

**دور العلاقات العامة في تعزيز كفاءة التسويق وتحقيق الميزة التنافسية:
دراسة تطبيقية على مجموعة الاتصالات السعودية (2025)**

***The Role of Public Relations in Enhancing Marketing Efficiency
and Achieving Competitive Advantage: An Applied Study on
Saudi Telecom Company (2025)***

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المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على العلاقات العامة من خلال مفهومها وطبيعتها وأهدافها وأسسها وجمهورها، وقياس آرائه، وكذلك التعرف على الميزة التنافسية من خلال مفاهيم التسويق وأهميته، والميزة التنافسية وأسبابها وسبل تحقيقها وتطويرها. وتمثلت مشكلة الدراسة في عدم اهتمام إدارات العلاقات العامة في المؤسسات بشرح سياساتها العامة للجمهور، وضعف الاهتمام بالتعامل الجيد معه، إضافة إلى وجود قصور في تفعيل دورها ضمن الهيكل الوظيفي لتحقيق الأهداف المطلوبة، رغم أهميتها الكبيرة، الأمر الذي يؤثر في كفاءة التسويق وتحقيق الميزة التنافسية.

اتبعت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي والتاريخي والاستدلالي. ومن أبرز نتائجها أن إدارة العلاقات العامة أسهمت في تحقيق أهدافها، مما أدى إلى تحقيق الميزة التنافسية للشركة، كما تتميز الشركة بوجود إدارة علاقات عامة ذات دور كبير وحيوي في تحقيق أهدافها، واهتمامها بوظائف العلاقات العامة من خلال البحث ودراسة الآراء وتحليلها لتحقيق الميزة التنافسية. كذلك يتميز العاملون في إدارة العلاقات العامة بالشركة بتوافر العديد من الصفات المطلوبة للعمل، مما أسهم في تحقيق الميزة التنافسية.

وأوصت الدراسة بعدد من التوصيات، من أهمها: تهيئة الفرص للعاملين للمشاركة في اقتراح الاستراتيجيات وتطوير النظم، وتوفير مناخ عمل محفّز يشجع على التفكير والإبداع والمساهمة بالأفكار داخل المؤسسة. كما أوصت بضرورة تطبيق وتطوير نظم إدارة العلاقات العامة، والاهتمام بجميع عناصرها البشرية والمادية والتقنية والتصميمية في إطار متناسق ومتكامل لتحقيق الميزة التنافسية، إضافة إلى الاعتماد على تزويد العاملين بالمعلومات المتجددة حول الميزة التنافسية، من خلال التدريب أو الاجتماعات الدورية بين العاملين والرؤساء، والكشف عن أفكار جديدة لتحسين فرص الأداء وفق الخطط المعتمدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العلاقات العامة، كفاءة التسويق، الميزة التنافسية، الأداء التسويقي، الاستراتيجية التسويقية، الاتصال المؤسسي، رضا العملاء، إدارة السمعة، الاتصالات السعودية، التنمية التنظيمية

Abstract:

This study aimed to explore public relations by examining its concept, nature, objectives, foundations, target audience, and methods of measuring public opinion. It also examined competitive advantage through the concepts and importance of marketing and competitive advantage, as well as the factors contributing to its achievement and development.

The study problem stemmed from the lack of attention given by public relations departments in organizations to explaining their public policies to the public, insufficient focus on effective engagement with the public, and the inadequate activation of their role within the organizational structure to achieve the required objectives, despite their significant importance. This, in turn, negatively affects marketing efficiency and the achievement of competitive advantage.

The study adopted a descriptive, analytical, historical, and inferential methodology. Among its most important findings is that the public relations department successfully achieved its objectives, which contributed to the company's competitive advantage. The company is distinguished by having a public relations department that plays a vital and influential role in achieving its goals, with a strong emphasis on research, opinion analysis, and evaluation to support competitive advantage. Furthermore, employees in the public relations department possess many of the required professional qualities, which enhances the company's ability to achieve competitive advantage.

The study recommended several measures, including the importance of creating opportunities for employees to participate in proposing strategies and developing systems, as well as fostering a positive work environment that encourages creativity and the contribution of ideas. It also emphasized the necessity of implementing and developing public relations management systems, with attention to all human, material, technical, and design components within a coherent and integrated framework to achieve competitive advantage. In addition, the study recommended providing employees with up-to-date information on competitive advantage through training programs or regular meetings between staff and management, as well as generating innovative ideas to improve performance in line with approved plans.

Keywords: Public relations, marketing efficiency, competitive advantage, marketing performance, marketing strategy, corporate communication, customer satisfaction, reputation management, Saudi Telecom Company, organizational development

Introduction:

Recent studies in the field of human resources highlight the significant role of public relations in the workplace, particularly its profound influence on employee attitudes and reactions toward the organizations in which they work. Accordingly, this topic has become increasingly important, receiving considerable attention in modern management literature. Numerous studies have demonstrated the impact of public relations on various work outcomes, both tangible and intangible. This growing interest is unsurprising, given that public relations management is fundamental to organizational success.

Some researchers define an organization as “a social system that coordinates the efforts of individuals through laws, standards, and shared values to produce goods or provide services.” In essence, any organization is a group of individuals interacting to produce a specific good (as in the case of factory workers) or to provide a service or facilitate tasks for others (as in the case of bank employees). When management effectively organizes these efforts within a coherent system, they are directed toward achieving organizational goals. However, if the system lacks coordination, employee efforts become fragmented, leading to weakened productivity and overall morale. This social dimension of the organization is often overlooked by upper and middle management, despite the fact that no work or product can be successfully completed without a well-functioning social system that organizes individual efforts.

Moreover, the rapid advancement of knowledge across all fields, along with ongoing social, cultural, and economic changes, has compelled organizations to adopt the most effective practices, retain their customers, and ensure continuity and survival. This has driven them to seek innovation and creativity in order to keep pace with continuous development and achieve a competitive advantage. Consequently, organizations have increasingly focused on public relations and the philosophy of competitive advantage, striving for excellence in a highly competitive business environment. In this context, survival is now contingent upon delivering high-quality, distinctive, and productive performance that meets the expectations of clients and stakeholders.

Problem Statement:

The problem addressed in this study lies in the insufficient attention given by public relations departments in organizations to explaining their public policies to stakeholders, the limited focus on effective public engagement, and their inability to fully perform their role within the organizational structure to achieve the required objectives, despite their significant importance. This situation negatively affects marketing efficiency and the achievement of competitive advantage.

The research problem can be formulated through the following questions:

- Is there a relationship between achieving the objectives of the public relations department and marketing efficiency, as well as the achievement of competitive advantage?
- Is there a relationship between the functions of public relations and marketing efficiency, as well as the achievement of competitive advantage?
- Is there a relationship between the characteristics of public relations department employees and marketing efficiency, as well as the achievement of competitive advantage?

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this study stems from its expected contribution to university libraries and its potential value for researchers and students. It also lies in the practical benefits that may be derived from its findings and recommendations, particularly in improving workplace practices and enhancing the role of public relations within organizations in general.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine public relations in terms of its concept, nature, objectives, foundations, and target audience, as well as methods of measuring public opinion.
- To explore competitive advantage through the concepts and importance of marketing and competitive advantage, along with the factors contributing to its achievement and development.

- To derive conclusions and recommendations related to public relations, marketing efficiency, and the achievement of competitive advantage.

Study Hypotheses:

This study tests the following hypotheses:

- There is a relationship between achieving the objectives of public relations management, marketing efficiency, and competitive advantage.
- There is a relationship between public relations functions, marketing efficiency, and competitive advantage.
- There is a relationship between the characteristics of public relations staff, marketing efficiency, and competitive advantage.

Methodology:

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical, historical, and inferential approach to achieve its objectives and address the research problem. The descriptive method is employed to provide a comprehensive overview of public relations and competitive advantage, including their concepts, characteristics, and key dimensions. The analytical approach is used to interpret and examine the relationships between public relations practices, marketing efficiency, and the achievement of competitive advantage, based on available data and relevant literature.

In addition, the historical approach is applied to trace the development of public relations and its evolving role within organizations over time, providing a contextual understanding of its current importance. The inferential approach is utilized to draw logical conclusions and generalizations based on the analysis of findings, enabling the study to propose practical recommendations.

This integrated methodological framework ensures a thorough examination of the research variables and enhances the reliability and validity of the study's results.

The Conceptual Framework:

Public Relations:

The term “public relations” emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century and became widely used in the mid-twentieth century. Its definitions are numerous; despite its prevalence in the business world, it

has been used to describe a wide variety of activities, which has led to ambiguity and vagueness. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines public relations as a set of activities undertaken by an organization, union, government, or any social entity to establish positive and healthy relationships with the various audiences it interacts with—such as consumers, users, shareholders, and the general public—in order to explain itself to society and gain its approval (Hussein, 1993).

Some definitions view public relations as efforts to win over the public. It has been defined as the set of efforts aimed at influencing the public through various media channels, enabling them to form an accurate perception of the organization, thereby supporting it in times of crisis, endorsing its goals, and encouraging its activities (Mohsen, 2003).

Many sociologists and media scholars have attempted to formulate a precise definition of public relations and develop a modern conceptualization of it. An earlier definition describes it as planned, systematic, and continuous administrative efforts undertaken by organizations to organize work and to establish and strengthen mutual understanding between the organization and its public, enabling the organization to adapt to the society in which it operates (Mohammed, 2004).

A more widely accepted and specific definition indicates that public relations is an administrative function that evaluates public opinion, ensures the alignment of individual or organizational policies and actions with the public interest, and develops and implements programs aimed at gaining public trust and acceptance of the organization (Harry, 1995).

Some researchers have proposed another definition, viewing public relations as a social philosophy of management expressed through the organization's policies, practices, and achievements. This philosophy involves establishing reciprocal communication channels with the public and striving to achieve mutual understanding and a positive reputation (Abdul Wahab, 1998).

The researcher argues that public relations extends beyond merely promoting a product; rather, it involves adapting the organization to the issues, needs, and expectations of a democratic society. In this sense, public relations represent an integral and continuous function within any organization, rather than a temporary activity.

Importance of Public Relations:

The importance of public relations is evident in the continuous efforts of organizations to build and maintain relationships with their audiences and to shape public opinion regarding the products and services they offer. If the public relations department in industrial organizations lacks a high level of expertise and competence, relationships with both internal and external stakeholders will inevitably deteriorate. Organizations often face challenging situations that require skill, tact, and wisdom to manage effectively, in order to prevent the emergence of negative perceptions or hostility toward the organization and its products. This is particularly true in competitive environments, where competitors may resort to spreading rumors and misinformation. In such contexts, the role of public relations becomes essential in addressing these challenges.

The importance of public relations is also evident in service-oriented organizations. Since the services provided may not always be essential, and alternatives are often available, the role of public relations becomes more complex. For instance, if an airline neglects its customers, fails to provide satisfactory services, or does not adhere to scheduled departure times, passengers will likely turn to competing airlines offering better services at equal or lower costs.

Public relations also play a crucial role in governmental organizations, where it contributes to improving relationships between government institutions and the public. Through effective public relations, citizens develop a sense of responsibility, becoming more cooperative and engaged. Over the past three decades, public relations has evolved into a vital administrative function in public institutions, particularly in developed countries. Administrators are now expected to inform the public about policies, assess public opinion before implementation, respond to criticism, and justify decisions affecting public interest.

The need for public relations has emerged as a result of major transformations in modern societies, encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions. Among the most significant of these changes (Jamal, 2006) are the following:

1. The growing influence of public opinion: Public opinion has become increasingly powerful, especially in democratic societies. Governments must actively seek public support, trust, and approval to maintain

legitimacy and effectiveness. This requires transparent communication and continuous engagement with citizens, as well as efforts to guide public opinion in ways that serve societal interests.

2. Expansion of industrial and commercial institutions: The growth of large-scale corporations, characterized by automation, mass production, and global outreach, has created a need for effective communication strategies to engage diverse and widespread audiences.
3. Rise of labor unions and collective movements: Workers have organized themselves into unions to defend their rights and interests. These unions often influence public opinion to gain support, making it necessary for organizations to engage in similar efforts to maintain their position and reputation.
4. Societal transformation: The shift from agricultural to industrial economies has been accompanied by demographic changes, including urbanization. This transition has increased the need for structured communication efforts to manage social change and maintain stability.
5. Advancement of media and communication technologies: Significant developments in printing, journalism, and broadcasting—along with the emergence of new media such as film, radio, and television—have enhanced the ability of public relations to communicate effectively with different audiences using appropriate channels and timing.

Areas of Public Relations:

The areas of public relations can be summarized as follows (Ahmed, 2003):

1. Bridging the gap between individuals and groups, achieving integration, and creating a state of knowledge and understanding that contributes to unifying attitudes and beliefs.
2. Striving to raise awareness of the efforts and services provided by institutions, and encouraging cooperation and coordination among members of society.
3. Building trust between institutions and individuals by establishing effective channels of communication.
4. Engaging positively with events and keeping pace with people's interests and aspirations, in a manner that does not conflict with prevailing systems and laws governing public life.

5. Influencing public opinion and maintaining a favorable perception of the institution, through the use of analyzed data to guide decision-making.
6. Providing administrative support and advisory services that assist the institution in implementing its programs and planning its projects according to a comprehensive vision and careful study.
7. In governmental institutions, the role of public relations specialists includes explaining institutional activities to citizens and facilitating media coverage of these activities.

Thus, public relations seek to present a positive image of the institution in society, emphasizing its role in serving the community and safeguarding its interests. In doing so, public relations contribute to society by supporting research and development and by building bridges of trust.

Public Relations Objectives:

These objectives can be summarized as follows (Salah al-Din, 1999):

1. Public relations aim to raise public awareness of the operational objectives of the state, educate citizens about public policy, and inform them of their responsibilities in its implementation. Similarly, organizations seek to raise awareness of their objectives, methods, activities, and plans. It also facilitates coordination among individuals' efforts; when all members understand the objectives, they can work collaboratively toward achieving them. Objectives also serve as benchmarks for evaluation and control, clearly defining what needs to be accomplished and enabling necessary adjustments in strategies. The absence of clear objectives is often a major cause of failure in this field.
2. Public relations aims to establish positive relationships and increase opportunities for mutual understanding, agreement, and harmony between the organization and its various stakeholders. This includes internal stakeholders, such as employees, by fostering satisfaction, improving morale, increasing productivity, and strengthening their sense of belonging. This is achieved through comprehensive educational and guidance programs, training for new tasks, improving working conditions, establishing fair compensation systems, and ensuring transparency in the work environment. Employees should be provided with clear explanations regarding workplace conditions and policies. Furthermore, public relations encourage cultural, social, and

recreational activities, addresses employee concerns, and promotes communication at all administrative levels.

External stakeholders include labor unions, consumer associations, suppliers, distributors, banks, retailers, and the broader community, including institutions such as hospitals, schools, and places of worship.

3. Public relations aims to support the functions of other departments. For example, it assists in attracting qualified employees, enhances communication between different management levels, and supports the sales department in promoting both existing and new products.
4. Public relations aim to increase productivity by providing both material and moral support, and to maximize benefits for company owners, employees, consumers, and the communities in which the company operates. This is achieved through improving production processes, modernizing equipment, accelerating product development, reorganizing administrative operations, and expanding distribution channels.
5. Public relations seek to build strong relationships with shareholders, who are primarily concerned with protecting their investments and staying informed about developments in production, expansion plans, and new markets. Therefore, it is essential to provide them with transparent information about organizational plans and expected returns.
6. Public relations focus on gathering feedback, comments, and suggestions from distributors, particularly regarding product packaging, quality, and presentation. Distributors serve as a critical link between the company and the consumer, and their perspectives significantly influence the organization's success. Consequently, public relations work to strengthen communication between the company and its distributors.
7. Public relations is also concerned with building positive relationships between consumers and the organization, as promoting the organization enhances the promotion of its products. The consumer is a central force in the market, and production ultimately depends on consumer demand. Therefore, responding to consumer needs and preferences is essential for organizational success.
8. Public relations aim to foster a sense of social and national responsibility among citizens, encouraging their participation in shaping

public policy and contributing to solving organizational challenges (Ahmed, 2008).

Functions of Public Relations:

The success of the public relations department in performing its roles and functions requires a thorough understanding of its fundamental responsibilities. In practice, the duties of this department vary from one organization to another, depending on the nature, size, and surrounding conditions of the organization. Generally, the public relations department is concerned with the social environment or climate in which the organization operates. Therefore, professionals in this field must pay close attention to the theories and findings developed by sociologists and management scholars. Many authors identify five basic functions of public relations (Gharib, 2006):

1. Research:

Public relations involve collecting, analyzing, researching, and studying public opinion trends among the organization's audiences, understanding their views and attitudes, and obtaining accurate and reliable information. For example, in a university, public relations can collect opinions from professors, students, and parents. In the military, it may assess the views of soldiers, officers, and technical personnel. In companies and ministries, it examines public opinion trends among employees and workers. Furthermore, it measures public opinion among external audiences, such as shareholders, consumers, and merchants. Public relations also studies developments in economic, social, and political conditions. It analyzes and summarizes all issues relevant to senior management and reports them accordingly. This research includes examining the technical aspects of public relations, analyzing media channels such as newspapers, radio, television, and film, evaluating the effectiveness of media campaigns, identifying the most effective communication channels, and studying the development of public relations over time. It also considers the opinions and attitudes of influential figures in various fields, such as educators, union leaders, and business professionals.

2. Planning:

The public relations department is responsible for contributing to the formulation of the organization's overall policy and for developing public

relations strategies and programs within this framework. This is based on the findings of research and analysis, through defining objectives and identifying target audiences, designing communication programs in terms of timing, assigning responsibilities to specialists, and determining budgets accurately. This process also helps facilitate adjustments to the organization's general policies. In addition, public relations plays a key role in explaining the organization's policies—and any modifications or changes—to the public in order to gain their understanding, acceptance, and cooperation.

3. Communication:

Communication involves the implementation of plans and direct engagement with target audiences. It includes selecting appropriate communication channels for each audience, organizing conferences, producing audiovisual materials such as films, photographs, and presentations, maintaining archives and historical records, and organizing events such as festivals, exhibitions, and competitions. It also encompasses organizing seminars, lectures, discussions, and public forums. Public relations further works to develop relationships with other institutions and community groups through mutually beneficial activities. For example, organizing a successful book fair requires aligning the event with the needs and expectations of librarians and booksellers. Public relations also introduce the organization to the public and explains its products or services in a clear and accessible manner to attract public interest.

4. Coordination:

Public relations play a vital role in coordinating among different departments to enhance understanding and cooperation. It serves as a communication and coordination link between employees and various stakeholders, as well as between lower and upper levels of management. Additionally, it facilitates coordination between the marketing department and consumers, the purchasing department and suppliers, and between the organization and its shareholders.

5. Evaluation:

Evaluation refers to measuring the actual outcomes of public relations programs and taking appropriate corrective actions to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with intended objectives (Hassan, 2002).

Marketing:

Marketing is a concept that emerged alongside the Industrial Revolution, when goods, services, and inventions began to flow gradually into markets, expanding from local and national levels to the international sphere. Numerous definitions of marketing have been developed in response to varying contexts and conditions, making it difficult to adopt a single, universally accepted definition. One of the earliest definitions, dating back to 1930, focused primarily on activities related to the physical distribution of goods—particularly industrial goods—to consumers or end users. It stated that marketing, in its broadest sense, involves the transfer and facilitation of the use of goods by a second owner who acquires all associated rights, privileges, and responsibilities (Abu Saeed, 2000).

It is noteworthy that the consumer occupies a central position in most definitions of marketing. The traditional definition describes marketing as “the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from the producer to the user.” The American Marketing Association defines marketing as “a managerial function and a set of processes aimed at creating communication with customers to gain a comprehensive understanding of their needs and wants. This enables the organization to develop and satisfy these needs through processes that benefit both the organization and its stakeholders” (Hossam, 2005).

Marketing is also viewed as the means through which producers present products and services to satisfy consumers’ needs and desires, while achieving organizational goals within the context of the society in which they operate (Asaad, 2014).

Marketing Objectives:

Marketing objectives vary according to the stage of the organization’s life cycle. These objectives include:

1. Achieving a high level of consumer satisfaction.
2. Anticipating consumer needs and wants, and undertaking the necessary activities to fulfill them, whether related to goods or services.
3. Maintaining and enhancing the organization’s competitive position.
4. Planning for and generating sales revenues and profits.
5. Providing goods and services required by the community in appropriate quantities and at suitable rates.

6. Ensuring the availability of goods and services at the time and place desired by consumers.
7. Ensuring that consumers perceive value and fairness in the prices they pay for goods and services.
8. Collecting and analyzing market information, understanding consumer preferences, and developing effective promotional policies.
9. Organizing the market in a manner that maximizes the well-being of community members (Abdul Salam, 2002).

The Importance of Marketing:

Markets and marketing represent essential aspects of life, as individuals constantly seek to satisfy their diverse needs through various available sources. Consequently, producers of goods and services strive to adopt appropriate strategies to reach consumers effectively. Industrial and commercial organizations aiming to survive and grow must exert continuous effort to access diverse consumer segments and persuade them to purchase their products or services. These efforts must be guided by specific economic principles that enable organizations to achieve profit, which is often considered their ultimate objective.

Marketing is not limited to selling and advertising goods; rather, it encompasses the provision of the right products in the appropriate place, at the right time, and with suitable quality and pricing. The prevailing practices and the limited understanding of the role of companies in society may contribute to misconceptions about marketing. However, a proper understanding of marketing is essential not only for advertisers but also for professionals involved in transportation, distribution, storage, market research, wholesale and retail trade, and investment activities.

Moreover, marketing is equally important for non-profit organizations such as universities, hospitals, and places of worship, as their success depends largely on their ability to communicate effectively with their audiences, even if such activities are labeled differently, such as public relations or community engagement. Since marketing contributes to increasing sales, it supports institutional growth and generates financial resources that stimulate economic activity, including the procurement of raw materials and the employment of labor (Muhammad, 2005).

Marketing Functions:

The main marketing functions can be summarized as follows (Mohammed, 2001):

1. Gathering Marketing Information:

This function includes identifying and analyzing marketing opportunities, designing and conducting market research, carrying out market experiments, and collecting information about competitors.

2. Risk Management:

This involves recognizing and assuming the risks associated with marketing activities, educating stakeholders about **these** risks, and monitoring and controlling them effectively.

3. Purchasing and Leasing:

This includes identifying and selecting supply sources, evaluating them, and negotiating and determining the terms of purchasing or leasing.

4. Selling or Leasing:

This function involves identifying target customers, determining their locations, establishing methods of communication, and stimulating demand for products through advertising, personal selling, sponsorships, and promotional activities. It also includes studying and setting the terms of sales or leasing agreements.

5. Distribution:

This function includes warehouse selection, storage methods, inventory management, transportation, customer service, handling goods, order fulfillment, wholesale operations, and retail activities.

6. Product Planning:

This includes developing new products, managing existing ones, determining warranties, selecting brand names and trademarks, and disposing of obsolete products.

7. Pricing:

This involves setting initial prices, determining discounts and final pricing, analyzing competitors' prices, and establishing credit terms (Sharif, 2010).

Competitive Advantage:

Competitive advantage can be defined as the ability to produce goods and services that meet international standards while maintaining a high and continuously improving standard of living over the long term (Ibrahim, 2009). It has also been described as a set of desirable characteristics that are difficult to define or measure precisely, often appearing as idealized attributes (Yahdih, 2003).

More precisely, competitive advantage refers to a unique characteristic or a combination of characteristics that distinguish an organization and enable it to sustain its superiority over competitors for a relatively long period, due to the difficulty of imitation. This allows the organization to outperform competitors in delivering products or services to customers (Attia, 2007).

It may also be viewed as superior skills, technologies, or resources that enable an organization to create greater value and benefits for customers compared to competitors. From the customer's perspective, this differentiation is accepted and valued, as it provides greater benefits than competing alternatives (Ahmed, 2000).

Importance of Competitive Advantage:

The importance of competitive advantage is reflected in the following:

1. Creating value for customers that satisfies their needs, ensures their loyalty, and enhances the organization's reputation and image.
2. Achieving strategic differentiation from competitors in the products and services offered, along with excellence in resources and organizational capabilities within a competitive environment.
3. Securing market share and achieving high profitability, which supports organizational survival and investment growth (Mustafa, 2007).

Objectives of Competitive Advantage:

Organizations seek to achieve the following objectives through competitive advantage:

1. Creating new marketing opportunities (for example, Motorola's pioneering role in inventing the mobile phone).
2. Entering new competitive arenas, such as new markets, new customer segments, or introducing new products and services.

3. Developing a forward-looking vision that enables the organization to achieve its strategic goals and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Ahmed, 2006).

The primary objective of competitive advantage is to enhance the economy's ability to respond effectively and efficiently to global changes by building a competitive system equipped with the capabilities required for excellence and achievement (Abdul Karim, 2007).

Dimensions of Competitive Advantage:

Competitive advantage consists of several key dimensions that management must consider:

1. **Superiority:** Building competitive advantage by leveraging areas where the organization can outperform competitors.
2. **Intangible Resources:** Emphasizing the importance of human resources, innovation, and organizational reputation as critical intangible assets that are difficult for competitors to imitate (Anwar, 2005).

Sources of Competitive Advantage:

The main sources of competitive advantage include:

1. **Innovation:** The increasing number of organizations and the intensification of competition at both national and global levels have made innovation a fundamental requirement for maintaining competitiveness. The ability to innovate has become a renewable and sustainable source of competitive advantage.
2. **Time:** Time has become a critical factor in both production and service management. Reaching customers faster than competitors represents a significant competitive advantage.
3. **Knowledge:** Knowledge—defined as the accumulation of experience, information, research, and learning—has become the most valuable resource in the modern “knowledge economy,” and a key driver in creating competitive advantage (Atef, 2001).

Achieving Competitive Advantage:

An organization can achieve competitive advantage by differentiating its product from competing products, whether in terms of quality, price, or design, so that it possesses additional features that distinguish it from alternatives in the market. These advantages must be accepted by

consumers, and the characteristics of product differentiation can be summarized as follows:

1. Product Design and Manufacturing:

This refers to ensuring that product design represents the best available option compared to competing products. Activities required to achieve differentiation in design include studying consumer requirements, distinguishing the product from competitors, comparing available design alternatives, and selecting the most appropriate one.

2. Quality:

Product quality is a fundamental factor in achieving excellence. This includes identifying features that provide a competitive advantage and ensuring their acceptance by consumers. Quality—both in design and conformity—is a key attribute that distinguishes a product from its competitors (Salami, 2006).

3. Price:

A competitive price does not necessarily mean the lowest price among competing products. Rather, it must be appropriate to the product's features and the value perceived by consumers, including its essential, operational, and complementary characteristics. A product that combines superior design with a price that reflects its added value will attract consumers, even if it is relatively high-priced. In fact, a higher price accompanied by strong demand often reflects superior product quality.

4. Excellence through Innovation:

This is achieved through the continuous development of existing products to keep pace with changing consumer preferences, as well as through the introduction of new products that outperform competitors in terms of features and value.

5. Cost Leadership (Cost Excellence):

This is achieved by reducing costs continuously while maintaining and improving product quality. A product may also achieve distinction by excelling over competitors in quality, price, or design, thereby gaining additional advantages valued by consumers. It is important to note that competitiveness does not necessarily require lowering prices below all competitors, but rather ensuring that the price reflects the product's design and value in a way that appeals to consumers, even if it is relatively high.

Field Study:

The study population consisted of all employees of the Saudi Telecom Company (STC). The study sample was selected purposively to include relevant stakeholders and individuals interested in the study topic, particularly members of the company's Public Relations Department and selected managers from other departments, based on their academic and professional experience. The sample represented 40% of the population, and a total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted groups.

The questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool to gather information related to the phenomenon under study.

Table (1):
shows the frequency distribution of the study sample according to their educational qualifications.

<i>Academic Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Bachelor's	32	53%
Higher Diploma	4	7%
Master's	14	23%
PhD	9	15%
Other	1	2%
Total	60	100%

The table shows that the academic qualifications of the study sample were distributed as follows: 53% held a Bachelor's degree, 7% a Higher Diploma, 23% a Master's degree, 15% a Doctorate, and 2% held other qualifications, limited to secondary education. This distribution indicates a strong presence of highly qualified individuals within the study sample.

Table (2):
Frequency distribution of the study sample according to job title

<i>Job</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Department Manager	6	10%
Section Head	5	8%
Supervisor	14	23%
Employee	26	44%
Other	9	15%
Total	60	100%

The table shows that the job titles of the study sample were distributed as follows: 10% were department managers, 8% heads of departments, 23% supervisors, 44% employees, and 15% held other job titles.

Table (3):

Frequency distribution of the study sample according to years of experience

<i>Experience</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 5 years	7	12%
years 5 to less than 10	18	30%
10 to less than 15 years	20	33%
15 years or more	15	25%
Total	60	100%

The table shows that the years of experience of the study sample were distributed as follows: 12% fell within the “less than 5 years” category, 30% within the “5 to less than 10 years” category, 33% within the “10 to less than 15 years” category, and 25% within the “15 years and above” category. This distribution indicates that the majority of the study sample possesses substantial professional experience.

Results of the study hypotheses:

Table (4):

Summary of the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the study hypotheses

Hypothesis statements	Standard Deviation	Average	chi-squared value	Morale level
Hypothesis 1	0.54	4.57	87.6	0.000
Hypothesis 2	0.46	4.63	71.7	0.000
Hypothesis 3	0.58	4.54	27.6	0.000

Table (4) shows the following:

First Hypothesis:

The results of the analysis indicate that the majority of the surveyed sample agreed with all the statements measuring the first hypothesis. This is evidenced by the fact that the arithmetic mean for all statements exceeds the study’s hypothetical mean (3), with the overall average of respondents’ answers reaching (4.57). Moreover, statistically significant differences were found across all statements of the hypothesis, as indicated by a chi-square value of (87.6) and a significance level of (0.000), favoring respondents who strongly agreed with the statements.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis of the study -namely, that there is a relationship between the objectives of public relations management, marketing efficiency, and the achievement of

competitive advantage- is supported across all statements used to measure it.

Second Hypothesis:

The analysis reveals that the majority of the surveyed sample agreed with all statements measuring the second hypothesis. This is evidenced by the fact that the mean score for all statements exceeds the study's hypothetical mean (3), with an overall average score of 4.63. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found across all statements of the hypothesis, as indicated by a chi-square value of 4.63 and a significance level of 0.000, favoring respondents who strongly agreed with the statements.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the second research question—namely, whether there is a relationship between public relations functions, marketing efficiency, and the achievement of competitive advantage—is supported across all statements used to measure the hypothesis.

Third Hypothesis:

The analysis reveals that the majority of the surveyed sample agreed with all statements measuring the third hypothesis. This is evidenced by the fact that the mean score for all statements exceeds the study's hypothetical mean (3), with the overall average of respondents' answers reaching 4.54. Furthermore, statistically significant differences were found across all statements of the hypothesis, as indicated by a chi-square value of 27.6 and a significance level of 0.000, favoring respondents who strongly agreed with the statements.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the third hypothesis of the study—namely, that there is a relationship between the characteristics of public relations staff, marketing efficiency, and the achievement of competitive advantage—is supported across all statements used to measure the hypothesis.

Conclusions:

- The Public Relations Department successfully achieved its objectives, thereby contributing to the company's competitive advantage.
- The company is distinguished by having a Public Relations Department that plays a significant and vital role in achieving its objectives. This

department emphasizes public relations functions through research, opinion studies, and analysis to support the achievement of competitive advantage.

- The staff of the Public Relations Department possess many of the essential qualities required for their roles, which has contributed to achieving a competitive advantage.
- The Public Relations Department engages with the public through distinctive and effective methods that contribute to achieving a competitive advantage.
- Competitive advantage is one of the most important pillars of the company's excellence, as confirmed by the findings of this study.
- The Public Relations Department undertakes and supports the various functions performed by other departments within the organization.
- The Public Relations Department works to establish relationships with distributors by contributing to product development and exploring new markets.
- The Public Relations Department is responsible for formulating its general policies and programs.
- The Public Relations Department coordinates among different departments to promote understanding and collaboration.
- The staff of the Public Relations Department demonstrate strong organizational thinking and possess excellent memory skills.
- The company's public relations management is based on the understanding that the public represents the foundation for the company's development and growth.

Recommendations:

Based on the preceding findings, the researcher recommends the following:

- The necessity of relying on public relations across various sectors and organizations—whether industrial, financial, commercial, or otherwise—to achieve maximum marketing benefits and sustain competitive advantage.
- The importance of creating opportunities for employees to participate in proposing strategies and developing systems, as well as ensuring a positive work environment that encourages creativity and the contribution of innovative ideas.

- The necessity of implementing and continuously developing public relations management systems, while giving due attention to all their human, material, technical, and design components within a coherent and integrated framework to achieve competitive advantage.
- Providing employees with up-to-date information on competitive advantage through training programs or regular meetings between employees and management, and encouraging the generation of innovative ideas to improve performance in line with approved plans.
- The necessity for the company to coordinate the efforts of human resources within public relations departments—particularly those with experience and competence—and ensure that all efforts are directed toward achieving defined objectives in accordance with approved methods and priorities, thereby strengthening the elements of competitive advantage.
- Greater attention should be given to leadership within the organization. A leader is not merely one who exercises authority over employees, but rather one who guides, develops, and enhances the capabilities of human resources.
- The importance of considering personal characteristics, qualifications, and skills when selecting employees is essential for the organization as a whole, and particularly for public relations management.

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