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Organizational Innovation, Technology, Strategic Planning and Competitiveness: Conceptual Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Organizations need to study their past operations and review the current status of competitiveness so as to inform their future strategic planning process if they are to remain competitive. Changes in the business environment emanating from globalization, internationalization of firms and developments in information, communication and technology have called on firm to constantly rethink their strategies if they are to remain competitive in a given industry. Technology enable organizations to gather information about their competitors with the offering hence lead to better product development and higher customer satisfaction. Through technology, firms are able to develop new and better ways of going about internal affairs hence operational efficiency. Technology offers organizations a platform for them to leverage their operations for efficient operations compared t their competitors. Organizations have to constantly come up with new ways of doing things by investing in research and development. The competitive advantage of an organization is never constant because the competitors are always plotting to stay ahead in a given industry. Strategies developed for competitiveness are always concerned with making an organization unique and different from its peers in a given industry. Innovation enables firms to respond to changing customer preferences and tastes hence remain relevant in their decision making process. This study was anchored on four theories: Innovation diffusion, Resource Based View, Technology acceptance Model and the five forces Theory. These theories are conceptualized in the context of strategic planning covering strategy formulation, implementation to monitoring and evaluation. It also presented the technological advancements and how they have affected businesses' competitiveness through innovation. Innovativeness mediates the relationships between firm performance and the formal strategic planning process and planning flexibility.

Key Words: Organizational Innovation, Technology, Strategic Planning and Competitiveness

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Introduction

The operating environment for businesses is changing rapidly following effects of globalization, internationalization of firms and developments in information, communication and technology. Innovation is an important component in organizational profitability which also foresters future organizational growth. Innovation goes beyond invention because it involves Operationalization of new knowledge developed into a product or product production process. Innovation has been found to be one of the most reliable and convenient parameter in the realization of organizational growth and achievement of sustained good organizational performance. These developments have affected the way organizations go about their business in satisfying the needs of their customers. It is therefore important that the management teams in organizations rethink of their strategies if they are to remain competitive in their respective industries. The competition is always fighting to gain an upper hand over other organizations in an industry through research and development, innovations and inventions.

Organizations therefore need to study their past operations and review the current status of their competitiveness so as to inform their future strategic planning process if they are to remain competitive. The current operating environment characterized by globalization and highly dynamic operating environment for businesses calls of firms to invest in research and development with the aim of developing new ways of doing thinks if they are to gain competitiveness. The market for businesses is currently characterised by three major trends: high competition due to greater internationalization of firms, fragmented and well informed consumer markets, and diverse and continuously evolving technologies (Wheelwright and Clark, 1992). This paper therefore aims at examining how organization innovations in a technologically empowered environment influence strategic planning for organizational competitiveness by analyzing the benefits, challenges and barriers. The study argues that the relationship between innovations in an organization is influenced by the technological changes happening in the organization and how organizations plan their responses through strategy formulation, implementation monitoring and evaluation so as to gain sustainable competitiveness. The study further evaluates how strategic planning affects organizational competitiveness by evaluating the role played by different factors, the benefits of strategic planning and barriers.

Organizational Innovation

The current operating environment calls on business to invest in intellectual assets as they constitute key strategic elements for sustained business growth, profitability and the ability to outperform peers in a given industry (Berry, 2000). Various scholars and researchers have defined Innovation differently with Davila et al (2006) defining it as involving acting on new ideas developed on how to do things with the aim of coming up with specific and tangible difference in a given area when the innovation is taking place (Davila et al, 2006). Innovation involves the successful

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operationalization of new ideas developed within the setting of an organization so as to leverage its operations and improve its competitiveness (Mayor, 2003).

Strategy provides direction and scope of activities in an organization over a period of more than two years which enables it gain competitive advantage in a highly changing business environment through utilization of resources and competences at its disposal so as to improve the wellbeing of all its stakeholders (Oke & Goffin, 2001). The level of outcomes registered by an organization represents the appraisal of prescribed indicators like the industry standards of effectiveness, level of efficiency, and accountability to the environment in terms of productivity, time lapse, reducing wastes and complying with the provision of the law governing businesses.

Organizations that are greatly innovative are in a position to grow in a fast, efficient as compared to highly conservative ones. In addition, the level of profitability among innovative organization has been found to be higher (Mayor, 2003). Organizational innovation also has an influence on the quality of work recorded by an organization, level and quality of information that it shares both within and externally, able to grow the amount of knowledge besides its application for competitiveness. Innovative organizations are always ready and willing to implement new methods and procedures of going about their internal processes as they realize their long terms objectives (Dubé, 2012). Furthermore, innovative organizations have been found to adapt well to changes in the operating environment thereby easily improving their overall performance (Calantone et al., 2002).

Organizational innovation can be classified in various ways. Existing literature presents different classifications of organizational innovativeness. According to Nilakanta and Subramanian (1996) organizational innovation can be classified in two broad categories: technological innovation which includes product, services and processes; and administrative innovation which involves internal organizational processes in terms of structure, programs and how the organization is managed.

Innovation within organizations has been established to be a key variable in the process of creating and sustaining competitive advantage (Tidd, 2001). One way to achieve organization competitiveness in an industry is to encourage creativity and innovative practices so as to improve the ability of an entity in satisfying changing demands of its customers. Innovation aims at positively influencing the results posted by an organization in its endeavors to meet and exceed the changing customer needs better. Innovation is said to have occurred whenever something more that generation of a new creative idea. This means that the innovative idea needs to be operationalized or implemented with the aim of creating a difference in the way things are done in the organization thereby resulting in gaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Davila, Marc, Epstein and Robert, 2006).

According to Davila, Marc, Epstein and Robert (2006), for innovation to occur, there needs to be efficient management and

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internal processes that are conducive. The team involved in research and development needs to be provided with relevant tools and other resources so that they can realize the set objectives (Tidd, 2001). They also need to maintain high levels of discipline. Innovations help introduce new ideas and methodologies on how processes are undertaken for effectiveness and efficiency. They also help organizations achieve competitive advantage as it may take competition more time to catch up (Davila et al., 2006).

2.3 Benefits of Innovations

Innovation involves the implementation of new or significantly improved product for the usage of customers. It describes the process of creating a new marketing or better and improved way of doing things with an organization (Pavitt, 2005). A number of studies have revealed different benefits associated with innovation. Some studies have argued the role of innovation particularly in boosting national growth through entrepreneurship (Ndemo & Maina, 2007; Tiffen & Mortimore, 1994).

Kantor (2001) indicated that innovation is key factor in economic progress of any country as well as in gaining competitive advantage for different industries. According to Kemp (2003) innovation is one of the core weapons for firms to gain competitive advantage. Polevoi (2013) also indicates that it is very crucial for a business to exploit new prospects and possibly gain competitive advantage through market, process and product innovation. Many businesses are actively involving in different innovative activities like manufacturing processes, improving their products and initiatives for customer satisfaction. Today, the operating environments have become extremely dynamic coupled with intensive competitive forces. For firms to therefore meet this, they are producing new products, services and solutions to provide a totally better experience for their clients (Chesbrough, 2010)

There are several areas of innovation which include main development of new products, services besides their improvements and creation of completely new products. Innovations help businesses in cost reduction, offering of better collection of consumer centric products as well as in reducing the time in marketing and driving firm growth (Kemp, 2003). Studies have shown that through adoption of innovations, organization increase the chances of becoming competitive in their respective industries. They need to invest in innovations to come up with new ways and products that meet the changing needs of customers (Howells and Tether, 2004).

Innovation also enhances learning within organizations. According to Weerawardena (2001), the sources of firms innovation process can be attributed to a firm's entrepreneurship, market focused learning capability and organization learning intensity. Firms also pursue growth strategies through innovation which leads to development of high value products and services that improve the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Whalen, 2007). A study conducted in Pakistan by (Hafeez, 2013) established the following benefits of innovation: increase in profit and margins,

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diversification of products so as to meet and exceed customer needs, optimal use of business opportunities, creation of new brands, improvement in product quality, creation of new markets, meeting of government regulations and maintenance of market shares besides cost reduction.

Innovation can be seen as a process through which an invention or idea is transformed to a service or good which creates value (Kantor, 2001). Several studies have revealed different challenges facing innovations. According to West and Gallagher (2006), innovation experience three main huddles including: establishment of creative ways to exploit internal innovation, incorporation of external innovation into internal development and motivation of the outsiders to supply an ongoing stream of external innovations. Njeru (2012) assessed challenges facing innovation strategy implementation at Equity Bank of Kenya. The study focused on one organization with the aim of collecting more insightful information that would enable deeper analysis and development of conclusion and recommendations. The findings indicated that the Bank adopted innovations based on product offerings and process to meet the changing needs and preferences of their customers. As a result of adopting product and process innovations new product offerings tailored to the changing needs of customers were developed. However, challenges faced in innovation strategy implementation included, in adequate communication, market focused learning capability, scale of entrepreneurship, lack of adequate resources and the type of leadership.

Dixon-Woods et al. (2011) examined the problems and promises of innovation as organizations sought to build competitiveness. The study revealed that application of innovation in development of quality product and service offerings were more complicated. This was largely because innovations diffuse rapidly hence pose some risk if not well catered for could negatively affect the reputation of the organization. In some instances, good innovations take time to be fully adopted by target customers hence reducing the benefit and ability of the innovators to recover their initial investment.

Innovation within organizations goes through a number of barriers that hinder their effectiveness to the organizations. Inadequate resources act to hinder the efficiency of innovation in most organizations (Kubinski, 2002). The barriers to innovations within organization include financial, political and cultural aspects that affect the way that nw inventions are developed and operationalized. For instance, limited finances available for research and development limits the number and depth of inventions that occur and te extent to which the invented inventions are operationalized. Availability of adequate resources in terms of personnel and their experience can be a source of competitive advantage. On the political barriers, Acemoglu and Robinson (2000) argues that bringing new technological ideas to an organizational settings affect the distribution of political

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power. Uyarra et al. (2014) identified lack of interactions between the suppliers and procuring entity personnel and curtailment of innovations by insisting on specified tender formats. This resulted in poor risk management and low competence of procurement expertise.

Aagaard (2012) on the other hand examined the drivers and barriers of public innovation in crime prevention. On the basis of case study of collaborative innovation in the Danish Crime Prevention Council, the study argues that drivers emerge in a process of reactive sequences and that barriers emerge in a process of increasing returns. On the other hand, Johnson (2010) studied the barriers to innovation adoption using a case study of the e-markets. The study reviewed literature on e-market adoption followed by in-depth interviews with senior managers in buyer, supplier, and e-market organizations. The findings revealed a number of barriers and challenges related risk perception, knowledge deficits, trust, firm size and organizational readiness that moderate the adoption and usage of e-markets in the sectors.

Sivertsson and Tell (2015) examined on the barriers to business model innovation in Swedish agriculture. The study employed a qualitative approach by interviewing the agriculture business consultants. The study concludes that farmers faced many barriers in their considerations for various models of doing business in the agricultural sector. The barriers were caused by various propositions including human attitudes, history and their culture and traditional beliefs. Other challenges emanated from industry specific factors while others emanated from government regulations, value chain positions and acts of nature.

Theoretical Arguments

This section discusses the different schools of thought on which a given study is anchored. It helps in the establishment of the various variables under study and how they would be measured by providing a statistical relationship within the context of a given issue necessitating a given research (Aguilar, 2009). It provides relevant information to the researcher which enables them to select the most appropriate research design (Trochim, 2006). This study is guided by four theories; discussed below.

Innovation Diffusion Theory

This theory holds that there are a number of factors that influence how innovations diffuse (Rogers, 1983). These factors were listed by Dillon and Morris (1996) as including: relative advantage in relation with the extent that a given technology offers better way of accomplishing a task as compared to the existing tools within the organization, the extent to which the given technology is able to be integrated with the existing and other new technologies, the ability of the technology to be consistent with social practices and norms in the organization, complexity in terms of how easy it is for users of a given technology to learn how to use it, and observability which concerns the clarity of the output of a give new technology when viewed from and outside the organization. According to Tornatsky and Klein (1982), relative advantage and complexity are mutually exclusive meaning that one can easily

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predict either the extent or rate at which the new technology or idea would diffuse. The work of Moore and Benbasat (1991) was an extension on the previous work by Roger (1983) and other scholars like Tornatsky and Klein (1982) and Brancheau and Wetherbe (1990) who examined seven characteristics of innovations where among the seven were the above three: relative advantage, compatibility and trialability.

Ease of use which is the fourth characteristic has a close relationship with Rogers' complexity characteristic because they both are subjective in that they can be interpreted and viewed differently by different individuals depending their perceptions and background information. These findings were also supported by Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) who argued that attitudes towards an object can differ widely across people because of their socialization. Rogers (1983) identified innovation image as an important component within an individual in relation to relative advantage because image helps in creating fantasies about the expected output in terms of enhanced social statu (Lundblad & Jennifer, 2003).

Organizations are referred to as social system because of their bahaviour of being environmental dependent where they get inputs from the environment and release outputs into the same environment. However, various departments or sections found in an organization serve as social systems because they allow employees who are great stakeholders in innovation to socialize with one another. The extent of socialization and interaction among departments and strategic business units affect the adoption of innovation. As employees go about interacting with one another, they form some perceptions about one another and some informal grouping which is a normal group dynamics aspect (Lundblad & Jennifer, 2003). This theory on diffusion of innovation among organizations heavily relies on the internal decision making processes regarding the adoption and usage of new technologies and ideas. Rogers' theory has been criticized for failure to identify the conducive environment for optimal diffusion of innovation as it is not always certain that innovation would diffuse at the same rate among two different organizations (Lundblad & Jennifer, 2003).

This theory starts with a description of how decision making within an organization setting affect innovation diffusion. It however fails to give a detailed explanation how the various characteristics of an innovation identified above interact to influence the adoption and usage of innovative ideas among organizations with different sizes, ages and experience. The school of thought further falls short in explaining how various variables interact when innovations diffuse from one organization to another (Lundblad & Jennifer, 2003). This theory helps in explaining how innovation evolves and develops within the organizations. The theory indicates reasons as to why organizations decide to be innovative.

Technological Acceptance Model

The theory was advanced by Davis (1989) to help explain how the bahaviour of an individual influences their adoption and

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application of information communication and technology. This school of thought argues that an individuals bahaviour towards application and adoption of ICT is influenced by their bahaviour to use a given new technology. This is further explained by an individuals' attitude and perceptions on how useful a given technology would be to them. Pedersen, Leif, Methlie and Thorbjornsen, 2002), argue that in circumstances where users find a given technology or new idea easy to use, they would be willing to adopt it hence faster diffusion. The school of thought argues that users of a given new technology need to have a better understanding of the technology to promote diffusion rate. The users need to be well conversant and more knowledgeable about the technology for faster diffusion (Pedersen et al., 2002). The school of thought identifies usefulness and user friendliness as key determinants of users' attitudes towards any new innovation being introduced in the organization (Davis, 1989; 1993).

Critiques of this school of thought have argued that the theory focuses more on the technology aspect that diffuses and fails to take into account the various factors that play a key role in the diffusion process. In an organizational setting, technology diffusion is affected by numerous variables like skills set possessed by the staff, duration over which the technology is to be implemented, the resources at the disposal of the organization, the industry in which the firm is operating and the ability of competitors to respond among others (Wang, Wang, Lin and Tang, 2003).

According to TAM, the perception among employees on how easy it is to use a given technology and its usefulness parameters make up key factors in the level of acceptance and application of various information technologies introduced in an organization. Wang, Lin and Tang (2003) argue that the aspect of "perceived credibility" of a given technology is an important factor to consider in its adoption because of its influence on the security of information and other assets of an organization. This theory helps in explaining the adoption of technology in most organizations. There are various forms of technology in organizations and these drives the innovation capabilities of such organizations.

Resource Based View

The Resource Based View (RBV) school of thought explains the role played by organizational resources in strategic planning and competitiveness (Roos & Roos, 1997). The process of strategic planning ranges from formulation to evaluation and monitoring. All through requires various forms of resources both in terms of human capital and finances (Wernerfelt, 1984). The school of thought argues that in order to implement a given strategy, organizations need to set aside adequate resources. The resources need to be applied efficiently in the adoption of new technology and ideas so as to eliminate wastes thereby improving efficiency.

The perspective of resources in a given strategy implementation was advanced by Wernerfelt (1984) by arguing that the level of performance results posted by an

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organization is influenced by the resources it has set aside during a given period and how efficient these resources have been applied in generating the wealth for the shareholders (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Resources could also take the form of knowledge which can help organizations in building sustainable competitive advantage, human capital or other tangible assets. The most sensitive resource which could be used to attained sustainable competitive advantage if the quality of human capital. The skills, experience and qualification possessed plays a key role in building sustainable competitive advantage. Other resources may not realize their full potential without the intervention of human capital. This therefore makes human capital very pivotal to attainment of competitiveness in a given industry. This theory is relevant for this study because it explains the role played by various organizational resources to build sustainable competitive advantage. In order to realize optimal results from human capital, there needs to be sufficient motivational programs. The management could use a number of motivational packages to motivate employees to try their best to ensure that they perform optimally.

Porter's five Forces

This model was developed by Porter (1979) to be in conducting strategic analysis of industries so as to establish ways in which they can build sustainable competitive advantage. Michael Porter's five forces of competition can be used in studying an industry's competitive structure by assessing the five key parameters that influence end of period results posted. Through his model, Porter (1979) identifies these main competitive forces that affect any market and all industries as: the level of rivalry among the competitors in a given industry, threats arising from new firms joining the industry, threat brought about by substitutes, the power of buyers in determining firm competiveness and the influence that suppliers hold in the industry.

The forces play a key role in the level of competition in any industry and the level of returns recorded by the firms. They also determine the level of attractiveness of an industry. Firms are always interested in positioning themselves strategically to emerge competitive through formulation and implementation of various strategies bearing in mind the influence of the identified forces. The potential presented by a given industry to investors determines its attractiveness. It is explained that in an industry where the combined powers of the identified forces increase overall results in terms of profitability and other organizational goals, more firms will scramble to join its as compared to the firms that promises low returns. This model is appropriate in explaining the competitive position enjoyed by a given firm in the industry. This would enable such firms in formulation and implementation of appropriate strategies to emerge competitive. This model is relevant for this study as it helps in explaining how a company can stay competitive in the industry through carrying out the analysis of the five forces identified by Porter.

Strategic planning for competitiveness in an environment characterized by rapid changes in technology and innovations presents a

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number of benefits, challenges and barriers to organizations. In order to realize benefits of technology, organizations have to overcome these challenges and barriers. These benefits, challenges and barriers are discussed in detail below.

Technology

The discovery of computer technology has revolutionized the level of competition among organization especially in a globalized environment. Technology has continued to be applied by organizations to improve their level of efficient and effectiveness in operations thus resulting into improved organizational competitiveness. Study by Agarwal and Lucas (2005), identified Information Technology as of the factors of competitiveness of firms in a given industry especially in the current information based organizational settings. The highly competitive business settings in today's world characterised by a fast-paced business landscape, requires that organizations reap optimal returns from their resources if they are to emerge competitive. Therefore, in order to realize these, organizations have to proactively invest in research and development which would improve their chances of keeping trend with the dynamic consumer needs. It has been affirmed that adoption of information technology in operations leads to increased efficiency and effectiveness. The adoption of information technology has been found to leverage operations in institutions of higher learning. The higher learning institutions have applied technology in offering lectures, running administrative duties among other functions. This has seen some institutions using technology as their competitive edge in advertisement.

Technology consists of all hardware and software that combine to enable firms leverage their operations in an effort to achieve pre-set business objectives (Laudon and Laudon, 2010). Technology has been argued as one of the key drivers of competition and organizational success in the world today. According to Porter (2004) the necessary steps in formulating and choosing strategies involves identification of appropriate technology components in the process of adding value within an organization, determination of likely path of change of the technologies, assessment of organization's relative capabilities in technologies and making a choice of strategy that encompasses all the technologies that reinforce the organizations intended goals.

The period after 1990 has seen rapid advancement and adoption of information technology as organizations sought to outperform one another in their industries. These developments have enabled organizations to access a wider market at a cost effective manner hence leading to faster growth. ICT has changed from being a support function to the core of every business. As businesses grow more complex, organizations are extending their markets by exploring global market which would otherwise not be served were it not because of advanced technology (Ongori and Migiro, 2010. Organizations need to develop an ICT strategy that considers various principles and priorities as per the

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formulated strategic plan in order to optimize the benefits of technology. The strategy aims to define the end point that an organization envisions to achieve and the road map on how to get there so that adequate preparation is made should the scenarios change (Wendy, 2004).

Several studies have been conducted on technology and organizational competitiveness. Matambalya and Wolf (2001) sought to establish how organizations can apply technology to overcome the challenge of increasing competition as a result of globalization and internationalization of firms. The findings indicated that information asymmetric is a key cause of increased transaction costs, unpredictability of future business performance and the resultant market failures. It was also established that firms that are able to reduce the information gap are likely to win the heart of their customers hence improve their level of customer loyalty and repeat purchases of their products and services. The study applied a sample of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with the East Africa. The analysis of data was conducted with the help of Cobb Douglas production function. The study finds a negative and insignificant relationship between different parameters and and organizational competitiveness.

Otieno, Oginda, Obura, Aila, Ojera and Siringi (2010) examined how ICT application among local authorities affected overall revenue collection among local authorities with the focus on Home Bay County, Kenya. The study sought to establish how internal systems and information systems influenced the levels of service quality offered. A cross sectional design was applied on a sample of 165 local authority staff and 1,842 traders within the county of interest. The study established that: there existed that Information Systems led to both efficiency and effectiveness in revenue collection. Utilization of ICT improved the efficiency and effectiveness of local authorities in meeting their set targets especially in revenue collection.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) refers to any communication device, various services and applications associated with them that enable institutions to apply technologies in their day to day lifes (Laudon & Laudon, 2010). It is generally thought that the importance of ICT is in its ability to create greater access to information and enhance communication (Büchli, Vleeschauwer, Janssen, Moffaert & Petit, 2011). ICT is at the centre of electronic security system in the world and Kenya police cannot ignore information as it plays a critical role in the security department. The integration of ICT in operation of firms across the globe has led to improved security among firms thereby improving their competitiveness. As firms go on applying technology innovatively in their operations, the level of output per employee is improved thus leading to greater organizational performance (Jackson & Krieshok, 2012).

Chou and Chou (2000) examined application of technology in the banking industry and how it influenced financial results posted at end of financial periods. The study identified a wide variety of

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financial services delivered through various technology platforms including: checking on customer account balances, settlement of utility bills, transferring funds across accounts and financial institutions; accessing credit information and cards; and placement of orders for check books among other services. The study acknowledges the role played by technology in improving the efficiency in operational costs, thereby increasing the overall profitability of financial institutions. The introduction of technology-enabled banking service delivery has revolutionized the way commercial banks offer services and the bottom-line recorded (Thamaraiselvan & Raja, 2007).

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a management tool that uses specific actions to carry out an organization's strategy (Minatra, 1997). It is a systematic, formally documented process that draws a map of activities that are supposed to be undertaken within a given period of time so as to facilitate the achievement of desired future state (Pearson, 1988). The strategies are developed with the aim of directing all actions of the organization on a day to day basis hence ensure proper utilization of resources in an organization. Strategic planning is used to determine the organization's mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, roles and responsibilities as well as timeliness. Strategic planning enables an organization to draw master plans on how to realize set organizational visions which enable development of internal procedures and operational guidelines to achieve the postulated future position.

Strategic planning provides an opportunity to organizations for scanning the environment for the opportunities and threats so as to help it plan on how to optimize the position of the organization using internal organizational strengths and minimizing the effects of internal weaknesses. Proper strategic planning will therefore aid the institution in its performance. Performance can thus be seen as the manner in which an institution carries out its duties within a specific period. It measures how well the management has utilized the resources entrusted in them by shareholders in the generation of value.

A strategic plan is concerned with organizational goals and the way in which those goals are to be achieved. Drucker (1954) first addressed strategy and strategy formulation as an approach to managing organisations. Steiner (1979) defines strategic planning as the systematic, formalized effort to establish company policies and objectives. Strategic planning has many phases including: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation and monitoring. Each of these processes requires close monitoring to ensure that the actual performance does not deviate so much from the espoused position (Decker & Höppner, 2006).

The term strategic planning is based on strategic plans covering several aspects like activities to be undertaken, the individual officers charged with overseeing the implementation, the period within which the implementation is to take place, resource t be utilized in the implementation and organizational changes required for

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realization of set objectives (Bush & Coleman, 2000). All these aspects need to be provided for in advance so that once the implementation process starts, it flows smoothly. In addition, there needs to be efficient communication among various implementing agents so as to enable exchange of relevant information for the implementation (Fidler, 2002). The process of coming up with the strategic plans is generally referred to as strategic planning (Adeyoyin, 2005).

Strategic planning is divided into immediate, medium term and long term for ease of monitoring and evaluation to ensure that any deviations from the planned activities is noted early so that appropriate actions are taken (Bush & Coleman, 2000). Each strategic plan clearly identifies the operating environment and how it is likely to affect its implementation, identifies resources required for its implementation and the timing of the resources both in terms of financial and human skills (Adeyoyin, 2005). In order to ascertain whether the strategic plan implementation is on course as stipulated, regular evaluation is necessary. For effective strategy implementation, there needs to be a balance among the different strategic objectives. They also needs to be aligned with other objectives in the strategic plan to ensure the measurement process if simple (Johnson & Scholes, 2002).

The evaluation of strategic planning can be done in various ways (Huotari & Iivonen, 2005). The rational way of achieving this evaluation however includes the Balanced Score card (BSC) because of its ability to measure beyond the traditional financial measurements. The BSC was developed with the purpose of helping organizations to track and monitor the implementation of strategic plans from four different perspectives (Kettunen, 2010). These key perspectives measure an organization's strategy implementation across customers' perspective, financial perspective, internal processes and learning and growth perspectives. Commonly used measures here include customer satisfaction and loyalty for customer perspective, return on assets and return on equity for financial perspective; knowledge created, shared and stored with an organization and its impact on organization growth in terms of change in total assets for the learning and growth perspective while internal processes are measured in terms of process flows, and internal efficiency (Kaplan and Norton, 2001)

Different models are applied in measuring strategic plan implementation depending on the kind of organization and the leadership present, level of complexity in the organization, total assets controlled or owned by the organization, skills and experience of the individuals involved in the planning process, culture, core and values in the organization (Bush and Coleman, 2000). These other models include: goals-based which is the most common model that starts by drawing focus on the mission, organization goals guiding day to day operations in the organization and strategies to achieve the goals, issues-based, organic and scenario?

Another model is the Issues-based strategic planning which begins with examination of

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issues facing the organization before formulating strategies that can address them together with clearly defined action plans (Bush and Coleman, 2000). The third model: organic strategic planning begins with clear articulation of an organization's vision and values before proceeding to formulate action plans that can help achieve the vision subject to the values. Various strategic plan experts prefer different models depending on the circumstances in their organizations. The strategic plan period could vary from one year, three years, while other considers five to ten years (Fidler, 2002).

The strategic planning function can be arranged formally or informally from one organization to another (Pearce & Robinson, 2002). This could be explained in terms of the existence of rules and guidelines governing the strategic planning process or lack of it within an organization (Pearce & Robinson, 2008). Formal analytical process makes use of analytical tools and methodologies that direct the actions of managers towards attainment of corporate success (Hofer & Schendel, 1978). Formal strategic planning leads to the development of a document that is comprehensive on an organization’s mission and future direction and how management intends to utilize the resources at their disposal in the production of the desired future position (Thompson & Strickland, 1993). Informal strategic planning is one with no structured way of formulating and implementing strategic plans instead the managers adopt the strategies in an ad hock manner (Hax & Majluf, 1991).

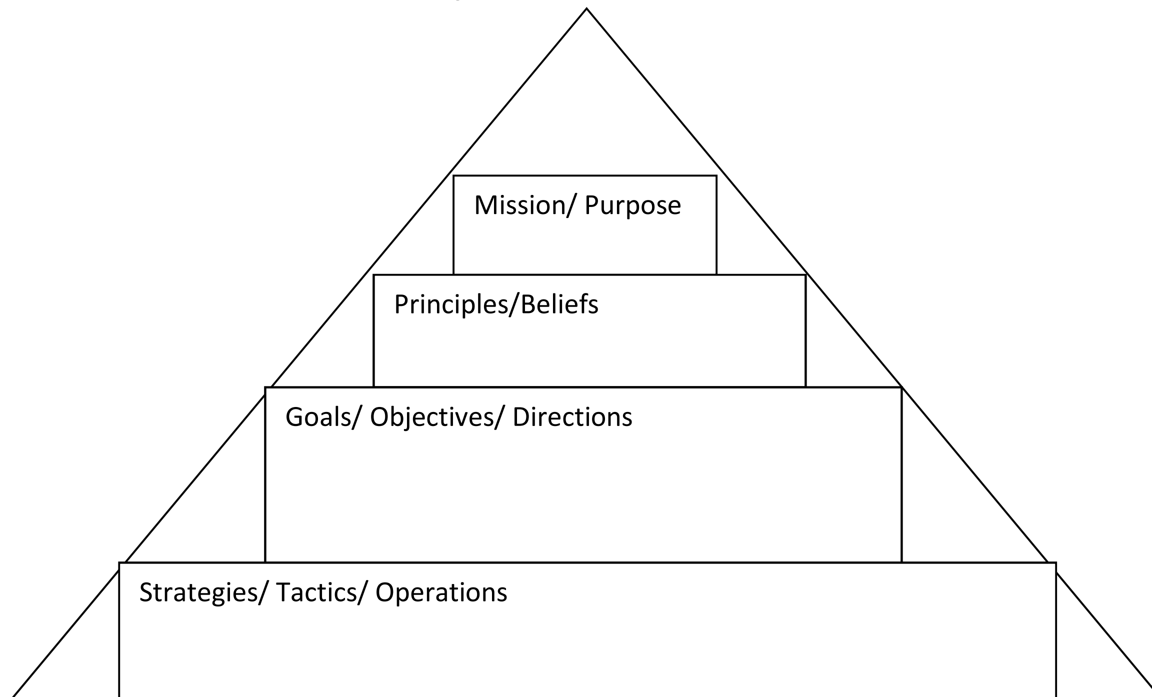

Figure 1: Strategic Planning Domain

Source: Verardo (1997)

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Mission concerns the main reason for the existence of the organization. Mission gives the purposed for the survival of a business organization. Principles and beliefs refer to what the organization stands for, what the organization values (Carpenter, 2006). Goals and objectives are what the organization wants to achieve in a given period. Strategies indicate how the organization will achieve the goals and objectives. Before the formulation of the mission statement, an organization must first of all conduct a strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis (SWOT). According to Hines (1991) the common planning elements of strategic planning included the determination of the mission, result areas, critical issues, goals, objectives, and strategies.

On the determination of critical issues, Hines indicates that internal and external factors to an organization are vital to the strategic planning process. He also points out the need for SWOT analysis. According to Perpetua (2016), strategic planning is a summary of activities to be carried out by an organization within a specified period of time. This could be a short term period of three years or a long term period of 5 years. It identified the various activities that need to be undertaken within the organization so as to attain the desired future position. Through strategic planning, organizations are able to coordinate various activities in the organization so as to attain better overall organizational performance. The process starts with formulation of strategies that are viewed as desirable to drive organization performance targets. Once formulated keen attention needs to be paid on implementation so as to appropriately operationalize the formulated strategies.

Organizational Competitiveness

Competition is a dynamic process within which it is difficult to achieve equilibrium because the industry structures are reformed repeatedly (Grant, 1998). For any firm to continue in the unforeseen future and still appeal to the customers, it has to rethink of how to continuously meet the ever changing and diversified needs of its customers. This is because competition determines whether a firm is to go into extinction of survive the competitive efforts and strategies developed by the competitors within the industry. In order to emerge competitive, a firms needs to employ a number of strategies including innovations, developing a cohesive culture which promotes development of new and better ways of solving customer issues (Porter, 1985). The level of competition in an industry may different from time to time because of the varied capabilities possessed by different firms within the industry (Bateman & Zeithaml, 1990). This is because there exist many different grounds of gaining and sustaining competitive advantage among firms in any given industry.

According to Porter (1979), competitors of a given organization could include various stakeholders like customers, suppliers, new entrants and substitute products (Porter, 1979). They all influence the way a given organization positions itself in a given market. The level of competition is influenced by the extent to which it is easy for new investors to enter the industry or exit. In circumstances where it is easy for

new entrants to join the industry, competition will always be high. This is because the level of restrictions imposed to join the industry is not significant and probably the capital required is not huge. The competition level may also be influenced by the aggressiveness of suppliers in a given industry. In circumstances where the suppliers determine the prices to be charged on inputs and hence outputs, the level of competition may be determined by them. The organization in the industry may only be price takers thus having limited powers to change the competitiveness of the industry (Porter, 1980). In circumstances where buyers determine the prices and quantities to be produced by a given industry, the level of competition will be driven by products and services demanded as opposed to the quantities to be supplied by firms. Substitute commodities offer alternatives to customers in place of what a given industry offer. This therefore means that the changes in the prices of a given substitute commodity is likely to influence the competitiveness of a given company. The same applies to complement goods in that change in the price of one would lead to a change in the other (Hill & Jones, 2001).

Firms formulate strategic plans with the aim of improving the competitiveness in the market place. The strategies are aimed at providing firms with opportunities to take advantage of internal strengths to make optimal use of opportunities while at the same time minimizing the effects arising from internal weaknesses and external threats. Organizations need to carefully evaluate their strengths and weaknesses so that they are in a position to take advantage of opportunities as they arise and minimize the effects of external threats (Porter, 1979).

The competitive advantage of an organization is never constant because the competitors are always plotting to stay ahead in a given industry. This therefore means that in order for a firm to have sustained competitive advantage, they need to constantly invest in research and development that would promote the rate of inventions and operationalization of new ideas hence innovation. The customers are becoming more informed and demanding with each passing day which then means that in order to keep pace with their changing tastes and preferences, an organization has to be innovative. An organization needs to keep pace with the changes in technology, internationalization trends and other aspects that would improve its competitiveness (Johnson et al, 2005).

Firms are said to be competitive whenever they are in a position to sustain profits that are above the industry average over a period of time (Porter, 1985). This is the aim of all organization because it leads to greater shareholders wealth accumulation. In order to achieve such a position in any given industry, firms are required to clearly understand the bahaviour of their market and customers so that they keep pace with their changing tastes and preferences (Porter, 1985). They need to always stay ahead of customers' changing needs and preferences so that customers always choose their products among the many in a given industry. Firms are said to be competitive whenever they are in aposition to make

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available the sme benefits to the customers at a price below that being offered by the competition, or deliver products and services that are of superior quality as compared to those of a competitor (McLauren, 2004). The advantages that accrue to an organization as a result of being able to offer benefits to customers at a lower price than a competitor and offering a totally differentiated product are commonly called positional advantages because they provide a description of a firm's position in a given industry as a leader in cost of product differentiation (Porter, 1985).

According to Wernerfelt (1984), all firms have different internal resources which they can utilize to gain sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, depending on how organizations utilize the resources at their disposal, the level of profitability and results posted would vary from one organization to another. This perspective is further confirmed by Mc Lauren (2004) who argues that resources provide firms with capabilities which are not uniform across an industry thereby an opportunity to utilize them better for competitive advantage. This is consistent with the model developed by Porter (1980) identifying the various forces of competition in an industry. Proper application of the Porters (1980) model in the forces of competitive advantage assures firms of competitiveness in any given industry. These forces include, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers, threat of substitute product and threat of new entrants (Porter, 1980).

Strategies developed for competitiveness are always concerned with making an organization unique and different from its peers in a given industry (Porter, 1996). This involves decisions made by an organization with the aim of delivering a unique and relevant mix of value to customers. It is mainly concerned with creating a competitive position through differentiation of a company's offering to customers from those offered by the competition. Development of effective strategy provides a firm with opportunities to influence the environment in its favour thereby defend it from competition. Aaker (1992) notes that in order to develop strategies that would assure an organization of competitive advantage, an organization has to clearly understand the strengths of its competitor so that they can know how to dislodge them from the top slot. In another study, Mintzberg (1994) argues that in order to be responsive to the changing business environment, an organization's strategy need to evolve with time to ensure delivery of benefits that exceed those of competitors.

To compete effectively firms need to rethink their strategies in terms of how they align to the changing customer tastes and preferences so as to promote customer loyalty. In order to achieve this, organizations need to have adequate information management systems that support timely and quality decision making. This will enable them in formulating quality strategies in a timely manner hence protect their market share from competitor encroachment (Muthama & Ngugi, 2012). This could also be improved by better intelligence gathering which informs product development and improvements for greater customer satisfaction. Through

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technology adoption, organizations are able to develop technology intelligence which if well exploited can provide competitive grounds. Technology enables firms in building better intelligence systems and quality data collection which lead to better response by organizations to competition strategies (Frenzel, 1996).

Baker and Sinkula (2009) identified technology as one of many aspects in the risk taking perspective that enable organizations to gather information about their competitors with the offering hence lead to better product development and higher customer satisfaction. Basile (2012) noted that technology enables firms to pursue opportunities which would otherwise be difficult to exploit and at the same time develop other new markets through product development and market expansion. Past study findings by Tajeddini (2010) provide indications that firms that apply technology in innovations through research and development realize above average results in an industry compared to their peers. This is because application of technology leverages the operations of firms thus leading to efficient which can be transferred in terms of lower prices and higher quality benefit offerings to customers (Altindag, Zehir and Acar, 2010).

According to Hakala (2011), firms that apply technology in their operations have been found to post above industry average results indicating that technology positively influences organization performance. It was noted that firms making use of sophisticated technologies even post higher returns because the sophistication in technology makes it difficult for the competition to replicate. A firm needs to ensure that it has on board appropriate technically qualified staff, enough resources to finance the research and development activities if it is to realize better competitive position than other firms in the industry (Hakala, 2011). Information Technology alignment to the business will seek to enable the business to maximize competitive advantage (Filippone et al., 2008).

To succeed in their operations and the industry, firms have to apply technology competitively in collecting information about the market, synthesizing the data collected and making inferences that would ensure they perform above industry averages (Kemerer, 1997). Through technology, firms are able to develop new and better ways of going about internal affairs hence operational efficiency. Technology offers organizations a platform for them to leverage their operations for efficient operations compared t their competitors. Strategic planning is a highly important element of organizational success (Frenzel, 1996). Strategic planning helps bring focus to an organization in that it identifies the roles, persons to perform the specified role and the time framework in which the actions are to be performed together with the desired end product in terms of deliverables (Altindag et al., 2010). Strategic planning ensures that the performance of the organization is coordinated and consistent thereby eliminating deviations.

The current operating environment characterized by high complexities makes it difficult for organizations to forecast due to

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many (Baker and Sinkula, 2009). However, well experienced and skilled managers would rely on their past experiences and see how they can predict the future performance of the organization. As managers go about their strategic planning functions, it is important that they understand their operating environment so as to develop responsive strategies that would provide competitive advantage (Kemerer, 1997). This will enable the organization formulate strategies that are consistent with the provisions of the laws governing their operations, responsive to customer changing demands and preferences and thus improve firm competitiveness (Gregus and Benova, 2006).

The Relationship Between Organizational Innovation, Technology, Strategic Planning And Competitiveness

Innovation can be viewed as either a discrete event that leads to the implementation of new creative ideas within an organization for competitiveness. Innovation is a process because of the various stages that the potential adopter goes through over the course of an innovation effort. These stages involve identification of problems, problems, evaluation of alternatives, arriving at decision and putting innovation into practice (Kogers, 1983). Mamula and Popović-Pantić (2015) investigated the relationship between innovativeness and strategic planning. The study revealed that there is positive correlation between strategic planning approach in marketing and firm's innovativeness but the intensity of the relationship depends on the type of the innovativeness considered.

Technology is one of the key and most important elements linked to effective operations management in an organization. Technology can be seen as a body of knowledge used to create tools, develop skills and extract or collect materials. It can further be defined as the application of science so as to meet an objective or solve a problem (Molinero, 2012). While a number of innovations are technology based that include; (personal computers, auto fuel injections), other innovations including new products and services in financial services are facilitated by technology. The present active surroundings require all organizations to change which can happen radically and incrementally. However, the development in technology cannot occur without innovation. It is very essential for an organization to change the way it operates and also change the products and services it provides (Wahlen, 2007).

According to Desouza (2001) organizations can achieve competitive intelligence by the use of technologies that include optical character recognition, intelligent agents and especially the Internet. Indeed, the Internet is a company's key tool that supports competitive intelligence (Buchwitz, 2002). Power and Sharda (1997) formulated a working framework where the Internet capabilities are indicated to give information for strategic decisions. According to the framework, the external information required and the methods of acquiring information can be supported by Internet tools for communication, searching, browsing and information retrieval. Miller and Cardinal (1994) in consideration of a number of results from different scholars

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found out that strategic planning affects firms' performances positively (Miller & Cardinal, 1994).

Baark, Antonio, Lo and Sharif (2011) in their assessment of innovation sources, capabilities and competitiveness based on a survey of 200 manufacturing firms in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta region. It was established that internal departments are as major sources of innovation for improving a range of firm capabilities, acquiring advanced technology improves learning, resource allocation and organizing capabilities.

Dibrell, Craig and Neubaum (2014) sought to investigate a link between the formal strategic planning process, planning flexibility innovativeness and firm performance of the 448 firms in a multi-industry sample. The findings indicate that the firms' formal strategic planning processes and planning flexibility are positively associated, and each is positively related to innovativeness. In addition, innovativeness fully mediates the relationships between firm performance and the formal strategic planning process and planning flexibility.

Empirical Studies and Knowledge Gaps

The Table below gives a summary of research and knowledge gaps.

Table 1: Summary of Empirical Studies and Knowledge Gaps

Researcher	**Focus**	**Methodology**	**Findings**	**Comment/ Knowledge Gap**
Njeru (2012)	Challenges facing innovation strategy implementation at Equity Bank of Kenya	A representative sample was used. Primary data collected through an interview guide. Content analysis applied	Bank applied product and process based innovation The innovations enabled development of new products and services	The study concentrated on challenges in innovation strategy implementation but ignored its effect on competitiveness and the aspect of technology
Arasa and K'Obonyo (2012)	The Relationship between Strategic Planning and Firm Performance in the Insurance industry in Kenya	A quantitative analytical approach was employed. Correlation analysis conducted	existence of a relationship between strategic planning and firm performance (Financial and non financial measures used)	The study did not consider innovation, technology and its effect on organizational competitiveness
Auka and Keraro (2014)	Strategic marketing and technological innovations and firm growth: The case of retail banking in Kenya	Descriptive research design Census study Multiple Regression Analysis	Positive correlation but an insignificant relationship between marketing innovation and growth of commercial banks.	The focus was on strategic marketing and not how general innovations in a technologically enabled environment influence strategic planning for competitiveness

Table 6.1: Continued

Farsi and Toghraee (2014)	Challenges of small and medium sized enterprises in exploitation of innovative opportunities using a case study of Iran SMEs	The study adopted the use of exploratory factor analysis	Six challenges were identified in order of importance: managerial and human resource; research and development; technologies; national policy and regulatory environment; lack of market information	The study looked at Challenges in exploitation of innovative opportunities but failed to evaluate the way strategic planning, innovation and technology affect firm competitiveness
Westerlund and Leminen (2011)	Managing the challenges of becoming an open innovation company: Experiences from Living Labs in the UK	Empirical reviews were conducted to establish the findings of the study	The study identifies four distinct steps in becoming an open innovation company (producer driven, user centric closed, user centric open and user driven) and describes these phases and illustrates the divergent roles that users play in each one.	The study focused on the challenges of becoming an open innovation as opposed to strategic planning, technology and organizational competitiveness

Table 1: Continued

Uyarra, Edler, Garcia-Estevez, Georghiou and Yeow (2014)	The barriers to innovation through public procurement: A supplier perspective survey of public sector suppliers in the UK,	The study adopted survey design on the public sector suppliers in the UK, using a probit model to investigate the influence of structural, market and innovation determinants on suppliers' perception of these barriers	The main barriers reported by suppliers included the lack of interaction with procuring organizations, the use of over-specified tenders as opposed to outcome based specifications, low competences of procurers and a poor management of risk during the procurement process.	The study was carried out focusing on innovation barriers in public procurement but did not consider technology and strategic planning on firm competitiveness. Its focus was public procurement
Johnson (2010)	The barriers to innovation adoption using a case study of the e-markets in the aerospace and defence and higher education sectors in the United Kingdom	Case study design was employed for the e-markets. The study reviewed the literature on e-market adoption followed by in-depth interviews with senior managers in buyer, supplier, and e-market organizations.	The findings revealed a number of barriers and challenges related risk perception, knowledge deficits, trust, firm size, and organizational readiness that moderate the adoption and usage of e-markets in the sectors	The study focused on the barriers in the e-markets innovations but did not cover competitiveness, technology and strategic planning interactions.

Conclusion

Innovation suffers from a number of challenges. West and Gallagher (2006) identify three challenges to include: establishment of creative ways to exploit internal innovation, incorporation of external innovation into internal development and motivation of the outsiders to supply an ongoing stream of external innovations.

A number of studies have revealed different benefits associated with innovation. Some studies have argued the role of innovation particularly in boosting national growth through entrepreneurship; (Ndemo & Maina, 2007; Tiffen & Mortimore, 1994). Innovations help businesses in cost reduction, offering of better collection of consumer centric products as well as in reducing the time in marketing and driving

firm growth (Kemp, 2003). Innovation within organizations goes through a number of barriers that hinder their effectiveness to the organizations. Inadequate resources act to hinder the efficiency of innovation in most organizations (Kubinski, 2002).

On Practice, developments in the Business world have introduced new dynamics that call on firms to rethink their strategic planning processes if they are to achieve and remain competitive. It is therefore imperative that organizations invest in research and development to enable the development of new ideas on how to conduct internal process for operational efficiency and effectiveness. Technology is advancing very fast and all organizations are required to tap into new technologies if they are to achieve the desired competitiveness. The findings of this study would help business managers in development of innovation in a strategically planned manner in order to ensure the competitiveness of their organizations.

The strategic planning process needs to take into account the changes happening in the operating environment so that they align their strategies according for organizational competitiveness. Technology has changed the way organizations do things and access markets for effectiveness. An organizations' adherence to these will improve their competitiveness. Organizations need to adapt to new technologies which have been found to leverage operations and thus lead to greater profitability and competitiveness.

On policy, the findings of this study would be relevant to Kenyan Government in development and implementation of policies relating to information communication and technology that govern the technology applications to ensure that businesses are protected. The findings will also guide government of Kenya technocrats in development of policies to promote research and development in the country for increased innovations. Through the findings of this study, Government officials charged with promotion of businesses will develop appropriate policies that spur business growth and development.

On the theory, this study would contribute to existing knowledge on strategic planning, technology, innovations and organizational competitiveness that future learners can use to better understand the various areas of interest they may want to explore. This study will act as empirical evidence of their studies hence creates knowledge for future scholars on technology, innovations, strategic planning and how they relate with firm competitiveness. The study will also help future scholars by suggesting areas for further research. This study will also extend the application of various theories used in this study. It will extend the applications of innovation diffusion theory and how technology diffuses and gets absorbed in organizations, how resources owned and controlled by an organization influences its strategic management and overall competitiveness.

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