Influence of the strategic techniques implementation on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya: A Case Study of Eveready East Africa Limited

Dr. Caleb Odhiambo Onjure, PhD

Africa International University. School of Business and Economics

Abstract: *The corporate organizations are facing cut throat competition, illiquidity, capital in-adequacy, and threatened growth in wealth, especially the dry cell battery manufacturing companies in Kenya. They have been faced by dire consequences of fundamental changes taking place in the business environment, such as liberation of both domestic and foreign market; reform programs aimed at modernization of the capital market. The study sought therefore to establish the influence of strategic techniques put in place by dry cell battery manufacturing companies in Kenya on their quest for competitive advantage. Specifically, the study sought to establish how product development, technology innovation, and competitor's analysis implementation influences the competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturing companies in Kenya. Research design was a case study. The target population was all dry cell battery manufacturing companies listed in the Nairobi Stock Exchange Market, which was one company (Eveready East Africa Limited). The unit of analysis was 250 employees. Sample size of 79 employees was derived from the target population. Stratified proportional sampling was used. The study used both primary and secondary data. The main instrument in data collection was semi-structured questionnaire, which was issued to employees at senior level management, middle level management, first level management, and junior staff. The Collected data was coded, analyzed, and presented in form of tables and figures by statistical packages for social science (SPSS). The study established that technology innovation, product development, and competitor's analysis have statistically significant influence on the competitive advantage of dry cell manufacturing companies in Kenya. Based on findings, the study concluded that the company faces serious specific challenges that required immediate attention. The study recommended for improvement in technology innovation and change in governance to the organization, further reduction in cost of production, and human resource development, among other recommendations.*

Key Words: Product Development, Technology Innovation, Competitor's Analysis, Competitive Advantage

I. Background of the Study

The World business environment undergoes drastic changes include accelerated implementation of economic reforms by the governments, the liberation of the economies, the discontinuation of price controls, privatization and commercialization of public sectors and increased competition (Besanko, Dranove, Shanley, & Schaefer, 2007). The key concern of organizations all over the world is their continued existence over time (Walker, 2007). However, such continuous organizational life is not automatically assured (Besanko, Dranove, Shanley, & Schaefer, 2007). Market are shifting rapidly and in many cases converging in taste, trends, and prices. Innovative transport systems are accelerating the transfer of technology. Shift in the nature and location of production systems, especially to China and India, are reducing the response time to changing market conditions". More and more countries around the world are welcoming foreign investment and capital, and therefore labor market has become international. David (2009) asserts that Corporations in every corner of the globe are taking advantage of the opportunity to share in the benefits of world economic development. In this changing environment, corporate organizations have to constantly adopt their activities and internal configurations to reflect the new external realities (Quinn, 1980). This constantly changing environment is complex, dynamic, and largely unpredictable; and so it makes it imperative for organizations to continuously adapt their activities in order to succeed (McGee, Thomas, & Wilson, 2010). To survive in this very dynamic environment, organizations need strategies to focus on their customers and deal with the emerging environmental challenges (Capon, 2008). Porter (1985) and Wheelen *et al.,* (2006), argued that the essence of strategy lies in creating tomorrow's competitive advantage, based on strategic capabilities faster than competitors. A competitive advantage is attained if the current strategy is value creating, and not currently being implemented by present or possible future competitors. Although a

competitive advantage has the possibility to become sustained in long run, this is not necessarily the case in Kenya today.

II.   Statement of the Problem

The corporate organizations especially the dry cell battery manufacturing companies in Kenya have been affected badly by unique business environmental challenges. According to the Eveready East Africa Annual Report and financial statement of 2011, the Managing Director Steven G. Smith is in record that a number of factors had negatively influenced their financial outcomes. These factors included: first is Illegal and unfair competition which continue to make markets flooded by low cost substandard dry cell batteries which are mainly retailed in the low end market segment. Secondly is Raw Material Prices. the metal prices in the global market are determined by supply and demand. The prices are tracked by various entities that include the LME (London Metal Exchange). In the financial year 2010, the price of zinc went up by 43%. The Eveready East Africa Limited Company could not transfer this cost to the consumer. Thirdly is a Currency fluctuation in the region: The depreciation of the local currency against the major currencies in international trade has the inevitable effect of increasing the cost of imports, comprising of raw materials and imported products. In view of the above, this study will attempt to establish the strategic techniques used by dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya on their effort to gain competitive advantage.

III.   Research objectives

General objective
To establish the influence of the strategic techniques implementation on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya

Specific Objectives
i.   To determine the influence of product development on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.
ii.   To establish the influence of technology innovation on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.
iii.   To examine the influence of competitor's analysis on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.

Research Hypotheses
i. H_0:   There is no significant influence of Product development on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.
ii. H_0:   There if no significant influence of Technology innovation on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.
iii. H_0:   There is no significant influence of Competitor's Analysis on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya.

Significance of the study
The findings of this study act as a guide to management of dry cells battery manufacturers in their steps to developing sustainable competitive advantage and commitment to organization's strategy. This study is also useful in enlightening management on the need to formulate strategies that will guide the operations of organizations. This research finding is extending knowledge in the world of academics in the area of strategic management.

Scope
The general objective is to establish the influence of strategic techniques on competitive advantage of the dry cell battery manufacturer's in Kenya. The study was limited to dry cell battery manufacturers listed in the Nairobi Stock exchange, a case of Eveready East Africa Limited in Nakuru County. The study independent variables were product development, technology innovation, and competitor's analysis. Dependent variable was competitive advantage. In areas where tangible evidence was not obtained to back up arguments and assertions, the study relied on subjective opinions of managers to achieve its objectives.
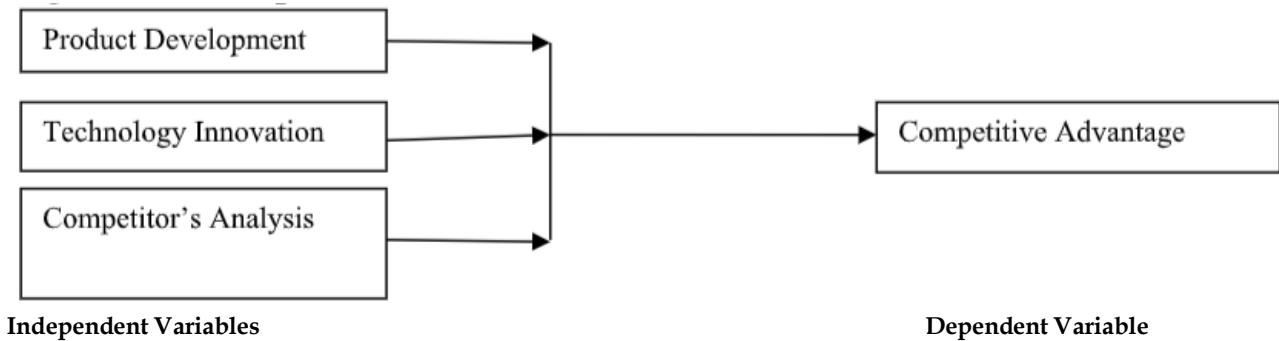
2.1 Theories Used
The study was guided by two theories: Resource Based View, and Porter's Five Competitive Forces.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework gives an illustration of the dependent variable which is competitive advantage and independent variables which comprise of five factors: Product development, technology innovation and competitor's analysis.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

Source: researcher (2013)

3.1   Research Design

Waiganjo (2013) is a framework that guides the collection and analysis of the data, and a detailed plan for how research study is conducted in order to investigate the research questions. This study adopted a case study design. According to Mathew *et al.* (2012) research design is a set of decision that makes up the master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the needed information. The study also used a descriptive survey research design. This is because; it permits the collection of data through questionnaires administered to a sample quickly, efficiently, and accurately (Osoo & Onen, 2007).

3.2   Study Population

The study population was dry cells battery manufacturers in Kenya listed in the Nairobi stock exchange. The unit of analysis was 250 employees of Eveready East Africa limited. The target population was however 250 people, who consisted of senior level management, middle level management, first line level managers, and junior staffs.

Table 3.1 Target population

Cadre of staff	Target number
Senior level managers	17
Middle level managers	33
First line managers	67
Junior staffs	133
TOTAL	**250**

Source: Human Resource Department Eveready East Africa (2013)

3.3 Sample Design and Sample Size

Sampling is a procedure of selecting a part of the population on which research is to be conducted. It ensures that conclusions from the study can be generalized to the entire population. The study employed stratified proportional sampling method. Stratified sampling method ensured adequate data for analysis from various subpopulations or strata. The size of the strata sample was calculated according to how large the total sample is, and the total sample was allocated among various strata proportionately. The method of proportional allocation was (n_i = n.P_i), whereby P represented the proportion of the population included in the stratum *i*, and n represented the total sample size, the number of element selected from stratum *i* was n.P_i. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), the sample size should not be less than 30% of target population. 30% of the targeted population was therefore picked for this study.

Table 3.2 Sample Size

Cadre of Staff (Sub Set of the Population)	Senior Level Managers	Middle Level Managers	First Line Managers	Junior Staff	Total Sample Population
Sample population (30%)	5	10	20	40	75

Source: Researcher (2013)

3.6 Data Collection Instrument

The main instrument in data collection was through semi-structured questionnaires targeting senior level managers, middle level managers, first level managers, and junior staff. This was because of merits claimed on behalf of the instrument such as respondents who are not easily approachable, can be reached conveniently, respondents have adequate time to give well thought answers, it is free of bias from the interviewer and answers are in respondent's own words; there is also low cost. For the secondary data, published records like magazines and annual reports were used as well as information from websites.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Approval was given from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture And Technology to carry out the study. The researcher sought permission to conduct the research in Eveready East Africa limited. The researcher also administered the questionnaire to the respondents. There was an introductory note to let the respondent to feel free to participate. Questions that were not clear to the respondent were clarified. Due to likelihood of poor questionnaire return rate, the researcher telephoned the respondents either before sending the questionnaire or afterwards as a follow up and assistance where completion of the questionnaire was required. The questionnaires were administered by the researcher. The researcher ensured that the questionnaires were received at the right time and that everything was clarified clearly to the respondents before they responded before they filled the items in the questionnaire.

3.8 Reliability of Instrument

This refers to the extent to which data collection techniques and analysis will yield similar findings by other observers. The measurement of reliability provides consistency in the measurement of variables. Internal consistency reliability is the most commonly used psychometric measure for assessing survey instrument and scales (Zhang, Waszink & Wijngaard, 2000). Cronbach alpha (α) is the basic formula for determining the reliability based on internal consistency (Kim & Cha, 2002). The standard minimum value of alpha (α) is 0.7 as recommended by Nunally (1975) and Malhotra (2004). Construct used in this study was tested for internal consistency reliability where values greater than 0.7 indicated presence of a strong internal consistency in the measurement. Table 3.3 shows Cronbach alpha (α) values for various variables greater than 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire is reliable as recommended by Fraenkel & Wallen (2000).

Table 3.3 Reliability Test Result

Study Variable	Number of Test	Cronbach Alpha
Product Development	12	0.8021
Technology Innovation	6	0.7912
Competitor's Analysis	17	0.7647
Competitive Advantage	8	0.7723

4.1 Response Rate

Out of 75 questionnaires distributed, 59 were filled and returned to the researcher. These questionnaires were interpreted and analyzed. This gave a response of approximately 78.7%.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

	Frequency	Percentage
Response	59	78.70
Non Response	16	21.30
Total	**75**	**100**

A response of 78.7% was found to be suitable enough for the analysis. This was higher than the average response rate of 30% recommended by Sekaran (2003).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1 Organization's Key Success Factors
The research sought to establish the key areas in which the organization consider as their success factors in the dry cell battery dynamic market in Kenya. This was important because for any organization to come up with any business strategy, SWOT analysis among other strategic models helps them to identify areas strengths.

Table 4.2 showing the organization's key success factors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Variety of quality product	59	1.00	3.00	1.6441	.73725
Market penetration	59	1.00	3.00	1.5254	.65274
Superior product/product ranges	59	1.00	3.00	1.6102	.66997
New machines for production	59	1.00	2.00	1.4407	.50073
The only organization in the market	59	1.00	3.00	2.3390	.80108
Customer loyalty	59	1.00	3.00	1.2203	.49368
Market intelligence	59	1.00	3.00	1.6271	.66691
Information system	59	1.00	3.00	1.6441	.60920

From the Table 4.2, the study established that customer loyalty (with a mean of 1.2203 and standard deviation of 0.49368) was their number one strong success factor. According to Smith and Wright (2004), measures of customer loyalty explain levels of relative revenue growth and profitability, and relatively high customer loyalty engenders a competitive advantage in the PC industry. The finding was followed by new machines for production (with a mean score of 1.4407 and standard deviation of 0.50073) as an approach to improving production line. According to Mahmood, Rahman, Denis and Jaharah (2011), experiments on simulated and real data clearly indicate that the productivity improvement on the current performance can be achieved by re-allocating the number of operators or machines effectively. The findings show that the organization has to improve on its market penetration strategy (with a mean of 1.5254 and standard deviation of 0.65274). The study by Luvusi and Muthoni (2019), examined that market penetration strategy had a significant influence on the performance of Telkom Kenya Limited; The Company has inferior product and product ranges (with a mean of 1.6102 and standard deviation of 0.66997). From the finding, market intelligence (with a mean of 1.6271 and the standard deviation of 0.66691), information system (with a mean of 1.6441 and standard deviation of 0.60920) and variety of quality product (with a mean of 1.6441 and standard deviation of 0.73725), need improvement. From the finding it is the only established company of this nature in the market (with a mean of 2.3309 and standard deviation of 0.80108). However, according to the finding, the firm least considers this as a success factor to its competitive advantage. This is likely because of the flooding of the market with dry cell battery product from foreign competitors fueled by liberal market. It however important to note that the firm has gaps in market penetration and product development which has connection with the findings of laxity in coming up with superior products and product designs, hence unable to avail variety of quality products in the market.

4.2.2 Factors Contributing Competitive Advantage
The research sought to establish the major factors that contribute to the company's competitive advantage.

Table 4.3 showing factors contributing to company's competitive advantage

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Payment of bonus in time	59	1.00	5.00	1.6271	1.06509
Presence of clearly spelt goals	59	1.00	5.00	2.0339	1.21721
Frequent communication from the CEO	59	1.00	5.00	2.1356	1.13650
Positive media report	59	1.00	5.00	3.5932	1.41566
Awareness of competitors	59	1.00	5.00	4.1525	1.41194
Awareness of profitability figures	59	1.00	4.00	1.8475	.88695
Participation in community and social responsibility	59	1.00	5.00	3.3729	1.64943
Interaction of management and stakeholders	59	1.00	5.00	3.1525	1.41194
The number of employees	59	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.33929
The company profitability	59	1.00	5.00	1.6949	.89547

Presence of long term plan	59	1.00	5.00	3.2712	1.57382
Release of new product at least annually	59	1.00	5.00	4.0169	1.31950
The professional background of the CEO	59	1.00	5.00	1.8305	1.21984
Negative media report	59	1.00	4.00	1.9492	.95455
awareness of the strategic plan	59	1.00	5.00	2.9661	1.65014
Ability to measure one's product output	59	1.00	5.00	2.7458	1.63573
Familiarity with policies and procedures of NSE	59	1.00	5.00	2.4407	1.42963
Following the company procedures	59	1.00	5.00	3.3220	1.23792

From Table 4.3 the number one contributor to competitive advantage factor awareness of competitors (with a mean of 4.1525 and standard deviation 1.14566). This is followed by release of new product at least annually (with a mean score of 4.0169 and standard deviation 1.31950), and positive media report (with a mean of 3.5932 and standard deviation 1.41566), the number of employees (with a mean of 3.3898 and standard deviation 1.33929), participation in community and social responsibility (with a mean of 3.3729 and standard deviation 1.64943), presence of long term plan (with a mean of 3.2712 and standard deviation 1.57382), following the company procedures (with a mean of 3.3220 and standard deviation 1.23792), interaction of management and stakeholders (with a mean of 3.1525 and standard deviation 1.23792), awareness of strategic plans (with a mean of 2.9661 and standard deviation 1.65014), ability to measure one's product output (with a mean of 2.7459 and standard deviation 1.63573). Familiarity with policies and procedures of NSE (with a mean of 2.4407 and standard deviation 1.42963), frequent communication from the CEO (with a mean of 2.1356 and standard deviation 1.21984), presence of clearly spelt goals (with a mean of 2.0339 and standard deviation 1.21721), negative media report (with a mean of 1.9492 and standard deviation 0.95455), awareness of profitability figures (with a mean of 1.8475 and standard deviation 0.88695), the professional background of the CEO (with a mean of 1.8305 and standard deviation 1.21984), the company profitability (with a mean of 1.6949 and standard deviation 1.0.89547), and payment of bonus (with a mean of 1.6271 and standard deviation 1.6509).

From this finding show that the dry cell battery manufacturer focuses their energy on customer awareness, release of new products at least annually and pays attention to positive media reporting. This shows that the company is strategically focusing on product development, good public image and good customer management system. However, According to this finding, the company has no proper strategic plan due to unrealistic goals, which means the company cannot have clear vision for the future. The company is unable to measure its product output. Productivity measurement however, should focus on overall capabilities. Managers therefore need to interpret trends, which can create further ambiguities. According to the finding, the company does not focus appropriately on familiarity with policies and procedures of NSE which is evident by the low performance of its shares in the stock market. According to Mwai (2019), government policies have great influence in business environment in Kenya. A study by Mbugua (2016) found that high tax rates, tax complicity, tax compliance and bureaucratic tax payment procedures influence the performance of SMEs businesses. The findings reveal that there is no frequent communication from the CEO. A study by Njoroge and Obonyo (2017), recommended that since there is a positive relationship between organization performance and the CEOs positive image, the PR departments and CEOs have to emphasize on the role of PR department in shaping the CEOs image. The finding also shows that the company lack clearly spelt goals. This is likely due to poor strategic planning. According to Arasa and Obonyo (2012), there exist of a strong relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. Further, strategic planning steps are positively related to company performance. The company also does not pay attention to negative media reports. When things are going poorly, the negative media coverage becomes that much louder, and makes that negative performance stand out that much more, which then acts as a strong trigger for strategic change. There is no awareness of profitability figures, and the professional background of the CEO is never a consideration in hiring. The company faces low profitability and is unable to pay bonus. Bun and Huberts (2018) established that the average productivity decreases when the pay structure shifts more to fixed pay.

4.2.3 Competitor's Analysis

The study sought to understand whether the company conducts competitor's analysis.

Table 4.4 Organization Regularly Collects Information about Their Competitors

Response	Frequency	Percent
yes	48	81.36
no	11	18.64
Total	**59**	**100.00**

From Table 4.4, the result from the findings indicates that 81.4% of the respondents agree that the organization collects information about its competitors. This therefore indicates a positive response with reference to whether they perform competitor's analysis. The finding by Adom, Nyarko and Som (2016) revealed that identifying competitors and how they operate helps in tackling industry issues that are detrimental to the company's health and also to learn from competitors. Firms that pay attention to competitors' actions have been achieve better business performance.

4.2.4 Factors Included in the Organization Successful Competitor's Analysis

In this question, the respondent were asked to rate how different factors are considered in their organization's competitor's analysis. This was meant to get understanding about the level of efficiency of such competitor analysis.

Table 4.5 Showing Factors Included in the Organization Successful Competitor's Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Competition for donor funds	59	1.00	3.00	1.5763	.67475
Securing government loyalty	59	1.00	3.00	1.6610	.73368
Gaining beneficiary loyalty	59	1.00	3.00	2.1695	.74631
Price competitiveness	59	1.00	3.00	1.8475	.82657

The finding as in table 4.5 shows that competition for donor funds (with a mean of 1.5763 and standard deviation 0.67475), securing government loyalty (with a mean of 1.6610 and standard deviation 0.73368). Finding by Mahmud, Tihir and Som (2018) however shows that there is a direct relationship between service quality, corporate image influencing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It leads to customer loyalty that influences satisfaction towards the agencies. Price competitiveness (with a mean of 1.8475 and standard deviation 0.82657) was also found to be an element within the competitors' analysis. Findings by Natter and Hruschka (1998) recommended that a firm should consider the effects of different levels of aggressiveness and cooperation and performs further sensitivity analyses for some of the more interesting levels. The study also revealed gaining beneficiary loyalty (with a mean of 2.1695 and standard deviation 0.74631) as part of competitor's analysis. The company put into consideration most importantly gaining beneficiary loyalty, and least importantly competition for donor funds. The beneficiaries in this case are the stakeholders, and that is in order with reference to good corporate governance.

4.2.5 Organization Rating After Analysis

The study sought the understanding about the respondent view on the organization rating after their competitors' analysis

Table 4.6 showing the respondent view on the organization rating after analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How the organization is rated among the competitors after analysis	59	1.00	3.00	1.2712	.58222

Source (Author, 2013)

From Table 4.6, the findings show a mean score of 1.2712 which is approximately 1 which implies excellent rating among their competitors after analysis. The company has excellent rating against competitors.

4.2.6 Benchmarking Against Other Competitors

The study sought to establish how the organization carries out its benchmarking against other competitors

Table 4.7 showing how the organization carries out benchmarking against other competitors

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Identify what is to be benchmarked	59	1.00	5.00	3.5932	1.46356
Competitors-identify comparative companies	59	1.00	5.00	3.6441	1.32304
Determine data collection methods and collect data	59	1.00	5.00	3.4746	1.33075
Determining current performance gap	59	1.00	5.00	3.8136	1.27947
Project future performance levels	59	1.00	5.00	3.9492	1.40717
Communicate benchmark, findings and gain acceptance to the top management	59	1.00	5.00	3.6610	1.34690
Establish functional goals	59	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.37737
Develop action plan	59	1.00	5.00	3.6949	1.51150
Implement specific actions and monitor progress	59	1.00	5.00	4.0847	1.08736
Recalibrate benchmarks	59	1.00	5.00	3.6780	1.27902

Source (Author, 2013)

From Table 4.7, the finding shows competitors-identify comparative companies with a mean of 3.6441 (which is approximately 4) implies very good, identify what is to be benchmarked with mean of 3.5932 also approximately 4 also implies very good. Determine data collection methods and collect data is 3.4746 which is approximately 3 implies good. This indicates that good planning is carried out in this company. This finding shows the company conduct their competitor analysis by determining the current performance gap (with a mean of 3.8136 approximately 4 and implies very good) and the project future performance level (with a mean of 3.9498 approximately 4 and implies very good). The communication benchmark findings is done in a timely manner to enable quick reactions were reported (with mean of 3.6610 approximately 4 imply very good) and establishing functional goals was reported (with a mean 3.3898 which is approximately 4). The finding shows that developing action plan was rated (with a mean of 3.6949 and standard deviation of 1.51150), while implementing specific actions and monitoring progress (with 4.0847 and standard deviation of 1.08736), and benchmarks with changes in the market and competition was reported (with a mean of 3.6780 and standard deviation of 1.27902). The finding shows that the organization has to enhance its establishment of its functional goals. Choo and Patrick (2016) revealed that realistic goal and employee capability are important besides the system and structure of the organization.

4.2.7 Product Development
The study sought to establish whether the organization focus on new product development or improvement of existing products

Table 4.8 showing whether the organization focus on new product development or improvement of existing products.

Statement	Frequency	Percent
Improvement of existing products	14	23.73
Development of new products	15	25.42
Both development of Existing products and development of new	30	50.85
Total	**59**	**100**

Source (Author, 2013)

According to the table 4.8 above, the findings show that improvement of existing products has the response of 23.7%, development of new products 25.4%, and both development of existing product and development of new 50.8%. This indicate that the company is engaged in product development, but most importantly development both existing products and new products. This is supported by the finding in Table 4.3 that the company is focused on release of new products at least annually. Effective product development rests on a product's design's ability to create a positive

product experience (Clarke & Fujimoto, 1991). However, developing new products is costly and time consuming with at times uncertain outcomes. Product innovations performance has been seen as an important driver for firm growth particularly the combination of product and processes innovations significantly improving firm growth (Mbithi, Muturi & Rambo, 2015).

4.2.8 Product Development Strategy Elements

The study sought to establish the existence of product innovation strategy elements.

Table 4.9 showing product development strategy elements

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Improvement of functional characteristics	59	1.00	5.00	4.1017	1.21336
Technical abilities	59	1.00	5.00	3.5593	1.60034
Ease of use	59	1.00	5.00	4.0678	1.40030
Idea generation	59	1.00	5.00	3.5593	1.26315
Product design	59	1.00	5.00	3.7966	1.11076
Detail engineering	59	1.00	5.00	4.2034	.99619
Market research	59	1.00	5.00	4.2881	1.21841
Market analysis	59	1.00	5.00	4.4068	1.14649

From Table 4.9, the finding shows improvement of functional characteristics (with a mean of 4.1017 and standard deviation of 1.21336), technical abilities (with 3.5593 and standard deviation of 1.60034), ease of use (with a mean of 4.0678 and standard deviation of 1.40030), idea generation (with a mean of 3.5593 and standard deviation of 1.60034), product design (with a mean of 3.7966 and standard deviation of 1.11076), detail engineering (with a mean of 4.2034 and standard deviation of 1.14649), market research (with a mean of 4.2881 and standard deviation of 1.21841), and market analysis (with a mean of 4.4068 and standard deviation of 1.14649). All these are mean approximately 4 (which according to the Likert scale implied very good).

4.2.9 Organization Views on Product Development

The study sought to establish view of the organization product development

Table 4.10 showing the respondent view on the organization approaches product innovation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The organization often identifies the end users as their target customers instead of channel customers they sell to as target customer.	59	1.00	5.00	4.0678	1.20150
The organization solicit correct information from customers.	59	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.59008
The organization consider all relevant customers when identifying customer outcome requirement.	59	1.00	5.00	4.2034	1.98945
The organization speaks to decision making customer representatives.	59	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.26385

Source (Author, 2013)

According to the findings in table 4.10, the finding show that organization considers identifying the end users as their target customer, rather than identify the channel partner to whom they sell as the target customer (with mean score of 4.0678 which is approximately 4-most important), the organization solicits correct information from customers (with a mean of 3.5424) which is backed by the finding in Table 4.3 that the organization is focused in customer awareness. The organization consider all relevant customers when identifying customer outcome requirements with 4.2034, and the

organization speaks to decision making customer representatives (with a mean of 3.5424). All these mean score are approximately 4 which implies most important according to the Likert scale. Cordon-Pozo, Vidal-Salazar and Torre-Ruiz (2017) revealed that positive impact of innovation training is achieved when firms are cooperating with the external agents. This is likely not to be the case when the company management does not pay keen attention to familiarization with policies and procedures of NSE.

4.2.10 Technology Innovation

Technology is a key element that defines a society and civilization. The study sought to establish how technology is factored in the organization for competitive advantage. Its primary role is to assure the survival of the company, as well as the business ecosystem, which in turn is based on achieving sustainable financial performance (Letangule & Letting, 2012). According to Porter (1985) technology affects competitive advantage if it has a significant role in determining relative cost position or differentiation.

Table 4.11 showing level of technology consideration in company processes

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Innovation technology	59	1.00	5.00	3.5593	1.26315
Strategic licensing out	59	1.00	5.00	3.7288	1.11155
Integrating different technologies	59	1.00	5.00	4.2712	0.94377
Strategic alliance/joint venture	59	1.00	5.00	4.1186	1.35296
Fullest exploitation of company's technology through finding new applications of technology	59	1.00	5.00	4.3220	1.26547

Source (Author, 2013)

According to the findings shown in the table 4.11 above, technology innovation has a mean score of 3.5093, strategic licensing out with 3.7288, integrating different technologies with 4.2712, strategic alliances/joint ventures with 4.1186, and fullest exploitation of company's existing technology through finding new application of technology with 4.322. The result means are approximately 4 which according to the Likert scale implied most important consideration. From this finding, technology innovation strategy is a very important tool for the company in her fight for competitive advantage. A standard deviation of approximate 1 shows congruence on the side of study respondents. A study by Mbithi, Muturi and Rambo (2015) established that the introduction of current technologies though been effected by some companies is promising to be a key in investment both for high, diverse production and cheaper with minimum wastage. The company need to still improve on level of technology innovation and strategic licensing out, and especially getting into a license in opportunities which when paired with the company's current technology portfolio, is able to create new products, services and market opportunities.

4.5 Inferential Analysis

This focuses on evaluating the strengths and direction of relationship between variables inferring findings from the sample to the population (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this study, the inferential analysis focuses on evaluating the relationship between the various strategic approaches by the dry cell battery manufacturers to create a competitive advantage. The multiple linear regression technique was used with the following model being tested:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon, \qquad \text{Model 1}$$

Where Y=Competitive Advantage; X_1=Product Development; X_2=Technology Innovation; X_3= Competitor's Analysis; X_4=; ε = error term. Table 4.30 presents a summary of the model 1.

Table 4.30: Model 1 Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.814(a)	.663	.639	.845

a Predictors: (Constant), Product Development, Technology Innovation, Competitor's Analysis

As the Table 4.30 shows, R-Square is 0.663, which indicates that the model explains the 66.3% of competitive advantage. According to Toole (2013), a model that yields an R Square of above 0.25 is considered to be fit in social science.

Table 4.31 presents the Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) of the model. The ANOVA test examines the significance of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable by comparing the predicting power of the model with that of the intercept only model (Faraway, 2002).

Table 4.31: ANOVA for the model 1

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.296	4	7.824	43.676	.000(a)
	Residual	42.814	55	.179		
	Total	74.111	59			

a Predictors: (Constant), Product Development, Technology Innovation, Competitor's Analysis
b Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

The regression model as illuminated in the ANOVA Table 4.31 predicts the dependent variable significantly well. The statistical significance of the regression model run is 0.000 which is much lower than the study's level of significance of 0.05. This implies that the overall regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable-competitive advantage.

Table 4.33: Regression Coefficients for Model 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.321	.150		5.482	.000
	Product Development	.276	.042	.032	1.106	.000
	Technology Innovation	.312	.032	.312	3.307	.001
	Competitor's Analysis	.216	.052	.249	4.738	.000

a Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Table 4.33 presents the Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) of the model. The ANOVA test examines the significance of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable by comparing the predicting power of the model with that of the intercept only model (Faraway, 2002). Based on findings in Table 4.30 and Table 4.33, the estimated regression equation was: Competitive Advantage (Y)

$(Y) = 1.321 + 0.276X_1 + 0.312X_2 + 0.216X_3 + 0.845$ Model 1

4.5.1 Influence of Product Development on Competitive Advantage of Dry Cell Battery Manufacturers in Kenya.
The first objective of the study was to examine the influence of product development on the competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya. As shown in Table 4.33 shows the t-statistics for Product development yielded a p-value of 0.000. Since this p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and affirm that there is statistically significant relationship between the product innovation and competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya at 0.05 level of significance. This finding is in agreement with the findings by Charity (2012) who also established that improving product quality was among the most used strategies.

4.5.2 Influence of Technology Innovation on Competitive Advantage of Dry Cell Battery Manufacturers in Kenya
The second objective of the study was to examine the influence of Technology on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya. As shown in Table 4.33 above the t-statistics for technology yielded a p-value of 0.000. Since this p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and affirm that there is statistically significant relationship between technology and competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya at 0.05 level of significance. This is consistent with the study by Sande (2014) that established that the organizations competitive strategies that gave it a competitive advantage over its rivals were those it implemented in its physical infrastructure, technology, and market research, innovation and manpower development. Similarly, Porter (1985) established that Technological innovations can have important strategic implications for individual companies and can greatly influence

industries as a whole. Ruguia (2014) also established that Innovation is considered as one of the success features in the economic companies, it is regarded as the basic element to reach customer satisfaction and to realize their desires. Hunia (2013) further established that organizations find it important to innovate and support an innovative culture.

4.5.3 Influence of Competitor's Analysis on Competitive Advantage of Dry Cell Battery Manufacturers in Kenya

The third objective of the study was to examine the influence of Competitor's Analysis on competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya. As shown in Table 4.33 above the t-statistics for capacity for change yielded a p-value of 0.001. Since this p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and affirm that there is statistically significant relationship between the Competitor's Analysis and competitive advantage of dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya at 0.05 level of significance. Bergen and Peteraf (2002) established that Managers who focus only on the product market arena in scanning their competitive environment may fail to notice threats that are developing due to the resources and latent capabilities of indirect or potential competitors.

Summary of Findings

Product development, technology innovation and competitor's analysis has significant influence on competitive advantage of the dry cell battery manufacturers in Kenya. The result from the findings indicates that the company collects information about its competitors. The data collection about competitors is done regularly. The competition for donor funds, securing government loyalty, gaining beneficiary loyalty, and price competitiveness is put under consideration in competitor analysis though not highly considered. The finding also established that the organization however is rated excellent among competitors. The finding shows that the organization performs integration by communication benchmark, findings and gain acceptance to the top management and establishing functional goals. It is shown in action that the dry cell battery manufacturing companies develop action plan, while implementing specific actions and monitoring progress and recalibrate benchmarks. The findings further indicate that the benchmarking against other competitors is not only done, but also done averagely very good. According to the findings, the organizations are involved in improvement of both existing products and development of new products. The organizations are found to engage in innovative product innovative initiatives such as enhancement of technical abilities, ensuring ease of use, idea generation, product design, detail engineering, market research, and market analysis. According to the findings, the organization considers identifying the end users as their target customer, rather than identify the channel partner to whom they sell as the target customer, the organization solicits correct information from customers, the organization consider all relevant customers when identifying customer outcome requirements, and the organization speaks to decision making customer representatives. Customer loyalty and new machines for production are also viewed as the major success factor.

However there are gaps to fill in areas such as of market penetration, product development specifically in coming up with superior product and product ranges (variety of quality product), market intelligence, and information system. Being the only organization in the market does not work to the advantage of the company. The study has also revealed that dry cell battery manufacturer focuses their energy on customer awareness, release of new products at least annually and pays attention to positive media reporting. However, the company has no proper strategic plan and unable to measure its product output. The company does not focus on familiarity with policies and procedures of NSE which is evident by the low performance of its shares in the stock market and there is no frequent communication from the CEO nor does their professional background a consideration (an indication of poor corporate governance). The company has no clearly spelt goals and they do not pay attention to negative media reports. There is no awareness of profitability figures, and the company faces low profitability and is unable to pay bonus.

Conclusions from Findings

From the findings, the study concluded that the company faces challenges in areas such as in its market penetration strategy, inferior product and product ranges, poor market intelligence and information system, lack variety of quality product, no proper strategic plan due to unrealistic goals, inability to measure its product output, company lack of proper focus on familiarity with policies and procedures of NSE, lack clearly spelt goals, and paying minimal attention to negative media reports. There is no awareness of profitability figures, and poor leadership based on poor background of the CEO. The company faces low profitability, and therefore likely not able to effectively meet its financial and operational obligations.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the research recommends for improved awareness of competitors. The study also recommend for improvement in product differentiation, technology innovation, strategic licensing out,

and customer relation management. The company should may own the negative media content, make good of the error, ride on it and make communication. They should improve their public image by participation in community and social responsibility. The company should have proper strategic plan with realistic goals. Corporate governance should be enhanced by getting the right people in leadership. The study similarly recommends further reduction in cost of production. This study similarly recommend for human resource development in organization in order to improve on general performance. If these recommendations are put into practice, then the company is likely to be competitive. It will be able to face the challenge of competition, illiquidity issues, capital in-adequacy, and threatened growth in wealth confidently.

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