

**STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE NAIROBI HOSPITAL IN KENYA TO
ACHIEVE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

BY


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DECLARATION


This research project is my work and it has not been presented in any other university.

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This research project has been submitted for examinations with my approval as the supervisor.

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DEDICATION

Eric and Mum

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KMP	Knowledge Management Process
SCA	Sustainable Competitive Advantage
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TNH	The Nairobi Hospital

ABSTRACT

Firms require different plans to manage their success. Strategies are what determine value and success of firms. Without effective strategic direction, firms cannot achieve their long term value. The goal of this inquiry was to determine some of the plans used by TNH in gaining their power over rivals. The analysis was based on case study model. Information was gained from eight managers at the TNH. Through the use of interview, data was obtained. The analysis was based on content analysis models. From the findings, it is true that adoption of unique strategies promotes the firm success. The inquiry noted that TNH has adopted different plans to achieve their goals. Some of the programs widely used in the firm included the adoption of quality services, the enhancement of stakeholder management and diversification strategies. The study review indicated that the firm also used cost cutting plans, use of innovation and research systems and development of customer management plans. In their operations, the study noted that the firm used focus plans, brand differentiation and offering unique services through stakeholder and partnership models. All these new models and plans improve the success of the firm. As such, it was concluded that TNH should continue using its unique strategies to improve its success. However, service delivery and quality services were viewed as one of the major factors that led to its success. Offering and introducing diverse services including publications on medical aspects, hiring professionals and offering meeting as well as laundry services also improved the firm success in times of economic crisis. It is recommended and considered that the management of the firm should adopt effective diversification plans going forward. The firm should also adopt ways of improving its quality control and avoid errors that may damage its brand image and reputation. Without proper service integration, the firm may fail to achieve its plans. It is imperative that the firm adopt ways of hiring medical experts and motivate their workers to achieve their success. With focus on the East African region, the firm should control their price range to meet the low income needs of various people in the region. This is one of the ways that can help promote sustainability of the services and activities in the firm.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The business environment has undergone varied changes compelling managers to establish and adopt responsive strategies to withstand the competition in the market place (Issa, Kabalan & El-ammare, 2018). Stiff competition in the world business environment presents technological changes which influence the demand, quality of the product and services and price sensitivity by consumers (Dirisu, Ilioya & Ibiduni, 2014). Strategy is critical in order to achieve competitive advantage since lack of it lays ground for failure (Lovas & Ghoshal, 2010). Business entities adopt various strategies in order to articulate themselves in their operating environment (Porter, 1985), create synergy among stakeholders that enhance commitment towards improved performance (Aremu,2010) as well as proper management of change, resources mobilization and differentiation of an entity from its rivals (Sharabati & Fuqaha, 2014).

The study was guided by Porter`s Theory of Competitive Advantage and Institutional Theory. The Porter`s Theory holds that a firm can achieve competitive advantage that is sustainable within its market area by deploying three strategies driven by management of costs, emphasis and distinctiveness (Porter, 1984). This theory predicts that for a company to succeed it must adopt to either differentiation, low-cost or focus strategy and companies that are stuck in the middle will be less successful than companies that specializes in any of these strategies.

On the other hand, Institutional Theory postulates that organizations carry out their business functions as prescribed by social frameworks of values, norms as well as assumptions that are often taken for granted with regards to economic behavior perceived to be acceptable. In this regards firms are advised to shape human motives higher in relation to economic drives in a socially justifiable manner (Zukin & DiMaggio, 1990).

In Kenya, hospitals were introduced as warehouses meant for patients dying from infectious diseases (WHO,2006), however the sector have advanced over time to not only diagnose but also treat even chronic diseases (International Finance Corporation, 1995). The Kenyan formal healthcare industry comprises of the mission hospitals, public and private hospitals as well as private nursing homes (Berman & Benson, 1995). According to Mburu (2007) public hospitals rely heavily on government funding to run their functions while mission hospitals rely on donor funding thus only private hospitals are majorly driven by competition and profitability in their operations. This study shall therefore focus on the private hospitals operating in Nairobi City, a case study of The Nairobi Hospital to establish strategies that the hospital has put in place in order to enhance its competitive advantage.

1.1.1 The Concept of Strategy

Strategy may be interpreted as a long-term vision, objectives and goals, adoption of necessary courses of action, as well as allocating adequate resources necessary to meet the set objectives (Bryson, Lauren & Slyke, 2018). Bert, Walker & Monster (2019) present strategy as modelling of purposes, objectives, plans, policies and goals to be achieved in way which describes the future of an entity by choosing activities required to make an organization succeed in creating a sustainable uniqueness in the market. Strategic management which is a major function of the top leadership has been widely applied in today's organizations as guided by the assumption that if it is practiced successfully, it yields positive effects on the organizational performance (Bert et al., 2019). According to Tapera, (2016) there are four major levels of strategies which include; operational level strategies, functional, business unit and corporate level strategies. Execution of the strategies at these four levels facilitate the creation of blue prints for moving into the future which is critical for success (Kabey, 2019).

Business entities have a wide range of alternative strategies to employ in their effort to achieve competitive advantage. Porter (2012) reports that business enterprises have options of choosing

from three distinct generic strategies necessary to achieve competitive advantage. These strategies include; focus, low-cost as well as differentiation strategy. Kim and Mauborgne, (2005) advocates for blue ocean strategies which focus on exploiting new markets by firms unlike Porters generic strategies which focuses on outshining the competitors in the same market area. According to Ansoff matrix, firms may devise strategies to gain entry into the existing markets with existing products, develop new markets for the existing products, develop new products for the already existing markets or purely diversify into new markets with new products.

1.1.2 The Concept of Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage can be well interpreted to mean the state which facilitates an entity to produce goods and services at an affordable price to satisfy the needs as well as desires of the target consumers (Wagner, 2014). The competitive advantage of any business enterprise is connected to many variables which include intellectual customer support, brand, quality, cost structure, as well as distribution network among other factors. Business entities with sustainable competitive advantage, constantly produce products with qualities that are in line with the key buying pursuit for the majority of their customer. Sustainable competitive advantage promotes superior performance as well as economic value over a prolonged period. In addition, sustainable competitive advantage is associated with continually adjusting to the surroundings and an entity`s resilience to overcome efforts to duplicate a firm`s advantages over market competition (Wagner, 2014).

The determination of the competitive position of an enterprise indicates whether the investment in the enterprise was successful and if it is capable of generating profit above the industry average (Lu & Wang, 2016). According to Porter (1996) competitive advantage pays attention mainly on differentiation advantage, cost leadership as well as focus strategy. The scholar further noted that competitive forces can be assessed in various dimensions such as customers

who are powerful, threat of substitutes, rivalry and threat of new entrants. Barney and Hesterly (2014) stated that two groups of legislative attractiveness exist, explicitly provisional and sustainable competitiveness as a result, when an entity conquers competitive advantage, it usually results to high profit margins though, the margins so obtained attract further rivalry that may bound the period that the organization enjoys the competitive edge hence in most cases competitive advantage is temporary.

1.1.3 The Health Sector in Kenya

The structure of the healthcare system in Kenya is hierarchical where it begins with primary and community healthcare units followed by high level units such as referral hospitals where more complex health problems are dealt with. The primary healthcare units include dispensaries, community units and health centers categorized into level 1, 2, 3 4 and 5 depending on the maximum number of patients a facility can effectively serve (Republic of Kenya, 2014). The level 5 hospitals are provincial hospitals with capacity to serve 1,000,000 while the highest-level hospitals are the level 6 hospitals which serve at a national level. Some examples of the level 6 hospitals in Kenya include KUTRRH, MTRH, TNH, KNH among others all of which are regulated by the ministry of health headed by a minister who report directly to the president.

The promulgation of the 2010 constitution certain roles and responsibilities within the sector have been devolved to the counties` management in an effort to boost health coverage (RoK-MoH, 2014). By 2014 Kenya had 7795 health facilities out of which the public sector operated 48% of them, 38% were operated by the private commercial sector while 14% by the non-commercial private sector. Most of the health facilities are located in urban centers which leads to regional imbalance in terms of the distribution of the health facilities (Rok-MoH, 2014). Kenya has established a health policy for 2012-2030 that is in line with the aspirations of the

country's Vision 2030 and MDGs. The main focus of the policy is to achieve the highest possible standards of health which conform to the needs of the Kenya population.

1.1.4 The Nairobi Hospital

The Nairobi Hospital (TNH) was established in 1954, to offer health services throughout East Africa region. The facility focused on providing patient care that is first class by employing professionals with high qualifications and investing in advanced facilities, ensuring maximum patient privacy as well as confidentiality. After the 1963 independence in Kenya, there was massive migration of Europeans. The population of clients at TNH dropped dramatically, however the economy readjusted and this together with the sale of Maia Carberry Nursing Home and the closing of the Princess Elizabeth Hospital resulted in the reinstatement of patient throughput at TNH to present levels. By 2001, TNH was a referral hospital with world-class standards which rendered health care services to people of distinct classes.

Key services offered at The Nairobi Hospital include inpatient and outpatient services, radiology, ambulance, pharmacy, and nursing services. Given that health care is an important commodity for a nation's workforce (Alumelu et al., 2015), and that its impact directly affects the productivity of labour, competitiveness of the entity is of utmost importance. The Nairobi Hospital is known in Eastern Africa to be among the leading private health care providers in the region. Since its opening in 1954 it has grown increasing its capacity and technology used to diagnose and treat its patients. This includes gaining world class critical care unit and also increasing its outpatient centers from 2 to 6 bringing its services closer to all residents of Nairobi. The company has continued to grow despite the growing competition in the field due to the effective strategic management process it has employed.

1.2 Research Problem

The objective of establishing a strategy is to put in measures to guide the direction of an entity which ensures that objectives are achieved while simultaneously providing responses to threats and opportunities in the external surroundings (Simons, 2013). Porter (1980) holds that firms should devise corporate strategies necessary to navigate changes in their operating environment. Due to dynamism in the global competitive environment formulation of strategies becomes crucial for survival (Acur & Englyst, 2013). Raduan, Jegak, Haslinda and Alimin (2014) holds that business entities are guided by different objectives but the two key ones include; to achieve competitive advantage and increase performance better than the competitors. Porter (2012) reports that business enterprises have options of choosing from three distinct generic strategies to achieve competitive advantage. Different strategies have varying impacts on competitive advantage. For instance, Adiguzel, (2020) reports that competitive strategies have significant impact on the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage by firms. This argument is supported by Jaya, Nasir, and Dewi, (2021).

In Kenya, hospitals were introduced as warehouses meant for patients dying from infectious diseases (WHO,2006), however the sector have advanced over time to not only diagnose but also treat even chronic diseases (International Finance Corporation, 1995). The Nairobi Hospital (TNH), was established in 1954, to offer health services throughout East Africa region. The company has continued to grow despite the growing completion in the field due to the effective strategic management process it has employed. According to Mburu (2007) public hospitals rely heavily on government funding to run their functions while mission hospitals rely on donor funding thus only private hospitals are majorly driven by competition and profitability in their operations which makes it appropriate for this study to focus on private hospitals.

Studies have been conducted around the world on the concept of strategies and competitive advantage as discussed below. Internationally, Mishra and Phung (2016) carried out a study to investigate differentiation strategy and its impact on performance of listed firms in Vietnam. The study established a negative effect of the strategy on the performance of an entity. Ali, and Anwar (2021) studied how generic strategies by Porter impact on competitive advantage of firms operating in the banking sector in Iraq. The study found a strong relation between competitive advantage and cost leadership strategy but a negative relation with differentiation strategy. Kharub, Mor and Sharma (2019) studied how cost leadership competitive strategy is associated with firm performance where no direct relationship was established. Saprong and Tandoh (2015) researched on the effect of strategy on business surroundings of Ecobank in Ghana. The study presents a positive impact of competitive strategies on bank performance. Karikari (2015) investigated the effect of Porter`s generic strategies on how the hotels in Kumasi perform. The study established that the generic strategies had a positive and significant effect on hotel performance. Elmi (2021) investigated the effect of competitive strategies on organizational performance with a specific focus on telecommunications entities in Mogadishu-Somali where low-cost, focus and differentiation strategies had a significant positive association with performance of telecommunication firms in Mogadishu-Somalia. It can be observed that the findings of these studies are not consistent with regards to the link between strategy and competitive advantage.

Njoroge (2016) investigated the strategies used by shopping malls operating from Nairobi County to navigate competitive pressure where it is established that most preferred strategy was branding done through aggressive advertisement as well as marketing of the products. Chege (2016) studied the strategies applied by entities in the commercial banking sector in Kenya to manage service quality, achieve market leadership, maximize profits, among other objectives. The findings of the study reveal that ICT strategy is critical in supporting service

delivery by banking entities in enhancing customer satisfaction as well as competitive edge. Koech (2021) on the other hand investigated the strategies adopted by Brookside Dairies to enhance its competitiveness. The study established that the generic competitive strategies were adopted by Brookside Dairies where cost leadership was deployed as the core strategy.

From the above studies, contradicting findings can be identified for instance, while all the sampled studies have established a direct association of the generic competitive strategies with the firm`s competitive advantage, the study by Mishra and Phung (2016) presented a negative relationship while the study by Kharub, Mor and Sharma (2019) found no direct relationship between cost leadership competitive strategy and firm performance. The other limitation of the above studies is that most of them have focused on the impact of generic competitive strategies on organization performance and not on competitive advantage, these studies have largely concentrated on generic strategies only. Finally, the studies have focused majorly on the banking industry and other sectors and not firms in the health care sector which therefore leaves the gap to be investigated. What strategies does The Nairobi Hospital adopt to achieve competitive advantage?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to establish strategies adopted by The Nairobi Hospital to achieve competitive advantage.

1.4 Value of the Study

The study`s findings would contribute to the theories in literature as well as the conceptualization of various strategies as expounded by different scholars and their correlation with and impact to competitive advantage. Researchers and scholar would in future find this study useful since it forms the basis for future research work. This study would act as a focal

point for discussions around the concept of strategies best fit for entities operating in the health sector.

The study`s outcome would guide the management of The Nairobi Hospital in reviewing and determining whether the strategies adopted are actually adequate and effective within the health sector and the business environment it is operating. The findings would further serve to provide information which shall guide the current as well as future strategic planning on strategy formulation, implementation as well as evaluation of different strategies adopted by organizations in the health sector.

The study can also be relied on by policy makers and regulators in the healthcare sector to establish the necessary policies and regulation with regards to fair competition among the players, quality standards as well as proper co-ordination between private firms and the government through public-private partnerships among others.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of other scholars work around strategy and competitive advantage. It presents theoretical review, the link between strategy and competitive advantage, empirical review and research gaps.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

This study is guided by Porter`s Theory of Competitive Advantage and Institutional Theory as discussed below;

2.2.1 Porter`s Theory of Competitive Advantage

The theory of competitive advantage was established by Michael Porter in the year 1980. The theory identifies five key forces which pose different dimensions of threats to an entity and set the foundation for competition in the industries in which firms operate. Porter (1980) holds that firms should devise corporate strategies necessary to navigate changes in their operating environment. In the year 1998, Michael Porter predicted that a firm must adopt at least differentiation, low cost or focus strategy in order to realize sustainable competitive advantage as well as excellent performance. And companies stuck in the middle will be less successful than companies that employ any of those three strategies.

Kevin and Subramaniam (1996) criticize this theory on the ground that the theory assumes a perfect market in which market players have all the control of planning and responding to the forces of competition in the market place in the real economic environment, markets are not perfect. Another ground of criticism is that the theory only alludes itself to external environmental forces as the only sources of competition thus ignores internal sources of

competition. In addition, Porter`s theory puts much emphasis on the industry as a whole than on the specific firm individually. Asad (2012) reports that business firms should keep eye on the five competitive forces to manage them in their favor in order to compete favorably. Porter`s theory is therefore applicable to this study since helps in analyzing the level of competition faced by TNH in the health industry in Kenya.

2.2.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional theory was established in the year 1983 by DiMaggio and Powell where it is argued that the environment in which firms operate and pressure exerted from the market pose impact on how organizations structure themselves. The origin of this theory is founded in the work of Meyer and Rowan (1977) who argue that firms are constantly facing pressures from outside their task environment thus they must adopt structures and strategies anticipated to be social. The pressure to conform to the social expectation is thus perceived to emanate from the institutional surroundings. The theory predicts that social pressures at the industrial level create room for similarities in the organizational practices since these pressures apply equally to all firms under a particular industry.

Alexander (2014) criticizes institutional theory on the basis that it fails to present practically the standards to guide the scrutinization of business firms in relation to their surroundings. The theory is also criticized from varied points of view such as over emphasis on conformity to the social expectations may compromise the efficiency of the business entities, much reliance on social prescriptions and not reality (Zucker, 1987) among others. However, this theory is relevant to this study since it provides an avenue to assess organizations not only from the objective opportunities in real sense but also opportunities that are institutionally defined to guide the adoption of various institutional structures, strategies as well as practices necessary to operate in their industries.

2.3 Strategy and Competitive advantage

Anwar and Abd Zebari (2015) define strategy as the art of establishing a strong defence over the five competing factors to generate a sustainable competitive advantage. Anwar and Ghafoor, (2017) hold that though the internal strengths and weaknesses of a given business entity differs from those of the rival entities, the firm can only have two major forms of competitive advantage which includes cost leadership or differentiation strategy where a firm must choose between being a differentiator or a cost leader. As a result of these two forms of competitive advantage Aziz et al. (2021) establishes three generic competitive strategies (Low-cost, focus and differentiation strategy) which are adopted in different types of businesses (Demir et al., 2020). The discussion below presents the interaction between different strategies and competitive advantage.

Through cost leadership strategy, a firm endeavor to adopt initiatives that are most cost friendly in order to price their products much lower compared to the prices of their rivalries in the market thus achieve a higher market share (Porter, 2015). The low-cost strategy is associated with advantages as a result of efficiency in the efficiency of the firm (Akan et al., 2016). A study by Kamiti et al., (2021) has shown a positive association of adopting cost leadership strategy with competitive advantage in the milk industry in Kenya where advantages such as increased operations span, investment in new business opportunities efficient operating systems are realized. These findings correspond to the findings of coffee shops operating in Jakarta, Sitanggang (2017) at MTCon Co., Kusdiartini et al., (2020) at Monica collection.

The complexity of approaches to modern business operations, stiff competition and rapid technological changes triggers the need for business entities to devise different strategies in order to achieve competitive advantage (Miano, & Wamalwa, 2021). Si, Liu and Takala (2010) report that the competitiveness of an entity operating in a complex and dynamic environment

relies much on the ability to establish distinctive differences between the product of the firm to those of the rivals. This therefore presents differentiation strategy as vital to achieve competitive advantage by firms (Porter, 1990). The study by Miano, & Wamalwa, 2021 present a positive association between differentiation strategies and competitive advantage for five-star hotels in Kenya. Similar findings are presented by Dirisu et al., (2013) at Unilever in Nigeria, Barin et al., (2015) in Brazilian firms among others.

The needs of specific niche of the market may be differ based on cost or differentiation, this is addressed through focus strategy as proposed by Pearce and Robinson (2011). This strategy is based on the believe that a firm is more capable of serving the needs of a specific target market easier compared to its rivals who serve a broad market. By serving a narrow market niche, a firm has the ability to tailor its products to the specific needs of the customers in that given niche hence effectively implement both low cost as well as differentiation strategies (Porter, 1998). A study by Musengi, (2021) reports that focus strategy positively contributes to the attainment of competitive advantage at NCBA bank thus recommends that the bank should tailor unique products to specific market segment at lower costs to become market leaders in those segments.

The reasons behind certain entities becoming more successful at the time when others fail, led to the establishment of value innovation and later Blue Ocean Strategy by Kim and Mauborgn, (2005). The two scholars carried out case studies in different firms including Netflix, Yellow Tail, Cirque du Soleil, Apple, Salesforces and South West Airline among others where it was established that non-successful entities place more focus on beating their competitors, however, successful firms did not focus on their competitors but rather on value innovations (Kim & Mauborgne, 1997). Harsh and Abusaleem (2016) established a strong connection between Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) and competitive advantage in telecommunication entities operating in

Saudi Arabia. Similar findings are presented by AlAyoubi, Mansour Mohammad Ali (2020) at Palestine Technical College, Mustafa and Al-Rubaie (2021) at International Development Bank and Massoudi and Ahmed, (2021) in the Syrian Food Industry among others.

2.4 Empirical Studies and Research Gaps

Aji, Ramadhan and Hidayatullah, (2021) investigated what strategy is implemented at Air Asia to enhance its competitive advantage. The researcher adopted descriptive case study approach. The study identified cost leadership as the grand strategy adopted by AirAsia Group to achieve competitive advantage in the market. Some of the measures facilitating the success of the strategy were identified to include; maximum utilization of the aircrafts, reducing ticket prices, elimination of frills and introduction of direct flight networks. The researcher further reports that the low-ticket pricing strategy as well as out baggage facilities had facilitated AirAsia to competent favourably especially in the awake of COVID-19 outbreak.

Prasanna et al, (2021) sort to determine the competitive strategic positions of the SMEs in developing countries in Asia. The study particularly focused on 463 SMEs in agricultural sector in Sri Lanka. The findings point out such strategic variables; gender, location in the market, exhibition of the entity in the local setting, efficiency of the market, business practices that are sustainable, product and marketing innovation, reputation of the business as well as superior services as the key most significant strategic variables. The insignificant variables were reported to include; business field experience, specialization in production, experience earned through attending of business exhibitions globally, research and development, access to credit markets, provision of products with high quality as well as strategic location of the business concern.

Graham (2016) study focus on strategies adopted by airports to achieve competitive advantage. The study carries out a competitive analysis of the airport industry from both the airline and

passenger view side. Competing forces are identified from the two sides of the respondents with non-aeronautical product factor being easy to influence from the passenger side and location factor for the airline side. The study identifies low-cost leadership as the highly adopted strategy among the airports. However, the options available to low-cost carriers are reported to be challenging not only to large but also small size airports in their effort to achieve competitive advantage.

Bwire (2021) investigate how competitive strategies influence the uptake of life insurance in Uganda by focusing on Kampala CBD as a case study. The study relied on a cross-sectional research design as well as both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The researcher sampled 306 individuals who were drawn from a population of 1500 individuals. Descriptive analysis was applied where percentages, mean, frequencies, as standard deviation were used. The researcher expressed the relationship between the uptake of life insurance and competitive strategies using regression and correlation analysis. The predictor variables of the study included distribution channel differentiation and cost leadership strategies while uptake of life insurance was the response variable. The study concludes that there exists a positive influence of the predictor variable on the response variable.

Agyapong, Ellis and Domeher (2016) investigated how business strategies influence competitive advantage of family hotel businesses in Ghana. The study drew data from 265 micro as well as small family-owned hotel business operating in Ghana. The researcher was motivated by the believe that although small family-owned businesses face a wide range of challenges, they have the ability to still build on organizational capabilities which are available to them to obtain higher gains from operations which are strategically guided. The research found out that small family-owned businesses aiming at pursuing either differentiation of low-cost position, need to focus on establishing strong internal managerial capabilities. The

researcher further recommends that small family-owned firms which are highly innovative aiming to establish competitive strong competitive strategies should prioritize differentiation strategy more as compared to cost leadership strategy.

A study by Waithaka (2012) investigates The University of Nairobi and the strategies it has put in place in order to enhance its competitive advantage. The study targeted heads of departments where data collection was aided by use of an interview guide. The study established that the university has a strategic plan in place which is usually reviewed after every five years thus the university establishes various strategies in order to achieve its strategic goals and objectives of offering quality education, recruiting and maintaining competent personnel as well as establishing programs that are diverse and ideal among others. The findings of the study indicate that the university largely adopts differentiation strategy which makes it unique in the industry thus enhancing its competitive advantage.

Shani, Owino, Ogutu, and Iraki, (2021) examined how adoption of competitive strategies enhance performance of project-based NGOs in Kenya. The study was based on the principal Agency Theory and the RBV theory and carried out a census of all the 160 PBNGOs to drawn data by adopting structured questionnaires. According the findings of the study, there exist a significant direct association between the performance of an entity and competitive strategies. The study thus recommends PBNGOs to implement competitive strategies in order to ensure the achievement of firm performance goals.

Thiong'o, Wasike and Yano (2021) investigated how competitive advantage is influenced by strategic choices of private universities in Nairobi-Kenya focusing on Strathmore as a case study. The study was anchored on innovation theory, dynamic capability theory as well as porter`s theory. The study made use of primary data which was analysed by use of SPSS

version 26.0. The findings of the study present a significant positive impact of competitive strategies on the competitive advantage of the private university within Nairobi County.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology can be interpreted as the general approach to the study enquiry in a specified area. It stresses the approach of coming up with information as well as knowledge while carrying out a study (Ethridge, 2004). In the sections below, the research design to be adopted, the population of interest, technique of drawing a sample, methods and procedures for data collection as well as techniques to be applied for data analysis are specified.

3.2 Research Design

Kothari (2014) interprets a research design as a roadmap, a draft or a plan of the conceived enquiry aimed at obtaining solutions to questions under investigation. Research design aims at providing a plan of study that paves way for precise assessment of the interaction of the study variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Hussey and Hussey (1997) present research design as a framework to research enquiry from theoretical foundation to data acquisition and analysis. This study shall employ a case study research design.

Case study as research design, calls for deep investigation of a certain event, firm, or social unit. It involves in-depth enquiry of a contemporary in its real-life setting. Use of case study helps the research to focus the study within the limits of time, resources and space available, collect varied forms of data including observations, interviews, surveys among others (Schoch, 2020). This research design is best suited in this study since the objective is to establish strategies adopted for competitive advantage particularly at The Nairobi Hospital.

3.3 Data Collection

The study used interview guide to draw primary data direct from the field. The interviewees of interest included 8 people who are departmental heads from strategic management team,

finance team, management team, procurement team, ICT department, pharmacy department, medical records team, nurses' department. The departmental heads were chosen purposefully since the researcher believes that they are better placed to provide necessary data to serve the objective of the study compared to others stakeholders at TNH such as shareholders, suppliers, creditors, the government, competitors, and customers among others.

The researcher shall seek permission to collect the data from TNH management through an introduction letter to be obtained from the university and guarantee the management that data to be collected shall be used purely for academic purposes. After being granted the permission, the researcher shall seek contacts of the interviewees willing to participate in the data collection by guidance of the HR and Administration Manager. The researcher thereafter wrote to every interviewee a consent letter to schedule for the interviewees (See Appendix II). The interviews were conducted online through google meet or zoom meeting, via the phone calls or by physical visits to the interviewees' offices depending on the convenience and availability of the interviewees. The interviews were recorded with the permission of interviewees in case of online meetings or via phone calls and written down in case of physical meetings.

The interview guide (Appendix I) was used. The interview guide has been divided into three parts where Part A focus on general data of the interviewees, Part B the strategies and competitive advantage, Part C shall seek data on the challenges encountered by the strategic management team at TNH to establish robust strategies to achieve competitive advantage in their market place.

3.4 Data Analysis

The research examined the data collected to check for clarity and completeness. The study employed content analysis to examine the data. Mugenda (1990) reports that content analysis relates to observing and widely describing the objects or items included in the study. The

content analysis technique is appropriate in this case since it provides room for comparisons by systematically identifying particular information with regards to their trend of occurrence.

The researcher shall read through the written data collected as well as the recorded interviews in order to get familiarized with it. The research will then transcribe the data using tables and meaning units/codes where unnecessary data shall be excluded. The researcher thereafter categorized the data to condense extended meaning units (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004) and themes established (Burnard, 1991) where each piece of data shall be categorized in one and only one theme (Patton, 2002). With themes well specified the researcher analyzed and put down the trends identified if any, major observations in relation to the research objectives, hidden meanings of different pieces of data as understood by the researcher among others. The researcher finally compared the findings to those other studies as presented in literature and make conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings as well as discussion are presented. This is based on the data collected. The section also includes analysis of the results achieved so as to meet the objectives of the study. The analysis also provides discussion of the topic in comparison of past reviews and theories advanced.

4.2 Demographic Profile

The researcher established the participants' demographics, that includes their position and how long they have been working at TNH. The researcher interviewed 8 people in the firm. This included the participants from strategic management team as well as others from finance team and the management team. Other respondents were from the procurement team as well as the ICT department and pharmacy department. A few of respondents also noted that they were from the medical records team and the nurses' department. The respondents and their different department are shown in table below.

Table 4.1 Respondents Departments

Department	Number
Strategic Management	3
Finance	2
Procurement	1
Pharmacy	1
ICT	1
Total	8

Source: Author, (2022)

The analysis also confirmed that different workers have worked in the firm for various length and years. Some of the respondents have worked in the company for more than five to seven years. However, the majority of the respondents have worked for more than five years. This is shown in the table below.

Table 4.2 Respondents Level of Experience

Experience in Years	F	(%)	CF
0 – 5	3	37.5	37.5
5 – 10	4	50	87.5
11 and above	1	12.5	100
Total	8	100	

Source: Author, (2022)

4.3 Strategies Adopted by TNH to Achieve Competitive Advantage

The study seeks to determine various strategies that have been employed by the TNH in their major operations to achieve competitive advantage. From the analysis of the results gained, it was evident that the top management of the firm is responsible for the formulation of different strategies and policies that guide its major operations. The current strategies in the firm have been formulated based on corporate plans and the organization values, agenda and services offered. The firm strategies are organized and formulated based on customers' needs and stakeholder's values and this is what forms its long term values and policies.

The analysis also revealed that the firm top management engages in strategy review and control. This is done with the aim of ensuring that its plans and set goals are in line with the firm long term view and programs. The strategy review, control and monitoring or evaluation is done in the firm within months, within three years as well as within five years and above to

cover long term goals and policies. This has led to high growth and competitive edge of the firm. The respondents also noted that the company current strategy is effective and will help them attract new clients and achieve high quality services to their patients. One of them noted:

“Our strategy is based on delivery of high quality services and we expect to meet our clients and stakeholders needs in the long run. Our plan is based on the value of the qualified doctors and nurses that guide our major operations. We work with different partners and the management is geared towards delivery of effective and well-managed clinical services”.

From the inquiry, the participants agreed that TNH is one of the best hospitals in East Africa and will soon emerge the best in the African region. This is because the hospital has qualified workers, offers a variety of clinical services and has different branches that deal with dentistry as well as gynaecology and other pharmaceutical services. The firm also offers antenatal clinical services. In addition, services associated with laundry services, meeting centers and emergency settings are also offered by the firm. This has made it one of the competitive firms within the East Africa region. However, the hospital is facing some competition from other hospitals such as Kenyatta National Hospital which is based on public value and costs.

The respondents argued that the hospital has adopted various strategies to remain competitive and some of the plans that allow the firm to stay ahead within the region include adoption of diversification plans, offering high quality services as well as hiring high qualified and medical experts in all their operations. The firm strategies are sustainable since the management work with various partners including insurance firms, government agencies and educational centers. This confirms the view that the hospital will remain the best hospital in the region. With over 60 years of experience, the hospital has effective level of practices including modern technology and expertise management to succeed in its major operations. Here are some of the strategies that have been adopted by the Hospital to promote its success in the region.

4.3.1 Brand Differentiation and Brand Image Management

Brand differentiation is one of the plans that the management of the firm has adopted in promoting its brand and image in East Africa and beyond. The respondents noted that TNH is a brand name and it is recognized within the East Africa region due to its brand name. Some of the notable leaders within the East African region such as Presidents from Tanzania and Kenyan leaders always seek services in the hospital. This is due to the image and high quality services offered in the hospital. The hospital is also located in the city centre in Nairobi and this gives it a good brand location to attract different clients. One of the managers noted:

“Our hospital is the best in east African region and our brand name is recognized in all parts of the region. We deliver high quality services in partnership with various stakeholders. Our experience and level of medical expertise put us ahead of others”.

4.3.2 Cost Leadership Strategies

On inquiring about the cost leadership strategies adopted by the firm, the respondents agreed that the firm has adopted cost leadership models of operations. It was noted that the firm use cost leadership to maintain low costs in its major operations. This has led to high quality services and low errors in its major operations. Majority of practices in the hospital are based on digital and modern technology. The respondents noted that with automation of services and the firm major operations, it has managed to achieve cost leadership in its major operations. However, in terms of pricing the interviewees acknowledged that the hospital charges are high compared to other options in the region. The pricing is not low since the firm has the best equipment for various services and has hired some of the best doctors and other medical personnel in the region. One of the respondents noted:

“Our costs of operations are low due to automation of services. We also hire qualified medical experts and this means we rarely experience dangerous errors that can lead to law suits. Although our prices are not low, we offer the best quality medical services in the region”.

4.3.3 Focus Strategies

The review and analysis also revealed that the management of the hospital has adopted focus models in their major operations. The respondents noted that the firm has adopted focus models in managing their clients. The majority of the firm clients are rich individuals in the region and this is done with the aim of maintaining high quality services and meeting the needs of their customers and employees. The delivery of services in the firm is based on a specific market audience and in most cases, leaders and prominent people are the clients in the hospital. The respondents noted that during Covid-19 they got a number of leaders coming to get services in the hospital. One interviewee argued:

“Due to our high quality services and diverse hospital needs and services that we cover, we got a number of leaders from the East African region during the Covid-19 challenge. Our clinical services target both the rich and low income individuals. However, we mostly get clients who are from stable markets and especially leaders and reputable individuals in the community”.

4.3.4 Research, Innovation and Technology Applications

The inquiry also confirmed that the hospital used innovation and modern technology to promote their services and increase their competitive edge. The respondents agreed that the firm has X-Ray Scans and other medical tools that support their innovation and success. Creativity and innovation is highly nurtured in the hospital. The interviewees noted that they have a research centre which is dedicated for publication on various aspects dealing with clinical, medical and other basic disease innovation. The research covers different aspects

including neurology, informatics as well as surgery and other pathologies. This has made the hospital unique and innovative than other medical groups in the region. One of the participants noted:

“We have a publication centre and research team which conduct daily research on current medical issues. We pride our expertise in managing diverse health challenges and we partner with others in promoting our publication efforts to the public. Creativity is part of the firm culture and all creative minds are motivated by the management. This is done with the aim of promoting our success and values”.

4.3.5 Effective Customers Relationship Management

The respondents confirmed that the management of the hospital has effective customer relationship management. The customers in the firm are well treated and fairly engaged. This has led to some customers preferring the hospital to others. Due to effective customer services, the management has expanded their operations in various branches in Nairobi. The respondents noted that the firm is having branches in different parts of Nairobi. Some of the branches are in Kiambu Mall, Southfield Mall as well as in Galleria among many other centres in the city. One of the participants argued by saying:

“We have good customer management and we ensure that all our customers are satisfied. This is because our success is pegged on the ability to meet their goals and needs. We aim to work closely with our customers and avoid any challenges and errors that can lead to dissatisfaction among our customers”.

4.3.6 Diversification Strategy

From the results, the respondents agreed and supported the view that diversification of services has improved the firm success. The participants noted that the firm has over 60 years of experience and has diversified its services in terms of having medical school. The firm also offers laundry services and promote the delivery of the best emergency and research services in the region. In their operations, the management aim is to serve more clients from global scale. As such, the firm has an international desk and currently offers discount and good services to all customers from other regions. The firm also offers meeting facilities to their clients and this diversification has seen it achieving its major goals in the long run. One of the respondents noted:

“We have more than 60 years of experience and our goal is to meet our customer’s value and taste or needs. To achieve this, we offer a variety of services and we have the best laundry services in the region. We also have meeting facilities where our customers can come and plan for their meetings at discounted prices. Our meeting points have world class tools and this is something we hope to expand in near future”.

4.3.7 Quality Services Delivery

On inquiry, the respondents noted that delivery of high quality services is one of the major plans that the management of the firm focus on in all their operations. The participants argued that medical field requires 100% conditions that are free from errors and the management has tried to put in place conditions that ensure no errors in their operations. The respondents also noted that quality services in the firm has been maintained due to application of digital tools and application of technology in different aspects. The medical experts are also trained and continuous training is part of the firm programs. Total quality management is supported by the management and errors are treated with lot seriousness in the firm. One of the respondents noted:

“Our hospital support quality management and quality is part of the issues that set our agenda. We work with different stakeholders to ensure that quality is maintained in the firm. Without effective and high quality management in our services, we cannot get clients. We believe that digital models have led to few errors and continuous training is part of programs we use in promoting success and quality in our service delivery”.

4.4 Discussions of Findings

The inquiry was on the analysis of the strategies adopted by TNH to achieve its competitive advantage. The analysis noted that the firm has adopted different strategies in order to meet their goals and achieve their success. The firm use different plans to meet the value and their customers’ needs and stakeholder’s values. The study also noted that the firm engages in strategy review and control. As one of the best hospitals in East African region, the inquiry noted that the firm used different strategies to achieve its success. Some of the strategies used by the firm include adoption of brand management, differentiation as well as innovation practices. The inquiry also revealed that the firm has adopted cost cutting and effective leadership in its major operations. Plans associated with delivery of high quality services, incorporation of partners as well as focus plans are also part of strategies adopted by the firm.

The analysis also revealed that the firm operations improved due to incorporation of technology and delivery of customer touch point. The management also adopted effective research plans and diversification in terms of opening laundry services, developing unique meeting facilities and medical research services. From its service delivery and unique framework of medical services, it is the best hospital in East African region.

However, there are various challenges facing the firm in its strategy success. Some of the challenges noted include lack of resources (Hamadat, 2021). There is also poor strategy and

structure alignment. The firm faces lack of support from the top leaders in their strategy implementation. Social, economic, as well as political factors are also part of the challenges.

It was noted that the firm has been experiencing various challenges in their strategy implementation. The respondents noted that lack of resources is a big challenge. There are many departments in the hospital and some of the departments fail to get attention and resources required to achieve their goals and plans.

The analysis also confirmed that lack of supports from the top management has been one of challenges experienced in strategy implementation. This has led to high delay in managing the firm major operations. Without support from the top management it is not possible to deliver on plans set. This means that the management should support all the set strategies to achieve success in the firm.

The respondents also noted that social, economic, as well as political interferences factors also delayed their strategy implementation. They noted that in some cases poor political, environmental and socio-economic conditions affected their plans. This was evident during the Covid-19 pandemic where their operations were affected.

Moreover, poor culture and lack of strategy structure match is also a big challenge towards strategy success in the firm. The participants noted that lack of strategy match with structure has led to poor implementation. Some conditions require attitude change and alignment of firm values and culture with the plans. It is important that the management get ways of improving its structure to match the firm strategy. This will improve the firm success in the long run.

This study is similar to Ali and Anwar (2021) who noted that adoption of unique strategies can promote the success of firms. The authors argued that with different plans, firms can manage their operations and achieve their goals from different angles. The study also noted that

successes of firms are dependent on the strategies that they have adopted. This means that firms must adopt effective strategies to achieve their goals (Shani et al., 2021).

The findings are also in line with Bett and Njuguna (2022) review on airline systems. Bett and Njuguna (2022) argued that success of the firm was mainly due to their unique operations and offering of good services to their customers. This means that firms must find ways of analysing their environment and considering their customers' needs to achieve success.

The analysis also supported the theoretical background and it can be argued that success of firms is based on the models in the Michael Porter's theory of competitive advantage. Firms must adopt rare strategies that meet their clients taste according to this theory (Wanaswa et al., 2021). The theory advocate for adoption of rare policies associated with brand differentiation, focus and cost cutting plans and this is what has led to the success of the Nairobi Hospital. It is important that firms find ways of improving their goals so as to achieve their set objectives using the theory propositions.

The analysis also supports the proposition of institutional theory that supports adoption of good norms in managing customers, employees and other stakeholders (Shani et al., 2021). The firm has effective customer management framework and works with various stakeholders and partners in their major operations. This has led to their success and it is important that all firms consider institutional factors in their major operations (Hamadat, 2021).

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study and this is based on the previous analysis. The chapter also gives conclusions based on the research study process and analysis provided. The section presents the policy framework as well as the implications of these findings on practice. Limitations and what other scholars can do to achieve good practice and analysis is also provided.

5.2 Summary of Findings

This inquiry was on review on some of the strategies and plans used by TNH in promoting their competition level in the industry. The analysis confirmed that adoption of various strategies promotes success of the firm. Some of the strategies adopted by the firm include delivery of services that are unique and high quality. It was also founded that the firm adopted diversification models in their major operations.

Moreover, the study and analysis noted that adoption of diversification plans, customer management systems and focus strategies improved the success of the firm. With diversification plans, the firm was able to start laundry services and facilities for meetings. This led to success of the firm. The management also introduce international desk to meet global customer's needs. In addition, the firm has research and medical publication team that promote research and innovation in various aspects of their operations.

The analysis also confirmed that partnership and working with different stakeholders improve the firm outlook and brand image. The firm has partnered with insurance firms, colleges and NGOs as well as banks to promote their success. With different partners, the firm find it easy and simple to expand their brand image and programs within the East African region.

Finally, the analysis found that the firm was experiencing various challenges in its strategy management. Some of the challenges noted included lack of resources, poor management of staff by the leaders and political interference. Lack of resources was founded to be the main challenge. However, poor political alignment and socio-economic factors also influenced operations in the hospital. It is important that firms consider their political environmental and legal policies in managing their strategy.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the results, it is true that TNH is one of the unique hospitals in Kenya. The success of the firm has been achieved due to adoption of different plans and strategies. The study concluded that adoption of unique strategies such as brand differentiation, delivery of unique and high quality services improved the firm success. The study also concluded that adoption of diversification; focus plans as well as innovation and research improve the firm success. The analysis showed that customer management and supports by different partners also improve the success of the firm.

The study also noted that the management of the firm experienced different challenges in their operations. This included lack of resources, poor support from the management and political challenges. The study concluded that lack of resources, poor support from management and political interference are major challenges facing strategy management in firms. It is important that firms work with different stakeholders as well as partners in gaining resources to promote their success in the long run.

The study also concluded that the use of diversification strategy and service quality is important in managing success of firms. This is because the analysis revealed that the success of the firm was mostly derived from its quality systems in service provision as well as from its

management of different products and diversification models. The management of firms should find ways of diversifying their operations since this is important in promoting their success.

The inquiry also concluded that effective customer's management and working with different partners is important in promoting firm success. The management of the firm achieved its success by working with different stakeholders. Customers are also given high priority in the firm and this has led to the firm success. It is important that firms find customers touch points and collaborate with others in their major programs.

5.4 Recommendations

The inquiry noted that delivery of services based on innovation, research and diversification strategies improve the success of TNH. The analysis also confirmed that the firm adopted focus plans, brand differentiation and cost cutting plans in their major operations. All these help to promote their success. Based on this review, this study recommends the need for the firm to adopt diversification plans to promote their success. It has been noted that diversification is effective in managing the firm success, especially in promoting crisis management since it involves different services.

Moreover, the study noted that medical services should be based on 100% error free settings. As such, it is important that the management of TNH provide different ways of managing their operations and activities. It is recommended that the firm adopt delivery of quality services to ensure that they meet their customer's values.

Finally, it is important that the firm consider the needs of the general public in Kenya and East African region. The majority of people in the region are from low income families and groups. It is imperative that the management of the firm find ways of reducing their price range to meet the needs of clients. This will allow the firm to attract more people and to gain power over its rivals.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

From an inquiry angle, this study was only based on case study of TNH and this means that data gained is biased to the hospital. The inquiry only involved eight respondents who were part of the top management, and this means they may have provided information that depicts the hospital in positive light. However, the author encouraged them to provide reliable information since the inquiry was meant only for academic goal attainment.

Moreover, this study relied on interview which is associated with bias and lack generalization validity. This means it may be difficult to replicate the study. Since the respondents may have only provide data to achieve their firm's mission, the information provided may not be 100% reliable. However, deep analysis and review of the information gained was done to maintain its validity.

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This inquiry involved analysis of the plans used by TNH in promoting their success. This means that the study was only on information gained from TNH. As such, it does not provide data that covers all hospitals in the region. There is need for further study that will analyze how competitive plans can help promote success of all private hospitals in Kenya. This will provide data and results that can be generalized.

Moreover, the study revealed that adoption of diversification is important to hospitals and there is need for a study that will only focus on the effects of diversification plans on promoting the success of the healthcare groups in Kenya. Diversification is an important aspect of strategy and future scholars should find ways of determining how the adoption of such plans can improve and promote success of firms in Kenya and beyond.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

PART A: Background Information

1. What is your current position in the organization?
2. How long have you been at TNH?

PART B: Strategies Adopted by TNH to Achieve Competitive Advantage

3. Who is responsible for strategy formulation at TNH?
4. How is/are your current strategy (ies) formulated?
5. How often do you review the organization's strategy (ies)?
6. How would you describe the current strategy health of TNH?
7. Do you think TNH is the most preferred hospital in Nairobi? Explain.
8. How would you describe the level of competition facing TNH currently?
9. In the last five years, which major strategy (ies) has TNH used to stay ahead of the competition?
10. What measures does the hospital put in place to ensure that this strategy (ies) is/are sustainable in the long run?
11. Do you feel the hospital has adequate resources/assets to achieve its strategic objectives?
12. What do you think TNH can do to become/remain the best hospital?

PART C: Challenges of Strategy Implementation

13. What major challenges has your organization faced in the implementation of the strategies necessary to achieve competitive advantage?

14. How does TNH respond to these challenges? Please explain

Appendix II: Letter of Consent

Dear Interviewee,

RE: REQUEST FOR DATA COLLECTION INTERVIEW

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Business and Management Sciences. As part of the requirements for the award of the university degree in Master of Business Administration (MBA) I'm carrying out my research project on "*Strategies Employed by The Nairobi Hospital to Achieve Competitive Advantage.*" I therefore would like to request for an interview with you on the study topic which shall take about 20 to 30 minutes. I am flexible to hold an online session via google meet, zoom or visit your office for a physical meeting whichever is convenient with you. See the attached interview guide for the specific information of interest for the study. Kindly advise on the appropriate date, time and mode you would like us to hold the interview.

Thanks in advance

Yours Sincerely

Cynthia Nosim

Reg. No. D61/39185/2021