

## The role of organisation culture in achieving competitive advantage at Telkom Kenya limited

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### Cite this article in APA

Anyembe, M. M., Jeptepkeny, B., & Sang, H. (2022). The role of organisation culture in achieving competitive advantage at Telkom Kenya limited. *Journal of media and communication*, 1(1), 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jmc.v4i1.243>

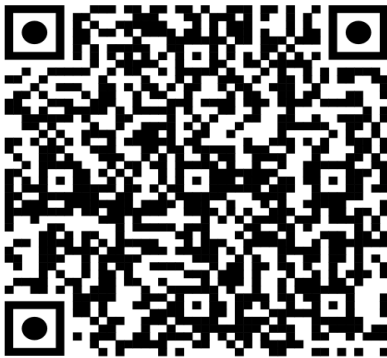


A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

### Article history

Received: 10.06.2022  
Accepted: 12.09.2022  
Published: 29.09.2022

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explore organisational culture's role in achieving competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya. The fact that Telkom was the first Telecom Company in Kenya and yet its performance is low instead of being the market leader justified this study. The study was anchored on Michael Porter's theory of competitive advantage, resource-based review theory and stakeholder theory. Case Study Research Design was used. Data collection was done using questionnaires. A pilot test was used to test the survey's reliability. The questionnaires were administered to twenty employees of Telkom Kenya in Nakuru who were not part of the final study. The Cronbach coefficient alpha test was used to determine the questionnaire's reliability. The analysis of data was by inferential and descriptive statistics. The study established that leadership style and control system statistically impact Telkom Kenya's competitive advantage with beta values of 0.243 and 0.230, respectively. The study concluded that the efforts put so far by Telkom Kenya to achieve competitiveness are not sufficient since its competitors still have the edge over it in the market. The study recommended that Telkom Kenya consider changing its leadership style to one that is participatory and implements control systems to ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of its performance.

**Key terms:** Organisational culture, competitive advantage, telkom Kenya.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Azhar et al. (2013), the performance of organisations is, to a great extent, dependent on what strategy is decided upon by the top management and how effectively this strategy is implemented. This study explores the organisational culture as a building block for a company to gain a competitive advantage over its competitors. The business environment is dynamic, turbulent, highly competitive and very complex. This is because of the continuously changing environment. The key drivers of these changes include the globalisation of trade, repositioning of government, increase in size and influence of corporate organisations, knowledge, brand reputation and the rise in importance of stakeholders relationships (Olanipekun, 2014). Therefore, enterprises need to develop flexibility and respond rapidly to market changes in order to grasp emerging opportunities and react accordingly to consumers' preferences. Enterprises should focus on their core competencies to maximise the firm's wealth and profitability. This can be achieved by encouraging innovations, supporting organisational culture, promoting employee participation and enhancing communication (Olanipekun, 2014).

Organisational culture has been defined as the main suppositions about the world and values that direct life in companies (Schneider et al., 2013). According to Kalyar and Rafi (2013), it refers to the beliefs, values and suppositions that organisations members perceive of the company. Organisational culture is a vital element of an organisation's achievement of competitive advantage since it enables a firm to achieve excellence in performance. These values and beliefs shared in companies are a source of competitive advantage because they shape the processes in the companies and unify the means by which they achieve their business solutions, thus attaining the overall goals (Yilmaz & Ergun, 2008). There are many ways in which the organisational culture can give an organisation a competitive advantage, for instance, through recruiting and retention of employees. When the company's culture is well defined to its employees, they can have a sense of purpose, for they work in line with the company's long-term goals. Employees in an organisation that embraces culture are empowered at the different business levels and follow the guidelines for decision-

making. Employees' decisions impact the organisation in meaningful ways, like saving time and resources. When an organisation's culture goes beyond marketing terminology and becomes the basis of its operations, it becomes a competitive advantage. The company culture sets clear visions and expectations among the employees, and everyone is held accountable to the standards. Organisational culture is an intangible resource that plays an important function in the organisation and influences employees and organisations operating within the company (Sadri & Lees, 2001). Organisation culture is considered an important factor influencing organisational success or failure (Ojo, 2010). Embracing organisational culture by developing a strong relationship with the main stakeholders is among the best tools that can be used in a corporation to enhance efficiency and competitiveness. Furthermore, it contributes to strengthening the company's competitive advantage (Surroca et al., 2010).

A company cannot be able to enhance its organisational culture without focusing on it so that it can create more transparent conditions among stakeholders and increase its competitive advantage over its rivals. The effectiveness of an organisation is largely dependent on the organisational culture (Widjaja et al., 2020). Michael Porter proposed three generic strategies through which an organisation can achieve competitive advantage. They include Overall cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies. The competitive strategies are based on a combination of quality, service, cost and time. Some factors influence organisational culture, including the organisation structure, the system and processes by which work is done, the employees' attitudes and behaviour, the organisation's values and traditions and the management and leadership styles adopted (Kiriri et al., 2017). In an organisation, strategies that are in line with the organisational culture are easier to effect and more likely to succeed. Competitiveness means the choice of a working method that is used in the strategy for achieving exceptional goals and outdoing the competitors. The character of strategy and competitive advantage imposes the necessity to be flexible and cope with uncertainty. Competitive advantage does not apply to only having higher operational excellence as compared with competitors or more effective actions in relation to rivals, but

refers to doing something else (Porter,1996). Competitive advantage is concerned with factors that make the organisation successful, but competitors' sources of success are difficult to reproduce. It can be in the form of huge financial resources, skilled human resources, and advanced technology. Yilmaz and Ergun (2008) posit that organisational culture is a source of competitive advantage because its ability eases business aims through unifying company abilities and answers challenges the organisation faces. Organisational culture is the main unique feature, which differentiates companies in having competitive advantage (Jardioui et al., 2019).

Porter (2003) asserts that a strategy requires firms to identify growth segments' work towards achieving efficiency of operation and continually enhance the quality of products and services. Continuous assessment of the performance indicators and their management determines firms' long-term direction and survival. For the telecommunication industry in Kenya, performance measurement is vital in order to achieve and maintain competitiveness, strategy formulation and implementation. In Kenya, the telecommunication industry currently has three major players. They include Safaricom, Airtel and Telkom Kenya (Orange). Their market shares are 75 per cent for Safaricom, 12 per cent for Airtel and Telkom 9 per cent. The Kenyan telecommunication sector has over 17 million active subscribers. Technological advancement and regulatory restructuring have transformed the industry in the past decade. Safaricom Company is the top performer in the industry in Kenya. It has been able to outdo its competitors and gain a competitive advantage (Arasa & Gathinji, 2014).

The telecommunication sector globally is unique and vibrant and keeps on evolving due to new technologies and infrastructure filtering into the market. The telecom industry is at the epicentre for growth, disruption and innovation. According to the number of subscribers, China mobile is a leading telecommunication service provider (Chong et al., 2011). Its capitalisation market is \$164.21 billion. In the United States of America, telecommunication is the largest communication sector and generates a lot of revenue for the country. The companies engaging in telecommunication compete in order to gain sizeable

market shares among customers and businesses. Voice services are the most popular of all mobile telecommunication services. The European telecommunication industry is vast. The leading telecommunications operators are not likely to be overtaken by the market entrants (Chong et al., 2011). They have well-established strategies in this sector. The telecommunication industry in Africa is expanding. Nigeria has the largest mobile market, with around 17 million subscribers.

The creation of the National Communications Commission in Nigeria as a regulatory body increased the competition in the mobile telephony industry as more players made an entrance into the market (Mubarak, 2011). In Tanzania, the telecommunication industry is made up of the radio, television, fixed and mobile telephones and the internet. The competition is stiff in this industry. In accordance with Tanzania Communications and Regulatory Authority (TCRA), an operator is said to have obtained significant market power by owning 35 per cent of the market share. However, the Tanzanian mobile telephony services market is concentrated on three major players: Vodacom, Tigo and Airtel. Egypt contains one of the largest Telecom markets in North Africa. Therefore, effective competition is encountered in different sectors, which have been supported by the licensing of operators to offer fixed lines and mobile services (Nyagilo, 2019).

Kenya's telecommunication industry has grown and is supported by the advanced growth in mobile telephony, internet penetration and the digital economy. The government has identified the telecommunication industry as an important sector that drives economic growth. In addition, this sector leads to digital advancement that entails digital services and cyber security markets in particular. In Kenya, mobile telephony continues to dominate the growth in the telecommunication sub-sector compared to fixed telephony services, which continue to experience a downfall. The telecommunication industry comprises four operators providing fixed voice services: Jamii Telecommunication Limited, Telkom Kenya Limited, Airtel and Safaricom Limited (CAK, 2016). In addition, the telecommunication industry dwells on mobile network services, among other services. In the market, there are five mobile

telephony service providers. By June 2016, Safaricom had 25,941,488 subscribers, Airtel had 6,588,825 subscribers, and Orange had 5,238,162 subscribers.

Furthermore, Equitel had 2,015,352 subscribers, and Jamii telecom had 470,000 subscribers. This industry has undergone transformations. Over the years, there has been the introduction of new services and products. Innovation has been a major achievement in this sector. Mobile money transfer continues to be a global front runner through innovations, and this has enabled cash transfers and remittances through the mobile platform, ensuring financial inclusion. The money services are offered by: Safaricom Limited (M-pesa), Telkom Kenya Limited (Orange money), Airtel networks (Airtel money), Mobikash and Fin serve Limited (Equitel) (Nyagilo, 2018).

The broadband service also plays a vital role in facilitating socio-economic development in Kenya. These services include wired and wireless, allowing users to access internet services at fast speeds. This has brought about a rise in demand for internet services, encouraging the uptake of broadband services in Kenya (CAK, 2016). The development of large-scale infrastructure in Kenya with the ability to deliver affordable and efficient communications services is recognised as expedient for the growth of the country's economy. The Communication Authority of Kenya is responsible for formulating and implementing policies and strategies regarding telecommunication services in Kenya. It also licenses telecommunication service providers and monitors their performance to ensure that they work in conformity with licenses offered and adhere to the provisions of the Kenya Information and Communications Act, 1998 and the Kenya Communication Regulations, 2001 (CAK, 2016).

Telkom Kenya is a telecommunication service provider in Kenya. Telkom Kenya Limited was incorporated in Kenya under the Companies Act (Cap 486) in 1999. The company was licensed to provide and operate telecommunication facilities and services by the Communication Commission of Kenya (CCK) under the provisions of the Kenya communications Act, 1998. It started operations on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1999, wholly owned by the government of Kenya. Telkom Kenya offers a comprehensive range of communication services and

solutions in broadband, data, GSM and fixed-line. The company's vision is connecting the people, and the mission is to provide the best value for a simpler life, efficient business and stronger communities. It normally does this by providing integrated telecommunications solutions to Government and large corporates, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and individuals in Kenya. Its values are innovation, teamwork, empowerment, integrity and customer-centricity. In line with its mission and vision, Telkom Kenya emphasises developing products for businesses apart from offering solutions for the entire population. The company develops innovative solutions and communications services designed for businesses in Kenya (Telkom Kenya, 2012).

Telkom belonged to the Kenya Post and Telecommunications Corporation (KPTC). It was the sole provider of telecommunication and postal services. This company started as a telecommunication operative in 1999 after a division of KPTC into the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), the postal corporation of Kenya (POSTA) and Telkom Kenya. Telkom Company ownership comprises 60 per cent shareholding by Helios investment and 40 per cent by the government of Kenya. Telkom Kenya provides various services, for instance, voice, data, mobile money, and network services. In addition, it provides a platform on which internet service providers operate. By the year 2004, the majority of internet services were through the dial-up service (CAK, annual report, 2015-2016). Jambonet is a subsidiary of Telkom Kenya. Telkom also offers a global mobile system for mobile networks (GSM), voice and high-speed internet services. Telkom dropped its mobile money operations in the year 2017 and resumed in the year 2018. The T-Kash is a competitor to the M-Pesa offered by Safaricom. In 2007, France Telecom, now known as (Orange, S.A), acquired 51 per cent shares of Telkom, which cost US\$390 million. The structure experienced transformations in November 2012 when the government of Kenya decided to convert the shareholders' loans into equity so as to ease Telkom Kenya's debt burden. In 2013, France Telecom increased its shares in Telkom to 70 per cent as a result of the government's failure to avail the full amount of the 2012 funding. Orange Kenya changed the name to

Telkom Kenya in June 2017 (CAK, annual report, 2015-2016).

This is the superiority that an organisation gets when providing the same products and services as the competitors at a lower price or by charging higher prices and providing greater value through the process of differentiation (Alimin et al., 2012). Competitive advantage occurs when the firm matches its competencies to its opportunities. This is in the form of differentiation advantage and cost advantage. Cost advantage occurs when products and services are offered at a lower price as compared to their competitors. On the other hand, differentiation advantage is concerned with delivering benefits that exceed the competing products. Competitive advantage is the key to superior performance (Rašković et al., 2013).

Three types of competitive advantage exist Focus, differentiation and cost leadership (Bani-Hani & Al-Hawary, 2009). The differentiation advantage revolves around characteristics like technology and innovation, brand image, customer service, the quality of the product, durability and the reputation of the firm, all of which must be hard for the competitors to imitate (Adom et al., 2016). Differentiation strategy achieves competitive advantage in that it creates entry barriers to entrants through building customer loyalty and brand loyalty by offering good quality products and services and marketing and advertising techniques. The focus strategy indicates that the company's leaders understand their market leader better than others (Alimin et al., 2012). This is achieved by implementing either differentiation or cost leadership. The aim of the focus strategy is to select one specific target market (Adom, et al., 2016). The cost leadership strategy is achieved by being the lowest-cost producer in an industry. Many businesses aim at minimising costs and maximising profits. This strategy is mainly practised by large-scale businesses that offer standardised products that are accepted by the majority of the customers. The cost leadership strategy aims to attain above-average returns over its competitors by driving the components of activities towards reducing costs (Bani-Hani & Al-Hawary, 2009).

In businesses, success relies on factors like identifying competitive advantage, cultivating a good relationship

with the customers and producing high-quality products (Hatten, 2018). By implementing the desirable strategies, competitive advantage can enhance the competitive position, and those organisations with strong competitive advantage can expand their market share over those with weak competitive positions. In order to outdo rivals, firms must analyse their competitors. Analysis of competitors offers information that is important to the firm and can identify the firm's competitive strategies (Hatten, 2018). Competitive advantage, the uniqueness in an organisation's performance, is supported and built by the leaders and what organisation culture they front. According to Kotler and Keller (2006), competitive advantage is the company's ability to perform in one or more ways that competitors cannot. Leaders ensure this by creating an organisational culture that makes employees believe that the substance of performance is the most crucial (Schein, 2012).

In Telkom Kenya, the major competitive advantage comes from practising cost leadership. This, however, is not enough, as evidenced by its small market share. Measures of competitive advantage in the telecommunications sector include Market share, the share of resources, the number of subscribers to voice, data and cellular mobile services and fixed telephone service subscriptions. According to Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) statistics, as of June 2019, Telkom Kenya ranked eighth with a rate of 1.0 per cent in fixed data subscriptions (Appendix III), it ranked third in market shares in mobile subscriptions (Appendix IV), and it also ranked third in percentage of market share for mobile subscriptions at 8.1 per cent (Appendix V).

Organisational culture can be referred to as the values, beliefs and suppositions that form the members' perception of the company (Kalyar & Rafi, 2013). Yesil and Kaya (2013) define organisational culture as suppositions and values that direct companies' lives. The culture at work is concerned with the changes around economic, social and political environments and those changes concerning the people over a period of time (Wu, 2006). The business culture is dynamic and changes over time. The organisation's culture forms the intangible resources that play an important function in the organisation, affecting the

employees and operations within the company (Sadri & Lees, 2001). For a corporation to be efficient and competitive, the stakeholders should have a strong relationship. Additionally, this contributes to strengthening the company's competitive advantage (Surroca et al., 2010). For a company to enhance its organisational culture, it should focus on it, so that creation of transparent conditions among those stakeholders increases the competitive advantage over its competitors.

For strategies in the company to be well implemented, it must align them with organisational culture. Goals in an organisation support the culture of the organisation, which enhances the strategy of the organisation over time. Culture brings out the uniqueness of the company in support of the company's beliefs, significance, morals, standards and the general process of operations. "The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture. If you do not manage culture, it manages you, and you may not even be aware of the extent to which this is happening" (Edgar Schein). According to Yesil and Kayab (2013), the role played by organisational culture in establishing competitive advantage for organisations and its influence on the performance of organisations has been documented in the literature. Elements of organisational culture are key in all spheres of an organisation as it forms the means of regulating the organisation's members' behaviour and influence all organisation activities, directly impacting the organisation's growth and development (Gavric et al., 2016). Organisation culture is, however, not always static and does not always lead to improved organisational performance. The fact that it could be dynamic and negatively influence an organisation's growth gives importance to its study since the 1980s when Japanese companies known for their cohesion and strong culture boomed their productivity and started suppressing Western companies.

The concept of organisational culture and its influence on performance has gained a lot of traction since the 1980s when companies from Japan known for their strong and cohesive culture made a boom with their productivity and started suppressing Western companies; understanding organisation culture became of essence (Gavric et al., 2016). Whereas

Western companies focused on the functional effects of individuals, Japanese companies incorporated elements of flexibility, adaptability, and teamwork to achieve huge successes. According to Madu (2012), organisational culture is one of the very basic components of a company's competitive advantage. It is also a basic component of performance sustainability. Madu asserts that all leaders have a set of organisational cultures which are promoted by them and which have a significant impact on the values exhibited by the organisation (Lee, 2020). In this study, the researcher looked at organisation culture in terms of policies embraced by an organisation, leadership style used by the management, control systems in place and their implementation and organisational values embraced by the organisation's members. The four elements above influence how the employees feel about the organisation, how they behave towards the management and towards each other and ultimately their level of performance, which in turn impacts the firm's competitiveness (Madu, 2012).

A high-performance culture is a key to the success and competitiveness of businesses. It leads to a self-driven workforce and consistently high-quality performance by employees. Corporate culture should be in line with an organisation's goals (Nongo & Ikyanyon, 2012). In Kenya, Telkom Kenya, like other companies, has encountered challenges that have affected its growth of competitiveness. These challenges include; political anxieties, technological advancements, new entrants into the market, social amendment and globalisation that affect the industry players' competitive advantage (CAK, annual report, 2015-2016). A high-performance culture in an organisation impacts positively as it can lead to better quality work and reduced absenteeism and turnover (Sarangi & Srivastava, 2012). Companies are inclined to different cultures, which drives their competitive advantage. Despite the essence of culture as a driver of competitive advantage in organisations, there is scant empirical evidence on organisation culture and its influence on the competitive advantage that relates to competitive advantage in the telecommunication industry.

Telkom Kenya has been in this industry since 1999, yet its productivity level is low in terms of the number of

subscribers and the market share. Despite the fact that it provides a variety of services, including internet, money transfer, telecommunication dealers, mobile phone accessories and other services, it has not been able to compete favourably. Having started as a government-owned entity, it is expected that it has access to enough resources and that government policies were meant to help its growth and sustainability. However, Telkom did not take advantage of being a monopoly in earlier times to grow its empire and become a formidable force in the industry. With new entrants coming, its sales reduced, forcing Telkom to downsize, reducing its workforce from 2006-2010 (CAK, annual report, 2015-2016)). In 2019, Telkom Kenya was forced to downsize further in preparation for a merger with Airtel Kenya, which never took effect. New entrants took advantage of the untapped market niche, overtaking it and performing better. During the fourth quarter of the financial year 2020/2021, out of the total mobile subscriptions of 64,402,022, Telkom's subscription was at 4,009,758, representing a market share of 6.2 per cent. Telkom's market share has been dwindling in comparison to other players in the same industry (Communications Commission of Kenya, 2013). If its performance is not enhanced, it will lead to decreased government revenue in terms of taxes and reduced job opportunities for the citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to understand why this company is not performing well in the market. Telkom's major strategy over time has been price leadership. This doesn't seem to give the desired milestones going by its low market share. There could be many reasons for this challenge. These could include globalisation, technological changes, new entrants and shift in market demand or the absence of high-performance organisation culture (CAK, annual report, 2015-2016). This research seeks to explore one of these possible reasons. It examines the role of organisational culture in achieving competitive advantage in the telecommunications industry with a focus on Telkom Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Verburg et al. (2018) studied the role of organisational control systems in employees' trust and performance outcomes in Singapore, focusing on how different forms of control, including process, outcome and normative, relate to employee job performance. The

study used data from 105 supervisors from professional services firms in Singapore. The study found that control systems appear to have beneficial impacts on employees' organisational trust and job performance. The findings also found that control systems promote employees' contribution to organisational performance hence competitive advantage.

A study was conducted by Odor (2018) on the impact of organisational culture on organisation performance: A case study of Telkom Sector. This study's purpose is to determine the impact of organisational culture on organisational performance to know the culture of an organisation assists in enhancing organisational performance. The organisational performance was measured using a balanced scorecard. The study employed a quantitative approach, where a questionnaire was used to collect the data from 22 respondents. The findings indicated that all the dimensions of the culture influence organisational performance. The study findings also showed that the norms and values of employees are according to organisational objectives and that roles and procedures are clearly defined.

Verburg et al. (2018) studied the role of organisational control systems in employees' organisational trust and performance outcomes. Data were collected from 105 employee supervisor dyads from professional services firms in Singapore. A Snowball sampling approach was used to determine the participants. The study concluded that the implementation of organisational controls improves employee performance directly and through trust. Improved employee performance consequently leads to improved organisational performance and hence positively impacts an organisation's competitiveness. This study looks at control systems as a component of organisational culture and how it impacts competitiveness, focusing on Telkom Kenya.

A study by Bogdanowicz (2014) on organisational culture as a source of competitive advantage – a case of a telecommunication company in Poland. This study aimed at giving an analysis of the impact of organisational culture on the company's competitiveness. The study used a case study of one of the biggest telecommunication companies in

Poland. Informal interviews and company data analysis supported the author's observation. The study results indicated that organisational culture aligned with a strategy was the inner strength of the organisation, which significantly improves its competitiveness. One of the essential elements in the change process is the correct diagnosis of the difference that exists between the current and the desired cultural features. In this case, the cultural gaps that are important covered such areas as the structure of the company, procedures and internal and external communication.

Akingbade (2021) researched competitive strategies and the improved performance of selected Nigerian Telecommunications companies. The study found a relationship between competitive strategies, the elements of competitive strategies and the outstanding performance of telecommunication firms. However, the study did not look at organisational culture, which is a major driver of competitive advantage. This study, therefore, builds on it by looking at the relationship between organisational culture and competitive advantage in the telecommunication sector with a focus on Telkom Kenya.

A study by Chebett (2008) on Challenges faced by Telecommunication Operators in Kenya that globalisation brings about found out that the major challenges facing the company are competition, rapid technological change and quality of service, copper vandalism, declining revenues, among others. This study builds on this by looking at what could be leading to Telkom Kenya's inability to compete favourably by investigating the relationship between its organisational culture and its competitiveness.

In a study done by Otera (2018) on Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance in the Telecommunication Sector in Kenya: A Case Of Telkom Kenya, it was noted that though Telkom has been in existence since 1999, it has not managed to be a leader in the Telecommunications industry in Kenya. The study results, however, concluded that the employees at Telkom Kenya are very satisfied. One would ordinarily expect a satisfied workforce to steer a company to competitive levels. This, therefore, means that the problem could be the inherent performance culture or other aspects of the organisation's culture. This

research sought to find out whether there could be a relationship between Telkom's organisation culture and its competitive advantage.

Ndambuki et al. (2017) researched the Effects of Business Strategies on the Growth of Market Share in The Telecommunications Industry in Kenya: A Case Study of Telkom Kenya. According to the results of the study, it was concluded that internal factors affecting market share realisation in Telkom Kenya include; organisational culture, structure, leadership challenges, technology, human resources and cash flows. This study, therefore, builds on the research by Ndambuki et al. (2017) by looking into how organisation culture with respect to control systems and participatory leadership skills impacts the competitiveness of Telkom Kenya.

Kandie (2001) carried out research on strategic responses by Telkom Kenya Limited in a competitive environment. The target population was senior managers in the company. The data was collected by doing elaborate interviews with the respondents. The study's objectives were; to identify challenges affecting Telkom in a competitive environment and establish strategic responses to cope with the competitive environment. From the study's results, it was found that the company had strategies in place to cope with the competition. It was, however, discovered that implementation of these strategies faced several challenges, one of which was the organisation's culture. It was therefore recommended that they organise a culture transition program. This echoes what was said by (Sadri & Lees, 2001) that for strategies in the company to be well implemented, it must align them with organisational culture.

Ouma (2009) did research on the Challenges of Managing Strategic Change in Telkom Kenya During and After Privatisation. The study looked into the changes that had taken place and the inherent challenges as a result of the changes. This study implemented a case study research design, and data was collected using an interview guide. The target population was ten managers. From the study results, it was found that Telkom underwent several key transformations concurrently, leading to coping challenges for the management. Major reasons for the challenges were found to be; poor planning, lack of



staff involvement, poor internal communication and a prolonged change period. In addition, it was found that the management was grappling with coagulating implemented strategies while learning from past mistakes at the time of the study. It was recommended that, amongst other things, Telkom should avoid the top-down approach to management change, embrace a change process that is accommodative of feedback and empower section heads to make decisions regarding their areas of work.

In a study done by Njoroge (2015) on Competitive Strategies Adopted By The Telecommunication Mobile Service Providers In Kenya: A Case Of Telkom Kenya, it was found that “given the competitive nature of the Kenya telecommunication industry, the firm has had to continuously monitor their strategies based on organisational goals as well as in response changes in external and internal environment adaptive strategies the company was putting in place in order to effectively cope with this completion.” The research design adopted during the research was a case study. Interviews were used in the collection of primary data, and the target population was Telkom's top management. The published reports and enterprise periodicals were used in the collection of secondary data. It was found that competitive strategies adopted by Telkom Kenya (Orange) were; cost Leadership and focused differentiated strategy. It was concluded that Telkom indeed formulates and implements competitive strategies in order to compete effectively in the industry. However, given the statistics from CAK on the market share and share of resources, these efforts seem not to have brought about the desired results.

Tanui (2008) studied Strategic Responses to Increasing Competitive Challenges in The Telecommunications Industry in Kenya - A Case Of Telkom Kenya Limited. The study sought to determine the environmental challenges faced by Telkom and the strategic responses that it had adopted to fight competition effectively. The collection of Data was by interviews with key senior management staff of Telkom. Data were analysed using the content analysis technique. It was found that Telkom was battling with adverse environmental challenges as well as internal challenges, the key among them being culture change and huge disparities in staff remuneration.

In a study by Ngara (2018), the main objective was to establish the organisational culture's influence on The Kenya Power and Lighting Company Limited (KPLC) performance. A descriptive research design was used. The population of the study included the entire 11,295 workforces of KPLC. A sample of 4,697 employees of KPLC based at the Central Office, Nairobi North, Nairobi West and Nairobi South was used. Stratified random sampling in the selection of a sample population of 354 employees to participate in the study. The data collection instrument was the questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used, and findings were presented in the form of charts and tables. The research established a strong positive relationship between organisational culture and organisational performance at KPLC.

The study hypothesised that: “there is no significant relationship between leadership style and competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya, and there is no significant relationship between a control system and competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya”. Resource-based view theory was used to guide the study, which is a theory that looks into how strategic resources of a firm can be used to attain sustainable competitive advantage. This theory focuses on an entity's internal resources to identify those assets with the capabilities and competencies to deliver superior competitive advantage (Barney, 2001). The company's resources and sustained competitive advantage are viewed as the emergence of a resource-based view. According to Barney, for resources to have the capability of sustainable competitive advantage, they should have the following qualities that are: not substitutable, imperfectly imitable, should be of value and rare to find. Barney (2001) further argued that organisations must come up with unique firm-specific core competencies that give allowance to outperform competitors by doing things in a different manner. This study focuses on organisational culture as a unique resource that can help a telecommunication company achieve a competitive edge over its competitors.

From the highlighted literature review, it is clear that organisational culture significantly impacts competitiveness in the telecommunication industry and in other firms. On close scrutiny, all researches

done with reference to Telkom Kenya seem to agree that there is a problem with the competitiveness of Telkom Kenya. All the researchers similarly agree that Telkom Kenya, given its history, is expected to have a bigger market share than it currently does. It is also evident that organisational culture and leadership have come up as challenges facing Telkom Kenya and as areas that need to be looked into with keenness if Telkom Kenya is to achieve competitiveness in the telecommunication industry in Kenya. Against this backdrop, research on the relationship between organisational culture and competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya was done. In most of the research done on Telkom Kenya, as highlighted above, respondents were Telkom Kenya's top management. In this research, respondents were from all levels of management. Therefore, it was deemed more appropriate to have respondents from all cadres of

management so as to get a more practical image of the company.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

So as to test the power of the relationship between organisational culture and competitive advantage, the coefficient of estimates model was applied; it was found that the model is reliable and that the predictors can be efficiently used to predict an outcome in the dependent variable.

### Descriptive Statistics

The study sought to determine organisational culture's role in gaining competitive Advantage. Accordingly, organisational culture was measured using multiple items on a 5-point Likert scale. The table below summarises the responses to organisational culture.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Organisational Culture**

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std deviation
Each employee is involved in decision-making in their workplace.	9.5%	33.3%	19.0%	26.7%	11.4%	2.97	1.20
There is a flexible working environment.	0.0%	9.5%	23.8%	50.5%	16.2%	3.73	0.85
The organisation is committed to the employees' welfare.	6.7%	9.5%	19.0%	33.3%	31.4%	3.73	1.20
Customer needs are prioritised by the company	0.0%	17.1%	28.6%	29.5%	24.8%	3.62	1.04
Unethical behaviour is punishable.	0.0%	4.8%	34.3%	39.0%	21.9%	3.78	0.84

**Key: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)**

Most respondents (33.3%) disagreed that each employee is involved in decision-making in their workplace. This is reinforced by the mean of 2.97 and the standard deviation of 1.2, meaning that the level of consensus is high at this point. However, the majority of the respondents (50.5%) agreed that there is a flexible working environment. Similarly, the majority of the respondents (33.3%) agreed that the organisation is committed to employee welfare.

Furthermore, the respondents (29.5%) agreed that the company prioritises customer needs, and 39.0 per cent agreed that unethical behaviour is punishable. Thus, in general, the respondents agreed to all but one of the indicators on organisational culture, implying that Telkom has adopted good practices on organisational culture. This is in agreement with what (Surroca et al., 2010) said that embracing organisational culture by developing a strong relationship with the main

stakeholders is among the best tools that can be used in a corporation to enhance efficiency and competitiveness and that it contributes towards strengthening the company's competitive advantage.

## Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage was measured using four indicators on a 4-point Likert scale. The table below summarises the responses.

**Table 2: Percentage Response on Competitive Advantage**

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std deviation
The company has a flexible strategy that allows for accommodation for the numerous changes in the industry	1.0%	31.4%	21.9%	25.7%	20.0%	3.32	1.15
The company focuses on target clients, and this gives it a competitive edge	1.0%	19.0%	34.3%	25.7%	20.0%	3.45	1.05
Cost leadership has led to the company acquiring a competitive edge	0.0%	21.0%	22.9%	41.9%	14.3%	3.5	0.98
Product differentiation has given the company a competitive advantage	0.0%	20.0%	38.1%	23.8%	18.1%	3.4	1.01

**Key: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)**

Most of the respondents (31.4%) disagreed with the suggestion that the company has a flexible strategy that accommodates the industry's numerous changes. Most of the respondents (34.3%) remained unsure of whether Telkom focuses on target clients giving it a competitive edge in the industry. The majority of the respondents (41.9%) agreed that cost leadership has led to the company acquiring a competitive edge in the market. However, most respondents (38.1%) were unsure whether product differentiation had given Telkom a competitive advantage. This is in agreement with Akingbade (2014), who found out that there is a relation between competitive strategies, the elements of competitive strategies and the outstanding performance of telecommunication firms. It also

resonates with what (Odom & Dunn, 1991) noted: culture affects how employees perceive and treat customers, the way shareholders and employees are perceived by the management and how the future is anticipated and managed. Some respondents were unsure whether the company focuses on client needs, so something is amiss with Telkom's corporate culture. A good culture dictates that all employees know what is expected of them as regards the treatment of other stakeholders.

## Leadership Style

Leadership style was measured using multiple indicators on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses to the statements are summarised in the table below.

**Table 3: Percentage Response to Leadership style and Competitive Advantage**

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Deviation
The company employs participatory leadership	5.7%	24.8%	38.1%	14.3%	17.1%	3.12	1.14

There is a cordial relationship between the management and employees	3.8%	15.2%	25.7%	43.8%	11.4%	3.44	1.01
Top-level management allows employee participation in decision-making in their area of work	6.7%	26.7%	38.1%	22.9%	5.7%	2.94	1.00
There are clear guidelines for conflict resolution in the organisation	1.0%	8.6%	23.8%	44.8%	21.9%	3.78	0.92
The management are effective role models to the rest of the employees	6.7%	4.8%	11.4%	41.9%	35.2%	3.94	1.13

**Key: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)**

Most respondents (38.1%) were unsure whether the company employs a participatory leadership style. However, most respondents (43.8%) agreed that there is a cordial relationship between the management and the employees. Most respondents (38.1%) were unsure whether top management allows employee participation in decision-making in their work area. The majority of the respondents (44.8%) agreed that there are clear guidelines for conflict resolution in the organisation. The majority of the respondents (41.9%) agreed that the management is an effective role model to the rest of the employees. This is in line with Serfontein (2010), who posited that strategic leadership played an important function in shaping strategic direction and improving the firm's competitive advantage. Abdullah et al. (2017) reiterated that generally, it is necessary to give opportunities to every employee to give ideas and get involved in decision-making. This encourages a sense

of ownership and adaptability and leads to the achievement of an organisation's goals. Since a majority of employees were unsure whether this would happen in Telkom, it follows that there is a possibility there is a lack of ownership of the company among the employees leading to a lacklustre attitude and consequently low performance. This could be a contributor to the lack of competitiveness of Telkom Kenya.

### Control Systems

The second objective of this study was to establish the role of control systems in achieving competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya. Therefore, control systems were measured using 5 indicators with the aid of a 5-point Likert-type scale. The summary of the responses to control systems is indicated in the table below.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Control Systems**

	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Deviation
There is periodic audit of departmental performance	5.7%	28.6%	22.9%	32.4%	10.5%	3.13	1.12
Performance appraisal is accompanied by rewards which motivate employees	8.6%	26.7%	41.9%	17.1%	5.7%	2.85	1.00

Periodic Financial Audits encourage prudent utilisation of resources	5.7%	18.1%	45.7%	22.9%	7.6%	3.09	0.97
There is a vibrant Customer Feedback department	0.0%	10.5%	21.9%	41.0%	26.7%	3.84	0.94
Departments often benchmark with similar departments in leading organisations	2.9%	37.1%	22.9%	23.8%	13.3%	3.08	1.12

**Key: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)**

Most of the respondents (32.4%) agreed that there is a periodic audit of departmental performance. However, most of the respondents (41.9%) were not sure whether performance appraisal is accompanied by rewards that motivate employees. Some respondents (45.7%) were unsure of whether periodic financial audits encouraged prudent utilisation of resources. The majority of the respondents (41.0%) agreed that there is a vibrant customer feedback department. They, however, disagreed (37.1%) that departments often benchmark with similar departments in leading organisations. This disagrees with (Sitkin et al., 2010), who said that control aims to ensure that employees are given information relevant to their standards and corrects their morals to enhance effective performance. Verburg et al. (2018) noted that implementing organisation controls

improves employee performance directly and through trust. The fact that the respondents were not sure whether there are effective controls alludes to the fact that the control system could be weak or that their implementation is not up-to-date. This could contribute to the lack of competitiveness due to low employee performance due to poor implementation of control systems.

## Correlation Analysis

### Organisational Culture and Competitive Advantage

In order to assess the relationship between organisational culture and competitive advantage, correlation analysis was used to test the following hypothesis. The results are displayed in the table below.

**Table 5: Correlation Analysis Results for Organisational Culture and Competitive Advantage**

		Organisational Culture	Competitive advantage
Organisational Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	.135
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.171
	N	105	105
Competitive advantage	Pearson Correlation	.135	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.171	
	N	105	105

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the table above, organisational culture has a weak positive correlation with Competitive

advantage ( $r = 0.135$ ). However, the correlation was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). Hence, we fail

reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the relationship between organisational culture and competitive advantage is not statistically significant.

## Leadership Style and Competitive Advantage

The research aimed at determining the relationship between competitive advantage and leadership styles. The following hypothesis was tested with the aid of Pearson correlation analysis. The table below summarises the results.

**Table 6: Correlation Analysis Results for Leadership Style and Competitive Advantage**

		Competitive advantage	Leadership style
Competitive advantage	Pearson Correlation	1	.187
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.056
	N	105	105
Leadership style	Pearson Correlation	.187	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	
	N	105	105

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows leadership style has a weak positive relationship with competitive advantage ( $r = 0.187$ ). However, the correlation was not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ); hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that leadership style does not influence competitive advantage significantly.

## Control Systems and Competitive Advantage

In order to examine the relationship between control systems and competitive advantage, the following hypothesis was tested using bivariate Pearson correlation analysis. The table below presents the results.

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis Results between Control Systems and Competitive Advantage**

Correlations		Competitive advantage	Control Systems
Competitive advantage	Pearson Correlation	1	.248*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.011
	N	105	105
Control Systems	Pearson Correlation	.248*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	
	N	105	105

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows a weak positive correlation between competitive advantage and control systems ( $r = 0.248$ ). This correlation was statistically established to be significant at the 5 per cent level of

significance ( $p < .05$ ). Thus, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, and we conclude that control systems significantly influence competitive advantage.

This study's findings conclude that the leadership style employed does not support its competitiveness since some respondents disagreed with the suggestion that participatory leadership exists. Participatory leadership ensures that employees make decisions regarding their area of work and take responsibility for the outcomes. This instils in them a sense of ownership and motivation to achieve set goals (Salma et al., 2017). One can conclude that Telkom's lack of competitiveness could be a result of a poor corporate culture. It was established that there is a positive relationship between the control system and competitive advantage in Telkom Kenya because of the beta value of 0.217. It was also noted that there exists a statistically significant correlation ( $r=0.248$ ) between the control system and competitive advantage. The study results established that there is periodic audit departmental performance and a vibrant customer feedback department. They, however, disagreed with the suggestion that there is benchmarking with similar departments in leading organisations. The respondents, however, maintained neutrality regarding their views on the presence of performance appraisal and periodic financial audits. This shows that Telkom does not have a strong control system. According to Verburg et al. (2018), implementation of organisation controls improves employee performance directly and also through trust. The fact that the respondents were not sure whether there are effective controls alludes to the fact that the control system could be weak or that its implementation is not up-to-date. Therefore, it can be concluded that Telkom's control system is not up to date and needs some strengthening if they have to achieve the competitiveness of effective and efficient control systems. It was also concluded that the lack of competitiveness in Telkom is partly a result of a weak control system.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

**Conclusions:** In conclusion, there are gaps in the performance of Telkom Kenya, and as such, apart from the strategies currently in place to ensure competitiveness is achieved, a little more intervention is necessary. These findings are important to the management of Telkom Kenya. It can help the top management in their decision-making. They are also important to the government policymakers since they can have a glimpse of what could be ailing Telkom Kenya and, as such incorporate policies that can help improve its performance. This is important since it could improve the revenue collected by Kenya Revenue Authority and, by extension, the country's economy. Profession regulatory bodies like ICPAK will also find this information important since it could trigger them to want to find out any possible gaps in their regulatory role. It is recommended that Telkom Kenya management reviews its leadership policy to use it to improve its competitiveness. An inclusive leadership style which gives employees a sense of belonging and ownership will improve employees' performance and, in turn, the company's competitiveness. It is also recommended that it reviews its control systems implementation policy to detect performance anomalies in good time and put the necessary interventions since it could positively impact its competitiveness in the market. A strong financial audit should be put in place as this will go a long way in monitoring financial performance and making timely interventions in case of deviation from the set standards.

**Recommendation:** The study recommended that Telkom Kenya consider changing its leadership style to one that is participatory and implements control systems to ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of its performance.

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