform better not because they have strategic investments that limit entry but because they have significantly lower costs and offer higher quality or

higher product performance (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997). Mintzberg, Quinn, and Ghoshan (1999) noted that business activities are carried out using a collection of skills, competences or capabilities which are supported by strategic resources.

According to RBV, core competences must be developed and sustained as key to organizational performance and this is done by accumulating experience over time. They explained that competitive advantage can be traced to superior skills, superior resources and superior position. According to Wernerfelt (1984), resources are viewed as strengths or weaknesses of a given firm, are either tangible or intangible and are linked semi-permanently to the organization. Holder of a resource is able to maintain resource position barrier hence competitive advantage. The resources that are superior compared to those of competitors form the basis for competitive advantage if they are matched correctly to environmental changes (David 1997). Barney (2012) explained that sustained competitive advantage occurs due to the fact that resources are not perfectly mobile across firms in an industry. He noted that the resource must be valuable, rare, and imperfectly inimitable and must not be strategically substitutable.

According to Peteraf (1993), there are four conditions for a firm to experience long term above average returns namely, resource heterogeneity which creates monopoly rents, ex-post limits to competition, imperfect factor mobility to ensure valuable factors remain within the firm and ex-ante limits to competition to ensure costs don't offset rents. Grant (1998) highlighted the knowledge-based view of the firm which is viewed by many scholars as an extension of the resource-based approach. He looked at the characteristics of knowledge in a firm which include transferability of knowledge between firms and within the firm, capacity of aggregation of knowledge and specialization in knowledge

acquisition by individuals. Resources in organizations contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the organization. These organizations allocate resources in order to attain objectives in financial performance, customer perspective, learning and growth, and internal business processes. They will be required to invest in the enhancement of assets, skills and unique capabilities as they implement diversification strategies to attain a superior position in the sector.

2.3 Strategy and Organizations

Accordingly, a strategy can in broad terms be seen as the future, long term choices and overall priorities of an organization, and usually includes the decisions and actions concerning- and of importance to all departments of the organization (Lowendahl & Wenestop, 2003). Often, an organization's strategy starts with a summary of the organization's vision, mission, and values, aiming to capture the desired future state and aspiration of the organization, articulating the overall purpose and goal of the organization, as well as pointing out what is considered as the underlying principles and standards for the organization to reach its goals (Johnson & Scholes (2002), Johnson., (2008); Hatch, (1997). Several theorist, even argue that organizations organized around a deep sense of values, mission and vision are more powerful, and command more commitment from its employees. Still, the idea of an organizational vision, mission and values rest upon the thought that it is possible to move an entire organization in a similar direction, however Alvesson (2002) and Johnson (2008) point out that it is important to distinguish between the vision, mission and values an organization wishes to aspire to and the values expressing the way the organization is.

Even though strategy broadly can be seen as the long-term direction of an organization, the concept can be perceived in several different and often conflicting ways. Strategy is typically seen as the responsibility of top management (Hatch, 1997); the company director and top management rationally and intentionally plan and formulate the strategy, in which the forces and constraints of the organization are weighed carefully through analytic and evaluative techniques to establish a clear strategic direction and a basis for the carefully planned implementation of strategy. Lower levels of management and the employees then implement the strategy, by mobilizing allocated resources and translating the strategy into coordinated goals and activities at the operational level (Johnson 2008; Watson, 2006; Hatch, 1997).

Although the modernist influence has been strong in the field of organizational strategy and thus a commonly held view about strategy and strategy making within the field of business and management literature today (Johnson 2008), several researchers and scholars started in the late 70's to question the assumptions of human rationality implicit in the modernist influenced theories, and argue that these theories have undermined the role and centrality of human action and interaction (Johnson 2008). These researchers have argued that human beings recognize and make sense of things on the basis of past experience and what they come to believe to be true about the world; accordingly, it is unlikely that managers and employees approach problems and strategic issues completely rationally (Johnson 2008). What more recent theories on strategy have in common is that they focus on processes of enacting strategies, or the role of strategy in the social construction of organizations (Hatch, 1997), including a bottom up perspective aiming to show the real-world messiness of the strategy making-, decision- and change processes

rather than the top down perspective found in modernist influenced theories on organization strategy (Johnson et. al., 2008; Watson, 2004; Hatch, 1997).

The more recent theories on organizational strategy can be argued to hold more realistic views on strategy than the modernist- influenced theories do, particularly because they recognize that both within and around organizations there are multiple interests, competing priorities and conflicting groups, which challenge the implementing and following up on strategies (Watson, 2004). Accordingly, the strategy an organization actually pursues is typically a combination of intended strategy, the product of formal strategy planning and decision, as well as emergent strategy, including bottom-up initiatives, political influences, organizational history and culture, the experience and taken for granted assumptions of organizational members, and sheer chance (Johnson 2008; Hatch, 1997). However, common for most theories on strategy, modernist and more recent, is that they focus mainly on the processes of the strategy making, and not so much on strategy in practice in the organization. For instance, there is not much literature or research about how the strategy is communicated, acted upon and received by the organization's employees. An exception can be found within one of the newer strands of strategy research, strategy as practice, however Hatch (1997) points out that even here, one is mostly concerned with the work of strategizing, emphasizing the role of the manager(s) in the strategy making process, including how managers do- and work with strategy and strategy-related activities.

2.4 Competitive Advantage in Organization

A competitive strategy is a value adding strategy that is not being implemented by potential competitors and can hardly be duplicated by competitors Porter (1980). A sustained competitive advantage needs to last for a considerable period of time. Competitors involve both the current firms in operation as well as potential firms that are planning to enter the market in the near future Porter (1985) Efforts to duplicate a competitive advantage need to have been rendered futile for a period of time for it to be considered sustainable Porter(1996). Hunt and Morgan (1995) propose that "potential resources can be most usefully categorized as financial, physical, legal, human, organizational, informational, and relational". They go on to state that a comparative advantage in resources can translate into a position of competitive advantage in the marketplace, but only if the criteria proposed by Barney (1991) are satisfied and the offering has some perceived value in the marketplace. Brown, (2010) suggest that firms should combine their resources and skills into core competencies, loosely defined as that which a firm does distinctively well in relation to competitors. Competitive advantages are realized only when the firm combines assortments of resources in such a way that they achieve a unique competency or capability that is valued in the marketplace Morgan and Hunt (1995).

2.5 Strategies and Competitive Advantage

Strategic responses to a dynamic business environment mean that organizations have to change their long term goals substantially in order to be successful (Ansoff and McDonnel, 1990). These changes affect both the corporate level strategy and business level strategy as both are very strong determinants of the direction the organization takes

in the long run. These changes that take effect are either gradual and happens over time or they can be drastic and brings about an evolution within the organization depending on the circumstances facing it.

Pearce and Robinson (1997) advanced the grand strategies for firms operating in dynamic environments. The grand strategies include concentration, market development, product development, innovation, integration, joint venture, diversification, turnaround, divestiture and liquidation. He describes concentration as a strategy to direct the organization's resources to the profitable growth of a single product in a single market and with a single technology. Market development strategy he says, involves marketing present products to new markets, while product development strategy involves substantial modification of present products for existing customers. Innovation involves modifying a product such that the firm creates a new life cycle for the product. Clayton (2010).

Pearce and Robinson (2011), argues that integration can either be horizontal or vertical. Horizontal integration is acquiring similar businesses operating at the same stage of production while vertical integration is the acquisition of businesses that supply the firm with raw materials. Joint venture involves several capable companies that come together to complement each other in their weaknesses and strengths in order to succeed. They refer to diversification as the development of new products for new markets. Liquidation, they say, refers to winding up businesses or part of it that is not viable.

2.6 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps

A research on effect of competitive strategies on firm performance on Gaziantep carpeting sector found that there is no significant relationship between competitive strategies and firm performance in Gaziantep carpeting industry. The result however, suggested that in order to improve firm performance and get sustainable competitive advantage in global markets, competitive strategies should be used resolutely and cost and differentiation strategies implemented simultaneously by decision-makers (Yasar, 2010).

Japanese Managers investigated current strategic syntheses and the degree to which Japanese management is embracing “The Porter Prize” in Japan. They concluded that Japanese companies mainly apply cost leadership, and to a lesser degree employ a product differentiation strategy, and none of the emerging strategic factors appeared to represent a focus strategy. In addition, some firms reported using strategic practices that fit into multiple strategic factors as few real world organizations implement pure strategies (Allen et al., 2016).

A study was done on completed cross border mergers and acquisitions made by publicly traded Indian companies. The study was carried out in 425 Indian firms between the year 2000 and 2007 and was longitudinal in nature. They noted that internally generated growth takes long and is path dependent and that acquisitions offered possibility of abnormal growth cycles. They explained that acquisitions helped organizations gain and reconfigure new resources and capabilities. They also noted that there was evidence of positive above normal returns for the acquiring firm shareholders and that firms involved in mergers and acquisitions get strategic assets from diverse markets (Gubbi, Aulakh, Ray, Sarkar, and Chittoor, 2010).

Another study focused on competitive strategies that firms adopt in the Kenyan beverage industry. The results indicated that 56.2 per cent of the firms embraced duo strategies of cost leadership and differentiation simultaneously while 25 per cent were exclusively on cost leadership and 18.8 per cent were exclusively using differentiation carried out a cross sectional survey study on the strategic responses adopted by weighing scale companies in Kenya. He collected primary data using a questionnaire and realized that the external environment was a major factor of consideration for these dealers. His study pointed out globalization and technology as two major environmental factors that affected them the most (Mutunga and Minja, 2014) and (Motanya, 2013).

Separate research assessed the strategies for gaining competitive advantage in insurance firms in Kenya. Specifically, the three strategies of competitiveness namely cost leadership, focus and differentiation as suggested by Porters were examined to show how they affect gaining of competitive advantage amongst insurance firms. The study was conducted in Thika town, Kenya. It adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for this study consisted of the 40 insurance officers working with the 20 insurance companies based in Thika town. The study established that the three generic strategies advanced by Porters had positive, strong and statistically significant influence on competitive advantage (Kimani and Wagoki, 2015).

An enquiry was launched on the strategic responses by East African Breweries and used PESTEL framework to identify the factors affecting the company. He used a case study

and collected primary data through interviews. His research findings indicated that product development and modification, vertical integration, information systems change, innovation, product differentiation and outsourcing were the best strategic responses that could counter these environmental factors (Muturi, 2007).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter entails the research methodology of this study. The researcher justified why the case study has been used as the research design and consequently outline data collection sources primary qualitative data. Finally, the researcher explained how the data was analysed and supported the method selected to analyse the data.

3.2 Research Design

The research was undertaken using the case study design. Mugenda (2008), are of the view that case studies place more weight on a full contextual analysis of fewer events and their relationships. According to Kothari (2004), a case study will subject social units, family, cultural groups to a careful and well thought analysis as it focused more on the depth rather than the breadth of the study. Moreover, Yin (1984), explains that case studies increased our knowledge about an individual or organizational phenomenon.

The case study was ideal for the researcher because it enabled collection of more information on cross sectional studies. Case study design ensured that data was obtained in all units under research and resourceful people in VIP. Its importance is elaborated by Wang (2000) who appreciate it as a powerful design of qualitative analysis as it involves a careful and well thought observation of a particular social unit. Similar studies that have successfully used this design include Machuki (2005) and Muthuiya (2004).

3.3 Data Collection

Only primary data was collected and reviewed. Data from primary sources was collected using interview guides and those in charge at the various sections were interviewed. This method of data collection was effective since it enabled classification of issues and interview further to provide more information. It is more flexible in comparison with the quantitative methods of collecting data. About twenty people were to be interviewed. The interview guide included open ended questions so that the researcher could dig deeper into the respondent's feedback to gather more information on strategies that VIP has adopted to achieve competitive advantage.

3.4 Data Analysis

Due to the anticipated large data that will be highly qualitative, the researcher used content analysis as a method of analysing collected data. Ole Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics and messages. Content Analysis places more emphasis on suspects such as system objectivity context and validity. It makes references to the inferences drawn from the communication content about the sender and the relevant materials upon which content analysis will be VIP documents.

Content analysis helped with the interpretation of the content to draw meaningful conclusion. This helped to explore theories and further contribute to paramount literature. It conformed to the three basic principles: objectivity, systematic and generalizability.

This is supported by Berelson (1971) who define content analysis as a research technique for the objective and systematic quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. Woodrum (1984), is of the view that content analysis is a safe method, in that if the researcher finds out that a portion of the necessary information is missing, it will be possible to return to the text and supplement the missing data. This is not always possible in experimental or survey research.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter reports the data analysis and interpretation of the results. The focus was specifically for data analysis from the respective respondents in Vision Institute of Professionals and giving interpretation of the research findings. The main purpose of the study was to establish the strategies adopted by vision institute of professionals in Kenya to achieve competitive advantage and to establish the factors that influence development of competitive strategies at VIP. Thus to accomplish the stated objectives, data was collected using an interview guide which was unstructured hence more information was gathered with regard to strategies adopted by vision institute of professionals in Kenya and competitive advantage.

4.2. Background Information

For purpose of this study, senior management from the various sections were targeted. According to the findings majority of the respondents were head of the various sections they were in charge. In addition, the majority of the respondents had worked with VIP for duration of over 5 years and thus had experience on various issue with regard to strategies adopted by vision institute of professionals in Kenya and competitive advantage. Majority of the respondents further indicated that the organization structure did not have major changes for the last two years.

4.3. Strategies Adopted by VIP to develop competitive Advantage

This section presents findings on the competitive strategies adopted by vision institute of professionals in Kenya. The findings are presented in the following subsections:

4.3.1. Main People Tasked with Development of Strategies at VIP

The respondents were requested to indicate the main people tasked with development of strategies at vision institute of professionals. According to the respondent's VIP has an elaborate strategic planning process that guides the strategic management process within the organization. It was clear from the respondents that the strategic management process at VIP guided by general group wide guidelines that are developed by the senior leadership who are the directors in consultation with all employees at various levels. It was further indicated that the strategic management process in the institution is highly participatory involving staff, key partners and project beneficiaries. This was one of the factors that makes VIP to achieve competitive advantage.

4.3.2. Strategies VIP has Developed in Response to Competition

The respondents were requested to indicate the strategies VIP has developed in response to competition. According to the respondent's VIP takes into consideration a detailed analysis of both the internal and external environment to ensure that key lessons are learnt from the past in order to inform the institution's future plans and direction. The institution usually develops strategic plans that are broken down into yearly targets to assist in simplifying the implementation of the strategy as well as enabling efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

The respondents further indicated that VIP adopts a number of strategies to enable it develop competitive advantage. Diversification of services is one such strategy. VIP has diversified its courses and is set to offering marketable courses as informed by market research. It has also diversified its funding scope from institutional donors to the private sector and multilateral institutions through engagement with the government. It is also targeting and cultivating relationships with other prime financiers for its operations. To stay ahead of the present or potential completion, VIP has also diversified its services and is now undertaking financial generating activities through provision of development consultancy services. Competitive costing of the services is done with the aim of offering the lowest relative cost compared to competitors hence attracting more clients. Risk management was also identified as a strategy which was mentioned as a responsibility of the higher management by the chief executive officer. The institution has become more cautious in areas where they would like to invest in. For example, VIP is taking precaution before collaborating with the local universities in offering degree programs.

4.3.3. Aggressiveness of the Strategies Adopted by VIP

The respondents were requested to indicate the aggressiveness of the strategies adopted by VIP. According to the respondent's VIP has adopted two strategies among others which are aggressive and they include pricing that is focused on ensuring that tuition fees are competitive as well as having qualified lecturers. It is interesting to note that most of the directors that form the top management are also qualified lectures and can step in to the lecture rooms whenever needed.. According to the respondents the prospector strategy which is also adopted by VIP, involves active programs that enables VIP to expand into new markets and stimulate new opportunities. New service development is

vigorously pursued marketing warfare strategies are a common way of obtaining additional market share. They respond quickly to any signs of market opportunity, and do so with little research or analysis. Majority of the respondents indicated that the defender strategy enables VIP to find, and maintain a secure and relatively stable market for its services. Rather than being on the cutting edge of technological innovation, defender tries to insulate themselves from changes wherever possible. The respondents further indicated that increasing levels of competitive aggressiveness enables VIP to take a relatively greater number of competitive actions. Taking a relatively greater number of competitive actions than their rivals outperform those rivals, even in situations or industries where firms have collectively deescalated their competitive intensity.

4.3.4. Working of the Response Strategies Adopted by VIP

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the response strategies adopted by VIP to competition were working. According to the respondents the response strategies employed by the VIP to counter competition from its competitors enabled the firm to have vigorous promotion strategies, service differentiation, continuous research into emerging technologies and have an impact in the market, operational efficiency, continual improvements to the network, Information Technology governance processes, information security processes which have all been instrumental in increasing competitive advantage. The respondents unanimously agreed that line managers implement the strategic responses within the department which are reviewed or amended on a yearly basis.

The respondents further indicated that the strategic response by VIP has enabled the firm to meet the change in customer demands, and has enabled the firm to assert uniqueness and superiority over the rivals by constructing a hierarchical relationship between themselves and others. In addition, the respondents indicated that on matters of ICT the school has installed WIFI and lecturers send the notes in advance to students on email.

4.3.5. Adequacy of the Resources the Organization has Devoted to Strategic Responses

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the amount of resources the organization has devoted to strategic responses is adequate. According to the respondent the resources available had enabled the firm to develop strategic response appropriately. This was depicted by the increase in the number of students joining the institution as the services had a wide scope and they were seen to be appropriate to the students. In addition, the respondents indicated that through the available resources the institution has managed to consistently market itself locally and globally through the use of the local media, an up to date website, education fairs, open door policy encouraging enrolment of foreign students, the institution open days where all the units and departments of the institution show case their products and services. VIP has over the years developed a calendar of its marketing activities each year through education fairs and open days. A budget is allocated to the calendar events each year.

4.3.6. VIP Change of Strategy

The respondents were requested to indicate whether VIP is considering change of strategy. According to the respondents it was noted that VIP is considering change of

strategy though in the near future to focus more on customer service and consequently an increased market share. The respondents indicated that the change of strategy to focus on customer service would ensure the customers feel valued and ensure a cordial relationship with its clients. VIP has decided to put in place strategies that ensure that customer service is not compromised. The launching of the institution service charter in future will make it evident that VIP is committed to serving its clients efficiently. The service charter states that VIP commits to providing various services to all its stakeholders within the specified time frame. VIP has also installed customer feedback boxes on all offices for gathering regular feedback to help improve on service delivery. Furthermore, VIP carries out lecturer valuations by issuing questionnaires to students three times a year, feedback received and reviewed to ensure quality of education is not compromised.

4.4. Factors That Influence Development of Competitive Strategies

This section presents the findings on factors that influence development of competitive strategies. The findings are presented in subsequent headings.

4.4.1. VIP Main Competitors

The respondents were requested to indicate VIP main competitors. According to the respondent's VIP is currently faced by competition both from the local and international institutions. Local ICT and accountancy institutions have aggressively opened branches directly opposite or near VIP and also in almost all other towns. In addition, other competitors included colleges and universities offering KNEC examined courses. The Chief Executive Officer described the situation as worrying. He indicated that the branches of the institution where the ICT students attend classes during the day has been

affected with most students preferring the VIP main campus. However, he indicated that the evening programmes have not been affected. Most of the new institutions are promising prospective students better facilities and services. Although VIP still stands out ahead of the rest it is necessary to rethink the strategies that will ensure the other institutions do not close the gap.

4.4.2. Organization View of the Competitors

The respondents were requested to indicate the organization view of the competitors. According to the respondent's VIP views its competitors as worrying and if new strategies are not developed the new institutions may end up closing the gap. To counter the level of competition VIP has initiated strategies that are competitive in the current environment. Strategies like product differentiation, product diversification and quality customer service are being utilized by VIP. To address the challenge of limited finance resources the finance officer pointed out that VIP has over the years ensured it operates within its means. VIP has also lobbied for the Government to disburse full capitation to help it to implement projects that affect the strategic plan. There is also need for the institution to shift focus on other donors other than the Government to fund its projects and operations.

4.4.3. Changes in the Competitive Environment

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the competitive environment is becoming tougher or weaker. According to the respondents changes in the competitive environment are becoming tougher as new institutions are devising new methods of carrying out their activities and using the modern technology to offer their services. The new institutions are poaching competent staff from VIP through promises of higher

salaries and better staff services. Also the slow implementation of policies especially at the lower level units has made VIP level of competition to slow down due to the disconnect between the higher level and the lower level units.

4.4.4. Aggressiveness of the VIP's Response

The respondents were requested to indicate the aggressiveness of the VIP's response to competition, technological changes, economic changes, and political changes. According to the respondent's VIP has taken necessary steps of attracting and retaining qualified and competent staff by providing them with unique benefits and good terms of service like offering them unlimited medical cover. Through the qualified staff the institution is able to handle increased competition, changes in technology, changes in the economic conditions as well as changes in the political scope of the country. VIP has employed temporary staff where there is scarcity of employees. Respondents also indicated that VIP has emphasized on strict adherence to the service charter and have a strong and robust feedback system for all stakeholders to ensure continued customer royalty. To address the issue of limited capacity a modern examination Centre had already been built at the main campus that could accommodate a large number of students. In addition, the respondents indicated that VIP is concentrating on offering new courses that are marketable and thus they are constantly researching on them.

4.4.5. Influence of Various Factors on Competitive Threat

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the competitive threat was influenced by possible loss of qualified staff, reduced market share, offering of competitive courses, superior technology, superior human capital, and financial risk.

According to the respondents the competitive threat was influenced by loss of qualified staff, reduced market share, offering of competitive courses, superior technology, superior human capital, and financial risk. Loss of qualified staff to rival institutions weakened the institutions operation as it was forced to look for new staffs who were less qualified. This made other institutions to be more competitive than VIP. The respondents further stated that the reduced market share affected the VIP profitability that weakened its normal operations.

4.4.6. Effect of Changes in the Market Due to Competition

The respondents were requested to indicate whether the organization has been affected by changes in the market due to competition. According to the respondents the institution operations have been greatly affected as new competitors have set in. The institutions have had reduction in the number of students as they seek to join other institutions offering similar services but with more modern facilities. The institution has experience loss of qualified staff as well as reduced market share.

4.4.7. Changes which VIP has Initiated in Response to Changes in the Competitive Environment

The respondents were requested to indicate the changes which VIP has initiated in response to changes in the competitive environment. According to the respondents the VIP will continue to recruit new and skilled director in the spirit of succession planning. Others indicated that some class rooms have not been utilized fully like in campuses outside the main campus in Nairobi. VIP has also taken necessary steps of attracting and retaining qualified and competent staff by providing them with unique benefits and good terms of service like offering them unlimited medical cover. It has also changed location

within the town centres to ensure it cuts on rent associated costs. VIP has employed temporary staff where there is scarcity of employees. Respondents also indicated that VIP has emphasized on strict adherence to the service charter and have a strong and robust feedback system for all stakeholders to ensure continued customer loyalty.

4.4.8. Effect of Responses on Day to Day Running of the Organization

The respondents were requested to indicate whether responses by VIP affected day to day running of the organization. According to the respondents the institution day to day running has been affected as the new strategies developed needs new training which comes at a cost within the institution. The respondents stated the institution consists of its structures, policies and corporate culture all of which can become dysfunctional in a rapidly changing business environment. The external environment is dynamic and often results in uncertainties for the organization. Out of the constant interaction between such a dynamic environment and the organization, opportunities and threats emerge which may greatly affect the day to day operations of the institution.

4.5. Discussion of Findings

According to Porter 1987, for firms to gain competitive advantage, the firms will need to be innovative, have good reputation and maintain good relationships. From the findings discussed above, the researcher could comfortably derive these factors from the VIP values and practices which ensure that VIP maintains its customer's loyalty.

The study found that the strategic management process at VIP the guided by general group wide guidelines that are developed by the senior leadership team in consultation with all employees at various levels. The study also found that VIP takes into consideration a detailed analysis of both the internal and external environment to ensure that key

lessons are learnt from the past in order to inform the institution's future plans and direction. Brown, (2010) suggest that firms should combine their resources and skills into core competencies, loosely defined as that which a firm does distinctively well in relation to competitors. Competitive advantages are realized only when the firm combines assortments of resources in such a way that they achieve a unique competency or capability that is valued in the marketplace.

Secondly, VIP reputation is undisputed both locally and internationally from its great achievements over the years. It has been attracting students from all walks of life. The findings of the study revealed that VIP has distinctive capabilities that include provision of quality education, reputable research and consultancy work. The capabilities are supported by competitive strategies like attracting and retaining competent and experienced staff, efficiency in service delivery demonstrated by effective implementation of the service charter, use of modern technology, regular reviews of the curriculum and continuous development of new programmes relevant to the market. VIP has utilized its pool of competent work force specializing in almost all areas to create value from within and therefore it is difficult for any other institution to replicate this. The result of these is sustained competitive advantage

The study found that VIP has diversified its funding scope from institutional donors to the private sector and multilateral institutions through engagement with the government. They respond quickly to any signs of market opportunity, and do so with little research or analysis. Porter (1987), noted that the success or failure of an organization is majorly influenced by the competition factor. He argues that competitive advantage occurs where

the organization is able to offer similar gains of products as rival competitors, however, at a low production cost, hence having achieved a cost advantage.

The study found that managers implement the strategic responses within the department which are reviewed or amended on a yearly basis. The respondents further indicated that the strategic response by VIP has enabled the firm to meet the change in customer demands, and has enabled the firm to assert uniqueness and superiority over the rivals by constructing a hierarchical relationship between themselves and others. The study found resources available had enabled the firm to develop strategic response appropriately. Grant (1998) argues that the two sources of above average performance include locating an organization where environmental conditions are favourable to enable a rate of return that is above the respective competitors. The other is for an organization to ensure that it has advantage of position which will see it achieve returns that are above the industry's average. This was depicted by the increase in the number of students joining the institution as the services had a wide scope and they were seen to be appropriate to the students.

The study found that VIP is currently faced by competition both from the local and international. Local ICT and accountancy institutions have aggressively opened branches directly opposite or near VIP and also in almost all other towns. To address the challenge of limited finance resources the finance officer pointed out that VIP has over the years ensured it operates within its means. Hunt and Morgan (1995) propose that potential resources can be most usefully categorized as financial, physical, legal, human, organizational, informational, and relational". They go on to state that a comparative

advantage in resources can translate into a position of competitive advantage in the marketplace.

The study found that changes in the competitive environment are becoming tougher as new institutions are devising new methods of carrying out their activities and using the modern technology to offer their services. Grant (1998) argues that the two sources of above average performance include locating an organization where environmental conditions are favourable to enable a rate of return that is above the respective competitors. The other is for an organization to ensure that it has advantage of position which will see it achieve returns that are above the industry's average.

Studies conducted on the application of strategies to achieve competitive advantage have confirmed that for an organization to be profitable it needs to adopt to some sort of strategy. Waithaka (2012) did a study on competitive strategies at the University of Nairobi and concluded that the university adopted product differentiation and cost leadership strategies. Mazzarol (1998), did a study on the factors that are critical to the competitive advantage for education and service enterprise within the international market. He concluded that offering quality products, managing risk efficiently, proper resource allocation and utilization were critical factors. Mathooko (2013) carried out a survey in public universities and concluded that loss of qualified staff, technological developments and financial associated risks were some factors that led universities to develop competitive strategies. The findings of these studies have revealed that VIP also adopts similar strategies which are influenced by similar factors.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This section provides the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations from chapter four of the study. It further provides a recommendation on the areas for further studies.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1. Strategies adopted by VIP to develop competitive advantage

The study brought out the fact that VIP has plans to enact a new strategy in the near future with constant review and monitoring to gauge effectiveness. The strategic plan will state clearly the strategic issues to be addressed in the plan period and the strategies necessary for addressing them. The strategic plan is cascaded to the lower levels of the institution. The strategic issues of units are drafted in relation with the performance targets and within the budget allocation. The strategies adopted by the VIP in the current strategic plan include managing the institution efficiently, pricing, proper resource utilization, risk management, prospector and defender strategies, producing quality and holistic students, contributing to scientific and technological and innovations and enhancement of the competitiveness of the university. VIP was able to formulate and implement effectively competitive strategies that are able to effectively address the strategic issues despite the challenges posed by the external environment.

5.2.2. Factors That Influence Development of Competitive Strategies at VIP

The study found out that both local and international competitors influence development of strategies at VIP. Local ICT and accountancy institutions have aggressively opened branches directly opposite or near VIP and also in almost all other towns. It was deduced that the branches of the institution where the ICT students attend classes during the day has been affected with most students preferring the VIP main campus. The study found that VIP views its competitors as worrying and if new strategies are not developed the new institutions may end up closing the gap. To counter the level of competition VIP has initiated strategies that are competitive in the current environment. Strategies like product differentiation, product diversification and quality customer service are being utilized by VIP. To address the challenge of limited finance resources the finance officer pointed out that VIP has over the years ensured it operates within its means.

The potential loss of qualified staff has been a key factor that influences the formulation of competitive strategies in the institution. VIP has well trained lecturers who are recruited after undergoing lengthy, informative and holistic interviews. This enable recruiters at VIP to be assured that they have the best lecturers in the market, and the loss of such a skilled work force would be a blow to the institution. The study found that changes in the competitive environment are becoming tougher as new institutions are devising new methods of carrying out their activities and using the modern technology to offer their services. The new institutions are poaching competent staff from VIP through promises of higher salaries and better staff services.

VIP has taken necessary steps of attracting and retaining qualified and competent staff by providing them with unique benefits and good terms of service like offering them unlimited medical cover. Through the qualified staff the institution be able to handle increased competition, changes in technology, changes in the economic conditions as well as changes in the political scope of the country. VIP has employed temporary staff where there is scarcity of employees.

The study found that the competitive threat was was influenced also by reduced market share, offering of competitive courses, superior technology, superior human capital, and financial risk. Loss of qualified staff to rival institutions weakened the institutions operation as it was forced to look for new staffs that were less qualified. This made other institutions to be more competitive than VIP. Others indicated that some class rooms have not been utilized fully like in campuses outside the main campus in Nairobi. VIP has also taken necessary steps of attracting and retaining qualified and competent staff by providing them with unique benefits and good terms of service like offering them unlimited medical cover. VIP has employed temporary staff where there is scarcity of employees.

5.3. Conclusion

The study findings indicate that there is a link between the implementation of competitive strategies and achieving a competitive advantage in VIP. Such strategies like quality customer service, effective pricing, differentiation, marketing, diversification among others were viewed as essential for achieving competitive advantage levels. The study also concluded that VIP takes into consideration a detailed analysis of both the internal and external environment to ensure that key lessons are learnt from the past in order to

inform the institution's future plans and direction. The institution recruits lecturers who can serve in both administrative capacities and lecture in classrooms.

The study concluded that VIP has decided to put in place strategies that ensure that customer service is not compromised. The lecture's review are of great importance. The effectiveness of such strategies is subject to audit after every three semesters. The study concluded that changes in the competitive environment are becoming tougher as new institutions are devising new methods of carrying out their activities and using the modern technology to offer their services. The new institutions are poaching competent staff from VIP through promises of higher salaries and better staff services. Through the qualified staff the institution is able to handle increased competition, changes in technology, changes in the economic conditions as well as changes in the political scope of the country. VIP has employed temporary staff where there is scarcity of employees.

The study concluded that the competitive threat was influenced by loss of qualified staff, reduced market share, offering of competitive courses, superior technology, superior human capital, and financial risk. Loss of qualified staff to rival institutions weakened the institutions operation as it was forced to look for new staffs who were less qualified. This made other institutions to be more competitive than VIP.

5.4. Recommendations

In the wake of the major happenings in the current turbulent environment, the challenges have increased and the public expectations are high for VIP to demonstrate a leadership role in learning and research. It is therefore inevitable for the institution to embark on a process of change and rejuvenation. VIP will have to develop a flexible strategic structure, which will favour the use of strategic tactics, and activities that will configure

the strategies whenever the competitive advantage appears to be at threat. VIP has used various strategies of differentiating its products to maintain long-term competitive advantage. The choice of these strategies has emanated from its strategic issues or challenges, its resource capacity and the culture of the university. The competitive strategies adopted in the past and resulted in successful outcomes should be maintained while reviewing strategies that did not work and taking corrective action. Unfamiliar environments will call for the application of new strategies that are suitable for such environments.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was carried out under very challenging circumstances. Not much research work has been done on competitive advantage by higher learning institutions. Therefore, conceptual data was not easily available. The bureaucratic structures of learning institutions are still being followed most of which have become obsolete due to the many changes that have occurred in the recent years in the education sector in Kenya. The time allocated and resources were very limited. This constrained the scope as well as the depth of the research.

It was also difficult to get appointments for interviews and a lot of time was wasted visiting some offices severally. The distance covered was also a limiting factor as the researcher spent a lot of time moving from one campus to the next most of which were outside the city of Nairobi. Some of the interviewees were reluctant to be interviewed while others were very busy or out of office.

Data collected was qualitative in nature and therefore the researcher was required to analyse this data using content analysis. The method is subjective and involves a lot of decision making which can lead to different conclusions by different researchers while analysing same research data. However, with much sacrifice the researcher managed to collect enough data that was sufficient enough to establish strategies adopted by the University of Nairobi to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

5.6. Suggestions for Further Research

This study sought to determine the strategies adopted by vision institute of professionals in Kenya to achieve competitive advantage. Considering the contextual differences of various organizations resulting from differences in structures, systems, leadership cultures and goals the findings of this study may not work for the different organizations. Other higher learning institutions have come up with different management styles. In Kenya churches, individuals or government manages higher institutions of learning. Their context is therefore different and there is need to study strategies adopted by these institutions to gain competitive advantage. The study focused on the strategies that were adopted by VIP to develop competitive advantage as well as the factors that influence the development of competitive strategies. Further research will complement the finding of this study by providing information on what VIP should consider while formulating strategies, tools to measure effectiveness of such strategies and how the resources can be utilized efficiently to achieve the overall organization's objectives.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

A. Organization Data

1. Interviewee's position in the organization?
2. How long have you worked with VIP?
3. Has the organization structure changed in the last two years, if yes, what major changes have taken place?

B. Competitive Strategies

Who are the main people tasked with development of strategies in at VIP?

4. What strategies has VIP developed in response to competition if any?
5. How aggressive are strategies if any?
6. In your opinion, are the response strategies to competition working?
7. Do you think the amount of resources the organization devoted to strategic responses is adequate?
8. Is VIP considering change of strategy and if yes, why?

C. Factors That Influence Development of Competitive Strategies

9. In your opinion who are VIP main competitors?
10. What is the organization view on these competitors?
11. In your own opinion, is the competitive environment becoming tougher or weaker?
12. Please give reasons for the above answer.
13. How aggressive is VIP's response to;
 - a) Competition
 - b) Technological changes
 - c) Economic changes
 - d) Political changes
14. How have the following influenced the competitive threat that you are facing
 - i. Possible loss of qualified staff
 - ii. Reduced market share
 - iii. Offering of competitive courses
 - iv. Superior technology
 - v. Superior human capital
 - vi. financial risk
15. How has your organization been affected by changes in the market due to competition (in terms of structural changes)?
16. Explain the changes which VIP has initiated in response to changes in the competitive environment
17. How has these responses affected day to day running of the organization?