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Strategic Positioning and Competitive Advantage of Selected Multimedia Firms in Kigali, Rwanda

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Abstract

Purpose: To assess the effects of strategic positioning on the competitive advantage of multimedia companies in Rwanda, focusing on selected firms: Tele 10, Azam, and Canal+.

Methodology: A cross-sectional research design and a mixed-methods approach were utilized. Data were collected through interviews, surveys, and document review. Employing the purposive sampling method, the study had a sample size of 112 respondents same number as the target population of individuals from three selected Multimedia companies, using the universal sampling method.

Findings: The findings reveal that customer-centric strategies significantly enhance operational efficiency, brand reputation, and market share (β = 0.163, p = 0.007). Strategic leadership plays a pivotal role in vision setting, decision-making, and adaptability, driving sustainable growth (β = 0.241, p = 0.002). Product differentiation, through unique content and market segmentation, contributes to brand distinctiveness (β = 0.156, $p < 0.001$). Continuous improvement emerges as the most critical driver, fostering creativity, technological advancements, and service quality improvements (β = 0.437, $p < 0.001$). Respondents overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of aligning strategic decisions with customer needs, highlighting the value of feedback-driven improvement and exceptional service delivery. The study demonstrates strong interrelations among the factors, with continuous improvement showing the highest predictive power. The combined influence of the variables explains 89.7% of the variance in competitive advantage (R^2 = 0.897, F = 227.383, $p < 0.001$).

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study offers actionable insights for stakeholders in the multimedia industry, emphasizing the necessity of balancing customer-centric approaches, adaptive leadership, distinct product offerings, and continuous improvement-driven strategies. Competitive success lies in leveraging the synergistic effects of these elements to create sustainable value in a highly dynamic and competitive market environment.

Keywords: *Strategic Leadership, Customer Focus, Product Differentiation, Continuous Improvement, Competitive Advantage*

JEL Codes: *L10, L82, M10, M31*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary business landscape, strategic positioning has evolved as a cornerstone of organizational competitiveness. Shifting from traditional long-term planning to agile, data-driven decision-making, firms now navigate highly dynamic environments characterized by technological disruption, shifting consumer expectations, and intensified market rivalry. Strategic positioning refers to the deliberate configuration of a firm's internal capabilities and external market engagements to create a distinctive image, offer superior value, and build a defensible competitive edge. It encompasses the strategic choices firms make regarding target markets, product differentiation, customer orientation, leadership adaptability, and continuous innovation to outperform competitors and ensure long-term sustainability (Farida & Setiawan, 2022; Katsikeas & Leonidou, 2020).

Across global markets, the competitive success of organizations increasingly hinges on how well they position themselves to adapt to rapid changes while remaining aligned with customer expectations. Farida and Setiawan (2022) assert that modern firms thrive by combining strategic clarity with operational flexibility, enabling them to remain resilient amid market uncertainties. Strategic positioning now demands an integration of branding, innovation, and customer engagement practices to distinguish a firm in saturated markets. For instance, the mass commodification of services and products has elevated the strategic imperative of crafting a compelling market identity rather than relying solely on economies of scale (Ferrell, Hartline & Hochstein, 2023).

Regionally, in Sub-Saharan Africa, strategic positioning is increasingly viewed as a competitive necessity, especially in industries where technological convergence and consumer preferences rapidly shift. Uboegbulam and Ajao (2022) argue that African firms must leverage unique contextual advantages, such as local cultural relevance, affordability, and customer intimacy, to compete effectively against global players. This view is echoed by Muniu (2021), who notes that East African companies that actively develop distinctive brand propositions and align them with market needs are more likely to achieve consumer loyalty and sustained growth. Positioning strategies that emphasize value innovation, rather than cost alone, have emerged as viable paths to strategic differentiation (Nima, 2022).

In Rwanda, the multimedia sector represents a rapidly transforming space influenced by digital penetration, favorable regulatory policies, and increasing demand for localized content. With firms such as Tele 10, Azam TV, and Canal+ vying for market leadership, strategic positioning is no longer optional but essential. These firms operate in an ecosystem where service quality, technological innovation, content differentiation, and user engagement directly influence market share. Yet, there remains a notable gap in empirical literature examining how specific dimensions of strategic positioning, such as leadership orientation, continuous improvement, and customer-centricity, affect competitive advantage within Rwanda's multimedia industry. While global and regional studies underscore the importance of strategic positioning, there is limited contextualized evidence from Rwanda's multimedia sector regarding which positioning strategies most significantly drive competitive advantage. Existing literature is fragmented, focusing either on general marketing practices or on isolated aspects such as innovation or leadership, without systematically examining the interplay of multiple positioning dimensions.

Moreover, few studies employ mixed-methods approaches to holistically assess how firms align internal strategies with external market demands to gain sustainable advantage. This presents a critical gap, especially considering the intensifying competition among pay-TV providers in Rwanda's digital economy. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the effects of strategic positioning on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms in Kigali, Rwanda. It focuses on firms that have taken distinctive strategic directions, Tele 10, Azam TV, and Canal+, to uncover how customer-centricity, adaptive leadership, product differentiation, and continuous improvement influence performance outcomes such as market share, brand perception, and operational excellence. In doing so, the study offers not only practical insights for managerial decision-making but also theoretical contributions to strategic management scholarship in emerging economies.

Problem Statement

The Rwandan In an ideal business environment, firms in the multimedia industry are expected to leverage strategic positioning to create strong brand identity, enhance customer value, and achieve long-term competitive advantage. With the rapid digital transformation across Africa, Rwanda's multimedia sector is positioned for significant growth. Regulatory reforms by institutions such as the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) and Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) have opened avenues for innovation and investment. Rwanda's digital media market is projected to grow at an annual rate of 8.69% between 2024 and 2027, largely due to increased smartphone penetration, satellite television uptake, and supportive policy frameworks (Rwanda Governance Board, 2024). This momentum presents an opportune platform for multimedia firms to differentiate their services, expand viewership, and increase profitability through sound strategic positioning.

However, despite this favorable landscape, selected multimedia firms in Kigali, specifically Tele 10 Group Ltd, Azam TV, and Canal+ Rwanda, are struggling to sustain a competitive edge. The reality on the ground is that the industry's low entry barriers have allowed the entry of low-cost competitors offering budget television services, resulting in intensified price wars and shrinking profit margins (Jetir, 2019; Dube & Kabarere, 2018). These new entrants have strategically positioned themselves around affordability rather than content quality, challenging established firms to rethink their positioning strategies. While some companies attempt to improve content diversity or invest in service technology, there is limited clarity on which strategic elements effectively contribute to sustainable competitive advantage in this context.

Moreover, recent findings reveal that 80% of multimedia companies in East Africa report inconsistent performance outcomes despite investing in various positioning tactics (Muniu, 2021). This highlights a deeper strategic problem, not merely competition, but a lack of structured understanding of how to align customer-centric approaches, adaptive leadership, innovation, and differentiation in positioning for long-term advantage. According to Ndirangu and Owino (2023), many firms focus narrowly on product development while neglecting the strategic role of branding and market segmentation, leading to disjointed positioning efforts. Similarly, Farida and Setiawan (2022) show that shifting consumer preferences and poor strategy-execution alignment significantly undermine the ability of firms to retain customer loyalty and sustain revenue growth. The magnitude of the issue is further emphasized by Pereez, Nathan, Dative, and Charles (2020), who identified that Rwandan pay-TV companies have experienced a 16% decline in average revenue per user (ARPU) in the past three years due to a failure to differentiate offerings in a competitive market. The same study also revealed that customer churn rates exceeded 25% in some companies, directly affecting profitability and content investment potential. Despite these alarming indicators, few empirical studies have explored how specific dimensions of strategic positioning influence competitive outcomes within Rwanda's multimedia landscape.

This study is, therefore, positioned to fill a critical knowledge and practice gap. While global literature acknowledges the importance of strategic positioning in achieving competitive advantage, there is a lack of contextualized research focused on the interplay between customer-centric strategies, product differentiation, leadership, and continuous improvement within Rwanda's multimedia sector. The present study evaluates these strategic elements and their combined impact on competitive advantage, providing an evidence-based foundation for strategic decision-making. By focusing on Tele 10, Azam TV, and Canal+, the study offers both practical recommendations and theoretical insights that can support sustainable growth, improved service delivery, and policy refinement in Rwanda's digital media ecosystem.

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of strategic positioning on the competitive advantage of Multimedia Firms in Rwanda, specifically in selected multimedia firms.

Specific Objectives

i. To determine the effect of customer focus on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.
ii. To assess the effect of strategic leadership on the competitive advantage in selected multimedia firms.
iii. To analyze the effect of product differentiation on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.
iv. To evaluate the effects of Continuous improvement on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.

Hypotheses of the Study

i. **$H0_1$:** Customer Focus has no significant effect on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.
ii. **$H0_2$:** Strategic Leadership has no significant effect on the competitive advantage in selected multimedia firms.
iii. **$H0_3$:** Product Differentiation has no significant effect on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.
iv. **$H0_4$:** Continuous Improvement has no significant effect on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by three interrelated theoretical lenses that collectively provide insight into how strategic positioning influences competitive advantage among multimedia firms in Rwanda: Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, Porter's Generic Strategies, and the Porter's Five Forces Framework. These theories are not presented as abstract concepts but are applied to the actual positioning strategies adopted by pay-TV service providers in Kigali, namely Tele 10 Group Ltd, Azam TV, and Canal+ Rwanda.

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The CBBE model by Keller (1993) offers a consumer-centered framework for understanding brand equity through four key dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. When contextualized within the Rwandan multimedia industry, these dimensions explain how firms develop distinct brand identities in a competitive digital market. Tele 10 has built strong brand associations by emphasizing culturally relevant content such as local films and regional news, which resonate particularly with Kinyarwanda-speaking viewers. Azam TV, on the other hand, has achieved high brand awareness through affordable pricing strategies targeting low- and middle-income households, though its perceived quality and loyalty levels remain challenged due to limited premium content. Canal+ Rwanda differentiates itself through perceived high quality and brand loyalty by offering exclusive international content and superior broadcast quality. These examples illustrate that brand perception is not an after-effect of marketing but a direct outcome of deliberate strategic positioning choices. By applying the CBBE model, this study assesses how branding dimensions influenced by firm strategy contribute to sustainable market differentiation and customer retention.

Complementing this consumer perspective is Porter's Generic Strategies framework (1985), which helps analyze how firms select and sustain their market positions. Each of the studied pay-TV firms embodies a different strategic approach. Azam TV exemplifies a cost leadership strategy by prioritizing low pricing to expand market access in underserved segments. Canal+ Rwanda follows a differentiation path, targeting premium customers through exclusive programming and superior service quality. Tele 10 employs a focused strategy, tailoring its content and pricing to national preferences and cultural identities. Rather than treating these strategies as theoretical categories, the study investigates how they are executed in practice and how effectively they translate into competitive advantage. For example, while Azam's low pricing attracts subscriptions, its market share growth may be constrained if perceived service quality remains low. Similarly, Canal+'s premium positioning may limit mass adoption but secures loyalty in its niche. This analysis enables a deeper understanding of the strategic trade-offs involved in each firm's positioning and their implications on customer loyalty, operational resilience, and market growth.

To ground these strategic choices within the wider industry context, the study draws on Porter's Five Forces model to examine external pressures shaping firm behavior. Rwanda's pay-TV sector has relatively low entry barriers due to affordable satellite infrastructure and favorable regulatory policies, creating a constant threat of new entrants. The bargaining power of buyers is high, as consumers can easily switch between providers offering similar services, increasing the importance of strong brand equity and unique value propositions. The bargaining power of suppliers, particularly content producers and satellite providers, places constraints on firms like Tele 10 that rely heavily on third-party licensing, while Canal+ benefits from its vertically integrated content networks. Substitution threats from free digital content platforms such as YouTube and Netflix further erode traditional subscription-based revenue models, pushing local firms to innovate through localized content and interactive services. Lastly, the intensity of rivalry remains high, as all three firms compete in a limited yet growing urban market, requiring them to not only compete on price but also differentiate on content, service experience, and branding.

The theoretical foundation formed by these three frameworks provides a holistic understanding of how internal strategic decisions and external industry forces jointly shape competitive outcomes. While the CBBE model captures consumer perceptions crucial for brand success,

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Porter's Generic Strategies illuminate firm-level strategic choices, and the Five Forces analysis explains market dynamics that influence the effectiveness of these choices. Applied together, these theories enable a robust evaluation of how multimedia firms in Rwanda position themselves to remain competitive in a market that is fast evolving due to technological advancement, shifting consumer expectations, and intensifying competition.

Empirical Review

In Portugal, Rua and Santos (2022) analyzed the relationship between brand and competitive advantage (through differentiation) and the mediating effect of positioning and market orientation in this relationship. An empirical study was developed using a quantitative methodological approach. The object of the study was Portuguese exporting companies in the footwear industry, to which a questionnaire survey was applied. The results show that (1) brand has a significant direct impact on positioning and market orientation and competitive advantage through differentiation ($R^2 = 0.68$), (2) competitive advantage through differentiation is directly impacted by positioning ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$), (3) market orientation does not have a significant direct impact on competitive advantage through differentiation ($\beta = 0.12$, $p > 0.05$), and (4) positioning has a mediating effect on the relationship between brand and competitive advantage through differentiation (indirect effect = 0.38, $p < 0.05$), while market orientation does not.

In South Africa, Gonyora *et al.* (2021) looked into how an open continuous improvement strategic alignment at different management levels of a particular automotive supply chain in South Africa influences decision-making for a sustainable competitive advantage. This paper used a qualitative, exploratory methodology. Chief Executive Officers (CEO), senior managers, and research and development (R&D) managers from four chosen companies who were aware of their organization's R&D initiatives participated in fourteen sessions of semi-structured interviews. A thematic analysis was employed in the data processing. The study identified that open continuous improvement strategies significantly influenced decision-making processes across different management levels ($R = 0.75$) and found that strategic alignment significantly contributes to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$).

In Kenya, the goal of Simiyu (2021) was to determine how competitive advantage at G4S, Kenya, was affected by strategic positioning. Competitive advantage theory, resource-based view theory, market-based view theory, and capability-based view theory served as the study's pillars. The target population for the study, which employed a descriptive survey research design, was the five hundred and forty management employees of G4S in Nairobi, Kenya. Stratified random sampling was employed to select the sample subgroups, with a purposeful concentration on G4S. Next, a sample size of 122 respondents was selected for each stratum using simple random selection. Research questionnaires were employed to acquire primary data for the study. Data processing and analysis techniques included the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. This study adhered to ethical guidelines and norms. Using strategic leadership has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage in G4S ($R^2 = 0.72$), using strategic assets has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage in G4S ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$), using product differentiation has a positive and significant impact on competitive advantage in G4S ($\beta = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$), and employing continuous improvement has a favorable and significant impact on competitive advantage in G4S ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < 0.05$). The study suggested that G4S consider strengthening strategic leadership in important jobs ranging from managers to top leaders to help them understand their roles in long-term competitive advantage promotion and maintenance.

In Rwanda, Perez *et al.* (2020) focused on two issues: Does a positioning strategy affect market performance? Does a company's resource allocation affect how it positions the relationship between its strategy and performance? The study used a sample of 149 marketing/sales and corporate employees from Urwibutso Enterprises Ltd. and Inyange Industries Ltd., two Rwandan companies that manufacture soft drinks. Primary data from the two businesses was gathered using a structured questionnaire, and the nature of the link between the dependent and independent variables was estimated using various and simple regression models. It incorporated Aaker and Shansby's 1982 model as a metric for positioning strategy and used market share, sales, and profitability as comprehensive measurements for market performance. The findings support the notion that a company's positioning decisions and goals are strongly and significantly correlated with its assets and skills ($R = 0.82$). The study also demonstrated that product quality, pricing, and cultural symbols account for 57.5% of the variances in performance in these businesses (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.575$). An organization performs better in terms of market share, sales, and profitability if it prioritizes a small set of positioning characteristics.

In India, Dixit *et al.* (2021) aimed to identify the antecedents of strategic thinking and its relationship with competitive advantage. The study also analyzed the mediating effect of strategic thinking between its antecedents and competitive advantage. A self-reported questionnaire with 51 questions was floated among 220 professionals from various industries in India. The response was analyzed using the partial least squares-structural equation modeling methodology with SmartPLS software. The direct effect of creativity, corporate culture, and knowledge management on strategic thinking and competitive advantage were established with the following results: Creativity had a direct effect with $\beta = 0.45$ and $p < 0.01$, corporate culture had a direct effect with $\beta = 0.51$ and $p < 0.01$, and knowledge management had a direct effect with $\beta = 0.47$ and $p < 0.01$. The study found a significant relationship between strategic thinking and competitive advantage ($R^2 = 0.63$). However, no significant mediation effect was found for creativity, corporate culture, knowledge management, and vision on the relationship between strategic thinking and competitive advantage.

In Nigeria, Uboegbulam and Ajao (2022) investigated how strategic positioning affected hotel organizational performance in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study, with hypotheses focusing on the lack of significant relationship between strategic positioning—including cost leadership and product differentiation—and organizational performance metrics such as market share and profitability. Using cluster sampling, a sample size of 182 respondents was selected from 105 hotels. The Pearson Moment Correlation Technique was used to test hypotheses, achieving a 95% confidence level. The results showed a strong positive and significant association between cost leadership and market share with an r value of 0.889, and between product differentiation and market share with an r value of 0.901. The study also found weaker associations between cost leadership and profitability with an r value of 0.512, and between product differentiation and profitability with an r value of 0.473. The study revealed that traditional marketing techniques are insufficient and suggested incorporating cost leadership and product differentiation strategies for improved performance.

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In Kenya, Ndirangu and Owino (2023) examined how continuous improvement culture (IC) and competitive advantage (CA) were affected by strategic marketing (SM) in petroleum product marketing companies in Nairobi. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research approach with a target population of 1,568 managers. The Cochran formula was used to calculate the sample size, and stratified random sampling was applied. A total of 497 validated responses were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results showed that continuous improvement culture had an adjusted R^2 of 0.390 with an F value of 80.180 and $p < 0.05$, while competitive advantage had an adjusted R^2 of 0.627 with an F value of 208.685 and $p < 0.05$. The study concluded that strategic marketing positively and significantly impacts both continuous improvement culture and competitive advantage.

In Rwanda, Ngendahimana *et al.* (2024) studied the effect of competitive positioning on the operations of Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Rwanda, focusing on product variety, technological advancement, superior customer service, geographic reach, and strategic alliances. The study involved 200 respondents from 22 MFIs established as public limited companies and 18 MFIs registered as non-Umurenge Saccos. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were used in hypothesis testing. The results demonstrated that competitive positioning significantly impacts MFI performance, as evidenced by product variety and Microfinance Institutions(MFI) performance with an F value of 22.340 and $p < 0.01$, technological advancement and MFI performance with an F value of 19.570 and $p < 0.01$, and superior customer service and MFI performance with an F value of 24.820 and $p < 0.01$. Tables and percentages were used to display the analyzed data.

In Sri Lanka, Prasanna *et al.* (2021) assessed the factors that determine the competitive strategic position of SMEs in developing nations, using agro-based SMEs in Sri Lanka as a case study. The study utilized primary data from 463 SMEs and estimated a binary logistic regression model. The findings revealed that continuous improvement in product and marketing ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), business exhibition in the local setting ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$), gender ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$), strategic market location ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), sustainable business practices ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), marketing efficiency ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$), and business reputation and superior services ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) were significant strategic variables. Conversely, specialization in production, experience in the business field, experience in attending business exhibitions abroad, credit market accessibility, provision of high-quality products, research and development, and strategic firm location were identified as insignificant variables. The study suggested that government and policymakers should establish a more favorable business environment to leverage these variables for SME competitive advantage.

In Nigeria, the study by Uboegbulam and Ajao (2022) evaluated the relationship between SMEs' performance and strategic repositioning. A cross-sectional survey was used, involving a total of 1,205 SMEs, with a sample size of 291 respondents. A rigorous sampling technique resulted in 242 usable responses, representing 83% of the total. The Pearson product moment correlation statistical approach was employed. The analysis revealed a strong positive and significant correlation between ambidexterity traits (strategic repositioning) and performance metrics for SMEs, with r values of 0.785 for market share and 0.799 for profitability. The study determined that strategic repositioning had a positive and favorable perception among target consumers. It recommended that SMEs in Rivers State adopt competitive costing strategies that offer long-term viability over cost-cutting measures.

In Kenya, Christian (2020) investigated organizational performance and competitive advantage in Delta State. A validated structured questionnaire with 12 items was administered to 125 employees and clients of selected businesses. Multiple regression analysis and correlation were used to analyze the data. The study found strong correlations between research and development, resource availability, and firm success. Specifically, resource availability had a β coefficient of 0.56 with $p < 0.01$, and research and development had a β coefficient of 0.62 with $p < 0.01$. The study concluded that resource availability positively impacts strategic success and recommended that businesses increase their resource availability to enhance organizational performance.

In Rwanda, Josee *et al.* (2020), examined the impact of strategic positioning on the organizational performance of Independent Power Producers (IPPs). The study employed a descriptive survey research design and used inferential and descriptive statistics for data analysis. Thirty respondents, including board members, executive directors, senior management employees, and project managers, participated in the study. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 21, with frequencies displayed in Tables, percentages, pie charts, and standard deviations. The results indicated that differentiation strategy ($F = 15.240$, $p < 0.01$), costing and promotion strategy ($F = 12.560$, $p < 0.01$), perceived quality of service ($F = 10.780$, $p < 0.01$), and pricing strategy ($F = 14.320$, $p < 0.01$) all positively impacted organizational performance. The study suggested that future research should focus more on the management aspects of IPPs to enhance their performance.

From the above analysis, it is evident that strategic positioning significantly influences competitive advantage across various industries and geographies, with consistent emphasis on differentiation, cost leadership, and continuous improvement as key determinants. However, several research gaps emerge that warrant further investigation. First, most of the reviewed studies were sector-specific, focusing on footwear, manufacturing, hospitality, and energy sectors, with limited application to the multimedia or pay-TV industry, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Second, while some Rwandan studies (Perez *et al.*, 2020; Ngendahimana *et al.*, 2024; Josee *et al.*, 2020) address positioning strategies, they primarily target manufacturing, microfinance, or energy firms, leaving a significant empirical void in the context of media and content-based service providers. Third, few studies comprehensively assess how multiple positioning strategies interact, such as leadership, branding, continuous improvement, and product differentiation, to drive competitive advantage, especially in markets shaped by rapid technological shifts and digital consumer behaviors. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) as a mediating construct in these relationships, particularly within Rwanda's growing digital broadcasting sector. This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by examining the combined effects of strategic positioning elements on competitive advantage among selected multimedia firms in Rwanda, contributing both context-specific evidence and multi-dimensional analysis to the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships among the four independent variables: Customer focus, strategic leadership, product differentiation, continuous improvement, and their collective impact on the dependent variable, competitive advantage of selected multimedia companies in Rwanda.

Independent Variables

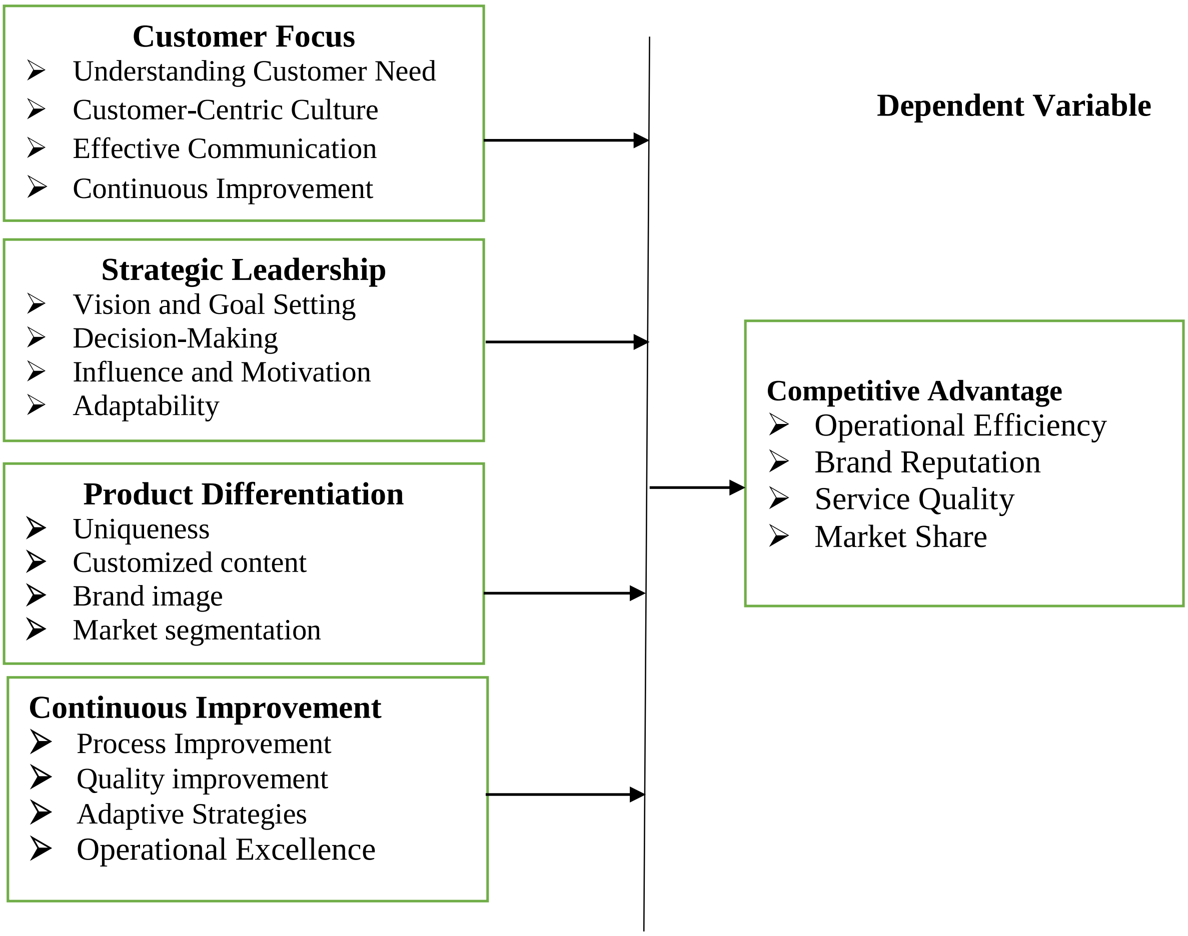

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2025)

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design to examine the influence of strategic positioning on the competitive advantage of selected television companies in Kigali: Tele 10 Group Ltd, Azam TV, and Canal +. The study targeted all 112 employees in management and sales roles across the three firms, using a universal sampling technique to include the entire population. Data collection involved both primary methods (self-structured Likert-scale questionnaires) and secondary document analysis, with a pilot study conducted at Star Africa Media Ltd to refine the instrument. Instrument validity was confirmed through expert review and supervisor validation, with average variance extracted (AVE) values ranging from 0.787 to 0.894, indicating strong construct validity. Reliability was verified using Cronbach's Alpha, with all constructs scoring above 0.804, confirming internal consistency. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27, applying descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, standard deviation) and inferential analysis (correlation and multiple regression) to test relationships and hypotheses. Ethical considerations were observed through informed consent, data confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics

The study achieved a high response rate of 97%, with 109 out of 112 targeted respondents fully completing the questionnaire, ensuring scientific representativeness of the sample. The demographic characteristics of respondents reflected a well-balanced and diverse sample, enhancing the representativeness and credibility of the findings. Gender distribution was relatively equal, with 54% male and 46% female participants, ensuring gender-inclusive insights into strategic decision-making. In terms of age, the majority (64.2%) fell within the 26–35 years range—an age group that is typically dynamic and well-positioned to drive innovation and strategic change. Moreover, 65.1% of respondents had between 5–10 years of work experience, indicating a solid base of industry knowledge and practical exposure. The educational profile of respondents showed that 81.7% held bachelor's degrees, with additional contributions from master's (9.2%) and PhD holders (1.8%), reinforcing the study's intellectual depth and contextual accuracy.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive findings strongly confirmed that customer focus plays a pivotal role in competitive advantage. Respondents indicated high levels of agreement (overall mean = 4.316), with over 93% affirming their organizations' emphasis on understanding viewer preferences, acting on feedback, and embedding a customer-centric culture. Statements such as "Our company has effective processes in place to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction" (mean = 4.36) and "Our company regularly collects and acts on feedback" (mean = 4.32) reflected strong operational alignment with customer-driven strategies. These findings affirm global trends and are consistent with prior research that links customer insights to enhanced strategic positioning and service quality.

In terms of strategic leadership, the study findings revealed a pronounced emphasis on visionary guidance, adaptability, and decision-making. Respondents reported high agreement (overall mean = 4.296), especially on leadership's ability to navigate market dynamics (mean = 4.37) and make decisions aligned with long-term objectives (mean = 4.33). With over 94% confirming the clear communication of company vision and strategic goals, the results emphasize the importance of leadership influence on motivation and competitive agility. These insights reinforce existing literature on the centrality of strategic leadership in sustaining organizational advantage in rapidly evolving sectors. The results further highlighted that product differentiation is a critical driver of competitiveness across the organizations studied. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that their companies leverage unique content, brand distinctiveness, and innovation to maintain market relevance (overall mean = 4.352). Statements such as "Our company continually invests in new and innovative programming" (mean = 4.45) and "Our company's brand is known for distinctive and innovative television programming" (mean = 4.36) were especially prominent, showing that innovation and customized content creation are essential to sustaining differentiation.

Correlation Analysis

This section used correlation analysis to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between strategic positioning dimensions and competitive advantage. This section provides insights into whether these variables are positively, negatively, or not significantly related.

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Table 2: Correlation Matrix Results

		Customer Focus	Strategic Leadership	Product Differentiation	Continuous Improvement	Competitive Advantage
Customer Focus	Pearson Correlation	--				
	N	109				
Strategic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.807**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001				
	N	109	109			
Product Differentiation	Pearson Correlation	.820**	.896**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001			
	N	109	109	109		
Continuous Improvement	Pearson Correlation	.820**	.868**	.917**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		
	N	109	109	109	109	
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.844**	.892**	.906**	.923**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	109	109	109	109	109

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Results (2024)

The correlation matrix in Table 2 reveals statistically significant and strong positive relationships among all variables at the 0.01 level. Customer Focus exhibits a robust correlation with Strategic Leadership ($r=0.807$, $p<0.001$), Product Differentiation ($r=0.820$, $p<0.001$), Continuous improvement ($r=0.820$, $p<0.001$), and Competitive Advantage ($r=0.844$, $p<0.001$). This indicates that customer-centric strategies substantially influence other strategic capabilities and the organization's ability to secure a competitive edge. Similarly, Strategic Leadership correlates strongly with Product Differentiation ($r=0.896$), Continuous improvement ($r=0.868$), and Competitive Advantage ($r=0.892$), underscoring its pivotal role in steering organizational initiatives toward differentiation and continuous improvement. A similar study by Kirabo, Namusonge, and Iravo (2022), found that strategic marketing is positively and significantly correlated with the performance of the telecommunication industry in Rwanda [$r = 0.846$, $\rho<0.05$].

Continuous improvement demonstrates the highest correlation with Competitive Advantage ($r=0.923$), emphasizing that fostering a culture of continuous improvement significantly enhances an organization's competitiveness. Product Differentiation is also strongly correlated with Competitive Advantage ($r=0.906$), suggesting that unique and superior products are critical drivers of market leadership. The consistently high correlation coefficients highlight the interconnectedness of these variables, forming a robust strategic framework that enhances organizational competitiveness through customer-centricity, strategic leadership, differentiation, and continuous improvement. The findings align with Prasanna *et al*. (2021), who identified continuous improvement and differentiation as critical determinants of SMEs' competitive positioning in Sri Lanka, reporting similar effect sizes (OR=1.89 for continuous improvement). Concerning similarity to this research, Christian (2020) emphasized the role of strategic leadership and resource allocation in driving competitive advantage ($r=0.68$), showing parallels in how strategic elements interact to enhance organizational performance.

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The strong link between customer focus and competitive advantage corroborates Karibo (2020), who found a significant relationship between ambidextrous strategies and market repositioning (r=0.62). Similarly, Josee *et al*. (2020) highlighted the impact of differentiation and perceived service quality on the performance of Rwandan Independent Power Producers, mirroring the positive correlations observed in the current study. These comparisons demonstrate consistency in the pivotal roles of leadership, continuous improvement, and differentiation across diverse contexts, reinforcing their importance in strategic management.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis evaluates the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, competitive advantage. This section identifies which factors significantly contribute to the competitive positioning of multimedia firms and assesses the overall model's predictive strength.

Table 3: Model Summary

					Change Statistics				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**R Square Change**	**F Change**	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig. F Change**
1	.947[a]	.897	.893	.162	.897	227.4	4	104	<.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Focus, Strategic Leadership, Product Differentiation, Continuous Improvement

b. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: SPSS Results (2024)

The Model Summary in Table 3 indicates a strong predictive relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. Before conducting multiple regression, a researcher conducted linear regression for each research objective. For objective 1 of influence of customer focus, R-model gives R value of 0.844, R square of 0.712, with adjusted R square of 0.710. For objective 2 of the influence of strategic leadership, R-model gives R value of 0.892, R square of 0.795, and with adjusted R square of 0.793. For objective 3 of product differentiation, the R-model gives R value of 0.906, R square of 0.821, with an adjusted R square of 0.820, and lastly for objective 4 of continual improvement, the R-model gives R value of 0.923, R square of 0.852, with adjusted R square of 0.851. While performing the regression analyses in SPSS, all four variables were entered as predictors, and the results became desirable. This implied the reliability of using multiple regression, and the researcher decided to go with interpretations of multiple regression findings on the overall basis, not with separate simple linear regression for each variable.

On an overall basis, from Table 3 the R-value of 0.947 demonstrates a very strong correlation between the predictors and the outcome variable. The R Square (0.897) signifies that 89.7% of the variance in Competitive Advantage is explained by the combined influence of these strategic positioning factors, while the Adjusted R Square (0.893) accounts for model adjustment, reflecting the stability and generalizability of the results. The F Change (227.4) and its significance level ($p<0.001$) affirm the overall model's robustness and statistical significance. This high explanatory power highlights the critical roles of continuous improvement, customer focus, leadership, and differentiation in achieving competitive advantage. The findings are consistent with those of Schauerte, Feiereisen, and Malter (2020), where continuous improvement and product differentiation emerged as key drivers of SME

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competitiveness, explaining approximately 78% of performance variation in their model (R^2=0.78). Kirabo *et.al* (2022) found similar findings of R^2=0.715 and adjusted $R^2$of 0.712 to predict the performance of the telecommunication industry using strategic marketing in Rwanda. Christian (2020) reported that strategic leadership and resource allocation accounted for 84% of organizational performance variance (R^2=0.84), supporting the current study's emphasis on strategic capabilities. The results also align with Karibo (2020), who found a significant predictive relationship (R^2=0.81) between strategic repositioning attributes and SME performance in Nigeria. Josee *et al*. (2020) further highlighted differentiation and perceived quality as determinants of competitive positioning, although their model had a slightly lower explanatory power (R^2=0.69) compared to the present findings. These comparisons validate the importance of integrated strategic approaches in driving competitiveness across diverse organizational contexts.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	24.046	4	6.012	227.383	<.001[b]
	Residual	2.750	104	.026		
	Total	**26.796**	**108**			

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage
b. Predictors: (Constant), Continuous improvement, Customer Focus, Strategic Leadership, Product Differentiation

Source: SPSS Results (2024)

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) Table 4 demonstrates that the overall regression model predicting Competitive Advantage from the predictors is statistically significant [F(4,104)=227.383, p<0.001]. The Sum of Squares for Regression (24.046) indicates that the predictors explain most variability in Competitive Advantage, with a negligible Residual Sum of Squares (2.750) left unexplained, highlighting the model's strong explanatory power. The small Mean Square for Residual (0.026) further underscores the precision of the model in estimating outcomes. These findings are corroborated by Prasanna *et al*. (2021), whose regression model on strategic positioning explained 78% of performance variation (F=104.312, p<0.001). Similarly, Josee *et al*. (2020) reported a significant relationship between differentiation strategies and organizational performance (F=145.21, p<0.001), though with a slightly lower model strength (R^2=0.69). This study's higher F-statistic (227.383) and R^2=0.897 reflect a stronger and more predictive relationship, reinforcing the critical role of integrated strategic factors in driving competitive advantage.

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Table 5: Regression Coefficients Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.372	.135		2.765	.007					
	Customer Focus	.137	.050	.163	2.753	.007	.844	.261	.086	.283	3.532
	Strategic Leadership	.219	.068	.241	3.212	.002	.892	.300	.101	.175	5.723
	Product Differentiation	.145	.086	.156	1.691	<.001	.906	.164	.053	.116	8.619
	Continuous improvement	.422	.081	.437	5.195	<.001	.923	.454	.163	.139	7.180

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

Source: SPSS Results (2024)

The model used in the study took the following form

$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2+\beta_3X_3+\epsilon$

Thus, the equation becomes: Competitive Advantage = 0.372 + 0.137 (Customer Focus) + 0.219 (Strategic Leadership) + 0.145 (Product Differentiation) + 0.422 (Continuous improvement).

Table 5 provides the coefficients that offer valuable insights into the relationships between the predictors [Customer focus, strategic leadership, product differentiation, and continuous improvement) and the dependent variable (competitive advantage) at Selected multimedia firms. The constant term (β0) is 0.372, indicating the expected level of competitive advantage when all independent variable constructs are at zero. The regression model indicates that all four predictors positively contribute to Competitive Advantage, with varying degrees of significance and impact. The regression equation shows that Continuous improvement has the highest standardized coefficient (β=0.437, p<0.001), signifying its dominant role in driving competitive advantage. This is supported by the t-value (5.195), confirming its strong contribution relative to other variables.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypotheses in this study were tested at a 0.05 significance level. The decision rule for hypothesis testing is to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05; otherwise, the null hypothesis is not rejected if the p-value is greater than 0.05. The results of the hypotheses testing are based on the regression coefficient results presented in Table 4.9

H_{01}: Customer Focus has no significant effect on the Competitive Advantage of Selected multimedia firms.

The study examined the effect of customer focus on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms. A null hypothesis was formulated stating that customer focus has no significant impact on competitive advantage. The test was conducted using the One-Sample Test with a test value of 0.05. The results showed a p-value of <0.001, leading to the rejection of H_{01}. This indicates that customer focus significantly affects the competitive advantage of these firms. The coefficient for customer focus was β = 0.163, p = 0.007, with a t-value of 2.753, showing that customer focus plays a significant, albeit moderate, role in enhancing competitive advantage. This finding supports the view that a customer-centric approach is crucial for firms to maintain a competitive edge. These findings are consistent with studies

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such as Kariuki *et al*. (2021), who reported a significant effect of customer focus on competitive advantage ($p<0.001$, effect size $r=0.75$). Pina and Dias (2021) also identified customer-centric strategies as a key determinant of differentiation and long-term competitive advantage.

This indicates that customer-centric strategies, such as enhancing customer satisfaction, fostering loyalty, and aligning offerings with customer preferences, are crucial for firms seeking to maintain a competitive edge. In highly competitive industries like multimedia and broadcasting, where customer preferences change rapidly, firms that can effectively attract and retain customer focus are better positioned for market success. The findings underscore the value of focusing on the customer experience as a key driver for competitive advantage.

H_{02}: Strategic Leadership has no significant effect on the Competitive Advantage of Selected multimedia firms.

The effect of strategic leadership on competitive advantage was tested, with a null hypothesis stating that strategic leadership has no significant impact. A p-value of <0.001 was obtained, leading to the rejection of H_{02}. The standardized coefficient for strategic leadership was $\beta = 0.241$, $p = 0.002$, with a t-value of 3.212. These results indicate that strategic leadership has a significant positive effect on competitive advantage, underscoring the role of strong leadership in driving long-term organizational success. These findings align with prior research by Chimwere, Banda, and Phiri (2020), who emphasized that strategic leadership plays a critical role in steering competitive positioning.

Al-Ababneh (2020), highlighted the role of leadership vision, goal-setting, and adaptability in enhancing competitive advantage. Chong and Ali (2022), also found that strong strategic leadership significantly influences innovation and decision-making, contributing to market leadership. Similarly, Grant (2021) demonstrated that leaders who cultivate strategic agility and alignment tend to outperform competitors in rapidly changing industries. for entities like the selected multimedia firms ., leaders who prioritize innovation, strategic thinking, and adaptability are better equipped to harness market opportunities and mitigate challenges, thus securing a sustainable competitive advantage.

H_{03}: Product Differentiation has no significant effect on the Competitive Advantage of Selected multimedia firms.

The hypothesis regarding the effect of product differentiation on competitive advantage was tested. The null hypothesis stated that product differentiation has no significant effect on competitive advantage. A p-value of <0.001 was obtained, which led to the rejection of H_{03}. The results indicate that product differentiation plays a significant role in enhancing competitive advantage, confirming that unique and innovative product offerings are essential for firms to maintain market leadership. This echoes the study by Abu-Aliqah (2012), which highlighted that firms employing product differentiation strategies through higher quality, design innovation, or unique features often outperform their competitors and secure stronger market positions. Mahdi, Nassar, and Almsafir (2021) also identified differentiation as a key strategy for outperforming competitors in highly saturated markets. the role of product differentiation in shaping competitive advantage has been emphasized in digital product strategies, where distinguishing product attributes such as quality, aesthetics, and functionality helps firms stand out from competitors. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also creates a unique market position that is difficult for competitors to replicate

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H_{04}: Continuous Improvement has no significant effect on the Competitive Advantage of Selected multimedia firms.

The study also evaluated the effect of continuous improvement on competitive advantage, with the null hypothesis stating that continuous improvement has no significant effect on competitive advantage. The p-value obtained was <0.001, leading to the rejection of H_{04}. The coefficient for continuous improvement was $\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$, with a t-value of 5.195, indicating that continuous improvement has the strongest effect on competitive advantage among all the factors tested. This highlights the importance of continuous adaptation and enhancement in processes, products, and services to remain competitive. The findings are consistent with Kariuki, Mwangi, and Njoroge (2021), who demonstrated the significant impact of continuous improvement strategies on competitive advantage. Flak and Głód (2020) demonstrated that firms investing in adaptive strategies achieve long-term operational efficiency and market leadership. For organizations like selected multimedia firms, embedding a culture of continuous improvement ensures operational efficiency, innovation, and long-term sustainability. This approach not only reduces costs but also enhances value delivery, solidifying the firm's position in competitive markets.

The overall Hypothesis Testing Results demonstrate that all null hypotheses ($H0_1$, $H0_2$, $H0_3$, $H0_4$) are rejected with p-values < 0.05 threshold value, in favor of alternative hypotheses, implying the strong statistical evidence of a significant relationship between the predictors and Competitive Advantage. These results validate the hypothesized relationships in the conceptual framework and emphasize the synergistic effects of these strategic factors in fostering competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of customer focus, strategic leadership, product differentiation, and continuous improvement on the competitive advantage of selected multimedia firms. The findings reveal that customer focus plays a vital role in enabling firms to align products and services with market needs, thus improving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention. A robust customer-centric approach significantly enhances competitive positioning by building strong relationships and delivering value tailored to client expectations.

Strategic leadership also emerged as a crucial determinant of competitive advantage. Leaders who articulate a clear vision, foster innovation, and respond strategically to industry shifts help position their firms for long-term success. The study affirmed that firms with visionary, responsive, and empowering leadership are better placed to navigate the complexities of the multimedia sector while cultivating a culture of performance and innovation.

Product differentiation was identified as a powerful tool for market distinction. Firms that invest in creating unique and high-value products were found to attract and retain a loyal customer base. Differentiation—whether through innovative features, branding, or service excellence—enables firms to escape price wars and appeal to niche markets, solidifying their market presence. Continuous improvement significantly contributes to sustaining competitive advantage. Companies that embed continuous enhancement in their operations can better adapt to changing market dynamics, reduce costs, and enhance customer experiences. The study highlighted that iterative improvement in products, services, and processes drives agility and operational excellence—two cornerstones of competitive strength.

Collectively, the study's findings underscore that these four strategic factors are not only interdependent but also mutually reinforcing. Strategic leadership, for instance, drives the implementation of customer-focused initiatives and product innovation, while customer insights inform continuous improvement and differentiation strategies. The study validates that a synergistic and integrated approach to these practices is essential for achieving and maintaining competitive advantage in the dynamic multimedia industry.

Policy Recommendations

Multimedia firms should prioritize cultivating a customer-centric culture by integrating customer data analytics, enhancing service personalization, and embedding feedback mechanisms into product development cycles. These efforts will boost customer satisfaction and long-term loyalty, directly contributing to market competitiveness. To bolster strategic leadership, companies should invest in executive development programs that emphasize strategic thinking, digital transformation leadership, and adaptive management. Embedding leadership development at all levels will ensure that firms are equipped with capable leaders who can anticipate change and drive growth. Product differentiation strategies should be enhanced through investment in research and development, creative design, and customer co-creation processes. Firms must continuously seek to offer distinct value propositions that meet evolving consumer preferences in an increasingly saturated media landscape. For continuous improvement, companies are encouraged to adopt agile methodologies and lean practices to optimize processes, reduce waste, and respond rapidly to emerging trends. Regular staff training, innovation labs, and internal feedback loops can serve as mechanisms for sustaining improvement momentum. A coordinated and holistic strategy that connects these four areas with broader organizational goals will be essential for multimedia firms seeking to thrive in a highly competitive and technologically evolving environment.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future research could explore the role of digital transformation in strengthening the four strategic factors addressed in this study. Comparative research across various countries or industries may provide deeper insights into contextual factors influencing competitive advantage strategies. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the sustainability of competitive advantage derived from these practices over time would offer valuable information on the long-term efficacy of these strategic initiatives. Further inquiry into the interaction effects among customer focus, strategic leadership, product differentiation, and continuous improvement could reveal more nuanced strategies for achieving synergistic benefits. Researchers may also investigate the influence of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, in enhancing these strategic dimensions in multimedia firms.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study offers actionable insights for stakeholders in the multimedia industry, emphasizing the necessity of balancing customer-centric approaches, adaptive leadership, distinct product offerings, and continuous improvement-driven strategies. Competitive success lies in leveraging the synergistic effects of these elements to create sustainable value in a highly dynamic and competitive market environment.

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