



Strategic Leadership in Establishments' Development: Enhancing Competitive Trends in Multi-Cultural Global Markets

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Strategic Leadership in Establishments' Development: Enhancing Competitive Trends in Multi-Cultural Global Markets

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Abstract

The study sought to explore strategic leadership in establishments and enhancing competitive trends in multicultural global markets. It focused on Safaricom Limited in the Telecommunication sector. The study findings revealed that fostering an inclusive workplace and integrating diverse cultural perspectives into decision-making processes significantly enhance organizational competitiveness. Additionally, the study established the importance of aligning organizational values with the diverse backgrounds of employees, which leads to increased engagement and loyalty. Moreover, it highlighted the pivotal role of technological adaptation and the strategic integration of diversity in talent acquisition and management for long-term organizational success. The findings also revealed the need for strategic leaders to be adept at culturally aware communication strategies and to possess a deep comprehension of cultural elements influencing workplace dynamics. The analysis of various schools of thought, including the Cultural and Environmental Schools, provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership and its impact on organizational development and success.

Keywords: *Strategic Leadership, Multicultural Environments, Organizational Competitiveness, Cultural Intelligence, Telecommunications Industry.*

1.0 Introduction

Strategic leadership is fundamentally about setting a direction and creating alignment and commitment within an organization towards achieving its long-term goals (Deliu, 2019). This leadership style is distinguished by its focus on enduring performance potential, which is crucial for the sustained success of any organization. It encompasses a wide range of organizational types, from for-profit businesses to non-profit entities, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations. The core idea is to build capabilities that continually provide unique value to stakeholders over time. This definition, which emphasizes the long-term focus of strategic leadership, is echoed by Hughes et al. (2014), who highlight the importance of strategic leaders in shaping the future trajectory of organizations. Strategic leadership is a multifaceted concept that integrates various dimensions of leadership and strategy. As suggested by Hughes et al. (2013), it encompasses not only traditional leadership qualities such as vision and motivation but also requires a profound understanding of strategy formulation and implementation. This fusion is essential for navigating the complexities of the modern business environment, where change is constant, and unpredictability is the norm. De Kluyver and Pearce (2009) advocated for this comprehensive approach, emphasizing the need for leaders to exhibit versatility in their strategies, adaptability to changing circumstances, and the ability to guide their organizations through both opportunities and challenges (Chimakati, 2023).

The application of strategic leadership varies across different organizational contexts. In for-profit organizations, it often revolves around gaining a competitive edge and maximizing shareholder value. In non-profits and governmental entities, the focus might shift towards social impact and sustainability. Regardless of the type of organization, the goal of strategic leadership remains consistent: to ensure long-term viability and success. This requires leaders to not only foresee future trends and prepare their organizations accordingly but also to foster a culture that embraces innovation and continuous improvement. Hughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014) emphasize that strategic leadership is about more than just navigating current challenges; it's about preparing for future ones as well. A key characteristic of strategic leadership is its long-term orientation. Unlike management approaches that may prioritize immediate results, strategic leadership is concerned with the enduring success and growth of the organization. This involves making decisions and taking actions that may not yield immediate benefits but are crucial for long-term sustainability and resilience. As Hughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014) point out, strategic leaders are tasked with the challenging role of balancing short-term pressures with long-term objectives, ensuring that their organizations are not just surviving, but thriving, in an ever-changing business landscape.

The telecommunications industry is characterized by rapid technological changes and intense competition (Czarnecki et al., 2017). Strategic leadership in this context is about anticipating and responding to these changes proactively. Companies like Safaricom have to constantly innovate and adapt to stay ahead. This requires a deep understanding of market trends, customer needs, and technological advancements. Strategic leaders in this industry, therefore, must not only be visionary but also agile, capable of steering their organizations through technological evolutions and market disruptions. As Ndemo and Weiss (2017) pointed out in the case of Safaricom's success under Michael Joseph and Bob Collymore was largely due to their strategic leadership foresight and commitment towards innovation. Notwithstanding, the current CEO Ndegwa continues to score highly in view of Safaricom positive trajectory with innovations like hustler fund as a lead success story of the bottom-up narrative of United Democratic Alliance (UDA). The culture of CEO's recruitment process at Safaricom agrees to the fact that, structure follows strategy.

Innovation is a key driver of success in the telecommunications sector. Strategic leaders at Safaricom have consistently pushed the boundaries of innovation, resulting in services like M-Pesa, a mobile money platform that revolutionized financial transactions in Kenya and beyond. This kind of innovation requires not just technological expertise but also a strategic vision that aligns with the company's overall goals and market needs. The leadership's ability to foresee emerging opportunities and risks in the market and to act decisively has been crucial in establishing Safaricom's market dominance. As highlighted by Ndemo and Weiss (2017), Safaricom's leadership approach has been instrumental in fostering a culture of innovation that has had significant impacts on both the company and the industry.

Strategic leadership in telecommunications also involves a strong sense of corporate social responsibility. Safaricom's leaders have recognized their role in societal development, leading initiatives that go beyond business interests to address social challenges (Mwania, 2023). This approach aligns with the growing understanding in modern business that companies should contribute positively to the societies in which they operate. Safaricom's investments in community projects and sustainable business practices demonstrate how strategic leadership extends beyond achieving corporate goals to encompassing broader societal impacts. Such initiatives not only enhance the company's reputation but also solidify its position as an industry leader committed to responsible and sustainable business practices. According to Kusuma et al. (2020) strategic leadership in the telecommunications industry often sets trends and standards that shape the entire sector. Leaders like those at Safaricom have the power to influence market dynamics, consumer expectations, and regulatory frameworks. Through their strategic decisions, they can drive industry-wide changes, promoting innovation, ethical practices, and customer-centric services. The influence of companies like Safaricom on the telecommunications landscape in Africa demonstrates the far-reaching impact of strategic leadership in shaping industry standards and practices.

Strategic leadership is not a static process; it involves continuous learning and adaptation (Roux et al., 2022). As the provided text suggests, strategy involves change, and to achieve long-term performance potential in a dynamic environment, organizations must continually evolve. This requires leaders to not only implement changes but also learn from each initiative, using new insights to inform future strategies. This concept is illustrated in the cases of IBM and DEC, where IBM's ability to adapt over time contrasted sharply with DEC's failure to do so (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012). Safaricom's strategic leadership has been pivotal in its growth and success. The company has consistently demonstrated an ability to innovate, most notably with its mobile money service, M-Pesa (Markus et al., 2020). This innovation was not just a business success but also had a significant societal impact, transforming financial services in Kenya. The leadership's focus on integrating societal needs with business strategies, as observed by Ndemo and Weiss (2017), showcases the essence of strategic leadership in action.

The enduring performance potential of an organization, as emphasized in strategic leadership, is critical for sustainability. This involves not just achieving short-term goals but also ensuring the long-term thriving of the organization. In this regard, Safaricom has set an example by not only leading in the telecommunications sector but also contributing to social and economic development in Kenya. This aligns with the views of Hughes, Beatty, and Dinwoodie (2014), who highlight the importance of strategic leadership in achieving sustainable organizational growth. The comparison of strategic leadership practices in different organizations, such as IBM and DEC, as mentioned in your text, provides valuable insights. IBM's adaptation through turbulent times, leading to its ranking as one of the most profitable companies, contrasts with DEC's eventual acquisition and cessation. This comparison underscores the significance of adaptive and forward-thinking leadership in ensuring an organization's long-term success (Kaplan & Mikes, 2012).

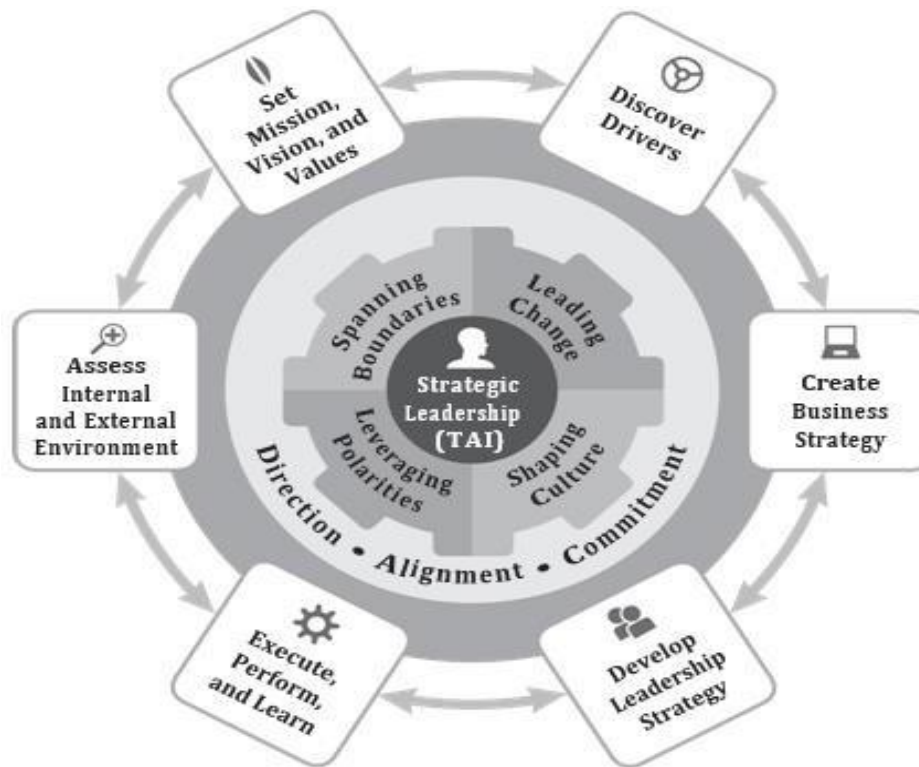


Figure 1: Strategic Leadership Model

The Figure 1 illustrate a model of Strategic Leadership that emphasizes the importance of leadership strategy as part of the overall organization strategy process. The model includes various elements that contribute to an effective strategy, such as setting a mission, vision, and values, discovering drivers, creating a business strategy, developing leadership strategy, executing, performing, learning, and assessing both the internal and external environment. This holistic view suggests that strategy is not just a plan or a competitive advantage; it is a comprehensive process that includes understanding and influencing the behavior, values, and identity of the leaders themselves.

Montgomery (2012), from the Harvard School of Business, notes the rarity of executives associating strategy with people, with only a few recognizing leadership and vision as part of the strategic equation. This observation is crucial because it points to the often-overlooked human element in strategic planning. The core of the organization strategy process, as depicted in the figure, stresses that the essence of strategy involves leaders first examining their own behaviors, values, and identity—how they personally contribute to and navigate the strategy process. The model suggests that achieving leadership outcomes such as shared direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC) requires engaging the hearts, minds, and hands of all organizational members. Leadership is defined by its ability to engage others to create this shared DAC. Flexibility in achieving these outcomes is necessary, as the means to do so are varied and dependent on the context. In today's Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) world, leadership is increasingly demonstrated by groups and collectives rather than a single individual, acknowledging that the complexities of modern strategic decisions require a blend of capabilities across the enterprise.

The figure point that no single person can manage all the information, make all the decisions, or achieve success alone. Thus, one of the most crucial roles of a strategic leader is to foster strategic leadership in others, igniting the collective power and potential of the organization in

service of its performance potential. DAC serves as indicators that the leadership processes associated with strategy are effective. Shared direction means that everyone in the organization understands the goals, priorities, and plans, and there is a common understanding of why decisions are made. Alignment ensures that decisions and tactics are coordinated and consistent with the overall strategy. Commitment is the attitude people hold toward the strategy, with a willingness to put forth effort for the organization's needs beyond just meeting individual goals.

1.1 Strategies for Effective Application in Multi-Cultural Environments

In the quest to navigate multi-cultural environments effectively, strategic leadership must go beyond mere recognition of cultural differences—it must actively integrate these differences into a cohesive strategy. This entails fostering an organizational culture that values diversity as a strategic asset, as Hughes and Beatty (2005) suggest. Leaders can achieve this by promoting an inclusive workplace that embraces a variety of perspectives, integrating them into decision-making processes. This integration can be bolstered by training programs that enhance cultural intelligence, equipping employees with the skills to excel in a global business milieu (Chimakati, 2023). The intricate nature of cross-cultural interactions demands a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics. Personal cultural awareness and preparation are essential for managing diversity in global projects, as Huang (2016) points out. Ruben (1977) underscores the importance of effective communication strategies for imparting knowledge across cultural boundaries, a concept further elaborated on by Chimakati (2023).

Merchant (2002) highlights the need for aligning cultural approaches when implementing strategic information systems, reinforcing the notion that cultural congruence is paramount for organizational success (Chimakati, 2023). Chevrier (2003) identifies several strategies that leaders in multinational project groups use to navigate cultural diversity. These include fostering individual tolerance, engaging in trial-and-error processes, building relationships, and leveraging transnational corporate or professional cultures (Chimakati, 2023). Such strategies are indicative of the multifaceted approach needed to harness the potential of multicultural environments effectively. Similarly, Rau (2015) emphasizes the design of culturally sensitive interfaces for mobile learning, while Ni, Kang and Zhu (2019) discuss training strategies to mitigate language and cultural barriers in multinational corporations. The digital realm also presents unique challenges and opportunities in multicultural settings. Calabrese et al. (2012) delve into the importance of creating country-specific cultural interfaces and web designs that cater to global markets (Chimakati, 2023). The adaptation to local cultural content, aesthetics, language, and values is not just a technical requirement but a strategic imperative for global reach and resonance. Educational strategies also play a significant role in enhancing cultural understanding.

Andrade (2021) proposes the use of interactive games to help students recognize and value cultural diversity. In the corporate context, Sahadevan and Sumangala (2021) stress the importance of cross-cultural communication in multinational firms. Such educational approaches can complement the strategic initiatives within organizations, as Eason et al. (2019) point out the necessity for practical models that foster cultural adaptability. The Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies for multicultural organizations, as studied by Baporikar (2022), highlight the need for a deep comprehension of cultural elements that influence workplace communication, particularly in sectors like construction where multicultural teams are prevalent. Stoica et al. (2021) discuss how transformational experiences and the development of self-efficacy in international settings can be achieved through multicultural teamwork, both virtual and in situ. This body of research presents a rich tapestry of strategies and considerations that strategic leadership must account for to thrive in diverse global markets (Chimakati, 2023).

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In addition, strategic leadership in multi-cultural environments necessitates the creation of communication strategies that are sensitive to cultural differences. Effective communication is the bedrock upon which mutual understanding and cooperation are built. As Chimakati (2023) emphasizes, leaders must be adept at tailoring their communication styles to suit the cultural contexts of their audience, whether it's through language, non-verbal cues, or the medium of communication itself. This approach is reinforced by the work of Mintzberg et al. (2005), who argue that adaptability in leadership styles is crucial for navigating the complexities of diverse environments. By implementing such culturally aware communication strategies, organizations can ensure that all members feel heard and understood, which in turn fosters a collaborative and innovative atmosphere. Strategic leaders must also recognize the importance of aligning organizational values with the diverse values of the workforce (Aarons et al., 2014). This involves not only acknowledging the various cultural backgrounds of employees but also integrating these values into the company's vision and operational practices. Such alignment can lead to enhanced employee engagement and loyalty, as it resonates with the employees' own beliefs and cultural perspectives. Hughes and Beatty (2005) assert that when employees see their cultures reflected in the organization's values, they are more likely to contribute their full potential towards the organization's objectives.

This synergy between individual and organizational values can be a significant source of competitive advantage in the global market. Evaluating and measuring the impact of diversity on organizational performance is critical. This includes not just financial outcomes but also metrics related to innovation, employee satisfaction, and customer engagement. Leaders must be capable of interpreting these metrics within the context of cultural diversity to understand the full impact of their strategies. As De Kluyver and Pearce (2009) note, the ability to quantify the benefits of a diverse workforce can inform more effective strategy development and implementation. Moreover, empirical research, such as that encouraged by Sull (2009), can provide valuable insights into the best practices for managing and capitalizing on cultural diversity within organizations. By systematically assessing the outcomes of diversity initiatives, organizations can refine their strategies to better meet the needs of their multi-cultural environment. The strategic integration of diversity also extends to talent acquisition and management. As organizations compete globally, the ability to attract, retain, and develop talent from a wide range of cultural backgrounds becomes a strategic imperative. De Kluyver and Pearce (2009) emphasize the strategic advantage of a diverse talent pool, which brings a variety of skills, experiences, and perspectives that can drive innovation and adaptability.

Strategic leaders must, therefore, design and implement recruitment and professional development policies that are inclusive and culturally sensitive. This includes not only ensuring that hiring practices are free from bias but also that career development opportunities are accessible to all employees, regardless of their cultural background. By doing so, as Sull (2009) notes, organizations not only signal their commitment to diversity but also build a reputation as an employer of choice for top global talent. The long-term sustainability of multicultural strategies hinges on the continuous development of cultural competence at the leadership level. Leaders themselves must model the behaviors and attitudes they wish to see reflected throughout the organization. According to Hughes and Beatty (2005), leaders who exhibit cultural competence and humility set the tone for the entire organization, encouraging a learning-oriented approach to cultural differences. This can include participating in cultural immersion experiences, language learning, and ongoing education on global affairs and cultural practices. Strategic leaders who are culturally competent are better equipped to navigate the complex interplay between global business operations and local cultural nuances, thereby enhancing the organization's agility and responsiveness in the face of global challenges.

1.1.1 Globalization and Its Impact on Strategic Leadership

Globalization, as a fundamental element shaping the strategic business environment, is a crucial factor in the discussion of strategic leadership, particularly in dynamic sectors like telecommunications (De Kluyver & Pearce, 2009). This phenomenon has led to an increased interdependence among the world's major economies, thereby intensifying competition across many industries. The effects of globalization are multifaceted; it has not only expanded markets and created new opportunities but also brought about significant challenges in the form of intensified competition and the restructuring of industries. As Yip (2012) articulates, globalization has transformed traditional business models, leading to the emergence of deconstructed value chains and new forms of competition, such as "virtual corporations." This changing landscape necessitates a strategic leadership approach that is adaptable, forward-looking, and capable of navigating the complexities of a global market. In this context, strategic leaders are required to be acutely aware of global market trends, adapt their strategies accordingly, and steer their organizations through the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization. The impact of globalization on strategic leadership is further compounded by demographic and social changes, technological advancements, and shifting consumer preferences. As Dicken (2015) notes, demographic shifts such as the aging population and the increasing participation of women in the workforce have had profound implications for businesses. These changes have not only created new market opportunities but also posed threats to existing business models.

In addition, the technology revolution, as discussed by Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), has dramatically altered how businesses operate and interact with their customers, giving rise to new industries and transforming existing ones. For a company like Safaricom, these shifts imply a need for a leadership style that is not only technologically savvy but also sensitive to the changing demographic and social landscape. The strategic leadership at Safaricom, therefore, must continually innovate and adapt to stay relevant and competitive in this evolving global context. Moreover, globalization has necessitated a re-evaluation of traditional business strategies to incorporate a more global perspective. Strategic leaders are now required to think beyond local and national boundaries, considering the global implications of their decisions. This global outlook involves understanding diverse cultural norms, economic conditions, regulatory environments, and competitive landscapes. It also includes recognizing and leveraging the interconnectedness of global markets to create strategies that are not only locally relevant but also globally competitive. As the telecommunications industry continues to evolve in the face of globalization, strategic leaders like those at Safaricom must navigate these complexities with a keen understanding of the global market dynamics. The leadership's ability to foresee and respond to global trends, adapt to changing market conditions, and leverage global opportunities is key to sustaining growth and competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected world.

1.1.2 Collaboration, Partnership and Competitor Analysis in Strategic Leadership

In the realm of strategic leadership, understanding and navigating the complexities of collaboration, partnership and competitor analysis is increasingly vital in today's interconnected and competitive business environment. The traditional assumptions about distinct market boundaries and competition primarily for market share are becoming less tenable as industry structures evolve. Markets are no longer isolated; their boundaries are blurred, and competition often occurs simultaneously at both business unit and corporate levels. This new reality necessitates a broader perspective on strategy from executives, prompting them to ask new and probing questions about the nature of competition and strategic advantages (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

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For instance, they need to consider whether companies compete as stand-alone entities or as part of extended networks that include their suppliers. In analyzing competition, executives should focus on the competitive advantages of a diversified portfolio of businesses against stand-alone businesses and weigh the importance of access to information technology against financial resources. This section will explore these dimensions of strategic leadership, particularly focusing on how companies like Safaricom navigate these complex competitive landscapes. To effectively analyze immediate competitors, five key questions are instrumental: identifying direct competitors, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, understanding past behaviors, predicting future actions, and evaluating how these actions will affect the industry and the company (Porter, 1980). Developing a solid understanding of immediate competitors and what motivates their competitive behavior is crucial for strategy formulation. This involves analyzing key competitors' strengths and weaknesses, their past behavior, and predicting their future behavior. Understanding why competitors behave in certain ways helps anticipate major strategic initiatives or retaliatory moves. An analysis of competitors' organizational structure and culture can also offer insightful perspectives; for example, a cost-driven, highly structured competitor is unlikely to successfully challenge an innovation-driven, market-oriented strategy. This section will delve into how Safaricom conducts competitor analysis and adapts its strategies in response to competitors' actions and the broader market dynamics.

In analyzing competitive patterns, it can be useful to assign roles to particular competitors, such as leaders, challengers, followers, and nichers. While this approach can be simplistic, it provides insight into the competitive dynamics of the industry (Porter, 1980). Leaders tend to focus on expanding total demand, challengers often target the leader directly or indirectly, while followers and nichers have more modest strategic objectives. For instance, Coca-Cola focuses more on developing new markets overseas than on taking market share from Pepsi Cola in the domestic market (Yoffie & Cusumano, 2015). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for a company like Safaricom, which operates in a highly competitive telecommunications sector. This section will analyze how Safaricom identifies and responds to different types of competitors and how this influences its strategic positioning. Further, the concept of strategic groups becomes essential when industries have numerous competitors. A strategic group is a set of firms facing similar threats and opportunities, which differ from those faced by other sets of companies in the same industry (Porter, 1980). Rivalry is usually more intense within strategic groups than between them. For example, in the fast-food industry, hamburger chains compete more directly with other hamburger chains than with chicken or pizza restaurants. Analyzing strategic groups helps reveal how competition evolves between competitors with similar strategic focuses. This analysis is crucial for companies like Safaricom, as it aids in understanding the competitive landscape and strategizing accordingly. This section will explore how Safaricom identifies and positions itself within strategic groups and how this understanding shapes its competitive strategies in the telecommunications sector.

1.1.3 Recruiting Process and Contract Profiling

The recruiting process and contract profiling are critical components of strategic leadership, particularly in industries such as telecommunications where the calibre and compatibility of talent has a significant impact on organizational success (Mhillu, 2022). The ability to attract and retain qualified employees is critical for fostering innovation, productivity, and a competitive advantage. Rasmussen (2020) delves into the challenge of recruitment communication in start-ups, focusing on the need to balance the allure of attracting candidates with the fulfilment of recruitment promises. Korobkina et al. (2018) examine how integrating talent management practices into recruitment is critical, emphasizing the importance of close collaboration with other HR areas. Kannan (2020) emphasizes the significance of clear job

descriptions in attracting candidates with the necessary skills and qualifications. Kumar (2019) points out that recruitment is more than just filling positions; it involves aligning talent acquisition with an organization's strategic goals and cultural values.

This approach ensures that new hires are not only skilled and qualified but also align well with the company's vision and ethos. For companies like Safaricom, operating in dynamic and competitive environments, a strategic recruitment approach is a key differentiator. This includes using diverse sourcing channels, applying data-driven methods for candidate identification, and conducting thorough selection processes to evaluate both technical abilities and cultural fit, as detailed by Breaugh (2008). Sebayang (2021) discusses the use of profile matching in recruitment, advocating for near-perfect criteria for more objective assessments. Nuraisyah et al. (2020) suggest using SWOT analysis and elicitation methods to enhance recruitment systems. Hardy et al. (2021) highlight the detrimental effects of bias in hiring, showing how even minimal bias can lead to substantial discrimination and productivity loss. Jayaweera et al. (2021) investigate how national culture moderates the effects of psychological contract breaches on work outcomes, revealing the influence of cultural practices on these dynamics. Crosno et al. (2021) examine the effectiveness of contracts in marketing exchanges, finding that contract specificity and utilization improve economic performance and relationship quality. Lastly, Lu and Hung (2023) explore the factors prompting governments to revert contracted work in-house, identifying market management strategies, political ideology, and employee opposition as key influences.

Contract profiling is another important aspect of the recruitment process, involving the creation of job contracts that clearly define roles, responsibilities, expectations, and terms of engagement. Effective contract profiling ensures that both the employer and the employee have a clear understanding of the job requirements and expectations, which is essential for job satisfaction and performance. As cited by Chemakati (2023), contract profiling is not just a legal necessity but a strategic tool that can be used to set clear performance standards, align employee objectives with organizational goals, and foster a sense of clarity and commitment. In the case of Safaricom, contract profiling can be particularly useful in managing the expectations of both parties and in reducing the likelihood of future disputes or misunderstandings. Further, well-defined contracts can serve as a foundation for performance management and career development, enabling employees to have a clear roadmap of their growth and contributions within the organization (Mathis & Jackson, 2011).

Moreover, the recruitment process and contract profiling should be viewed through the lens of diversity and inclusion. As the telecommunications industry continues to evolve, having a diverse workforce can bring a range of perspectives, ideas, and skills that are crucial for innovation and adaptability. Chemakati (2023) emphasizes the importance of diversity in recruitment, stating that it should be a strategic priority for companies looking to remain competitive in a global marketplace. Safaricom can enhance its recruitment strategies by actively seeking candidates from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that its contract profiling practices promote inclusivity and equal opportunities. This not only aligns with ethical and legal standards but also strengthens the company's position as a socially responsible and forward-thinking employer. Implementing inclusive recruitment and contract profiling practices can also enhance the company's brand image and appeal to a broader range of stakeholders, including customers, investors, and potential employees (Shen et al., 2009). In summary, the recruitment process and contract profiling are crucial components of strategic leadership, playing a key role in shaping the workforce and aligning talent acquisition with the organization's strategic goals and values.

1.2 Ability to Forecast Organization Development Trends Through Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking is essential in forecasting organizational development trends, particularly as it pertains to preparing for future challenges and opportunities within various market contexts (Ginter et al., 2018). Strategic leaders utilize a forward-looking perspective, drawing from both current market data and predictive analytics to anticipate changes that could affect their industry (Reez, 2020). This ability to forecast is not merely a technical skill; it involves a complex interplay of analytical acumen and creative vision. Hughes and Beatty (2005) emphasize the role of strategic leaders in shaping not just the future of their own organizations, but also in influencing the direction of the market as a whole. They argue that by employing strategic thinking, leaders can craft a vision for the future that is both aspirational and grounded in a realistic assessment of market trends and organizational capabilities. Such a vision becomes a north star, guiding the organization's developmental trajectory and ensuring that it remains agile and responsive to the rapidly changing business environment (Chimakati, 2023).

The global market is characterized by its dynamic and often unpredictable nature, which makes the ability to forecast trends a crucial aspect of strategic leadership. This foresight is not about having a crystal ball to predict the future accurately, but rather about having a well-tuned sense of direction that aligns with the organization's strategic intent. De Kluyver and Pearce (2009) argue that strategic thinking allows leaders to delineate between short-lived fads and sustainable trends, enabling organizations to allocate resources more efficiently and to pivot when necessary. The capacity to differentiate and prioritize becomes a pivotal skill in maintaining competitive advantage. Strategic thinking fosters a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, which is essential in recognizing and reacting to emerging trends (Chimakati, 2023). In addition, strategic thinking is inherently linked to the organization's innovation pipeline. Leaders who excel in strategic thinking are adept at identifying trends that could lead to the next breakthrough in product development or service delivery. This anticipation of future needs and preferences requires a deep understanding of customer behavior and industry evolution. Mintzberg et al. (2005) suggest that strategic leaders must engage in an ongoing dialogue with both internal and external stakeholders to refine their understanding of the trends that will shape the future market landscape. It is through this dialogue and collaboration that strategic leaders can synthesize diverse perspectives into a coherent strategy that propels the organization forward (Chimakati & Oduol, 2023).

Strategic thinking also demands a consideration of the broader socio-economic and technological context in which an organization operates. Hughes and Beatty (2005) discuss the importance of leaders being able to extrapolate from current global events and technological advancements to predict how these factors might influence their organization's development. For instance, the rise of artificial intelligence and automation has significant implications for workforce development and operational efficiency. Leaders with a strategic mindset are proactive in integrating new technologies and methodologies to stay ahead of the curve, thus ensuring that the organization not only adapts to but also capitalizes on the changes brought about by these macro-trends. This proactive approach is vital for long-term sustainability and success in a marketplace that is constantly being reshaped by technological innovation and societal shifts (Chimakati & Oduol, 2023).

Demonstrating the capability to forecast trends in organizational development through strategic thinking stands as a crucial competency for strategic leaders. Strategic leaders must possess the foresight to anticipate shifts in the business landscape and position their organizations for success. As emphasized by Mintzberg et al. (2005), strategic thinking involves envisioning the future and crafting strategies that align with emerging trends and opportunities. This necessitates a profound understanding of industry dynamics, market forces, and evolving

consumer preferences. By staying ahead of the curve, organizations can proactively adapt to changing circumstances and gain a competitive edge. Goldman et al. (2015) discovered that organizations predominantly rely on experiential approaches and general leadership programs to nurture strategic thinking skills, with limited utilization of literature, assessment, and competency models. In addition, Von Der Gracht et al. (2010) identified five strategic clusters within a portfolio approach for organizational development in corporate foresight and innovation management. They also delineated distinct development paths for traditional industries in contrast to dynamic industries. Stacey (1993) emphasized the importance of strategic thinking for senior managers in today's dynamic business environment, suggesting the need for a more flexible and radical approach to strategic planning as cited by Chimakati (2023). Kazmi et al. (2015) emphasizes the role of strategic thinking in supporting new product development initiatives and highlights areas of improvement such as internal communication, data collection, and employee empowerment. Bikmetov et al. (2020) emphasizes that strategic thinking is crucial for navigating the changing and uncertain business environment. Folarin (2021) suggests that leaders with strategic thinking skills have an advantage in managing organizational change. Khaddar (2022) confirms the positive impact of strategic thinking on organizational innovation. Pobyvaev (2021) discusses the use of strategic analysis tools to forecast business development trends.

One key aspect of forecasting organization development trends is the effective use of data and analytics. In today's data-driven world, organizations have access to vast amounts of information that can be leveraged for predictive insights. Strategic leaders must not only collect and analyze relevant data but also interpret it in the context of broader trends. As De Kluyver and Pearce (2009) emphasize, data-driven decision-making is a cornerstone of strategic leadership. By harnessing the power of data, leaders can identify patterns and anomalies that may indicate future developments. This analytical approach allows organizations to make informed strategic choices that anticipate market shifts and evolving customer needs. Strategic leaders must also cultivate a culture of continuous learning and innovation within their organizations. According to Hughes and Beatty (2005), strategic leadership involves fostering an environment where experimentation and adaptation are encouraged. This mindset of exploration enables organizations to test new approaches, products, and services, allowing them to stay at the forefront of industry trends. It also involves embracing a growth mindset, where failure is viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a setback. By promoting innovation and agility, strategic leaders empower their organizations to not only forecast development trends but also shape them through proactive initiatives. Further, strategic leaders should actively engage in scenario planning and risk assessment. As noted by Chimakati (2023), the ability to envision multiple future scenarios and assess their implications is a hallmark of strategic thinking. By considering a range of potential outcomes, leaders can prepare their organizations to respond effectively to various contingencies. This proactive approach minimizes risks associated with unforeseen developments and enhances an organization's ability to capitalize on emerging opportunities. In essence, strategic leaders are forward-looking visionaries who blend analytical rigor with creativity to forecast and navigate organization development trends successfully.

1.2.1 Analyzing the External Strategic Environment

This analysis involves understanding how global trends and developments shape business strategies and influence organizational success. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ways in which investors value companies are evolving. Traditional metrics like sales, profits, and dividends are now being considered alongside long-term environmental and social costs. This shift reflects a growing emphasis on sustainability and corporate social

responsibility (CSR) in business strategy. Phrases like “going green,” “eco-friendly,” and “sustainable practices” have transitioned from fringe buzzwords to central elements in the investor lexicon, signaling a new and powerful compact between business and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). This section will explore how these global trends are reshaping strategy formulation, with a particular focus on their implications for companies like Safaricom, which operates in a rapidly globalizing market. In addition to CSR considerations, analyzing risk and uncertainty in the strategic environment is a critical component of strategic leadership. This involves using tools like scenario analysis to define and analyze alternative futures, helping leaders to anticipate and prepare for various potential outcomes. As global competition intensifies, the capacity to master ideas and technology—resources that transcend traditional boundaries of ownership and geography—becomes increasingly important.

The shift in the center of gravity of economic activity towards emerging markets like China and India has redefined global opportunity and competition (Dicken, 2015). For instance, the emergence of the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) has significantly altered global competition, with their unprecedented growth rates in GDP, trade, and disposable income reshaping the global business landscape (O'Neill, 2001). This section will delve into how Safaricom, situated in an emerging market, navigates this transformed global competitive landscape and what strategic approaches it employs in response to these shifts. The rise of emerging markets has also led to a two-way flow of business, challenging the traditional notion of globalization as a one-way expansion of trade from developed to emerging economies. This new phase of “globality” creates both opportunities and threats for multinationals and emerging market companies alike (Sirkin et al., 2008). The growing presence of companies from emerging markets in the Fortune 500 rankings and their increasing acquisitions of established Western businesses illustrate this shift. For instance, Lenovo’s acquisition of IBM’s personal computer business, including the ThinkPad laptop range, is a prominent example of this seismic shift in global business dynamics (McGregor, 2005). In this context, Safaricom’s strategic leadership is challenged to leverage opportunities and mitigate threats presented by this new phase of globalization. This section will analyze how Safaricom assesses both internal and external environments as part of its strategic process, and how it adapts its business model and strategies in response to these global changes.

Lastly, the process of strategic development involves a comprehensive assessment of internal and external factors impacting an organization. This assessment is critical in developing a collective and shared understanding of the situation within the organization and aligning it with the external environment. Understanding external factors such as economic, governmental, social influences, technological developments, and demographic trends is as important as recognizing internal strengths and weaknesses. For example, the founding of Netflix was marked by the advent of the DVD player, a technological development that set the stage for a digital revolution and influenced their strategic direction (Chatterjee, Carroll, & Spencer, 2010). In a similar vein, Safaricom’s strategic leadership needs to continually assess and understand both the internal capabilities and the external environment in which it operates. This section will explore how Safaricom’s leadership has successfully navigated these challenges by adapting its strategies and business model to align with both internal strengths and the external strategic environment.

1.2.2 Technological Implications for Strategy Formulation

The dynamic global landscape, particularly marked by technological advancements and the evolving nature of information and knowledge, has significant implications for strategy formulation (Suherlan & Okombo, 2023). These changes are fundamentally altering business operations and competitive landscapes. This section focuses on the critical technological

factors affecting strategy formulation, examining how leading companies like Apple are adapting to these changes. Cantelmo and Kreps (2021) argue that technological innovation is a crucial factor in shaping and executing strategic priorities, necessitating adjustments in overall grand strategy. Kaloudi and Li (2020) highlight how technology can redefine the strategic playing field, either by presenting new opportunities for advancement or by bolstering defensive mechanisms. The influence of technology in sculpting organizational strategy is further emphasized by Kaletnik and Lutkovska (2020), who stress the need for adopting technologies that enhance performance and foster partnerships for rapid development. In addition, Nassar and Tvaronavičienė (2021) discuss technology's role as a key differentiator in achieving competitive edge, advocating for a methodical and structured approach to developing and implementing technology-driven strategies.

In the new global economy, the traditional laws of scarcity no longer apply. Unlike finite resources that deplete upon use, information and knowledge can be shared and actually grow through application (Drucker, 1993). This abundance of knowledge has redefined the competitive landscape, as companies can harness and leverage information assets to gain a strategic edge. Apple, for example, leverages its extensive knowledge of consumer preferences to design and market its products effectively. Technological advancements have significantly reduced the importance of physical location in business operations (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Through appropriate technology and methods, virtual marketplaces and organizations can be created, offering benefits such as speed, agility, round-the-clock operation, and global reach. Apple's online App Store is a prime example of how technology enables the creation of virtual marketplaces, connecting developers and consumers worldwide. National laws, barriers, and taxes are increasingly challenging to apply in a globalized and interconnected world. Information and knowledge flow to where demand is highest and barriers are lowest, transcending traditional borders (Levitt, 1983).

Companies like Apple must navigate these complex regulatory landscapes as they operate in multiple countries, each with its own legal and tax framework. Knowledge-enhanced products or services can command price premiums over comparable offerings with lower knowledge intensity (Grant, 1996). However, the pricing and value of knowledge-based products are context-dependent. For Apple, this means that the same technological knowledge can have different value propositions to diverse customer segments, necessitating tailored marketing and pricing strategies. In the knowledge-based economy, human capital, comprising acquired skills and competencies, becomes a critical component of value (Mohamed et al., 2021). Companies like Apple recognize that their workforce's knowledge and expertise are invaluable assets, driving innovation and differentiation. The rapid transfer of technology on a global scale has accelerated product life cycles and reduced the windows of opportunity to bring products to market (Markard, 2020). Apple must continuously innovate and adapt to stay ahead in its highly competitive industry. Mass marketing approaches are losing appeal in the new global economy, leading to market fragmentation (De Villiers et al., 2020). Companies like Apple are shifting their focus from targeting a vast, anonymous crowd to catering to individual consumer preferences. Personalization and customization have become key strategies for retaining and expanding market share.

1.2.3 Employee Rights and Voice

The significance of employee rights and voice in strategic leadership cannot be overstated, particularly in today's dynamic business environment. Employee rights encompass a range of aspects including fair treatment, equitable compensation, safe working conditions, and respect for personal and professional boundaries. The concept of 'voice' extends this further, emphasizing the importance of employees having a say in decisions that affect their work and

workplace. This aspect of strategic leadership aligns with the idea that organizations are more successful when they actively engage with and listen to their employees. As cited by Chimakati (2023), studies have shown that companies that prioritize employee rights and voice tend to have higher levels of employee satisfaction, increased productivity, and better overall performance. This approach also aligns with the principles of modern Human Resource Management (HRM) theories, which advocate for employee empowerment and participative management as key drivers of organizational success (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). The inclusion of employee perspectives in strategic decision-making is not only a matter of ethical leadership but also a strategic imperative that can lead to more innovative and effective solutions (Bryson, 2004). In the context of Safaricom Limited, embracing employee rights and voice can be seen as a strategic tool for enhancing organizational resilience and adaptability. As the telecommunications industry continues to evolve rapidly, companies that can tap into the insights and creativity of their workforce are better positioned to innovate and stay ahead of the curve.

This approach aligns with the broader strategic goals of the company by fostering a culture of open communication, trust, and mutual respect, which are essential for driving sustained organizational growth and success (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). As cited by Chimakati (2023), Safaricom's leadership has recognized the value of employee engagement, implementing policies and practices that support employee rights and encourage open dialogue. This not only enhances employee morale and job satisfaction but also contributes to a more agile and responsive organizational culture, capable of navigating the complexities of the modern business landscape (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Further, the emphasis on employee rights and voice is not just a matter of internal policy but also a reflection of an organization's commitment to broader societal values. In the case of Safaricom, this commitment is part of a larger strategy of corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership. By ensuring that employees' rights are protected and their voices are heard, the company reinforces its reputation as a responsible and progressive employer. This approach has implications beyond the immediate workplace, contributing to the company's brand image and its relationship with customers, investors, and the broader community (Greenwood, 2007). As cited by Chimakati (2023), Safaricom's investment in employee welfare and empowerment is a key component of its strategic leadership model, demonstrating how a focus on employee rights and voice can contribute to both organizational success and societal well-being.

1.2.4 Mental Health and Wellness

The integration of mental health and wellness into strategic leadership is a critical aspect of modern organizational management, especially in high-pressure industries like telecommunications. The mental health and overall well-being of employees are increasingly recognized as vital factors influencing productivity, creativity, and, ultimately, the success of an organization. As highlighted by Chimakati (2023), the growing awareness of mental health issues in the workplace has led progressive companies to develop strategies that prioritize employee wellness. This approach is supported by a wealth of research indicating that mental health and well-being significantly impact employee engagement, job satisfaction, and turnover rates (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). For instance, Safaricom Limited, operating in a dynamic and sometimes stressful sector, has an opportunity to enhance its strategic leadership by implementing comprehensive mental health and wellness programs. Such programs not only demonstrate a commitment to the workforce but also contribute to building a resilient and adaptive organization. The importance of mental health in the workplace is further underscored by research showing that mental health issues, if left unaddressed, can lead to reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs (Harter et al., 2003).

Furthermore, the strategic approach to mental health and wellness extends beyond providing support services to fostering a workplace culture that actively promotes mental well-being. This involves creating an environment where employees feel safe to discuss mental health issues, and where there is an understanding and acceptance of the importance of mental wellness. As Chimakati (2023) points out, leadership plays a crucial role in shaping this culture. Leaders who are open about mental health and who actively promote wellness initiatives can significantly influence the organizational climate. This aspect of strategic leadership is about more than just implementing policies; it is about leading by example and creating a culture of care and support (Goh et al., 2015). Safaricom, as a leading telecommunications company, has the potential to set industry standards in this regard, demonstrating how prioritizing mental health and wellness can be a strategic advantage. By investing in mental health initiatives, the company not only enhances the well-being of its employees but also positions itself as a forward-thinking and socially responsible organization.

Lastly, the emphasis on mental health and wellness within strategic leadership is increasingly seen as a key component of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Companies that prioritize the well-being of their employees are often viewed more favorably by stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the wider community. As cited by Chimakati (2023), there is a growing expectation that responsible companies will take an active role in supporting the mental health of their workforce. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the importance of mental health support in the workplace. For Safaricom, integrating mental health and wellness into its strategic leadership framework not only benefits its employees but also enhances its reputation as a socially responsible company. This commitment to employee well-being can be a differentiating factor in the competitive telecommunications industry, contributing to a positive corporate image and stronger stakeholder relationships (Bhattacharya et al., 2008). In summary, the strategic integration of mental health and wellness is not only a moral imperative but also a business strategy that can drive organizational success and societal impact.

1.2.5 Motivation and Appraisal System

The motivation and appraisal system within an organization plays a crucial role in strategic leadership, especially in fast-paced industries like telecommunications. Motivation is a key driver of employee performance and satisfaction, influencing their level of engagement and productivity. Appraisal systems, on the other hand, provide a structured approach to evaluating employee performance, offering feedback, and setting goals that align with the organization's strategic objectives. As emphasized by Chimakati (2023), effective motivation and appraisal systems are not just tools for performance management but are integral to the strategic alignment of the workforce with the company's long-term goals. These systems, when properly implemented, can significantly enhance employee performance and contribute to the overall success of the organization. In the context of Safaricom Limited, developing a motivation and appraisal system that is transparent, fair, and aligned with the company's strategic goals can be a key differentiator. This system should not only focus on measuring performance but also on recognizing and rewarding contributions in a way that motivates employees and fosters a culture of continuous improvement (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020).

Moreover, the design and implementation of motivation and appraisal systems should be tailored to meet the unique needs of the organization and its workforce. This involves understanding the diverse motivational drivers of employees and creating appraisal processes that are perceived as fair and meaningful. As cited by Chemakati (2023), motivation in the workplace is influenced by a variety of factors including job satisfaction, recognition, career development opportunities, and work-life balance. Therefore, an effective appraisal system

should go beyond traditional performance metrics and incorporate elements that address these broader motivational factors. For instance, Safaricom can integrate 360-degree feedback mechanisms to provide a more comprehensive view of employee performance, including peer and self-assessments. Additionally, linking appraisal outcomes to developmental opportunities such as training programs and career progression paths can enhance employee motivation and retention (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This approach not only boosts employee morale but also ensures that the workforce is continually developing skills and competencies that are aligned with the strategic direction of the company.

Finally, the integration of technology in motivation and appraisal systems is becoming increasingly important. With advancements in data analytics and digital platforms, organizations like Safaricom have the opportunity to leverage technology to streamline their appraisal processes and gather insightful data on employee performance and engagement. As pointed out by Chimakati (2023), technology-enabled systems can provide real-time feedback, facilitate goal setting, and track progress more effectively. This not only enhances the efficiency of the appraisal process but also provides a more dynamic and engaging experience for employees. Furthermore, utilizing data analytics can help identify trends and patterns in employee performance, enabling more targeted and strategic interventions to boost motivation and address performance issues. In a technology-driven industry, Safaricom's adoption of a tech-enhanced motivation and appraisal system could set a precedent, demonstrating how digital tools can be effectively utilized to enhance employee engagement and drive organizational performance (Bersin, 2017). In summary, a well-designed motivation and appraisal system, underpinned by strategic leadership and enhanced by technology, can be a powerful tool in aligning employee efforts with organizational goals and driving long-term success.

1.3 Schools of Thoughts

The exploration of strategic management and leadership within organizations can be greatly enriched by examining various schools of thought, each offering distinct perspectives and insights into the process of strategy formation. These schools of thought provide frameworks for understanding how strategies are developed and implemented, influenced by a multitude of factors ranging from organizational culture to external environmental dynamics. As articulated by Chimakati (2023), understanding these diverse theoretical frameworks is essential for comprehending the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership. One prominent perspective is the Cultural School, which views strategy formation as a collective process deeply rooted in the shared values, beliefs, and traditions of the organization. This school emphasizes the role of culture as a guiding force in shaping strategic decisions and actions, reflecting the internal dynamics and social complexity of organizations (Mintzberg et al., 1998). The Cultural School posits that strategy is more than a rational plan; it is a reflection of the collective mindset and ingrained practices within an organization, evolving organically over time.

Another significant school of thought is the Environmental School, which conceptualizes strategy formation as a reactive process, primarily driven by external environmental factors. This school focuses on the influence of the external context on strategic decision-making, suggesting that organizational strategies are largely shaped by the opportunities and constraints present in the external environment (Bourgeois, 1984). As cited by Chimakati (2023), the Environmental School highlights the adaptive nature of organizations, where strategic choices are responses to external pressures and changes in the marketplace, industry, and broader socio-economic landscape. This perspective underscores the importance of environmental scanning and analysis, enabling organizations to align their strategies with external realities. For instance, in a dynamic industry like telecommunications, companies such as Safaricom must

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constantly adapt their strategies in response to technological advancements, market trends, regulatory changes, and competitive forces. The Environmental School thus provides a lens for understanding how external factors compel organizations to evolve and adapt their strategies for survival and success.

1.3.1 Cultural School: Strategy Formation as a Collective Process

The Cultural School of strategy formation delves into the intricate relationship between culture and strategy, portraying strategy as a collective and cultural phenomenon deeply ingrained within organizations (Mintzberg et al., 2003). In this section, we explore the key tenets of the Cultural School, emphasizing the pivotal role of organizational culture, shared beliefs, and collective processes in shaping strategic decisions. Central to the Cultural School's perspective is the belief that culture acts as a powerful force that unites individuals within an organization (Johnson et al., 2008). Organizational culture encompasses shared values, norms, rituals, and symbols that guide how individuals think, behave, and interact. This collective mindset becomes the "organization's mind," shaping its traditions, habits, and more tangible manifestations like stories and symbols (Pettigrew, 1985). Culture thus serves as the glue that binds individuals into a cohesive entity called the organization.

Within the Cultural School, strategy formation is viewed as a process of collective socialization (Firsirotu, 1985). Individuals acquire cultural beliefs and understandings largely through tacit and nonverbal means. This means that organizational members may only partially articulate the beliefs that underpin their culture, and the origins of these beliefs often remain obscure (Barney, 1986). The culture is deeply rooted, and much of it operates below the level of conscious awareness.

Culture profoundly influences decision-making styles within organizations (Feldman, 1986). It shapes the preferred thinking styles and the use of analysis, thereby affecting the strategy formation process. For instance, organizations with cultures emphasizing deliberate analysis, like General Motors, tend to adopt a structured and analytical approach to decision-making (Wright, 1979). Culture acts as a perceptual filter, leading organizations to interpret their environments based on their deeply embedded cultural resources (Pralhad and Bettis, 1986). Cultural beliefs and ideologies play a significant role in resisting strategic change (Bettis and Prahalad, 1995). Shared cultural commitments encourage consistency in organizational behavior and discourage shifts in strategy. Culture is deeply entrenched, and its powerful internal barriers hinder fundamental change. Organizations often stick with established strategies and perspectives rooted in their culture, even when faced with external challenges (Weick, 1986).

Culture can act as a prism that blinds managers to changing external conditions (Lorsch, 1986). Even when managers recognize the need for change, they tend to respond in alignment with their cultural beliefs and established strategies. This myopic tendency keeps organizations anchored to their historical perspectives, which are deeply embedded in their culture. Culture's influence extends to industries as well, fostering similarities in strategic postures and inhibiting innovation (Abrahamson and Fombrun, 1994). Industries with shared cultures and networks may become more resistant to change and may overlook threats from outside their network. The propensity to benchmark against one another can further reinforce industry-wide inertia (Halberstam, 1986).

1.3.2 The Environmental School: Strategy Formation as a Reactive Process

The Environmental School of strategy formation presents a paradigm where the external environment is not just a backdrop but the central actor in the strategic process. This

perspective, as discussed in the text, posits that organizations are fundamentally reactive entities, shaped and constrained by the myriad forces that constitute their external environment. The school sees the environment as a dynamic and sometimes unpredictable actor that sets the agenda, to which organizations must adapt or risk obsolescence. This view contrasts with other strategic schools where the organization, through its leadership or collective processes, is seen as the primary driver of strategy. Instead, the Environmental School suggests a scenario where the organization's strategic choices are limited and heavily influenced by external factors, be they market conditions, technological changes, regulatory landscapes, or socio-economic shifts (Mintzberg et al., 1998). This school, therefore, places a strong emphasis on environmental scanning and analysis, suggesting that understanding and adapting to external forces is crucial for organizational survival and success.

In this school, leadership is conceptualized not as a proactive force but as a reactive one, primarily engaged in interpreting environmental signals and ensuring that the organization adapts appropriately. This perspective diminishes the role of the strategist as an all-powerful actor and instead highlights the constraints imposed by the external environment. As per the text, this approach to strategy formation can lead to a somewhat deterministic view of organizational behavior, suggesting that organizations have limited scope for strategic choice and are mostly confined to reacting to external pressures. However, this does not imply that strategic choice is nonexistent. The Environmental School acknowledges that while organizations are constrained by their environment, they still possess some degree of decisional power, allowing them to choose how best to adapt to external conditions (Mintzberg et al., 1998). This nuanced understanding of the relationship between the organization and its environment provides a more balanced view of strategy formation, recognizing both the limitations and the opportunities presented by the external context.

The Environmental School's focus on the external forces shaping organizational strategy leads to the concept of niches. Similar to ecological niches in biology, where species compete for resources, organizations in the Environmental School are seen as competing for market position and resources within their respective niches. This school borrows heavily from ecology and population biology, conceptualizing organizations as entities that must adapt to survive in their ecological niches. These niches are not static but are constantly shaped and reshaped by competitive forces, technological changes, and other external factors. In this view, organizations that fail to adapt to their niches are selected out, akin to the natural selection process in biological ecosystems. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding the competitive landscape and the need for continuous adaptation to maintain a viable position in the market (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

In addition, the Environmental School has roots in contingency theory, which posits that organizational strategies and structures are contingent upon external environmental conditions. This theory challenges the notion of a "one best way" to manage organizations, arguing instead that the most effective management approach depends on the specific circumstances an organization faces. This approach calls for a more systematic and nuanced understanding of the environment, considering factors such as market stability, complexity, diversity, and hostility. These environmental dimensions dictate the strategies and structures that organizations should adopt to be effective. In essence, the Environmental School, with its emphasis on environmental contingencies, underscores the importance of external analysis and adaptation in strategy formation, suggesting that the key to organizational success lies in the ability to read and respond to the ever-changing external landscape (Mintzberg et al., 1998).

2.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that strategic leadership provides a rich tapestry of insights and practical applications, particularly in the context of Safaricom Limited and the telecommunications industry. The comprehensive analysis, which covers topics ranging from cultural diversity and globalization to technological advancements and the interaction of employee welfare and strategic goals, emphasizes the multifaceted nature of strategic leadership. It is critical to be able to navigate and leverage multicultural environments effectively. In order to be globally competitive, organizations must incorporate cultural intelligence, foster inclusive workplaces, and align organizational values with diverse employee backgrounds. Safaricom's approach to diversity not only strengthens internal cohesion but also aligns with broader societal values, which contributes to the company's success and reputation. The ability to forecast organizational trends through strategic thinking is a defining characteristic of successful leadership. Safaricom's ability to anticipate market shifts, embrace technological innovations, and adapt to socioeconomic changes has been critical in maintaining its industry leadership. Continuous learning, innovation, and scenario planning are essential for navigating the complexities of today's business landscape.

Globalization forces a rethinking of traditional business strategies. For Safaricom, this means adapting to changing market conditions, capitalizing on global opportunities, and navigating the complexities of an interconnected world. The transformation of traditional business models in response to globalization highlights the importance of adaptable and forward-thinking strategic leadership. Understanding the dynamics of collaboration, partnership, and competitor analysis is critical in strategic leadership. Safaricom's approach to navigating these complexities has enabled it to effectively position itself in the competitive telecommunications sector, from identifying competitor roles to understanding strategic groups. A strategic approach to recruitment and contract profiling is critical in attracting and retaining the right talent, which is an important determinant of organizational success. Safaricom's efforts to align talent acquisition with strategic objectives, along with a commitment to diversity and inclusion, highlight the significance of these aspects in strategic leadership. The rapid evolution of technology has a significant impact on strategy formulation. Safaricom's ability to adapt to these changes, from harnessing information assets to leveraging digital platforms, highlights the importance of responsive strategic leadership to technological advancements. Emphasizing employee rights, voice, and mental health reflects a comprehensive approach to workforce management.

Safaricom's focus on these areas not only improves employee well-being but also aligns with modern Human Resource Management principles, contributing to organizational resilience and adaptability. Effective motivation and appraisal systems, which are critical in aligning employee performance with strategic objectives, have been critical in Safaricom's approach to workforce management. The incorporation of technology in these systems indicates a forward-thinking approach to employee engagement and performance management. Exploration of the Cultural and Environmental Schools of Thought provides deeper insights into the strategy formation process. These perspectives emphasize the role of organizational culture and external environmental forces in shaping strategic decisions, providing a comprehensive understanding of strategic leadership dynamics. This study exemplifies the dynamic and complex nature of strategic leadership, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that incorporates multiple perspectives and adapts to changing environments. Safaricom's success story, underpinned by strategic foresight, adaptability, and a commitment to innovation and social responsibility, serves as a compelling case study for strategic leadership in the modern business world.

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