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# 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 (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, majority of businesses employ Porter's triple strategies (differentiation, centralization, and cost leadership) to gain competitive advantages. Among the triple strategies, the strategy of differentiation has drawn 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.

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## 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 surely lose considerable share of their market and profit. Finding a suitable place in the intensive competitive environment is the key for 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 than 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 for elaboration 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 noticeable 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 its effect 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 has positive and significant effect on transfer of knowledge and the transfer improves development of attaining innovation regarding competitive advantage in the organization.

Lew and Sinkovics (2013) concluded in their survey of the effect of strategic unity at international level and its effect on competitive advantage 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) concluded in their study 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 said that these technologies may bring differentiating features for the business.

Moreno et al. (2012) demonstrated that environmental human resources (HR) management improves and increases 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 is to 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 in a study 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 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.

Massa and Testa (2009) found through their surveys on competitive advantages of food industries 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) stated in a study 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) found in their study on a model for attaining competitive advantages 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 is improved 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) lead to development of long-term competitive advantage.

Awuah and Gebrekidan (2008) found in their study on 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 on competitive advantages of firms.

In a survey of 56 Thai firms in semiconductor industry, Liao and Chien Hu (2007) suggested that through affecting on 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 in their study that development of new products (centralization strategy) creates and increases competitive advantages of businesses.

In their study Toppinen et al. (2007) concluded that keyfactors of success, organizational capabilities, and organizational resources (differentiation and centralization strategy) 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 of 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 on performance and

competitive advantages of businesses and result in differentiation from the rivals.

Castro et al. (2006) maintained in their study 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 in a study 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) bring competitive advantages to businesses.

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

Adams and Lamont (2003) recommended in their study that knowledge management, organizational resources, innovation and differentiation of products, and organization learning improve competitive advantages of businesses.

Rigamampianina et al. (2003) maintained based on their data that Porter general strategies (differentiation, centralization, cost leadership strategy) result in competitive advantages for organization.

Based on their results of data analyses, Davis et al. (2003) concluded that utilization of IT based strategies attenuates costs of company, differentiate the products, and create innovation through which bring considerable competitive advantages to the organization.

In an article Erikson (2002) found that entrepreneurship capital consisting of

entrepreneurship capabilities and commitment is positively and significantly effective on competitive advantage.

Longenecker and Ariss (2002) concluded in their study that learning and development indices improve skills management and performance of the organization, which 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 on competitive advantages.

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

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

Likewise many other researchers, Fahy (2002) suggested that resource-based viewpoints are effective on 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 enter into new markets, as well as easy access to new markets and acquisition of competitive advantages.

Keams and Lederer (2000) argued in their study 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) argued 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 organization 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 assumed that influence on competitive advantage through marketing relations are listed along with some examples in the table below.

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

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

Olson et al. (1998) maintained in their research that organizations' strategic design and marketing are positively and significantly effective on competitive advantages of organizations provided that 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 have been taken into account at 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 in an article 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 are effective on 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) named 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 in a study that marketing information is positively and significantly effective on the three strategies

of cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization.

In his well-known book in 1980 Porter 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 Knowledge obstacles Transfer of knowledge	Sheng & Chang, 2013
competitive advantages (centralization strategy)	Strategic union Control process	Lew & Sinkovics, 2013
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Logistic new communication technologies: Environmental factors Organizational factors	Hazen & Byrd, 2012
competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)	Brand identity Marketing strategy creates brand identity	Kim et al, 2012
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)	Forward merger Backward merger	Rugraff, 2012
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 Market trend	Li & Zhou, 2010
competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)	Customers' role and participation in preparing and providing products Suppliers' role and participation in preparing and providing products	Feng et al, 2010
competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy/merger)	Capability process R&D capabilities	Oh & Rhee, 2010
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) (competitive advantage through differentiation in	Creating value in customer - Emphasis on services - Emphasis on prices - Market trend	Zhou et al, 2009

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

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

	Coordination of business and information system design	
<b>competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)</b>	Comprehensive quality management	Reed et al, 2000
<b>Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)</b>	Marketing strategies and communications (cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategy)	Morgan & Hunt, 1999
<b>Int'l competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)</b>	External market and industry structure:	
	- Internal/external marketing strategy	
	- External market entry strategy	Mazzarol & Soutar, 1999
	Different merits	
	Copying obstacles	
	Cost leadership strategy	
<b>Competitive advantage</b>	- Differentiation strategy	Yamin et al, 1999
	- Centralization strategy	
	Organizational resources:	
	- Physical	
	- Financial	
<b>Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach) including product competitive advantage (centralization strategy)</b>	- Exporting experience	
	- Human force skills	
	- Information skills	Piercy et al, 1998
<b>Service competitive advantage (differentiation strategy)</b>	- Customer communication skill	
<b>Cost competitive advantage (cost leadership strategy)</b>	- Development of product (centralization strategy)	
	- Supply chain	
<b>Competitive advantage (technological advantages of firm)</b>	management technical knowledge	Ghingold & Johnson, 1998
<b>Competitive advantage (resource-centered approach)</b>	Competencies:	
	- Resources	Hill & Jones, 1998
	- Competencies	
	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	
<b>competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)</b>	- Taking into account the factors in production (direct/indirect factors such as workers, suppliers, managers, etc.)	Olson et al, 1998
	- 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)	
	Entry of new investors	
<b>Competitive advantage (industry/structure-centered organization approach)</b>	Purchasing negotiation power	
	Suppliers negotiation power	Porter, 1997
	Competition among new rivals	
	Threat of new products	
<b>competitive advantages</b>	Knowledge-based strategies	Whitehill, 1997

<b>(differentiation strategy)</b>	Emphasis on and identification of each customer (differentiation strategy)	
<b>Competitive advantage (customer-centered approach)</b>	Take real measures to meet the customers' needs Utilization of strategy collaboration and a network of suppliers, customers, and suppliers (cost leadership strategy)	Whiteley & Hessian, 1996
<b>competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)</b>	Transforming satisfied customers into loyal customers Customer contact with the staff - Acceptable quality - Suitable services - Low costs - Products supply pace - Innovation in products supply - Organizational learning Central capabilities	Slater, 1996
<b>competitive advantages (differentiation strategy)</b>	- Central capabilities (knowledge and differentiating skills from competitors) - Strategic process	Long & Koch, 1995
<b>competitive advantages (cost leadership strategy)</b>	Upward vertical merger Downward vertical merger	Krause, 1995
<b>competitive advantages</b>	Merits	Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994
<b>competitive advantages (centralization, differentiation, and cost leadership strategy)</b>	Organizational resources Availability of information for successful implementation of competitive strategies	Turner, 1991
<b>competitive advantages (general strategy)</b>	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

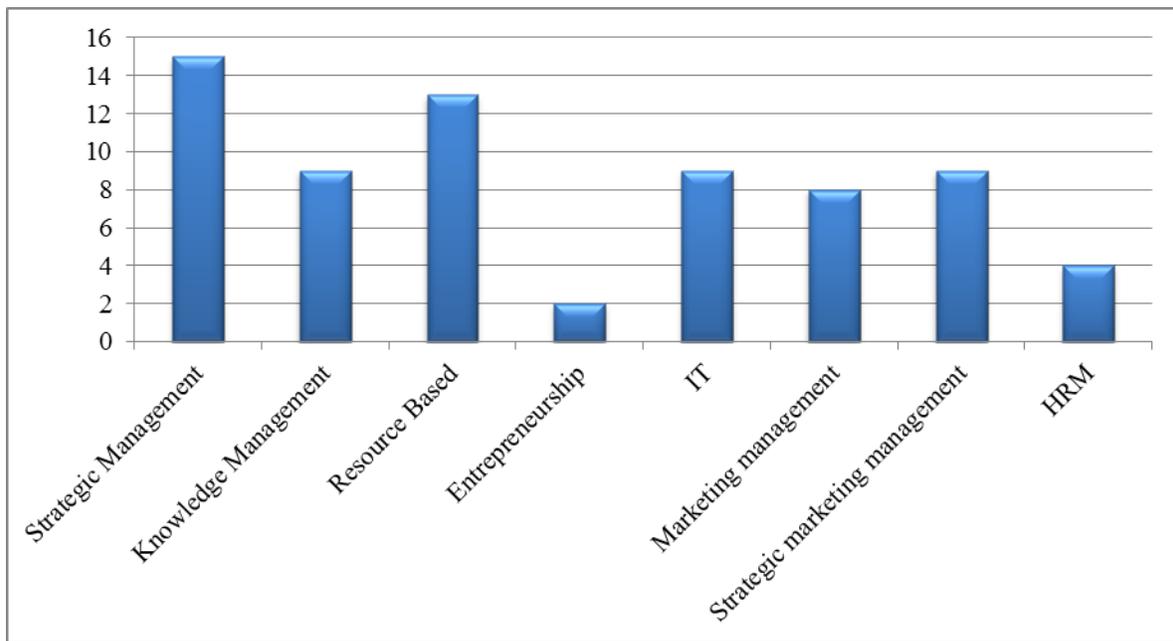
merits of the organization (skills and internal resources) and the opportunities and risks exerted by environmental changes. On the other hand, resource-based theory is one of the main theories introduced in strategic management literature concerning competitive advantage. The theory is in contrary with 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 on 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&Hessan, 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
58	Hill & Jones, 1998	Resource based
59	Porter, 1997	Resource based
60	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

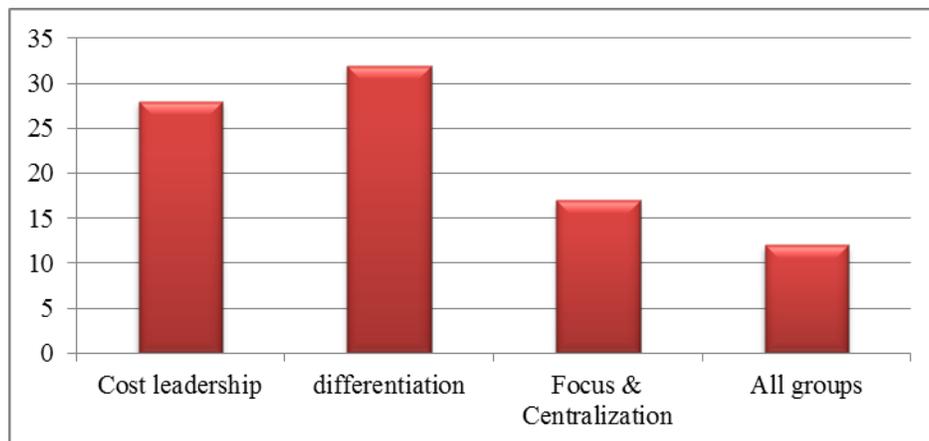
distinguishing feature of the present study is that these three strategies have been surveyed in one work. The reason for employing Porter’s general strategies in

conceptual model for surveying competitive advantages is further explained in the **Table 3.** Aspects under study by previous studies conclusion.

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 surveyed in detail. The purpose of the survey was to find the causes of competitive

advantages in an institute. Based on surveys on 59 articles, the main factors in realization of competitive advantages were the Porter’s general strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and centralization strategies), among them differentiation strategy has been most used in other works and 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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