



**DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES AND COMPETITIVE
ADVANTAGE OF THE TELECOMMUNICATION
INDUSTRY IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study aimed to assess the dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage of telecommunications companies in Kenya, investigating the impact of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration capabilities on firm competitiveness within the sector.

Findings: The research revealed that sensing and seizing capabilities are crucial for a firm's competitive advantage in the telecommunications industry. Additionally, factors such as adaptability, innovation, learning, development, and resource mobilization were identified as key elements influencing a company's competitive edge.

Conclusion: The study concludes that to sustain a competitive advantage in the telecommunications sector, firms need to prioritize the development and deployment of dynamic capabilities, including sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration. Attention to factors such as adaptability, innovation, learning, and resource mobilization is essential for maintaining competitiveness in this dynamic industry.

Recommendation: The study recommends that telecommunications firms in Kenya focus on enhancing their dynamic capabilities, particularly in sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration. Moreover, attention should be given to fostering adaptability, innovation, learning, development, and effective resource mobilization strategies to sustain and strengthen their competitive advantage in the market. Additionally, future research should explore the development of parallel strategic practices and organizational techniques to further enhance competitiveness in the telecommunications industry.

Keywords: *Telecommunications, Dynamic capabilities, Competitive advantage, Strategic Agility*

INTRODUCTION

The industry's dynamic capability is a much-needed key to success in today's business environment. Dynamic capability in this context is regarded as "the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments" (Teece et al., 1997). Historically, the Kenyan telecommunication industry has been accustomed to viewing its environment in terms of stability, which is no longer a reality in today's telecommunication environment. As the industry becomes more liberalized and globalized into the information age, it is simply the nature of the industry's environment that there is a great deal of unpredictability and change. With the emergence of many new technologies, convergence of services, and new entrants, the spectrum of possible moves and countermoves will inevitably lead to a more turbulent environment. (Mwaniki et al., 2023). Dynamic capability is then crucial, as it is an attribute that enables a firm to be proactive and not merely reactive, to shape its environment and not be shaped by it. If the firms within the industry are unable to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, they will eventually be marginalized and headed towards failure (Ghosh et al., 2022).

Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) and Tempelmayr et al. (2019) describe dynamic capabilities as the subset of competencies and capabilities that enable the company to develop new goods and procedures and adapt to shifting market conditions, described dynamic capabilities. DCP have significant theoretical and practical implications. The capacity of current businesses to seize chances entails gathering resources and arranging them in a way that makes it easier to provide novel business solutions.

According to Tarvainen, (2020), these are knowledge integration, knowledge sharing, and knowledge gain. Reconfiguration capacity is the ability to perform tasks like redeploying and recombining resources; as a result, it improves continuous development and can be a tool for businesses to obtain new resources and capitalize on the advantages of innovation (Karim and Capron, 2016). Competitive advantage is necessary for a firm to achieve superior profits and in the end survive. A firm with a competitive advantage over others is effectively performing at a higher level than its rivals, whether this be through offering customers greater value for money, superior products, or by providing similar benefits more efficiently at a lower cost (Ghosh et al., 2022). Competitive advantage.

Dynamic Capabilities and Competitive advantage

The telecommunications industry is undergoing significant transformation due to its dynamic nature, necessitating the abandonment of traditional business models and strategies as highlighted by Vishwakarma et al. (2022). This industry's acute sensitivity to environmental changes and customer demands requires innovative approaches to sustain competitive advantage, with factors such as cost structure, branding, product quality, distribution network, intellectual property, and customer service playing crucial roles (Haseeb et al., 2019). Market expansion strategies that target new demographic and geographic segments are also vital (Khalifat & Gimira, 2017). Moreover, studies like that of Yao et al. (2019) on Taiwanese firms emphasize the significant role of dynamic capabilities in enhancing organizational performance, thus supporting the relevance of dynamic theory in today's rapidly evolving market environments.

Dynamic Capability in the Telecommunication Industry

Dynamic capabilities address how firms can develop competencies to manage rapidly changing environments like market turbulence and innovation, differing from traditional strategic concepts. This theory highlights the origins of competitive advantage in uncertain conditions, challenging the standard resource-based views that assume stable environments. By focusing on strategic routines, dynamic capabilities help explain how firms can sustain competitive advantages even when investing in volatile areas such as 3G licenses in the telecommunications industry.

Telecommunication Industry in Kenya

In the recent past, the telecommunications sector in Kenya has been rated as the most vibrant compared to other sectors. This is due to the high demand in telecommunication services and the proficiency in service provision. Telecommunication services have improved greatly and become reliable, compared to the past where poor services resulted in customer frustration (Rukumba, 2021). According to the Economic Survey 2009, the growth of the telecommunication sector in Kenya has been impressive with the total investment increasing from 41.1 billion in 2008 to 57.3 billion in 2009. This shows that there has been an increase in confidence in the sector and it is potentially becoming the most attractive sector to investors. The total revenue also increased to 150.3 billion, an 11.3 billion increase from 2008 (Njoroge2020). The telecommunication industry in Kenya has come a long way and has the potential to grow in wider markets and different sectors.

This can result in improving the overall industry and the economy of the country, but in order to achieve this, there needs to be effective

Statement of the Problem

The telecommunications industry is currently dealing with quick developments in technology that need large capital investments, product differentiation, rising customer demand for a range of services, including dependability, quality, and speed of service delivery (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). Therefore, telecommunication service providers must adapt and focus quickly to meet the demands of the rapidly growing data traffic, build their network infrastructure, increase newly needed capabilities, create new goods and services, better customer experience, and keep refining their business models (Karim et al., 2022). Although the beginning of the changes can be seen from the early 1990s, previous studies of dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage have only focused on only on certain aspects (e.g. capability in innovation, differentiation, knowledge). There has not been a clear and thorough study of how Kenyan telecommunications companies in general have gone through those changes and gained a competitive advantage from it by viewing it from the overall capabilities and resources (Mugo 2022). This study is intended to fill that gap by studying these changes throughout the period and how firms have used their dynamic capabilities in sensing, seizing and reconfiguring resources and creating new capabilities to gain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, the literature on dynamic capability in telecommunication demonstrates paucity in this field and the urgent need for empirical study to progress this domain (Autio et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2021). According to Kola (2023), Kenya's telecom industry has been going through many dynamic corporate developments aimed at improving products, services, and consumer needs.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to determine the Dynamic capabilities and Competitive advantage of telecommunications firms in Kenya.

- i.** To ascertain the degree to which sensing capabilities impact the competitive advantage of telecommunications firm's companies in in Kenya.
- ii.** To determine seizing capability affects the competitive advantage of telecommunications firms in Kenya.
- iii.** To determine the degree to which reconfiguration capabilities impact the competitive advantage of telecommunications Firms in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of dynamic capability stems from the argument that in rapidly evolving and highly competitive environment, the sustainability of competitive advantage has become increasingly difficult to be achieved and maintained by the enterprise. This study was guided by three theories, Human Capital Theory, Dynamic Capability Theory, and Resource-Based Theory (RBT). These theories offer a fundamental comprehension of how Businesses can acquire and maintain a competitive advantage, particularly in a dynamic and constantly evolving setting.

Dynamic Capability Theory

Dynamic Capability Theory: In response to a business environment that is changing quickly, Teece (1990) developed the idea of dynamic capabilities, highlighting the necessity for organizations to constantly adapt, reconfigure, and renew their resources and competencies. This theory emphasizes the value of flexibility and the capacity to use dynamic capabilities to forge new competitive advantages. It is especially important to comprehend how commercial banks need to adjust to changes in the market and in technology. This theory was further enhanced by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997). To adapt to changing environment, they offered an intriguing definition of dynamic capabilities as the firm's capacity to sense, integrate, build, reconfigure, adapt, absorb, and innovate both internal and external competences.

Human Capital Theory:

This theory was put forth by Becker in 1964 and emphasizes the critical role that human capital plays in the creation of goods and services. It implies that in order for businesses to successfully adopt and integrate new technologies, they need a workforce that is both knowledgeable and skilled. This theory emphasizes the value of human resource capability and training in giving cut flower businesses a competitive edge, making it especially pertinent in the study's context.

Resource-Based Theory (RBT):

Resource Based View Theory of the Firm (RBV), which was initially employed by Penrose in 1959. Wernerfelt (1984) contributed to its further development and popularization, and Prahalad (1990), Barney (1991), and other scholars refined it (Adudu, Asenge, and Torough, 2020). Theory focuses on how businesses can use their special resources and skills to gain a competitive edge. It highlights that acquiring a competitive edge requires

having access to valuable, uncommon, and non-replaceable resources. RBT plays a significant role in this study's conceptualization of technology and knowledge management skills as vital resources for commercial banks.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a structured plan or diagram that outlines the key concepts, variables, and relationships within a research study. It serves as a guide for researchers to systematically investigate the relationships between different variables, offering a visual interpretation of the theoretical aspects of the research. In the context of the telecommunications industry, a conceptual framework can help illustrate how dynamic capabilities influence organizational performance and competitive advantage amidst rapidly changing environments. The relationships and interactions among these elements are depicted in Figure 1 below, which provides a visual representation to support and clarify the theoretical discussion presented in the text.

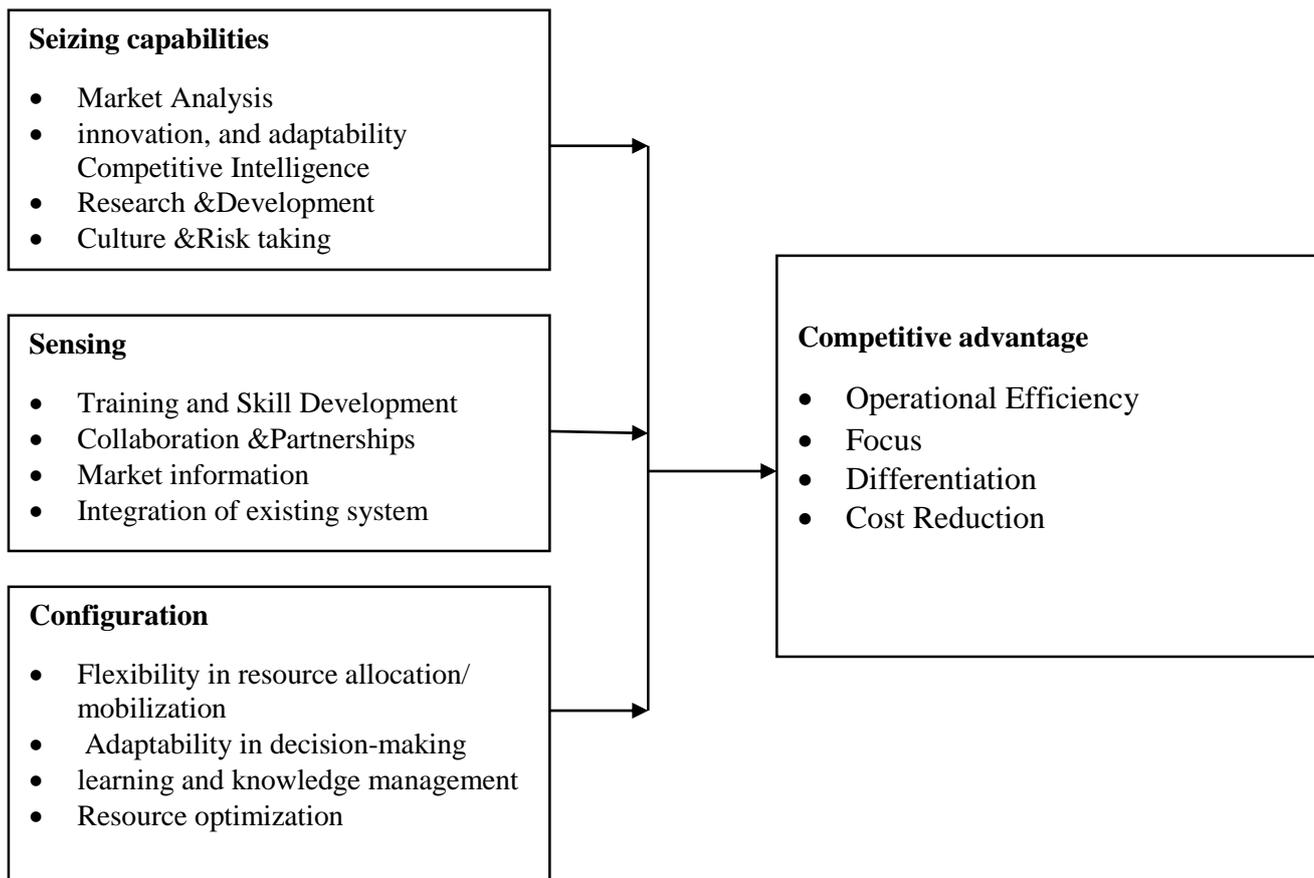


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Hanmaikyur, (2023) in the study investigated the dynamic capacities in telecommunications businesses in Nigeria on the impact of dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing, reconfiguring, integrating, and strategic flexibility) and the competitive advantage. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data, with a sample size of 387 respondents. The validity (0.778) and reliability (0.922) of the instrument using Cronbach alpha and factor analysis using descriptive statistics. The study noted a strong and positive relationship between the different aspects of dynamic capacities and the competitive advantage of telecommunication businesses in Nigeria. Integration of capabilities had a greater impact on the competitive advantage of telecommunication businesses in Nigeria (36.8%) compared to seizing capabilities (20.7%), reconfiguration capabilities (16.1%), and strategic flexibility (12.3%). The study concluded that dynamic capability has a significant positive impact on the competitive advantage of firms.

In Kenya Waganjo (2022) investigate the influence of generic tactics on competitive advantage in medical training institutes in Kenya using Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Resource-Based View Theory, and Knowledge-Based View Theory. The data analysis indicated that the strategies of cost leadership, differentiation, and focus had a favorable impact on the competitive advantage of the universities. Among these strategies, cost advantage had the most significant influence. The study suggests that colleges and other institutions should utilize Porter's generic methods, since they have been proven to effectively contribute to gaining a competitive advantage. Peter et al., (2021 in the study done on how market innovation affected Kenyan telecom companies' ability to compete. 247 respondents were obtained from 26 telecommunications companies in Kenya demonstrated that improved features, upgraded products, and new products significantly impact Kenyan telecommunications companies' competitive advantage. This led to the conclusion that the competitive advantage of Kenyan telecommunications companies is significantly influenced by product innovation.

Chemely, (2021) examined the relationship between dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage of manufacturing firms in Nairobi, Kenya through an organizational ambidexterity and leadership style study. The objectives of the study were to ascertain how sensing, seizing, and reconfiguration capabilities affect competitive advantage. Porter's Forces and Dynamic Capabilities theories provided support for the Resource Based View Theory, which served as the study's foundation. Random and stratified sampling and an

explanatory research design were used. Sample size of 321 firms was chosen. All values were less than 0.05 when the study hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression at a significance level of 0.05. The results of the study showed that competitive advantage was positively and significantly impacted by sensing, seizing, reconfiguring, and dynamic capabilities.

Mugo, (2020) investigated how technological innovation affected Kenyan telecommunications companies' ability to compete. The extension of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) networks, new hardware and software, collaborations and synergies, and other factors were used to gauge technological innovation, the results indicated that government regulation mitigates the impact of technological innovation on Kenyan telecommunications companies' competitive advantage. Gachigo (2019) on the other hand investigated how successful implementation of innovative strategies such as exploration, disruptive innovation, outcome-driven, and cannibalization influences the performance of the telecommunications industry in Kenya using 58 Safaricom employees from branches 58 branches located in Nairobi County and concluded that innovation strategy increases organization performance by 40.2%, (r square) at.402. Additionally, the study discovered that an increase in organizational performance results from a unit change in outcome-driven, disruptive, and exploratory innovative strategies. In a similar study by (Rahab, 2022, Kibor 2022). On dynamic capabilities and complete advantage.

Lucy (2023) carried a study on how strategic capabilities affected the way telecommunications companies' performance. The study looked at how resource skills, adaptability and agility affected the effectiveness of the firm. Descriptive correlational research design was used, and the sample 103 telecommunications selected. Quantitative methods were used to analyze the data. Results showed that resource capacities were positively and statistically significantly correlated. Results of the regression analysis indicated a strong and positive correlation between the organizational performance and marketing capacities hence organization performance of telecommunications companies was positively and significantly impacted by strategic capabilities.

Kitenga (2020) aimed to investigate the relationship between dynamic capabilities and the performance of particular Kenyan manufacturing firms. Variables used were; marketing, adaptive, and alliances and partnership capabilities on the performance of food manufacturing companies in Kenya; the dependent variables were: alliance-building, marketing, and adaptive capabilities. The dynamic capability theory and resource-based

theory. Using descriptive and explanatory research design seventy food manufacturers (sample) were analyzed to ascertain the kind and strength of the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Study found that there was high correlation between dependent variables and independent variable (performance).

Kihara (2014) conducted a case study on Safaricom Ltd., with 70 postpaid customers from seven retail centers in Nairobi as the target population. 14 employees were involved. Descriptive research design was used, with questionnaires serving as the primary instrument of data collection. The study found that 69% of respondents view service delivery as a factor affecting customer loyalty at Safaricom, 75% of respondents indicated that switching barriers exist at Safaricom that prevent them from migrating to the competitors, 75% of respondents view Safaricom as customer focused, and 71% indicated that the company is adequately protected by the government. Waganjo (2022) investigate the influence of generic tactics on competitive advantage in medical training institutes in Kenya using Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Resource-Based View Theory, and Knowledge-Based View Theory. 183 staff members, from 4 medical training colleges in Nyeri County, Kenya. The study suggests that colleges and other institutions should utilize Porter's generic methods, since they have been proven to effectively contribute to gaining a competitive advantage.

Kibor (2022), in the study, Impact of knowledge processing capability on Kenyan mobile telecommunication companies' ability to survive over time. Knowledge-Based View (KBV) theory served as the foundation for the study's variables, which used a descriptive, explanatory research design. Three mobile telecommunication companies with 1,177 employees were the focus of the study. Stratified random sampling methods were used in the study to choose 299 participants. We collected primary data using a semi-structured questionnaire. Statistics, both descriptive and inferential, were used to analyze the data. The results showed a strong correlation between the sustainability of Kenya's mobile telecommunications companies and their capacity for knowledge processing.

FINDINGS

Regressions Analysis

Table 1 displays the summary of the multiple regression model.

Table 1: Dynamic capability and competitive advantage of telecommunication

Model 1	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE
Total	0.759	0.577	0.574	0.28147

The results indicate that the coefficient of correlation (r) for dynamic capabilities was positive at 0.724, suggesting that these capabilities explained 52.58% of the variance in the competitive advantage of event management endeavors. The adjusted R-squared value, representing the proportion of variance explained, stood at 58.23%. This implies that dynamic capabilities can influence 57.4% of the competitive advantage of event management businesses in Kenya, with other unexamined characteristics contributing to the remaining 43.6% of the influence.

Variance analysis (ANoVA)

The model is statistically significant in predicting how dynamic skills affect the competitive advantage of event management businesses in Kenya, as evidenced by the p-value of less than 0.001 (i.e., less than 0.05). Additionally, the outcomes show that the independent

Table 2: ANOVA

Model 2	Sum of squares	df	mean square	F	P
Regression	20.553	1	19.553	230.125	<0.001b
Residual	15.36	168.96	0.085		
Total	35.89	170			

Coefficients of regression

The regression model can be obtained in the following manner from the coefficients table (Table 3): $Y = 0.672 + 0.938X_3$. The competitive advantage of event management endeavors in Kenya is significantly enhanced by the dynamic capability variable, according to Table 3's data. Regression analysis revealed that dynamic capability was a significant variable ($p < 0.001$), with a coefficient of 0.857. This model predicts that the competitive advantage of dynamic capability with a score of 0.672 when the independent variable values are zero competitive advantage of telecommunication in Kenya 0.672

Table 3: Coefficient Regression

Model 3	Unstandardized coefficients			Standardized coefficients	
	B	SE	β	t	p
Competitive	0.672	0.346		2.67	0.01
Total	0.857	0.062	0.759	2.26	>0.001

The descriptive analysis of dynamic capabilities reveals that most businesses in the study possess a keen ability to swiftly detect significant changes within their industry and promptly evaluate the potential impacts on their clientele, demonstrating agility in adapting to evolving business environments. Moreover, these businesses exhibit a high level of awareness regarding emerging technology trends and consistently assess the efficiency of their operations, particularly following the integration of new capabilities. Additionally, they actively engage in learning from external sources, fostering cross-functional knowledge sharing among employees and ensuring timely communication of important developments across departments. Furthermore, the findings suggest that these businesses excel in converting existing knowledge into innovative resources through effective reconfiguration, with employees displaying a proactive approach to organizational adaptation and demonstrating confidence in their ability to creatively reorganize existing capabilities to meet evolving demands.

Sensing Seizing Capabilities

The objective of the study was to determine the impact of sensing capabilities on the competitive advantage of telecommunications firms in Kenya. The analysis confirmed a positive relationship between dynamic capabilities and the competitive advantage of these firms, aligning with previous research by Kurtmollaiev (2016), which emphasized the importance of combining sensing and seizing capabilities for service innovation in telecommunications. Similarly, studies by Ko and Liu (2017) and Faccio and Zingales (2022) highlighted the necessity of dynamic capabilities for identifying new opportunities, improving service innovation, and enhancing service quality. Furthermore, Kitenga's (2020) study emphasized the role of sensing, seizing, and other dynamic capabilities in fostering creativity and innovativeness within firms.

Configuration capabilities

The second objective of the study was to assess the impact of reconfiguration capabilities on the competitive advantage of telecommunications firms in Kenya, focusing on

flexibility in resource allocation/mobilization, adaptability in decision-making, and knowledge management and learning. The findings indicate that knowledge management (KM) recognition and implementation positively influence firm competitiveness and are crucial dynamic resources for gaining a competitive edge. Descriptive analysis results show unanimous agreement among respondents regarding the influence of resource management capability on competitive advantage. The study also highlights the importance of focused strategies in exploiting niche markets that may be overlooked by larger firms, echoing findings from Kihara's (2014) research on Safaricom Ltd. Managers of focused companies must remain vigilant to changes in niche market appeal to sustain their competitive advantage, with defensive strategies often employed for this purpose. These findings align with Lucy's (2023) study on the impact of strategic capabilities on telecommunications companies' performance, emphasizing the significance of proactive management strategies in maintaining competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Kenyan telecommunications firms' competitive advantage is significantly influenced by their sensing capabilities, particularly in market analysis, innovation, adaptability, and competitive intelligence management. To enhance their competitive advantage, telecommunications firms should focus on implementing sensing capability practices, fostering innovation in products and services, and improving seizing capability through training and knowledge expansion. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of technological capabilities, including flexibility in resource allocation/mobilization, adaptability in decision-making, learning, knowledge management, and resource optimization practices, in further enhancing the competitive advantage of telecommunications firms in Kenya.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study provides new insights into the link between dynamic managerial talents and firm competitive advantage. However, caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to other industries or regions. Future research could explore the relationship between dynamic managerial qualities and firm performance across various industries and geographical areas. Additionally, while this study focused on three dynamic managerial capabilities, namely sensing, seizing, and configuration, further research could investigate

additional dynamic managerial competencies and their effects on business competitiveness.

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