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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Myanmar and Korea have many similarities and are complementary relationship. Therefore, we believe that research exchange will expand mutual understanding between Myanmar and Korea, and will be the cornerstone for mutual development.

KOMYRA and YUE have co-published The Myanmar Journal since August 2014. So far, many scholars have published numerous papers through the journal, and We are sure that this journal has helped many people understand Myanmar and Korea more clearly and closely.

The Myanmar Journal covers various issues in Myanmar and Korea. It covers various topics that can promote bilateral development and mutual understanding, not limited to specific topics such as economy, industry, society, education, welfare, culture, energy, engineering, healthcare, and agriculture.

We hope that this journal will continue to promote understanding of the current status and potential capabilities of Myanmar and South Korea and promote in-depth international exchange and cooperation.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the editorial board and YUE and KOMYRA for their valuable support in The Myanmar Journal publication.

August 30, 2021

Youngjun Choi *yj choi*

Editor-in-Chief of THE MYANMAR JOURNAL
Vice-President of KOMYRA
Email: yjchoi@khu.ac.kr
Office: +82-2-961-0485
Web address: komyra.com/doc/scope.php

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The Myanmar Journal (ISSN 2383-6563) is the official international journal co-published by Yangon University of Economics (YUE) and Korea Myanmar Research Institute (KOMYRA).

This journal aims to promote the mutual cooperation and development of Myanmar and Korea through intensive researches in the entire field of society, economy, culture, and industry.

It will cover all general academic and industrial issues, and share ideas, problems and solution for development of Myanmar.

Articles for publication will be on-line released twice a year at the end of February and August every year on the Myanmar Journal webpage (http://www.komyra.com/bbs/board.php?bo_table=articles).

Influence of Competitive Strategies on Private High School Performance in Mandalay

Aye Thu Htun · Moe Hnin**

Yangon University of Economics

ABSTRACT: The objective of this research is to investigate the influence of competitive strategies on performance of private high schools in Mandalay. To attain this objective, quantitative research method is used. Both primary and secondary data are employed in this research. According to data from Department of Basic Education, there are private high schools that offer education services in Mandalay. In this research, (40%) of them are selected by simple random sampling method. Afterwards, principal and founder from each selected private high school are interviewed with structured questionnaires to get the primary data. Secondary data are obtained from journals, articles, theses from internet websites and Strategic Management text books. In this research, dependent variable is performance of private high schools and independent variables consist of competitive strategies: cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies. This research revealed that competitive strategies have a significant direct influence on performance of private high schools in Mandalay. Among the competitive strategies, differentiation strategy has the strongest influence on performance of private high schools followed by cost leadership strategy and focus strategy. Therefore, the management of private high schools should adopt differentiation strategy to improve their performance and they should provide more training programs to teachers, assistants and guides to improve their professional competencies to differentiate their services.

Key words : *competitive strategies, differentiation strategy, focus strategy, low cost strategy, performance*

* Professor, Dept. of Commerce, Yangon University of Economics

** Lecturer, Dept. of Economics, Yangon University of Economics

I. Introduction

Nowadays, majority of the business organizations emphasizing organizational success and sustainability consider achieving wealth maximization for their shareholders, providing superior value to their customers, and increasing market share as their main goals. To achieve these goals, they have to select the competitive strategies that will provide the competitive advantage among their rivals in the industry.

In the turbulent business environment, it is necessary that management carefully carries out their strategic orientation for matching their competences with current opportunities. A business organization can select and then employ three competitive strategies that are differentiation strategy, cost-leadership strategy and focus strategy to gain a competitive advantage. According to Porter (1980), a business organization's strategy includes business approaches and competitive moves that are utilized to develop the organization and get the desired levels of performance. Moreover, Auka (2014) stated that competitive strategies are a group of actions that a firm executes as a model for how the firm will best compete, based on the linkage between the target market pursued and competitive advantage. Thompson and Stickland (2002) also asserted that companies can employ competitive strategies to attract the potential customers, maintain the existing customers, endure competitive pressure and increase their market positions.

The potential success of business organizations relies on their organizational performance which indicates their capability to effectively execute strategies to attain organizational objectives and goals (Randeree and Al Youha, 2009). Hurduzeu (2015) stated that to assess the competitive advantage of an organization, internal measures and external measures of organization performance such as learning and growth, customer perspective, financial performance, and internal business processes can be utilized.

Most countries recognize that education is the life blood of a country for enhancing the economic, social, political and cultural conditions of a country. For a developing country such as Myanmar, education plays an essential role for cultivating the talents and building up the core value of Myanmar's society. Therefore, the development of education sector is put as a main priority and Myanmar attempts to promote the education system. In Myanmar, Ministry of Education provides the permission to open private schools in 2012 accordance with Private School Registration Act. Therefore, number of private schools are increasing in Myanmar year by year. On the other side, parents have an opportunity to choose the schools to have the best education for their children.

Among the cities in Myanmar, Mandalay is the second largest city. It is also the education and commercial center in upper Myanmar. At present, there are (54) private high schools in Mandalay. At present, since the extent of competition among private schools become intense, private schools are progressively integrating competitive strategies in business model formulation and implementation. Therefore, private schools are needed to develop effective strategies that support to achieve a competitive advantage against their rivals.

According to Porter (1980), business organizations cannot survive without an effective competitive strategy because it provides a distinctive niche to the organization that assures profitability and success. Therefore, private high schools need to develop and implement the effective competitive strategy which is vital to achieve their objectives, goals and long-term success. Hence, this research attempts to investigate the influence of competitive strategies on performance of private high schools in Mandalay.

1. Scope and Method of the Research

This research emphasizes the influence of competitive strategies on the performance of private high schools in Mandalay. Quantitative research is used as a research method. In this research, not only primary data but also secondary data are also utilized. According to data from Department of Basic Education (2020), there are (54) private high schools in Mandalay. Among them (40%) of private schools are chosen by simple random sampling method and then, two respondents from each selected private high school are also interviewed with structured questionnaires to get the accurate and reliable data. Therefore, sample size of this research consists of (44) respondents who are principals and founders of selected private high schools. Secondary data is obtained from Strategic Management text books, articles, journals, theses from internet websites. Data collection is conducted in January and February, 2020.

2. Research Objective

This research objective is to investigate the influence of competitive strategies on private high school performance in Mandalay.

II. Theoretical Background

According to Porter (1980), a firm can adopt competitive strategies that consist of differentiation strategy, cost-leadership strategy and focus strategy to achieve a competitive advantage.

1. Differentiation Strategy

Baroto, Abdullah and Wan (2012) asserted differentiation strategy in which firms produce a service or product more appealing and unique than those of their competitors basing on brand, quality and image. Jones and Hill (2014) asserted that businesses can attain competitiveness by creating, producing, marketing and selling a product or service that can provide customer satisfaction compared with their competitors. Dirisu et al., (2013) mentioned a differentiation strategy in which a service or product developed by a business is unique in some dimensions that meet customer values and needs and fulfill customer satisfaction.

2. Cost Leadership Strategy

Cost leadership is also a competitive strategy to attain competitive advantage by producing goods and services with the competitive price in an industry (Pulaj, Kume & Cipi, 2015). Pearce and Robinson (2013) mentioned that a business adopted cost leadership targets a wide market and uses the cost advantage to gain a defensible situation against its competitors. Pulaj, Kume and Cipi (2015) stated that cost leadership is established firm efficiency where a firm has an ability to create or deliver services or products at a lower cost than other competitors in the industry.

3. Focus Strategy

Pulaj et al., (2015) defined focus strategy that is a strategic approach involving the targeting of a niche or specific market segment. Sumer (2012) stated that focus strategy chooses a specific small niche that might be a narrow segment of a particular product line, a specific buyer group, a local or geographic market, or a niche with special and unique preferences and tastes. Hough, Thompson & Gamble (2011) mentioned that a focus strategy can employ a low-cost approach where a business aims to provide goods or service in a target market at lower price than its competitors. Moreover, a business can employ focus differentiation approach targeting to attract the customers who have unique preferences and desires to pay a premium

price for special features and characteristics of service and product.

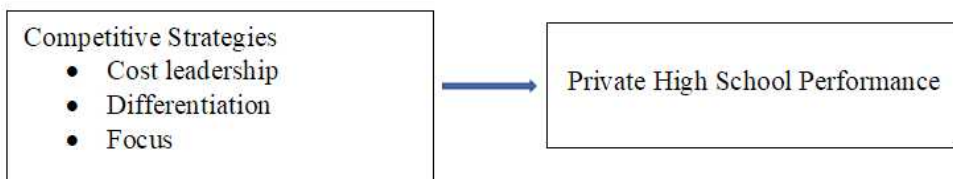
4. Organizational Performance

Organizational performance means an ability to accomplish objectives and goals by using resources in a well-structured approach (Maduenyi, Oke and Fadenyi, 2015). Firms need to seek the maximum profit and benefits for all stakeholders by providing quality services and products. Manyuru (2005) argued the performance of organization that could take many forms relying on whom and what measurements are intended for. And different performance measurements are utilized by different stakeholders to make effective decisions. Teresia Ndugo et. al. (2018) asserted that school performance can be presented by resource consumption per student that represents the ratio of resources utilized and the number of student enrollment per annum. In addition, Cohen (2009) also stated that school performance is the transformation of resources into education outcomes using a model that relates the use of resources per student.

5. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) based on above theory, and concepts. According to Figure (1), dependent variable represents the private high school performance. Competitive strategies which include cost leadership, focus and differentiation strategies represent independent variables in this research.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Caxton Munyoki, Peter O. K'Ovonyo (2015)

III. Research Analysis

In this research, 40% of private high schools (22 private high schools) in Mandalay are selected to achieve the research objective. Among them, majority of the private schools provide education services for Grade 8 to Grade 11. Moreover,

they have over 700 student enrollments in 2019-2020 academic year. Profile of respondents including gender, marital status, age, educational level, working experience in current school and income level is presented in Table (1).

Table 1. Profile of Respondents (N=44)

Particular		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	16	33
	Female	28	67
Marital status	Married	20	45
	Single	24	55
Age	Under 40 years	12	27
	41 to 50 years	15	34
	Over 50 years	17	39
Education level	Bachelor degree	10	23
	Master degree	32	73
	Ph. D degree	2	4
Working experience in current schools	Less than 3 years	10	23
	3 to 5 years	15	34
	Over 5 years	19	43
Income level	Less than 500,000 kyats	4	9
	500,001 to 700,000 kyats	18	41
	Over 700,000 kyats	22	50

Source: Survey Data (2020)

In Table (1), 67% of respondents are female and the rest percentage is male. 55% of respondents are single and the remaining percentage is married. The respondents are founders and principals of the schools. In this research, 39% of the respondents are at the age of over 50, 34% is at the age between 41 to 50, the remaining percentage is under 40 years old. Concerning the educational level, majority of the respondents are Master degree holders, 4% of respondents are Ph.D. degree holders. Regarding the working experience in current school, 43% of respondents have over 5 years working experience, 34% have 3 to 5 years, and the rest percentage has less than 3 year working experience in current school. In this research, half percentage of respondents can earn over 700,000 kyats, 41% of respondents can ear 500,001 to 700,000 kyats per month.

Concerning the Reliability Test, the reliability coefficients of research variables are indicated in Table (2). To calculate internal consistency, this research employed Cronbach's coefficient alpha. Orodho (2003) stated that if the Cronbach alpha value

of an item is 0.60 , it will be a minimum acceptable level for that item in a basic research.

Table 2. Reliability Coefficient

Sr. No.	Description	Items	Cronbach alpha
1	Cost leadership	8	0.656
2	Differentiation	7	0.712
3	Focus	6	0.612
4	Private high school performance	4	0.756

Source: Survey Data (2020)

According to Table (2), all alpha coefficients are situated at the range of between 0.612 and 0.756. Basing the coefficient values, the items that tested for this research are reliable. Table (3) shows the relationship between competitive strategies and private high school performance.

Table 3. Relationship between Competitive Strategies and Private High School Performance

Variables	Cost leadership	Differentiation	Focus	School Performance
Cost leadership	1			
Differentiation	0.372** 0.000	1		
Focus	0.239** 0.001	0.456** 0.000	1	
School Performance	0.380** 0.000	0.437** 0.000	0.307** 0.000	1

Source: Survey Data (2020)

** 5% significant level

According to the correlation results, competitive strategies namely cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies relate the performance of private high schools in Mandalay. Among the correlation coefficients, differentiation strategy has the strongest correlation with private high school performance followed by cost leadership and focus strategies with the coefficient 0.380, and 0.307, respectively.

Table 4. Influence of Competitive Strategies on Private High School Performance

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	4.824	0.501	Beta	9.63	0.001
Cost leadership	0.561***	0.191	0.154	2.94	0.000
Differentiation	0.606 ***	0.228	0.241	2.66	0.002
Focus	0.341***	0.193	0.141	1.77	0.001
R	.771				
R ²	.595				
Adjusted R ²	.589				
F Value	54.407***				

Source: Survey Data (2020)

*** 1% significant level

In Table (4), the goodness of fit for the regression analysis between competitive strategies and private school performance is a satisfactory level. In this research, an adjusted R² (0.589) shows that 58.9% of the variances in the acceptance of competitive strategies including differentiation, low cost and focus are spelt out by the variances in the private high school performance. The value of Adjusted R² also represents that 58.9% of the observed variability in the private high school performance can be explicated by competitive strategies. The rest 41.1 % of the variance do not depict by competitive strategies' variables. It means that the remaining 41.1% of the variation in private school performance is related to other variables which are not considered in this research. The F value exhibits the variance that is highly significant with F= 54.407.

In Table (4), this research proved that all competitive strategies (independent variables directly influence the private high school performance (dependent variable). Specifically, differentiation, low cost leadership, and focus strategies have direct and significant influences on private high school performance in Mandalay because of the value of cost leadership (t = 2.94, p=0.000, df=42), the value of differentiation (t=2.66, p=0.002, df=42) and the value for focus (t = 1.77, p = 0.001, df=42). Among the competitive strategies of private high schools, differentiation strategy has the strongest influence on performance of private high schools followed by cost leadership and focus strategies on private high school performance in Mandalay.

IV. Findings and Discussions

This research attempts to analyze the influence of competitive strategies on private high school performance in Mandalay. Particularly, this research examines how differentiation strategy, low cost leadership strategy and focus strategy influence performance of private high schools. This research proved that competitive strategies are not only relate but also have an influence on performance of private high schools. Among the competitive strategies, differentiation strategy has the strongest relationship and influence on performance of private high schools. The study found that majority of private high schools that adopted differentiation strategy offer high quality teaching, have high qualified teachers, assistants and guides, and provide well equipped classrooms with modernized teaching aids compared to other schools in Mandalay. Some private schools provide transportation services for students, and teachers.

This research also observed that cost leadership strategy has an influence on performance and also relates with performance of private high school significantly. These results imply that if the private high schools continue to use cost leadership strategy, the performance of private high schools will be improved. The research observed that private high schools adopted the cost leadership strategy offer lower cost of tuition fees compared with other private schools, apply the cost saving approach for the decorating classrooms and other infrastructure, and offer affordable price for services and facilities compared with other private schools in Mandalay.

Moreover, this research revealed that focus strategy has an influence on performance of private high schools. The majority of the selected private schools that endorse focus strategy segment on parents' income level. They have a specific target in the market that enables to provide a specialized focus when undertaking marketing activities, and offer the services which are aligned with the interests of the students and parents.

V. Conclusion

1. Suggestions

Since the differentiation strategy has the highest influence on performance of private high schools, the management of private high schools should adopt differentiation strategy and they should invest more in continuous training programs for their teachers, assistants and guides to distinguish and improve their teaching

competencies. Moreover, the private high schools should develop stronger image and reputation through excellent exam results at matriculation examinations, better curriculum activities and employ more qualified teachers, assistants and create an environment that encourages teachers and assistant and students to develop creative thinking and analytical skill. Moreover, the Management should implement the differentiation strategy by making more investments in well-equipped laboratory including language lab, chemistry lab and teaching aids.

This research also revealed that cost leadership has an influence on the improvement in performance of private high schools in Mandalay. Therefore, private high school management should more emphasize to reduce operating costs that is a main driver for private schools targeting at a low cost which in turn contributes to get maximum profit in long term. Moreover, the private schools should more use social media and develop own webpage to reduce the marketing costs.

Moreover, since this research proved that focus strategy also has an influence on performance of private high schools, management of private high schools should conduct an in-depth analysis on target segment to know and understand how to fulfill the preferences and needs of students and parents. In addition, the private high schools should undertake promotion activities with their target market which can increase the awareness of the private schools and courses within the market.

2. Research Implication

This research provides contribution to private high school management because school management can get more insights on how to enhance the private high school performance. Particularly, this research helps school management to realize how competitive strategies can influence performance. Moreover, the findings and suggestions assist school management to make strategic decisions. The research also facilitates the sustainable business model development providing the improvement of the performance of private high schools. The research provides a more insights on strategy-school performance link for researchers and academicians who are interested in the competitive strategies and their effect on performance. In addition, the research could provide guidance for policy maker in making better regulations and policies that help to the education sector to improve its performance.

As a conclusion, this research shows that private high schools in Mandalay pursue various competitive strategies which include differentiation strategy, cost leadership strategy and focus strategy to improve their performance. However, the most effective strategy influencing private high school performance is differentiation strategy.

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