

# STRATEGIC RESPONSES AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS: A CASE OF AFRICAN BOREHOLES INITIATIVE LTD.

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to establish the effects of strategic responses on competitiveness of African Boreholes Initiatives Ltd (ABI). Specifically it sought; to determine the relationship between strategic alliance and competitiveness; pricing and competitiveness, technology and competitiveness, and customer service and competitiveness. The study is of importance to the management of borehole drilling companies who may use the findings as the base upon which to review business/company performance and necessary improvements undertaken. The regulators and the policy makers may use the finding as reference for policy guidelines on management and control of such organizations. It was guided by resource-based theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study targeted ABI Ltd employees on managerial level in charge of strategy. ABI Ltd was selected as the study site due to proximity to the researcher, time available for research and budgetary constraints. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and was tabulated, coded and processed by use of computer software for easy analysis. The study concluded that the combined effect of the predictor variables (strategic alliance, pricing, and technology and customer service) explains 78.7% of the variations in competitiveness ABI Ltd. Moreover, pricing, technology, strategic alliance and customer service in that order were found to have statistically significant influence in explaining competitiveness ABI Ltd. This study recommends that; to stay in competition, ABI Ltd must set goals alright which is in the form of promise to customers adopt strategic alliance, should adopt strategic positioning such as ensuring full presence in the country, adopt Information Communication Technology and measure performance despite the challenges it faces from external environmental factors.*

**Key words:** Strategic Responses, Competitiveness and Strategic Alliance

## Introduction

The world is currently changing and according to Gabriel (2015). All firms lean themselves to the external surrounding which is highly dynamic and always presents opportunities and shortcomings. Organizations which do depend majorly on environment have to constantly adjust organizational activities as well as their internal structures to reflect the new external realisms which might be a threat to the organizations forthcoming success (Ngetich, 2010).

These difficulties, among numerous others, calls for broad environmental scan for reasonable methodologies to be embraced by associations for development and survival in the changing and turbulent commercial center (Al-Mansour, 2007). Successful companies today invest in sustainable competitive advantage for it is the single most dependable contributor of above-average profitability. In Kenya, where there is limited resources, market share and new competitive challenges, implementation of strategies in organizations is important. In order for firms to survive the growing competitiveness brought by the dynamic environment in which they operate, they have to adopt strategies that give them a competitive advantage.

Growing business rivalry therefore calls for expansion and implementation of fresh strategies by individual and every organization (Chekpiyeng, 2008). Application of strategies is administration's way to respond to the changing ecological conditions that surround them by adjusting their drive, shape and strategies to see sustained delivery of amenities to its customers and effectiveness. Some of the methods that organizations bring into line themselves with the environment are by implementing strategic responses identical to branding, strategic alliances and implementation of state of technology. These are a few of the strategic responses that are nowadays concerned with positioning and connecting businesses to the environment to safeguard continued success and also protect itself from surprises conveyed about by the varying environment (Ligondo, 2012). In borehole drilling business, the changes in commercial environment; equally internal and external aspects plays a major role, hence the need to maneuver company policies, resources midst others to realize competitiveness.

## Strategic Responses on Competitiveness of a Business Entity

Strategic response is an arrangement of decisions and moves made that item in the formalization and execution of arrangements meant to accomplish business goals. It requires organizations to establish a coherent framework of objectives, mission statement, corporate values for all parts of the organization, and at all management levels, if goal congruence and optimal decisions are to be achieved (Pearce & Robinson, 2007). Strategic response involves variations in the organizations' strategic conduct to ensure victory in a transforming upcoming environment. Hierarchical technique alludes to the guide and limit of a firm over the protracted term, which guarantees the accomplishment of destinations in a shifting domain through setting of assets and abilities with the point of accomplishing partner prospects (Hunger & Wheelen, 2011). The point of focused technique is to understand a practical upper hand and also along these lines improve a business execution.

Strategic associations are agreements amongst companies to grasp objectives of regular concern (Margarita, 2009). Pearce and Robinson (2007) stated that organizational strategic alliance is a situation whereby different organizations share resources and events to track a strategy though maintaining their independence aimed at a defined phase framework.

Pricing is the act or an instance of setting a price for a product or Service. A Company with the most minimal uses would procure the greatest benefits in the outcome when the contending merchandise is basically undifferentiated, and additionally offering at a typical market cost. Innovation enables the firm to diminish its expenses in each unit of yield (Cheng, 2010). Martín-de Castro *et al.* (2013) estimated that creating viable mechanical developments is urgent for making and maintaining an organizations competitive advantage.

Customer provision is the provision of activities to customers before, all through and after a buy. Client advantage is one of the fundamental methods which associations satisfy considering the rising competition and for connecting with

entrepreneurial open entryways for joined efficiency and more useful market access and assembling the customer dedication and reliability level (Yasar, 2010).

### **Competitiveness of a Business Entity**

Otuya (2016) asserts that organizational competitiveness is obtained over contenders by giving clients more prominent esteem, also through lower costs or else by giving extra advantages generally benefits that legitimize comparative, before conceivably higher, charges. Schoemaker (2012) stresses that rivalry is at the focal of accomplishment or disappointment of firms effectively growing a business corporate is frequently needy upon a vigorous upper hand that bit by bit shapes a center of steadfast demographics, which can be delayed after some time. Urbancová, (2013) asserts that in the present competitive condition very difficult condition of each organization is to restrict resistance and win new client bases.

Therefore strategic responses are a key factor in achieving competitiveness in the industry. Branding, pricing, strategic alliances and adaption of the state of technology are among the various tools that actively push for gain competitiveness in the industry. This can be supported by Yasar, (2010) that a firm's competitiveness deals wholly with the particulars of management's game proposal for competing effectively with its specific labors to please customers, its aggressive and defensive changes to counter the drills of rivals, its replies to whatever market circumstances prevail at the current condition, its initiatives to reinforce its market position, and its method to securing a modest advantage vis-a-vis rivals. Businesses worldwide are imaginative in considering competitiveness to win client favor. Agreeing to Otuya (2016), organizations expect to just improve work than adversaries of giving what customers are looking to and in this way secure high ground in the market.

### **African Boreholes Initiative Ltd**

African Boreholes Initiative limited is a business company legally registered in Kenya in 2007. It is dedicated to providing highly superiority products and services which allow their customers to advance access to the fundamental essentials which ensure life and good well-being. For 4 years that has been demonstrated through a well drilling, pump installation as well as water management facilities across the republic of Kenya where approximately a large degree of drought has wedged the society for the historical decade. Admittance to clean water is approximately every individual wishes water is life. However, changes in the market environment such as entry of new competitors, technological advancement and changes in customers' needs have affected this performance leading to a decline in profitability in the recent years. In 2015 profit before tax was a deficit as compared to 2014.

### **Statement of the problem**

In responding to changes in external environment, organizations in utmost industries have to come up with strategies that are receptive to environmental protocols (Peter, Namusonge, Waema, & Ngonzo, 2014). Though, the factors and performance in an organization's macro environment having the greatest strategy-shaping influence typically relate to the company's quick industry and aggressive condition, activities of adversary firms, purchaser conduct and providers' contemplations (Porter, 2008).

Organizational strategic responses are frequently adhoc and intuitive rather than formally written and provide little basis upon which development prospects can be measured or analyzed., like in other developing countries, organizational strategic responses plays an indispensable role in employment creation, investment distribution, and social welfare and in this respect contributes to organizational competitive which is not the case in many Kenyan organizations. Additionally increase in competition in borehole industry has led to lose of clients to rival firms, reduction in profit margin and general losses. In any given business environment, firms compete for the same customers posing many challenges to the organization. Therefore, there is need to find out the influence of strategic responses on competitiveness of African Boreholes Initiative Ltd.

## Literature Review

Strategic alliance is otherwise called an association that offers firms an opportunity to unite for a together valuable open door and proceeded with upper hand (Yi Wei, 2007). Key union's constitute covenants between organizations (accomplices) to meet goals of common attentiveness (Margarita, 2009). Pearce and Robinson (2007) defined strategic alliance as a situation depicts a reasonable system as a speculated display distinguishing the discernments under investigation and their relations. Schreiner et al. (2009) observe that strategic alliances present a means for firms to pursue their individual strategies despite minimal resources in some area. Strategic alliance together can likewise be portrayed as a system wherein individuals energetically change their key organizational practices with motivation to lessen doubling-up and waste while empowering upgraded execution (Hunger & Wheelen, 2011).

Evans and Wolf (2005) contend that having strategic alliances or collaborations between firms might be a critical constituent in accomplishing advantage or maintaining a strategic distance from rivalry since upper hand may not generally be accomplished by rivalry alone. Associations may contend in a few markets and team up in others or even do both (Nduta, 2012). Strategic alliances aid in building sustainable competitive advantage to parties involved. According to Kenei (2006), alliances between potential competitors or between buyers or contenders or amongst purchasers and dealers is probably going to be favorable when the consolidated expenses of procurement and purchasing exchanges, (for example, contract arrangements) are bring down through cooperation than the cost of going only it.

Vaidya (1999) and Muema, (2012) stated that the battle that key organizations are transforming into a fundamental sort of business development in various ventures; especially in perspective of the acknowledgment that organizations are contending on a worldwide field. Schreiner et al., (2009) take note of that vital union are basic to associations for various key reasons: natural development, speed to advertise, unpredictability, organizations can settle rising innovative work expenses, and collusions encourage access to worldwide markets(Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001 and Mowla, 2012).

Isoraita (2009) affirms that strategic alliances can be made to build barriers or avoid substitution and gain competitive power. A firm in a particular industry may join forces to invest in a research and development or marketing (Mowla, 2012). For example, a firm seeking to develop beyond her traditional boundaries like entering regional or international levels may need to collaborate with the others on the new market or territory in order to make entry Such unions might be favorable for motivations behind creating framework, for example, conveyance channels, data frameworks, innovative work and no doubt for social reasons.

## Theoretical framework

The study will be guided by resource based view. This theory was initially promoted by Penrose (1959) as cited by Nyaga (2015) and later expanded by others, it refers to established firms specific resources that can determine which businesses are more competitive and has additional performance. This method emphasizes on the company's strategic wealth that include, organizational resources, human resources physical resources, and, that such as competence, organizational developments, reputation, knowledge, information, that it is treasured and costly to swap and imitate (Williamson et al., 2012). Strategic resources on their own are the source of competitive advantage besides; they challenge managers in identification and organization of resources (Safari, 2008).

Newbert (2007) contend that resource-based view (RBV) reports the principal inquiry of why firms act differently and how firms fulfill and drive forward through high ground by arranging their benefits. Organizational assets, which shape the pivotal unit of examination for RBV, can be especially depicted as those inclinations that are fixing semi-always to the firm (Ngetich, 2010).It includes of technological, authoritative resources, money related, physical, human, business, and mechanical utilized by firms to create, fabricate, and pass on items and administrations to its clientele. Barney, (1991) as referred to by Uri Nyaga (2015). This hypothesis classifies assets as unmistakable monetary or, on the other hand physical) or imperceptible i.e., agents information, encounters and slant, connection's notoriety, picture name, progressive frameworks). In this study, RBV was used as a methodology to analyze African Boreholes Initiative Ltd which needed to intensely look into their resources and how best they can be put into action so as to achieve competitiveness.

## Materials and Methods

The study employed **descriptive survey design**. The target populace of this investigation was the 110 employees working at ABI Ltd with a sample of 100 respondents. The study used 5-point likert questionnaires as data collection instruments. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied on the results obtained to determine how items correlate in the same instrument. Cronbach's coefficient Alpha of more than 0.7 was taken as the cut off value for being acceptable which enhanced the identification of the dispensable variables and deleted variables.

**Table 1:** Target Population

Sections	Population	Percentage %
Top level management	14	13.0
Middle level management	28	25.0
Lower level management	68	62.0
<b>Total No. of Staff at Management Level</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: African Boreholes Initiative Ltd

## Data Analysis

Information gathered from the finished polls was outlined, coded, organized and checked for any blunders and exclusions. Recurrence tables, rates and means were utilized to exhibit the discoveries. The responses from the open-ended questions were reported by descriptive narrative as qualitative analysis. Quantitative information was examined utilizing illustrative measurements which are averages, percentages, means and standard deviations.

Multiple regressions was used to test the hypothesis, this is because it estimated the coefficients of the linear equation, which involved one or more independent variables, which best predicts the value of the dependent variable. This model was expressed as below:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X_1 + e$$

Where,

Y = Dependent variable (Competitiveness)

X = Independent variables;

X<sub>1</sub> = Strategic alliance

α = constant value e = Error term

## Results and Discussion

### Regression Analysis

To establish the statistical significance of the study variables regression analysis was employed. The regression equation took the following form.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \mu$$

Where Y = Competitiveness of borehole drilling companies

X<sub>1</sub> = Strategic Alliance

In the model, β<sub>0</sub> = the constant term while the coefficient β<sub>1</sub> was used to measure the sensitivity of the dependent variable (Y) to unit change in the predictor variables. μ is the error term which captures the unexplained variations in the model.

Regression analysis was conducted to empirically determine whether strategic alliance, was significant determinant of competitiveness of borehole drilling companies. Regression results show that the coefficient of determination also called the R square is 78.7%. This means that the effect of strategic alliance explains 78.7% of the variations in competitiveness of ABI Ltd. The correlation coefficient or R of 88.7% indicates that strategic alliance has a strong and positive correlation with competitiveness of ABI Ltd.

**Table 3: Regression Model Fitness**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.887	.787	.708	.18895

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) on table 3, shows that the effect of strategic alliance and customer service was statistically significant in explaining changes in competitiveness of borehole drilling companies. This is demonstrated by a p value of 0.000 which is less than the acceptance critical value of 0.05.

**Table 4: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	8.454	3	2.818	78.277	.000
Residual	2.285	43	0.036		
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.739</b>	46			

a. Predictors: strategic alliance

b. Dependent Variable: competitiveness of borehole drilling companies

Table 4 displays the regression coefficients of the independent variables. The results reveal that strategic alliance, is statistically significant in explaining competitiveness of borehole drilling companies. Regression results indicate that strategic alliance and competitiveness had a positive and significant relationship (beta=0.691, p value 0.000). The findings imply that an increase in strategic alliance by one unit leads to an increase in competitiveness of borehole drilling companies by 0.691 units.

**Table 4.5: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.522	0.224		6.765	0.00
Strategic Alliance	0.691	0.096	0.595	7.198	0.00

a. Predictors: strategic alliance.

b. Dependent Variable: competitiveness of borehole drilling companies

## Conclusion

The study established that ABI Ltd was involved in many existing schemes and projects to improve the water situation in the country through strategic alliance at the international, national and local levels. Strategic alliances were deemed as having a highly positive influence on competitiveness of ABI Ltd. The strategic alliances were a long-term and futuristic strategic response being sought to influence competitiveness of African Boreholes Initiative ltd.

Pricing was a critical success strategic response that could enhance African Boreholes Initiative ltd competitiveness as it pursues to reduce cost and improve efficiency through suppliers, performance and technology. Moreover, technology and customer service were also deemed as a strategic response that highly enhances competitiveness of ABI Ltd.

## Recommendation of the Study

Based on the findings and study conclusions, this study recommends that; To stay in competition, ABI Ltd must set goals alright which is in the form of promise to customers. But to be ahead of competitors or to remain in competition service ABI Ltd must give more than the expectation of customers so as to

delight them. ABI Ltd should put other customer service strategies that will delight customers in place. Example; notification of any transaction any developments or products should always be communicated to customers. Management should supervise the customer service personnel closely so that anyone who does not have good customer relations is taken from that department.

The study recommended that there is need for ABI Ltd to be able to overcome unpredictable environmental challenges that are brought about by the turbulent operating environment it operates it if it is to survive. The study recommended that the Society should differentiate service offered from other organizations offering the same product and services to remain relevant considering the limited resources available.

They study further recommended that strategic alliance should be adopted by ABI Ltd as a strategic response to partner with other development organizations and the private sector to develop the infrastructure and assist in penetrating in all areas that need water resources.

They study also recommended that ABI Ltd should adopt strategic positioning such as ensuring full presence in the country. This includes having county offices in all counties and working closely with stakeholders round the country. This reduces response time and ensures that many regions are served with water resources. It is clear that ABI Ltd is involved in development issues and their effectiveness depends on the response time and skills. The organization staff should therefore be trained the importance of responding within the shortest time possible to reach more clients.

The study recommends that ABI Ltd should adopt Information Communication Technology. The study acknowledges that adapting technology is expensive but the benefits of technology out do the costs. As a result of technology, time is saved and efficiency doubles. In this day and age, no organization can afford to ignore technology otherwise it will be faced out of the market.

Last but not least, the study recommends that it is important for ABI Ltd to measure performance despite the challenges it faces from external environmental factors. This ensures that its operations are in line with set goals and objectives and acts as a check so that it does not deviate from set goals and objectives.

### Suggestion for Further Studies

A replica of the same study is suggested within peer organizations in order to draw comparisons on the range of strategic responses that are available between those companies and the ABI Ltd.

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