
A Comprehensive Literature Review in Competitive Advantages of Businesses

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ABSTRACT

The previous studies on the field of competitive advantages of businesses were reviewed. Competitive advantage refers to a set of factors or capabilities that enable the company to demonstrate better performance comparing to the competitors. Totally 59 articles in eight different fields, including strategic management, strategic management of marketing, marketing management, information technology, knowledge management, resources-based theory, entrepreneurship, and human resource management, were reviewed. The results showed that among several available methods, a majority of businesses employ Porter's triple strategies, namely differentiation, centralization, and cost leadership, to gain competitive advantages. Among the triple strategies, the strategy of differentiation has drawn the highest attention and simultaneous utilization of the three strategies is a rare case.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Resource-Based Theory, Differentiation Strategy, Centralization Strategy, Cost Leadership Strategy.

Introduction

Business world nowadays is featured with intensive competition with national and foreign rivals. As a result, businesses that fail to deal with the changes are most likely to lose considerable share of their market and profit. Finding a suitable place in the intensive competitive environment is the key to long-term profitability and survival of a business; a goal which is only attainable through creating and keeping competitive advantages. The term "competitive advantage" refers to a "set of capabilities that permanently enable the business to demonstrate better performance in comparison to its competitors" (Bobillo et al.,

2010). According to Porter's reasoning, there are three ways to achieve competitive advantage: cost leadership, centralization and creating differentiation of product. He argued that businesses should think about how they enter a market and then create and keep a proper competitive position for themselves. (Porter, 1980)

There are two general viewpoints to elaborate on stable competitive position in an organization. The first viewpoint is developed on the industrial organization theory introduced by Michel Porter in the 1980s as a prevailing viewpoint, in which attaining competitive advantage is caused by

environmental opportunities. Analytical tools used in this viewpoint include analysis of organization value chain, analysis of competitive forces, general strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization), competitiveness, clusters, competitive advantages of nations, and so on. The second viewpoint is the resource-based theory, in which it is argued that every business creates its own competencies, and capabilities which eventuate in competitive advantage. In fact, permanent competitive advantage and weakness and strength features of the business are mainly under consideration. (Moreno *et al.*, 2012).

Methodology and Findings

Articles with the term “competitive advantage” in their title or keywords, which have been indexed in Science Direct and Emerald were adopted for analysis. It is noteworthy that to have more accurate survey only articles published between 1980 and 2013 were adopted.

Sheng and Chang (2012) surveyed the effect of information and communication technology (ICT) on transfer of knowledge and on achieving innovation in competitive advantages in medical sector of Taiwan. Obstacles ahead of transfer of knowledge were problems in an organization and ambiguity of the knowledge (i.e. ambiguity of cause and effect relations of the knowledge). The results of data analysis showed that capability of the organization in ICT field had positive and significant effect on transfer of knowledge and that the transfer improved the development of attaining innovation regarding competitive advantage in the organization.

In their study, Lew and Sinkovics (2013) examined the effect of strategic unity at international level and its effect on competitive advantage. They concluded that high-technology industries enjoy strategic alliance as the source of product

development, winning international market share, and developing competitive advantages.

Lim *et al.* (2012) reported that the stronger the IT ward managers regarding the structural power in organizational hierarchy, the stronger the IT role in the organization and the more the competitive advantages for the organization.

Hazen and Byrd (2012) found that new information technologies such as electronic data interchange (EDI) and FRID technology have positive effect on attaining competitive advantages and expansion of innovation. They maintained that these technologies may bring differentiating features for the business.

Moreno *et al.* (2012) demonstrated that environmental human resources (HR) management enhances competitive advantages of the companies. Indeed, such businesses employ researchers to create competitive advantages.

Rugraff (2012) conducted a study in car industry of Czech and found that two main factors of creating competitive advantages in the industry was forward-looking and backward-looking merger or the suppliers in the industry (participation in and sharing resources of customers and suppliers).

Kim *et al.* (2012) stated that recruitment of trained and skilled staff improves competitive advantage of the organization and differentiation among other industries.

Li and Zhou (2010) studied the effective factors on attaining competitive advantages in 179 foreign countries in China with the presumption that these companies have accepted market tendency and integrity of management. They found that market trend and management integrity could create competitive advantage through attenuating costs, differentiation, and diversity in the market.

Oh and Rhee (2010) argued that Korean car industry has achieved competitive

advantages in the world industry through combining capabilities of suppliers and merging (cost leadership strategy).

Feng *et al.* (2010) conducted a study in China between 2008 and 2009 and concluded that customer and suppliers' participation throughout the process of attaining competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy) improves competitive advantages of the industry.

Bobillo *et al.* (2010) studied 1500 manufacturing firms in Germany, France, the UK, Spain, and Denmark and maintained that organizational factors (*e.g.* capital markets, financial liaison, and skilled work force) – differentiation strategies approaches- have positive effect on attaining competitive advantages.

Focusing on competitive advantages of food industries, Massa and Testa (2009) found through their surveys on found that knowledge management process is positively effective on attaining competitive advantages in the industry and enables utilization of differentiation, centralization, and cost leadership strategies.

Tan (2009) held that relation between the staff and the company is strengthened through creating common values in a company, which eventuates in competitive advantages.

Ling and Chen (2008) launched a study on a model for attaining competitive advantages and reported that sharing knowledge and forward-looking/backward-looking mergers (with customers, suppliers, and distributors) – cost leadership strategy- improves competitive advantages in long-run.

Tan (2009) maintained that mutual relation between the staff and the company can improve through creation of common values in an organization; which is the source of competitive value.

Lin and Chen (2008) studied a model to gain competitive advantages and concluded that sharing knowledge and forward-

looking/backward-looking mergers (with customers, suppliers, and distributors) (cost leadership strategy) could lead to development of long-term competitive advantage.

Awuah and Gebrekidan (2008) addressed the development of competitive advantages that recognition of key elements in competitive networks and establishment long-term relation with the elements (cost leadership strategy) creates competitive advantages for firms.

Koh *et al.* (2007) studied small and medium size businesses in the UK and found that electronic business and the Internet (differentiation and centralization strategy) were positively and significantly effective in competitive advantages of firms.

In a survey of 56 Thai firms in semi-conductor industry, Liao and Chien Hu (2007) suggested that through affecting central qualifications in an organization, transfer of knowledge eventuates in competitive advantage in the organization, while uncertainties in external environment negatively influences transfer of knowledge and acquisition of competitive advantages.

Swink and Song (2007) maintained that the development of new products (centralization strategy) creates and increases competitive advantages of businesses.

In their study, Toppinen *et al.* (2007) showed that key factors of success, organizational capabilities, and organizational resources (differentiation and centralization strategy) could lead to acquisition of competitive advantages in businesses.

Silvi and Guganesan (2006) found that cost knowledge management (strategic cost management viewpoint) added to competitive advantages (through utilization of cost leadership strategy) in four Italian companies.

In their survey on the effects of electronic businesses on several real estate agencies in China, Hinton and Tao (2006) showed that electronic businesses were positively and significantly effective in performance and competitive advantages of businesses and resulted in differentiation from the rivals.

Castro *et al.* (2006) maintained that organizational capital (culture, structure, and learning) differentiate the firms that possess such capitals from their competitors and create competitive advantages.

Khandekar and Sharma (2005) polled 300 employees and managers in 9 Chinese companies in international market and found that ability of human resources poses positive and significant effect on competitive advantage.

Chuang (2004) found that implementation of knowledge management improved competitive advantage of a business.

Hunt and Amett (2004) maintained that utilization of competitive-centered viewpoint and market sectoring (centralization strategy) could bring competitive advantages to businesses.

Based on the results of their study, Awaz (2004) concluded that utilization of informal networks could increase competitive advantages through backward/forward-looking merger with partners (cost leadership strategy).

Adams and Lamont (2003) recommended that knowledge management, organizational resources, innovation and differentiation of products, and organization learning is most likely to improve competitive advantages of businesses.

Rigamampianina *et al.* (2003) maintained that Porter general strategies (differentiation, centralization, cost leadership strategy) helps to result in competitive advantages for organization.

Based on their results of data analyses, Davis *et al.* (2003) concluded that utilization of IT based strategies attenuated costs of

company, differentiated the products, and created innovation which could bring considerable competitive advantages to the organization.

In an article, Erikson (2002) found that entrepreneurship capital consisting of entrepreneurship capabilities and commitment was positively and significantly effective in competitive advantage.

Relying on their inquiry, Longenecker and Ariss (2002) concluded that learning and development indices improve skills management and performance of the organization, which may result in competitive advantage.

Though surveying the available models regarding competitive advantages, Walters *et al.* (2002) argued that tangible and intangible values and value of materials and equipment, services, salary, wage, investment costs performance were effective in competitive advantages.

On the basis of their three-dimension model of competitive advantage, Fudson and Radnor (2002) reported that organization, people, and practices are mutually interactive and positively affect competitive advantages through specific measures.

Based on a proposed model, Kaleka (2002) maintained that organizational resources and capabilities and utilization of Porter's triple strategies improve competitive advantages in organizations.

Likewise, Fahy (2002) suggested that resource-based viewpoints can exert positive impact competitive advantages of an organization.

In their study on information systems and their effects on competitive advantages, Zhang and Lado (2001) found that information systems improve data-based/transfer-based/information-based merits and eventuate in competitive advantages.

In their study on medical treatment and tourism, Preble *et al.* (2000) concluded that

strategic unions (cost leadership strategy) lead to sharing resources between two companies, innovation in new products and entering into new markets, as well as easy access to new markets and acquisition of competitive advantages.

Keams and Lederer (2000) argued that strategic harmony between information systems and business plans have positive and significant effect on organizational performance and competitive advantage.

In one of their studies Reed *et al.* (2000) reasoned that through development of products with lower quality (achieving cost leadership strategy), variety of products to meet different tastes (differentiation strategy) and the way it deals with organizational complexities, comprehensive quality management leads the organizational toward competitive advantages.

In their model of competitive advantage, Mazzarol and Souter (1999) demonstrated that strategies to enter the market (cost leadership strategy), marketing strategies, industries structure and external market structure create competitive advantages for businesses in higher education field.

Morgan and Hung (1999) surveyed the effect of marketing strategies and communications using resource-centered viewpoint. Organizational resources under consideration in the study and their influence on competitive advantage through marketing relations are listed along with some examples in the table below.

In their survey, Morgan and Hunt (1999) found that organizational based marketing relation was positively and significantly effective in organizational resources.

in their study on Australian manufacturing industries, Yamin *et al.* (1999) showed that Porter's general strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization strategy) positively affected competitive advantages and performance of the company.

Olson *et al.* (1998) maintained that organizations' strategic design and marketing leave positive and significant effect on competitive advantages of organizations provided that we take into account key merits of the organization, strategy centralization level (centralization on business, sector, or line of product), pricing limitations, resource and production merits, preferences of consumer on product design along with issues such as market development and variety of mergers.

Following several supporters of resource-based approaches for realization of competitive advantages, Piercy *et al.* (1998) concluded that organizational resources and skills result in competitive advantages.

Porter (1997) argued that structural features of an organization such as entry of new investors, threats of being replaced, customers' negotiation power, suppliers' negotiation power, and competition among rivals all play effective roles in realization of competitive advantages of a firm.

Whitehill (1997) argued that knowledge-based strategies, which are intangible and hardly achievable for the competitors, may be a source of competitive advantage for the company.

In their study, Whiteley and Hessian (1996) maintained that implementation of customer-oriented approach leads the organization toward competitive advantage through differentiation and centralization strategies.

Slater (1996) enlisted the methods to achieve competitive advantage including quality of services and products, provision of proper services throughout the process of introduction of products/purchase/after sale services, lower cost of production and services comparing with other competitors, pace of introduction of new and innovative products, innovation in provision of products and services, and promotion of learning culture throughout the organization (cost

leadership, differentiation, and centralization strategies).

In a study on Japanese companies, Krause (1995) maintained that vertical merger strategy (upward and downward) (cost leadership strategy) has positive effect on competitive advantages of organization.

Long and Koch (1995) and Juttner and Wehrli (1994) portrayed in their model that central advantages and strategic processes (cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization strategies) and organizational sources lead to competitive advantages.

Turner (1991) showed that marketing information is positively and significantly effective in the three strategies of cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization.

In his well-known book, Porter (1980) named three competitive strategies for realization of competitive advantages in organization including cost leadership strategy, differentiation, and centralization; which are the bases of the studies named above. (Porter, 1987).

Table 1 lists the summary of researchers' viewpoints based on main and secondary factors pertinent to competitive advantages.

Table 1. Summary of literature review based on main and secondary factors in competitive advantages

Main factor	Secondary factor	Author
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	IT capabilities	Sheng & Chang, 2013
	Knowledge obstacles	
	Transfer of knowledge	
competitive advantages (centralization strategy)	Strategic union	Lew & Sinkovics, 2013
	Control process	
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Logistic new communication technologies:	Hazen & Byrd, 2012
	Environmental factors	
	Organizational factors	
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Brand identity	Kim et al, 2012
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Marketing strategy creates brand identity	
	Forward merger	Rugraff, 2012
	Backward merger	
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Management of environmental human resources	Moreno et al, 2012
Competitive advantage	IT capabilities	Lim et al, 2012
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy) and institutional competitive advantage	Management correlation	Li & Zhou, 2010
	Market trend	
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Customers' role and participation in preparing and providing products	Feng et al, 2010
	Suppliers' role and participation in preparing and providing products	
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy/merger)	Capability process	Oh & Rhee, 2010
	R&D capabilities	
Int'l competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Internal/external competitive advantage through: organizational factors (e.g. capital markets, financial agents and skillful workforce)	Bobillo et al, 2010
Competitive advantage (human force)	Promotion of common value	Tan, 2009
Competitive advantage (demand-center viewpoint)	Creating value in customer	Zhou et al, 2009
	- Emphasis on services	

(competitive advantage through differentiation in market and innovation; differentiation strategy)	- Emphasis on prices - Market trend - Customer trend - Competition trend	
Competitive advantage	Knowledge management Acquisition or development of knowledge Knowledge storage	Massa & Testa, 2009
Competitive advantage	Knowledge transfer/ sharing Utilization of knowledge Cost leadership strategy Differentiation of strategy Centralization strategy	Salavou & Halikias, 2009
competitive advantages (differentiation and cost leadership strategy)	Condition of competitive environment Organizational merger - Internal merger - External merger Knowledge sharing Knowledge sharing	Lin & Chen, 2008
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Innovation capacity in organization Identification of key elements in network and establishment of long-term communication through forward/backward communication	Awuah & Gebrekidan, 2008
competitive advantages (centralization strategy)	Production-marketing mixture through development of new products	Swink & Song, 2007
Competitive advantage	Environmental uncertainty Knowledge transfer	Liao & Chien Hu, 2007
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Key factors of success of industry Competition strategy Organizational resource Organization capabilities	Toppinen et al, 2007
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Utilization of the Internet and new information technologies	Koh et al, 2007
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	cost knowledge management	Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Organizational capitals: - Organizational culture - Organizational structure - Organizational learning Electronic business: - Electronic learning	Castro et al, 2006
competitive advantages (differentiation and cost leadership strategy)	- Customer relation management - Web-based marketing - Electronic services - Electronic supplies - Office automation	Hinton & Tao, 2006
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Human resource abilities	Khandekar & Sharma, 2005
Competitive advantage	Industrial texture Environmental uncertainties Information intensity Necessity of IT	Kearns & Lederer, 2004
competitive advantages (centralization strategy)	Entrepreneurship intensity Learning capability of market concentration Marketing capability	Weerawardena & O' Cass, 2004

competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Knowledge capability merger through informal communication networks	Awaz, 2004
Competitive advantage (ownership, accessibility, performance approach)	Acceptance as colleague (cost leadership/merger strategy) Type of competition (centralization) Innovation and creativity (differentiation strategy) Collaboration (merger) Knowledge management:	Ma, 2004
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	- Social science management including: human resources, innovation supporting organizational culture, structural resources - Technical/technological knowledge management including: IT, hardware and software	Chuang, 2004
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Competition centered viewpoint: utilization of competitive resources (cost leadership and differentiation) Market sectoring (concentration)	Hunt & Arnett, 2004
Competitiveness advantages (differentiation strategy)	Investment toward improvement of obstacles of copying; emphasis on variety and differentiation of products	Rigamampianina et al, 2003
competitive advantages (differentiation and cost leadership strategy)	Knowledge management systems efficiency - Resource-based organizational learning	Adams & Lamont, 2003
competitive advantages (differentiation and cost leadership strategy)	- Financial resources of company IT based strategy	Davis et al, 2003
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Entrepreneurship capital: - Entrepreneurship capabilities including: perceived flexibility, entrepreneurship creativity, entrepreneurship merits, organizational capabilities, self-efficiency to reach resources, perceived behavioral control, entrepreneurship commitment	Erikson, 2002
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Sources of national competitive advantages: - Fundamental resources - Advanced resources	Fahy, 2002
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Competitive advantages sources of company: - Tangible and intangible assets - Human resources capabilities Resources of organization Organization capabilities	Kaleka, 2002
Triple aspects of competitive advantage	Individuals Organization Scheduled organizational practices	Fudson & Radnor, 2002
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Value of company Value added	Walters et al, 2002
Competitive advantage	Skills management improvement and organizational performance management Information systems effects	Longenecke & Ariss, 2002
Competitive advantage	- Information data-based merits - Transfer-based merits	Zhang & Lado, 2001
competitive advantages (differentiation and cost leadership strategy)	- Information-output merits Strategic unions	Preble et al, 2000

Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Coordination of information systems design and business plan	Kearns & Lederer, 2000
	Coordination of business and information system design	
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Comprehensive quality management	Reed et al, 2000
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Marketing strategies and communications (cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategy)	Morgan & Hunt, 1999
Int'l competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	External market and industry structure: - Internal/external marketing strategy - External market entry strategy Different merits Copying obstacles	Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999
Competitive advantage	Cost leadership strategy - Differentiation strategy - Centralization strategy	
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach) including product competitive advantage (centralization strategy)	Organizational resources: - Physical - Financial - Exporting experience - Human force skills - Information skills	Piercy et al, 1998
Service competitive advantage (differentiation strategy)	- Customer communication skill	
Cost competitive advantage (cost leadership strategy)	- Development of product (centralization strategy) - Supply chain	
Competitive advantage (technological advantages of firm)	management technical knowledge	Ghingold & Johnson, 1998
Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)	Competencies: - Resources - Competencies	Hill & Jones, 1998
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Effective factors in marketing strategy design and organization: - Organization key merits - Strategy centralization level (concentration on company, sector, or line of product) - Connection between image of company and targets of company - Taking into account the factors in production (direct/indirect factors such as workers, suppliers, managers, etc.) - Taking into account limitations of pricing, resource merits and production - Taking into account preferences of consumers during product design - Taking into account issues such as market development and different merger (upward/downward)	Olson et al, 1998
Competitive advantage (industry/structure-centered organization approach)	Entry of new investors Purchasing negotiation power Suppliers negotiation power Competition among new rivals	

competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Threat of new products Knowledge-based strategies	Whitehill, 1997
Competitive advantage (customer-centered approach)	Emphasis on and identification of each customer (differentiation strategy) Take real measures to meet the customers' needs Utilization of strategy collaboration and a network of suppliers, customers, and suppliers (cost leadership strategy) Transforming satisfied customers into loyal customers Customer contact with the staff	Whiteley & Hessian, 1996
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	- Acceptable quality - Suitable services - Low costs - Products supply pace - Innovation in products supply - Organizational learning Central capabilities	Slater, 1996
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	- Central capabilities (knowledge and differentiating skills from competitors) - Strategic process	Long & Koch, 1995
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Upward vertical merger Downward vertical merger	Krause, 1995
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Merits Organizational resources Availability of information for successful implementation of competitive strategies	Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994 Turner, 1991
competitive advantages (general strategy)	Cost leadership strategy Upward vertical integration Downward vertical integration Horizontal integration Centralization strategy Entering market Market development Product development and improvement Differentiation strategy Pace of product delivery Price Quality of product Upstream services	Porter, 1987

The literature review results imply that there are 8 distinct groups in the field of competitive management including strategic management, knowledge management, resource-based theory, entrepreneurship, IT, marketing management, marketing strategic management, and HR management. Diagram-1 pictures frequency of the studies on each one of these eight groups. These studies can be classified based on the specific variables

that each study has dealt with. For instance, some works have focused on IT and some others on HR. Table 2 lists the studies based on their field of study.

As illustrated in the figure above, two groups of strategic management and resource-based theory have the highest frequencies. The most dominant result of strategic management is the consistency between competitive advantage of a

company and its capabilities. That is, the main task of the management is to exert harmony between merits of the organization (skills and internal resources) and the opportunities and risks exerted by environmental changes. On the other hand, resource-based theory is one of the main theories introduced in strategic management literature concerning competitive advantage. The theories in contrary with industrial organizational theory in which competitive advantage is the outcome of external factors. It actually takes internal resources of the organization as the source of competitive advantages and emphasizes the fact that organizations may achieve competitive

advantages based on inconsistency of the resources they posse; what several studies have expressed interest in. The majority of the studies have focused on Porter's triple competitive strategies; while some have focused on one, two, or all three strategies. One may conclude from these studies that Porter's model of competitive strategies, thanks to coordinating aspects for exports of oil products, suffices for measuring and achieving competitive advantages. Taking into account aspects of distinction - cost leadership, and centralization strategies (Porter's general strategies) - the present study also reviews the studies that have analyzed the aspects (Table 3 and diagram 3).

Table 2. Competitive advantages studies based on field of study

No.	Reference	Field of study
1	Preble et al, 2000	Strategic management
2	Chuang, 2004	Resource-based knowledge management
3	Erikson, 2002	Entrepreneurship
4	Davis, et al, 2003	IT
5	Yamin et al, 1999	Strategic management
6	Massa & Testa, 2009	IT
7	Rugraff, 2012	Strategic management
8	Salavou & Halikias, 2009	Strategic management
9	Awuah & Gebrekidan, 2008	Strategic management
10	Silvi & Cuganesan, 2006	Knowledge management
11	Castro et al, 2006	Resource based
12	Khandekar & Sharma, 2005	Resource based
13	Morgan & Hunt, 1999	Resource-based strategic management
14	Olson et al, 1998	Strategic management
15	Whitehill, 1997	Knowledge-based strategic management
16	Krause, 1995	Strategic management
17	Zhang & Lado, 2001	IT
18	Whiteley & Hessian, 1996	Strategic management
19	Slater, 1996	Marketing management
20	Hunt & Arnett, 2004	Marketing management
21	Kim et al, 2012	Marketing strategic management
22	Moreno et al, 2012	HR management
23	Koh et al, 2007	IT
24	Hinton & Tao, 2006	IT
25	Khandekar & Sharma, 2005	HR management
26	Bobillo et al, 2010	Marketing management
27	Lim et al, 2012	IT
28	Kearns & Lederer, 2004	IT
29	Swink & Song, 2007	Marketing management
30	Kearns & Lederer, 2000	IT
31	Liao & Chien Hu, 2007	Knowledge management
32	Fahy, 2002	Resource based
33	Reed et al, 2000	Marketing management
34	Tan, 2009	HR management
35	Li & Zhou, 2010	Marketing management

36	Lew & Sinkovics, 2013	Marketing strategic management
37	Weerawardena & O’Cass, 2004	Entrepreneurship
38	Piercy et al, 1998	Resource based
39	Zhou et al, 2009	Marketing management
40	Kaleka, 2002	Marketing management
41	Long & Koch, 1995	Resource based
42	Feng et al, 2010	Resource based
43	Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999	Strategic management
44	Fudson & Radnor, 2002	Marketing strategic management
45	Turner, 1991	Resource based
46	Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994	IT
47	Ghingold & Johnson, 1998	Marketing strategic management
48	Rigamampianina et al, 2003	Resource based
49	Walters et al, 2002	Knowledge management
50	Walters et al, 2002	Marketing strategic management
51	Awaz, 2004	Marketing strategic management
52	Ma, 2004	HR management
53	Sheng & Chang, 2013	Strategic management
54	Hazen & Byrd, 2012	Marketing strategic management
55	Oh & Rhee, 2010	Knowledge management
56	Lin & Chen, 2008	IT
57	Toppinen et al, 2007	Strategic management
57	Hill & Jones, 1998	Resource based
58	Porter, 1997	Resource based
59	Porter, 1987	Marketing strategic management

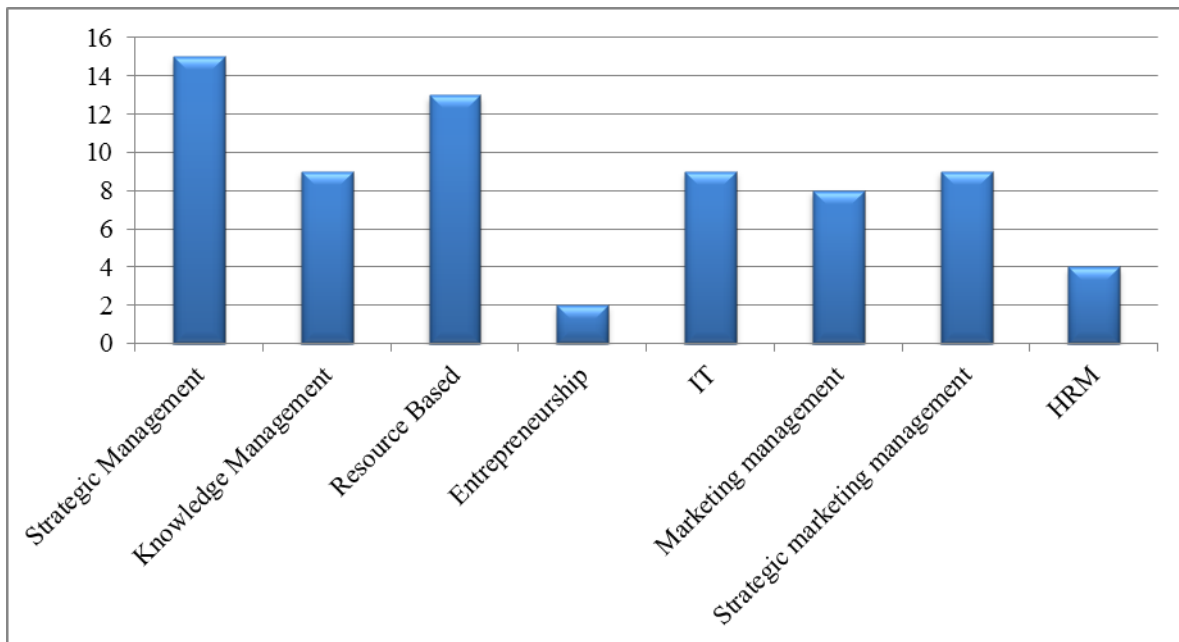


Figure 1. Fields of study on competitive advantages

As pictured in Figure 2, there are few studies dealing with the three general strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and

centralization) in one work. The distinguishing feature of the present study is that these three strategies have been

surveyed simultaneously. The reason for employing Porter's general strategies in conceptual model for surveying competitive

advantages is further explained in the conclusion.

Table 3. Aspects under study by previous studies

Researchers	Element under study	
Hazen & Byrd, 2012	Cost leadership	
Rugraff, 2012		
Li & Zhou, 2010		
Feng et al, 2010		
Oh & Rhee, 2010		
Salavou&Halikias, 2009		
Lin & Chen, 2008		
Awuah&Gebrekidan, 2008		
Koh et al, 2007		
Silvi&Cuganesan, 2006		
Hinton & Tao, 2006		
Awaz, 2004		
Ma, 2004		
Hunt & Arnett, 2004		
Adams & Lamont, 2003		
Davis, et al, 2003		
Kaleka, 2002		
Preble et al, 2000		
Reed et al, 2000		
Morgan & Hunt, 1999		
Mazzarol&Soutar, 1999		
Yamin, et al, 1999		
Piercy et al, 1998		
Olson et al, 1998		
Whiteley&Hessan, 1996		
Slater, 1996		
Krause, 1995		
Turner, 1991		
porter, 1987		
Sheng & Chang, 2013		Differentiation
Kim et al, 2012		
Moreno et al, 2012		
Li & Zhou, 2010		
Feng et al, 2010		
Bobillo et al, 2010		
Zhou et al, 2009		
Salavou&Halikias, 2009		
Lin & Chen, 2008		
Koh et al, 2007		
Hinton & Tao, 2006		
Khandekar& Sharma, 2005		
Ma, 2004		
Hunt & Arnett, 2004		
Rigamampianina et al, 2003		
Adams & Lamont, 2003		
Davis, et al, 2003		
Erikson, 2002		
Kaleka, 2002		
Preble et al, 2000		

Reed et al, 2000
 Morgan & Hunt, 1999
 Mazzarol&Soutar, 1999
 Yamin, et al, 1999
 Piercy et al, 1998
 Olson et al, 1998
 Whitehill, 1997
 Whiteley&Hessan, 1996
 Slater, 1996
 Long & Koch, 1995
 Turner, 1991
 porter, 1987
 Lew & Sinkovics, 2013
 Li & Zhou, 2010
 Feng et al, 2010
 Salavou&Halikias, 2009
 Swink& Song, 2007
 Koh et al, 2007
 Weerawardena&O’Cass, 2004
 Ma, 2004
 Hunt & Arnett, 2004
 Kaleka, 2002
 Mazzarol&Soutar, 1999
 Yamin, et al, 1999
 Piercy et al, 1998
 Olson et al, 1998
 Slater, 1996
 Turner, 1991
 porter, 1987

Centralization

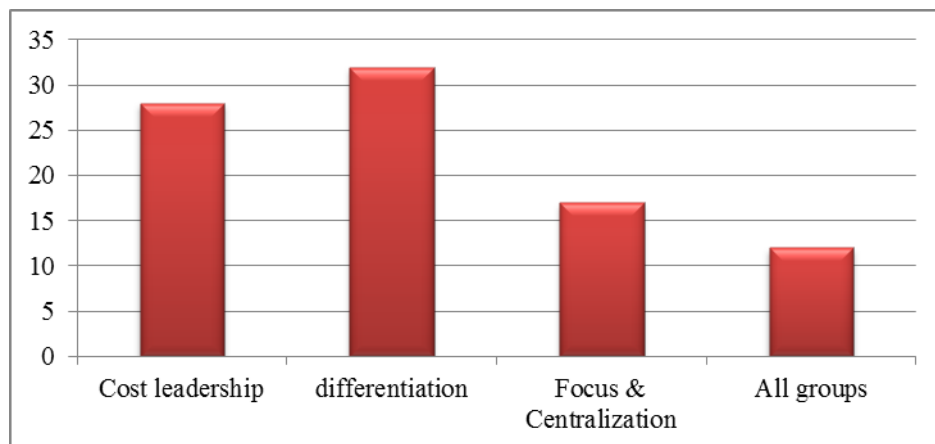


Figure 2. The aspects under study in previous studies

Discussion and Conclusion

Through field analysis, creditable articles on competitive advantages and the aspects indexed in Emerald and Science Direct were examined in detail. The purpose of the survey

was to find the causes of competitive advantages in an institute. Based on investigating 59 articles, the main factors in realization of competitive advantages were the Porter’s general strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization

strategies), among which differentiation strategy has been most used in other works and a minimum number of studies dealt with the three strategies at the same time. Moreover, the results showed that survey of competitive advantages in the fields of marketing strategic management, strategic management, marketing management, IT, knowledge management, entrepreneurship, and theory were based on resources and HR management. Furthermore, maximum and minimum frequencies in the studies were for strategic management and entrepreneurship. The results of this work may be helpful for studies on competitive studies, the aspects, and measurement at business level.

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