

Identifying Research Gaps in Literature related to studies of Strategic Planning on Competitive Advantage: A Systematic Review of Literature

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Abstract – This study presents a systematic literature review to identify the major research gaps in the literature related to the studies of strategic planning on competitive advantage. The study employed a systematic review of the literature contained in three databases, Google-Scholar, ERIC and Semantic-Scholar. The analysis of the literature in this study revealed that there is an increase in the number of studies focusing on the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage. The systematic review of the literature indicates a wider gap in the existing research in that: there are very few studies that include continuous variables to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage; there are very few countries that have conducted these studies in relation to the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage; the research methodologies employed in the studies reviewed were mainly quantitative; and there are other sectors that have received little or no attention in the focus area. The study included only peer-reviewed, English-language literature. A key contribution of this study is that the steps, methodology and analysis used can be replicated and applied by scholars to conduct similar or even different studies to identify gaps in the literature review.

Keywords – Research gap, strategic planning, competitive advantage, systematic literature review, replication

1 Introduction

Today, the ability of organisations to gain competitive advantage has become a challenge given the dynamics of environmental, political, technological and social changes (Cancino et al., 2018). Strategic planning is an important management tool that helps organisations by providing guidance and direction on what should be done to achieve the set mission and vision. Gichovi (2019)

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argues that strategic planning should be practiced continuously in order for companies to increase their efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness. While strategic planning helps organisations to set priorities, allocate resources and energy and also ensure that stakeholders work towards the desired common goals, it is important to understand how it relates to competitive advantage, especially in today's dynamic environment where competition has become so tense and fierce. The importance of understanding competitive advantage in the 21st century cannot be emphasised.

Most studies, especially recent ones, have shown that strategic planning has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage (Gichovi, 2019; Kiiyo, 2019; Tryson, 2022; Mulyaningsih et al., 2021). However, other studies have found no relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage or performance (Powell, 1992; Mintzberg, 1994).

To the best of our knowledge, there has never been a review of the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage, hence the relevance of this study. The purpose of this study was to analyse and evaluate the published studies conducted in the last decade on the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage, in order to identify gaps that could be researched in the future, so that a comprehensive understanding of strategic planning and competitive advantage can be well established and concluded, especially in this dynamic environment of the 21st century.

2 Literature review

This section presents some studies conducted on strategic planning on competitive advantage.

Selected Studies on Strategic Planning on Competitive Advantage

Mulyaningsih et al. (2021) in Indonesia conducted a study to determine the impact of strategic planning on the competitive advantage of SMEs. The study showed that strategic planning has a significant impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs. Kiiyo's (2019) study on large manufacturing firms in Kenya showed that strategic planning has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage.

Powell (1992) examined the relationship between strategic planning and performance. The result of this study led Powell (1992) to argue that strategic planning can promote some economic value, but cannot lead to sustainable competitive advantage. Miller et al (2004) studied the strategies required for successful implementation of strategic decisions in 55 UK companies. The results of the study showed that a company's success is not guaranteed by careful management planning. Robinson and Pearce (1983) conducted a study of small organisations in the United States to determine the effect of formal strategic planning on financial performance. The study found no relationship between the formal process of strategic planning and performance improvement.

3 Research Design and Methodology

The methodology used in this study was a systematic review of published work on strategic planning and competitive advantage. Systematic review is an important tool used to enhance debate and disseminate academic findings from different researchers (Tranfield et al., 2003). According to Manatos et al. (2017), systematic review is used as an approach to identify, appraise and analyse previously published contributions, guided by a specific research question. In this research paper, a systematic review of published studies on strategic planning and competitive advantage was used as the methodology. The following stages are highlighted in the conduct of a review: planning the review; conducting the review; reporting and disseminating the results.

3.1 Planning for Review

This study presents a systematic review of the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage. A number of studies that have used this methodology have followed the methodologies and strategies used by Tranfield et al. (2003). Although various previous researchers have applied Tranfield et al.'s (2003) strategies, which include: planning the study, conducting a review, and reporting and disseminating the results, they have used different foci and databases to conduct their studies (see Yangailo & Qutieshat, 2022; Kigozi et al., 2019; Manatos et al., 2017; Yangailo & Kaunda, 2021; Tari, 2011). This study adopted the very methodology and strategies applied by Tranfield et al. (2003), based on the fact that they are reliable, transparent and unbiased (Papaioannou et al., 2010). This study used three databases to conduct this review, namely Semantic Scholar, Google Scholar and Eric. The review was limited to English-language, peer-reviewed papers published between 2011 and 2021 in order to obtain a broad perspective. The search terms used in this review in all three databases were: impact of strategic planning and competitive advantage; impact of strategic planning on competitive advantage; and strategic planning and competitive advantage.

Table 1: Overview on the number of Studies Searched from 2011 to 2021 on Strategic Planning on Competitive Advantage Related Studies

Data Base	Total Search	Total number of articles identified	Total number of articles shared with other two Data Bases	Total number of articles NOT found in other Data Bases
Google Scholar	17,100	48	24	24
Semantic Scholar	915	26	24	2
ERIC	131	1	1	0
Total	18,146	75	49	26
Articles shared by Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar				23
Articles shared by all three data Bases				1

Table 1 summarises the number of searches from 2011 to 2021 for each database used in this review. Table 1 shows that Google Scholar has the largest number of searches (17,100) with 48 articles identified, of which 24 were also found in other databases, followed by Semantic Scholar with 915 total searches with 26 articles identified, of which 24 were found in other databases. Finally, ERIC recorded 131 total searches with 1 article identified and the same article found in both Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar.

3.2 Carrying out the review

During this stage the following criteria were applied as follows:

- Only peer reviewed papers to be considered
- The paper to be composed of: strategic planning and competitive advantage/competitiveness; strategic planning on competitive advantage/competitiveness
- The paper should an empirical study

After getting copies of the paper electronically, studies that passed and met the initial screening criteria were checked and screened for the second time to determine whether they met the criteria for inclusion. Their titles and abstracts were also checked and evaluated for inclusion.

As shown in Table 1, the papers from the three databases (ERIC, Google Scholar, and Semantic Scholar), were reduced to fifty (50) for the following reasons:

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- Removed based on the fact that the focus was not on strategic planning and competitive advantage despite having a correct title
- Appearing in another database (duplicates)
- Exclusion based upon the title and abstract
- Lack of critical review on how strategic planning affect/impact competitive advantage (competitiveness)

Table 2 presents the summary of the final 50 articles that were used in this review on studies related to strategic planning and competitive advantage from 2011 -2021.

Table 2: Summary overview of Strategic Planning on Competitive Advantage related Studies from 2011 -2021

No	Data Base	Country	Year	Sector	Method	Author
1.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2021	Banking	Quantitative	Navodera (2021)
2.	Google Scholar	USA	2021	SMEs	Mixed method	Christmas (2021)
3.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Indonesia	2021	SMEs	Quantitative	Mulyaningsih, Danial, Komariah, Firdausijah, and Yuniarti (2021)
4.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2021	Combined (Manufacture, Retail, Finance, Service)	Quantitative	Soebroto and Budiyanto (2021)
5.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Indonesia	2021	Health Care	Quantitative	Janaputra, Samopa and Sukmono (2021)
6.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Bolivar-Colombia	2021	SMEs	Quantitative	Gualdrón and Perez (2021)
7.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2020	Banking	Quantitative	Guyo (2020)
8.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2020	Banking	Quantitative	Abdi, Omwenga and Guyo (2020)

9.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Poland	2020	ICT	Quantitative	Jurczak (2020)
10.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2020	University	Qualitative	Rahayu and Subagiyo (2020).
11.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2020	Banking	Mixed Method	Adulu and Njuguna (2020)
12.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2019	Banking	Quantitative	Gichovi (2019)
13.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2019	Banking	Quantitative	Codero-Atieno (2019)
14.	Google Scholar	Malaysia	2019	SMEs	Qualitative (Conceptual)	Makhloufi, Yaacob and Mat Yamin, (2019).
15.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2019	Manufacturing	Quantitative	Maingi, Awino, K'Obonyo, and Pokhariyal (2019).
16.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2019	Manufacturing	Quantitative	Maingi, Awino, , K'obonyo, and Pokhariyal. (2019).
17.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Indonesia	2019	SMEs	Quantitative	Rachmawati and Abdillah (2019)
18.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Jordan	2019	Banking	Quantitative	Shehadeh and Mansour (2019).
19.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2018	Banking	Quantitative	Onyimbo (2018)
20.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Sudan	2018	Banking	Quantitative	Elamin (2018).

21.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Malaysia	2018	Hospitality	Qualitative	Wei Liang (2018)
22.	Google Scholar	Jordan	2018	University	Quantitative	Lesrah and Al Kasbe (2018)
23.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Jordan	2018	Health Care	Quantitative	Hunitie (2018).
24.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	New Zealand	2018	SME	Mixed	Bhandari, and Thapa. (2018).
25.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2018	Religious Organization (SDA)	Quantitative	Mitaki and Gitonga (2018)
26.	Google Scholar	Thailand	2018	Banking	Quantitative	Rittiboonchai and Thongrawd (2018).
27.	Sematic Scholar	Indonesia	2018	Food processing	Quantitative	Anis, Christiananta, and Ellitan, (2018).
28.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2017	Floriculture industry	Quantitative	Musau (2017).
29.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Kenya	2017	Conceptual Paper	Quantitative	Wanaswa, Awino, and Ogutu (2017).
30.	Google Scholar	Russia	2017	City Agglomerations	Quantitative	Bogdanova and Fieraru (2017).
31.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2017	University	Quantitative	Indartono and Wibowo (2017).
32.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Mexico	2017	Institute of Public Accounts	Quantitative	Gutiérrez, and Laguna (2017).

33.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Brazil	2016	Radioisotope Technology	Qualitative (Conceptual)	Vieira, Nascimento and Calvo (2016)
34.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Iran	2016	Nanotechnology firms	Qualitative	Amniattalab and Ansari (2016).
35.	Semantic Scholar	Indonesia	2016	University	Quantitative	Siswono (2016).
36.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2016	Cooperative Enterprises	Quantitative	Kinyuira (2016).
37.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2016	Food Industry	Quantitative	Ardiyanto. (2016).
38.	Google Scholar	Palestine	2016	Food Industry	Quantitative	Alslaibi (2016)
39.	Google Scholar	Nigeria	2016	Bottling Company	Quantitative	Olanipekun, Abioro, Akanni, Arulogun and Rabiun (2015).
40.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2015	Ceramic Industry	Quantitative	Walukow and Pangemanan, (2015).
41.	Google Scholar	Greece	2014	ICT	Quantitative	Sakas Vlachos and Nasiopoulos (2014).
42.	Google Scholar	Nigeria	2014	Manufacturing	Quantitative	Sani and Hassaballah (2014)
43.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Iran	2014	Banking	Qualitative	Seyed-Javadin, Raei, Iravani, and Safari (2014)
44.	Google Scholar	Kenya	2013	ICT	Quantitative	Awino (2013)

45.	Google Scholar	Saudi Arabia	2013	Manufacturing	Qualitative	Gulati (2013)
46.	Google Scholar	Indonesia	2012	University	Qualitative	Wijaya and Manongga (2012)
47.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	India	2012	Air Transport	Qualitative	Thakur and Verma (2012).
48.	Eric, Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Taiwan	2012	University	Quantitative	Huang and Lee, (2012)
49.	Google Scholar	Jordan	2012	Banking	Quantitative	Maryan (2012)
50.	Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar	Iran	2011	Packaging Industry	Qualitative	Mazdeh, Moradi, and Mazdeh (2011).

3.3 Reporting and Dissemination

Out of the 50 articles reviewed, only one study conducted by Maingi et al. (2019) from Kenya included a moderating variable, namely organisational structure, in the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage, representing 2% of the total articles. There were four studies that included mediating variables in the association between strategic planning and competitive advantage, including: a study from Kenya by Maingi et al. (2019), which included employee behaviour as a mediating variable; a study from Jordan conducted by Shehadeh (2019), which included knowledge process as a mediating variable; a study from Sudan conducted by Elamin (2018), which included balanced score card as a mediating variable; and a study from Iran conducted by Amni-attalab (2016), which included organisational ambidexterity as a mediating variable. The studies with mediating variables represent 8% of the total studies. Based on Table 2, the following tables and figures were created, which helped to show how the main objective of this study review was achieved.

Table 3 below summarises the number of studies carried out in each country and the research approach used.

Table 3: Summary overview of the Studies by Country and Research Approach

No	Countries	Method/Approach			Total
		Mixed	Quantitative	Qualitative	
1	Kenya	1	13	0	14
2	Iran	0	0	3	3
3	USA	1	0	0	1
4	Indonesia	0	9	2	11
5	Russia	0	1	0	1
6	Jordan	0	4	0	4
7	Colombia	0	1	0	1
8	Poland	0	1	0	1
9	Malaysia	0	0	2	2
10	New Zealand	1	0	0	1
11	Nigeria	0	2	0	2
12	Mexico	0	1	0	1
13	Brazil	0	0	1	1
14	Sudan	0	1	0	1
15	Saudi Arabia	0	0	1	1
16	Taiwan	0	1	0	1
17	Greece	0	1	0	1
18	Palestine	0	1	0	1
19	India	0	0	1	1
20	Thailand	0	1	0	1
	Total	3	37	10	50

Figure 1 presents the number of studies conducted in each year from 2011 to 2021.

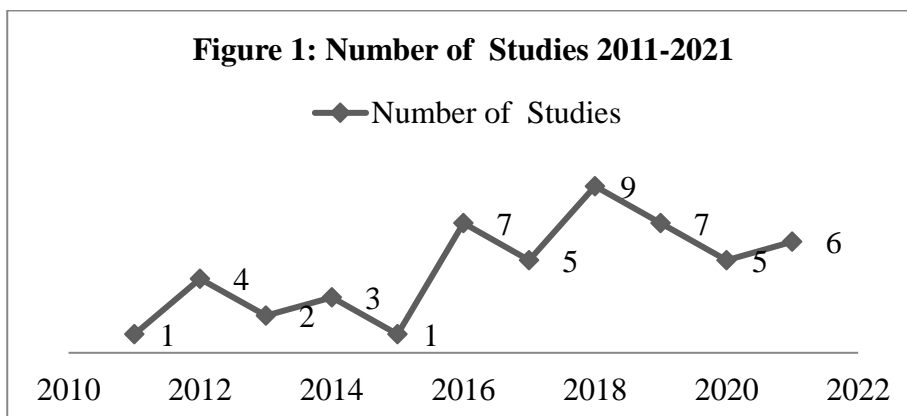


Figure 2 presents the number of studies and research approach applied in each country.

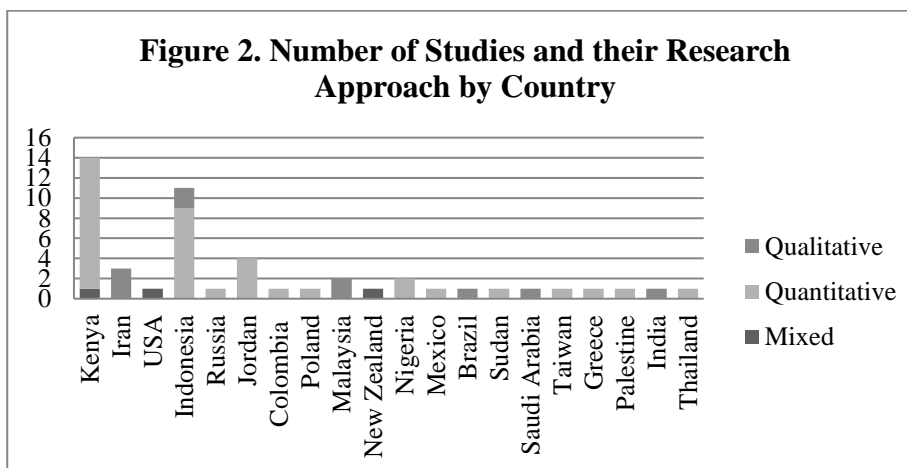
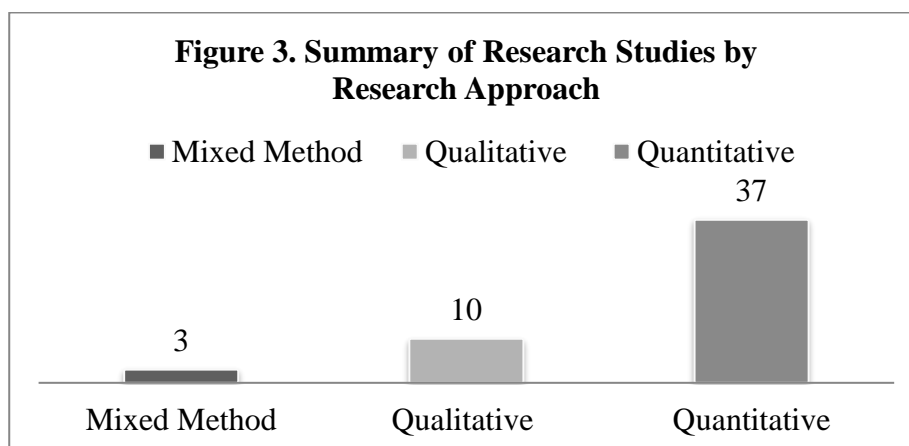


Figure 3 summarises the number of studies conducted based on the research approach.



It can be observed from Figure 1 that the number of relevant studies in the AREA under review increases from 2011 to 2021, with the lowest number of studies recorded in 2011 and 2015, followed by nine studies in 2018, seven studies in 2017 and 2016, and six and five studies in 2021 and 2020 respectively.

Table 3 and Figures 2 and 3 show the number of studies conducted by a given country with the research approach used.

per study. From the table and the figures it can be seen that for the period under review, out of 50 studies, Kenya recorded the highest number of studies with 14, followed by Indonesia with 11 studies, then Jordan with 4 studies, Iran with 3 studies, Malaysia and Nigeria with 2 studies each. The rest of the countries that conducted the relevant studies recorded 1 study each.

Table 3 and Figures 2 and 3 also show that out of 50 studies, the most common research methods used by these studies were quantitative methods, which recorded 37 number of studies, followed by qualitative methods with 10 and then mixed methods recorded 3. It can also be observed that out of 3 studies that recorded mixed methods, Kenya, USA and New Zealand were the countries with 1 study each that used this method. Of the 10 qualitative studies, Iran had 3 studies, all using qualitative approaches, followed by Indonesia and Malaysia with 2 each, and then Saudi Arabia, Brazil and India with 1 each. Of the 37 studies that used a quantitative approach, 13 were from Kenya, 9 from Indonesia, 4 from Jordan, 2 from Nigeria, Russia, Colombia, Poland, Mexico, Sudan, Taiwan, Greece, Palestine and Thailand all recorded 1 study.

Table 4 below gives a summary of studies by sector.

Table 4: Summary overview of the Studies by Industrial Sector

Industrial Sector	Number of Studies
Banking	12
SMEs	6
Combined	2
Health Care	2
Higher Education	5
Manufacturing	7
Hospitality	1
Air Transport	1
Food Industry	6
Technology	5
Public Institution	2
Religious Organization	1
Total	50

Figure 4 presents a summary of studies by sector.

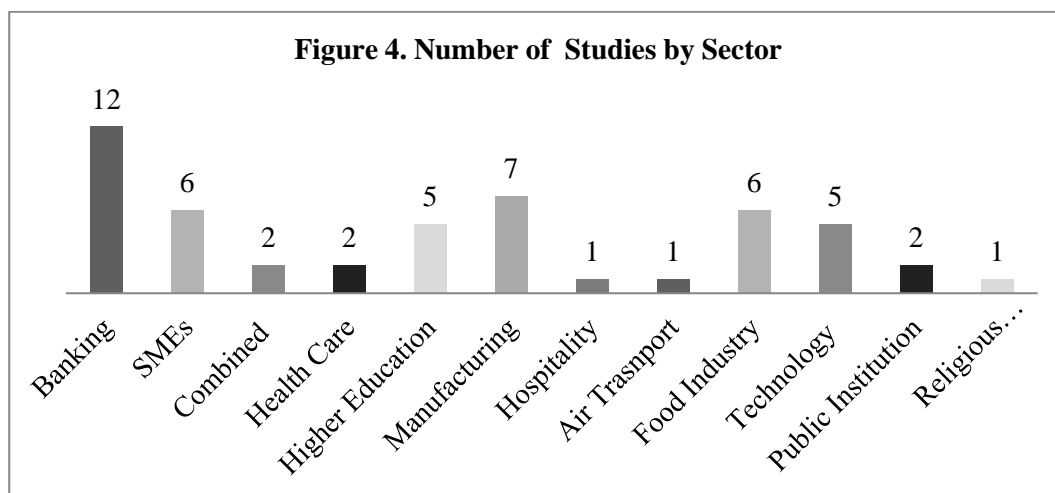


Table 4 and Figure 4 show the studies according to the sector in which they were carried out. It can be seen that out of 50 studies, 12 were conducted in the banking sector, followed by 7 in the manufacturing sector, 6 each in SMEs and the food industry, 5 each in technology and higher education, 2 each in health care, public institutions and combined sectors, and 1 each in hotels and restaurants, air transport and religious organisations.

4 Discussion

Based on the 50 articles included in the review in this study, it is worth noting that the number of studies in this focus area has increased from 2011 to 2021. However, there are still a number of gaps in the literature that need to be addressed urgently.

In order to fully understand a relationship between two variables, there are other variables (either mediators or/and moderators) that need to be included in this relationship in order to understand how well this association is. Based on our literature review, it is clear that more studies are needed that explore this relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage by including mediating and moderating variables. The review has shown that the conclusive decision on whether strategic planning has an impact on competitive advantage is still to be made, given the number of mediators and moderators included in the previous studies.

In a dynamic environment, it was expected that studies would be carried out in many countries. However, the review shows that very few countries have conducted this study on strategic planning and competitive advantage. For example, in Africa, out of 54 countries, only 3 countries (Kenya, Nigeria and Sudan) have had this study conducted. The same is true for other continents. This calls for more research in other countries.

There is also a need for a balance in research methodology. This gap is alarming. Of the 50 studies, only two or three had a mixed research approach. Kenya, for example, had 14 studies, of which only one used a mixed approach; the rest were quantitative. Iran had three studies, all of which were qualitative. The review showed that research methods were biased towards quantitative methods, with very few qualitative research approaches. There is a need for balanced research in this area that considers mixed methods to provide a complete and comprehensive understanding of this relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage.

The gap has also been identified in terms of the sectors in which research has been conducted. The review shows that most studies have been conducted in banking, manufacturing, SMEs, food industry, higher education and technology, while very few studies have focused on transport, hospitality, health care, etc. It was expected that the hospitality, healthcare and transport sectors, which were also negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, would receive a lot of research attention, especially from 2019, when the pandemic started, until 2021. However, these sectors have received little or no attention in this area. For example, the transport sector, e.g. the railway sector, received no attention from 2011 to 2021. This is consistent with studies that have found that the transport sector receives very little attention in research, despite its critical role in the global economy (Talib & Rahman, 2010; Yangailo, 2023a; Yangailo, 2023b; Janelle & Beuthe, 1997; Yangailo et al., 2023).

Relevance of Bridging the Identified Gaps

Addressing the gaps identified in this study would definitely lead to a better understanding of why the literature on the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage shows mixed results. Filling the gaps in the literature would definitely settle this dispute among researchers.

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Firstly, the inclusion of moderating variables in future studies would help to clarify the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage. A moderating variable is a variable that can strengthen, weaken, negate, or otherwise alter the association between independent and dependent variables. Moderators would provide scholars and practitioners with additional information about the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage in a quantitative research approach by elaborating on what characteristics can make this relationship weaker, stronger, or even disappear. On the other hand, the inclusion of mediating variables in future studies would help explain why and how an effect occurs in a causal pathway. The mediating variable links the independent and dependent variables, and its existence explains the association between the other two variables. In our case, mediators would help academics and practitioners to understand which variable(s) (mediator(s)) is (are) needed for strategic planning to have a positive impact on competitive advantage. In short, the inclusion of moderators and mediators in future studies would help researchers to go beyond the study of a simple association between strategic planning and competitive advantage to a more comprehensive, insightful picture of the real world of the 21st century.

Secondly, replication of studies in other countries and sectors would be a legitimate approach to establishing the reliability, validity and generalisability of research studies. In scientific endeavour, replication of the study is the key activity and one of the ways in which researchers build confidence in the scientific merit of the study results. If a study's findings are not contradicted by another study, it is more likely to be a reliable claim to new knowledge. In our case, it would be unwise for scholars or practitioners to simply generalise the findings of studies conducted in other countries or sectors to other countries or sectors, given that most studies have used either a qualitative approach that cannot be replicated, or a quantitative approach that limits its focus to variables and ignores the detailed concepts and experiences of human experience. In addition, different countries have different political economies and governance systems to generalise the findings. Replication is a key activity in scientific endeavour, although explicit replication is rare in many fields.

Third, although qualitative and quantitative research methods each have their weaknesses and strengths, they can be highly effective when combined. A balanced research approach of mixed research methods in future studies would definitely help researchers to gain both depth and breadth on the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage through triangulation, thereby strengthening the research findings.

The studies conducted in Iran, Malaysia, Brazil and India all used a qualitative research approach, which simply means that the benefits of using a quantitative research approach to replicate and generalise the research findings to a larger population cannot be applied to other sectors or countries.

On the other hand, studies conducted in Russia, Poland, Thailand, Sudan, Jordan, Colombia, Nigeria, Mexico, Taiwan, Greece and Palestine, as well as most studies in Kenya, used a quantitative research approach. This also means that the studies missed out on the benefits of a qualitative approach. The sample of data collected on experiences in quantitative approach may not represent the thoughts and opinions of the respondents. Qualitative research

approach allows a researcher to explore in detail the concepts and experiences that cannot be easily put into numbers to understand human experience. Qualitative research methods provide rich data about real people and situations. In addition, the close relationship that exists between the participants and the researcher in a qualitative approach makes it very easy for the participants to contribute directly to shaping the research. The use of one approach in many studies in the focus area could be one of the reasons why the findings are comprehensive, hence the need for a balanced research approach.

5 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this study finds that there has been an increase in the number of studies in the area of focus over the last decade, although the studies have been conducted in: very few countries; very few sectors; unbalanced research approaches; and in ways that omit other variables (mediators or/and moderators). Given the importance of understanding how strategic planning relates to competitive advantage in today's dynamic environment, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, further research studies are needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and competitiveness. To this end, we have provided a guide to the research gaps that require urgent research attention in this priority area. Another important contribution of this study is that the steps, methodology and analysis can be replicated and used by researchers to conduct similar or even different studies to identify gaps in future research.

Limitation of the study

We acknowledge that this study has two limitations. Firstly, the literature review used in this study was from three databases, namely ERIC, Google Scholar and Semantic Scholar. The use of other databases for literature review would definitely merit further research. Therefore, we hope that this study will further stimulate debate and then provide evidence that will shed more light on the gaps in this area and provide a conclusive understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and competitive advantage. Second, the systematic literature review used in this study was very limited to papers published in English only. Therefore, future research and analysis should include more papers written in languages other than English.

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