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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN BOHOL

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the strategic management practices and competitive advantage of selected private schools in Bohol and examined the relationship between these variables during the Academic Year 2025–2026. It employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design involving 129 respondents. Data were gathered using an adopted and modified survey questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. Strategic management practices were assessed in terms of strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation, while competitive advantage was evaluated in terms of programs, resources, and institutional practices. Findings revealed that strategic management practices were Fully Implemented (WM = 4.42), with strategic planning obtaining the highest rating (WM = 4.52). Competitive advantage obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.32, interpreted as Strongly Agree, with institutional practices receiving the highest rating (WM = 4.47), while resources obtained the lowest (WM = 4.13). The challenges encountered were Moderately Serious (WM = 3.22), with difficulty in sustaining competitive advantage identified as the most pressing concern (WM = 3.47). A very strong positive and statistically significant relationship was found between overall strategic management practices and competitive advantage ($r = .89$, $p < .001$), with strategy evaluation showing the strongest relationship among the strategic management dimensions ($r = .87$, $p < .001$). Thus, stronger strategic management practices were significantly associated with greater competitive advantage among the selected private schools. Based on the findings, the study developed the Competitive Advantage and Strategic Management Practices of Selected Private Schools in Bohol: An Action Plan Framework to address the identified areas of concern and support continuous institutional improvement.

KEYWORDS: *Strategic Management Practices, Competitive Advantage, Private Schools, Quantitative Descriptive-Correlational Research, Action Plan Framework*

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in national development because it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to participate effectively in society and contribute to economic growth. Educational institutions therefore strive to provide quality instruction while ensuring institutional sustainability and relevance in an increasingly competitive educational environment. In the context of globalization and continuous educational reforms, schools are expected not only to deliver academic instruction but also to implement effective management practices that promote organizational efficiency and institutional competitiveness. One important approach in educational administration is strategic management, which involves the systematic process of planning, formulating, implementing, and evaluating strategies to achieve organizational goals and long-term success (Adetowubo-King, 2018; Owich, 2018). Strategic management has become an essential practice for organizations because it enables leaders to analyze internal and external environments, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies that respond effectively to opportunities and challenges (Alajmi & Arabiat, 2021). In educational institutions, strategic management practices help administrators align institutional goals with academic programs, resource allocation, and operational policies in order to improve organizational performance and institutional reputation (Agyei & Mtembu, 2018). Moreover, effective strategic management encourages collaboration among administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders, ensuring that institutional efforts are coordinated toward achieving shared educational goals (Mawanika et al., 2021). In the education sector, competition among schools has become more evident as institutions seek to attract students, enhance academic programs, and maintain sustainability. Parents and students increasingly evaluate schools based on several factors, including the quality of programs offered, availability of learning resources, competence of teachers, and the overall reputation of the institution. According to Urquiola (2016), competition among educational institutions can encourage schools to improve productivity, innovation, and service quality. Similarly, Ndugo et al. (2018) explained that school choice is influenced by both productive efficiency and freedom of choice, wherein families select institutions that best address the educational needs and expectations of their children.

In the Philippine context, private educational institutions face growing challenges due to the expansion of public education and government-supported programs. The increasing availability of free public education has affected enrollment patterns, leading to a decline in student population in some private schools. At the same time, public schools often experience overcrowding and limited resources, creating pressures for both sectors to improve their management practices and maintain quality educational services. As noted by Dizon (2025), the transfer of students from private to public institutions has intensified competition and financial pressures among private schools, emphasizing the importance of effective strategic management practices in sustaining institutional operations.

Strategic management practices typically include strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. Strategic planning establishes the direction of the institution and outlines its long-term goals and objectives (Aboramadan & Borgonovi, 2016). Strategy formulation involves designing plans and policies that respond to environmental opportunities and threats (Hill et al., 2014). Strategy implementation focuses on translating these plans into concrete actions through the effective use of resources and coordination of institutional activities. Finally, strategy evaluation ensures that implemented strategies are continuously monitored and assessed to determine their effectiveness and to guide necessary improvements.

Despite the recognized importance of strategic management in improving institutional performance, limited empirical studies have examined its relationship with competitive advantage among private schools in Bohol Province. Competitive advantage in educational institutions refers to the ability of schools to outperform others through superior programs, resources, and institutional practices (Fatonah, 2023). Hence, this study aims to determine the strategic management practices and their relationship with the competitive advantage of selected private schools in Bohol during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The study will utilize a structured survey questionnaire adopted and modified from existing instruments on strategic management practices (Owich, 2018). The findings will serve as the basis for developing a Competitive Advantage and Strategic Management Practices Action Plan Framework for Selected Private Schools in Bohol, which may guide school administrators in strengthening institutional strategies and sustaining competitiveness in the evolving educational landscape.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Contingency Theory

The Contingency Theory, introduced by Fred Fiedler in 1967, is one of the most influential theories in organizational and leadership studies. The theory posits that there is no single best way to manage an organization or lead employees. Instead, the effectiveness of management practices depends on the alignment between organizational strategies and the situational factors affecting the organization. These situational factors may include organizational structure, leadership style, technological resources, organizational culture, and environmental conditions. According to contingency theory, optimal organizational performance is achieved when management practices are appropriately aligned with the specific context in which the organization operates (Donaldson, 2001).

In educational institutions, contingency theory suggests that school leaders must adopt management strategies that correspond with the unique conditions of their institutions. For example, a school with limited financial resources may adopt different strategic priorities compared to a well-funded institution with advanced facilities. Similarly, schools operating in highly competitive environments may need to implement innovative programs, strengthen marketing strategies, and enhance service quality to attract students and maintain institutional sustainability.

Recent research highlights that contingency-based leadership and management practices are essential in educational organizations because they allow administrators to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and institutional needs. Nguyen and Tran (2021) found that adaptive leadership practices significantly improve institutional performance in educational organizations by enabling administrators to align strategic initiatives with internal capabilities and external environmental conditions. Similarly, contemporary educational management studies emphasize that strategic planning and flexible management practices enable schools to effectively navigate uncertainties and achieve sustainable institutional development.

In the context of this study, contingency theory provides a useful framework for examining how strategic management practices are implemented in private schools in Bohol. Private educational institutions operate under varying conditions, including differences in resources, enrollment levels, institutional reputation, and community support. As such, school leaders must design and implement strategic management practices that respond effectively to these contextual factors. By applying contingency theory, this study seeks to examine how the alignment between strategic management practices and institutional conditions contributes to the competitive advantage of private schools.

Complexity Theory

Another theoretical foundation of this study is Complexity Theory, which was developed by Stuart Kauffman in 1984. Complexity theory views organizations as dynamic systems composed of multiple interconnected components that interact with each other and with the surrounding environment. According to this theory, organizational outcomes emerge from the interactions of these components rather than from linear cause-and-effect relationships. As a result, organizations operate within environments characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, and continuous change.

Complexity theory emphasizes that organizations must adopt flexible and adaptive management practices to survive and thrive in complex environments. In educational institutions, the complexity of the system arises from the interaction of various stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, students, parents, government agencies, and community partners. Each stakeholder contributes to the functioning of the educational system, and their interactions influence institutional decision-making and performance outcomes.

Recent studies highlight the relevance of complexity theory in educational leadership and strategic management. Mason (2021) emphasized that educational institutions must develop adaptive leadership practices and collaborative governance structures to effectively manage the complexities of modern educational systems. Similarly, educational researchers have noted that strategic management practices that encourage collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning help institutions respond effectively to complex and rapidly changing educational environments.

Within the context of private schools in Bohol, complexity theory explains how various institutional components interact to influence the effectiveness of strategic management practices. These components include leadership decisions, teaching practices, institutional policies, financial resources, and external environmental factors. Because these elements are interconnected, changes in one component may influence the entire organizational system. For example, changes in government policies or enrollment trends may affect institutional finances, program offerings, and staffing decisions.

Therefore, complexity theory provides an important lens for understanding how strategic management practices operate within dynamic educational environments. By examining how private schools manage the interactions among different organizational components, this study aims to identify strategies that contribute to the development of sustainable competitive advantage.

Environment Dependency Theory

The third theoretical foundation of this study is the Environment Dependency Theory, also known as Resource Dependence Theory, which was developed by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Salancik in 1978. This theory posits that organizations depend on external resources to sustain their operations and achieve organizational goals. These resources may include financial support, human capital, technological infrastructure, partnerships, and institutional legitimacy. Because these resources originate from the external environment, organizations must establish relationships with stakeholders and develop strategies that enable them to acquire and manage these resources effectively. Environment dependency theory emphasizes that organizations do not operate in isolation. Instead, they are embedded within networks of stakeholders that influence their access to critical resources. In the case of educational institutions, these stakeholders include government agencies, parents, communities, accreditation bodies, and industry partners. Schools must therefore develop strategies that strengthen their relationships with these stakeholders in order to secure the resources necessary for institutional sustainability.

Recent research supports the relevance of environment dependency theory in educational management. Hillman, Withers, and Collins (2020) emphasized that organizations that actively manage their external relationships and resource dependencies are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In the education sector, institutions that build strong partnerships with communities, industry partners, and government agencies are better positioned to obtain financial support, technological resources, and academic opportunities that enhance institutional performance.

For private schools in Bohol, environment dependency theory is particularly relevant because these institutions rely heavily on tuition fees, enrollment levels, and community support for financial sustainability. Unlike public schools that receive substantial government funding, private schools must develop strategic initiatives that attract students, maintain institutional reputation, and secure external support. Strategic management practices therefore play a critical role in helping these institutions manage resource dependencies and respond to environmental pressures.

Through strategic planning and evaluation processes, school administrators can monitor changes in their external environment and adjust institutional strategies accordingly. By strengthening partnerships, improving educational programs, and enhancing institutional resources, private schools can develop competitive advantages that enable them to sustain their operations and remain relevant in the education sector.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to systematically investigate the nexus between strategic management practices—specifically strategic planning, formulation, implementation, and evaluation—and the competitive advantage of private educational institutions in Bohol, Philippines. Following the structural logic of the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, a conceptual framework was operationalized to diagrammatically map the relationships between these independent and dependent variables, alongside demographic covariates (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive facet of the design detailed the existing conditions and profiles of the respondents, whereas the correlational component statistically examined the relationships among variables without introducing experimental manipulations (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The research environment of Bohol was purposefully selected given its highly competitive educational sector where institutions continually adapt their instructional and management paradigms to meet global demands, though opportunities for systemic improvement persist (Cajilog et al., 2023). From a population of 77 registered private schools in the province, a sample of 64 schools was engaged, yielding 129 respondents—comprising teachers, coordinators, and administrators—calculated via Slovin's formula and selected through purposive sampling to ensure comprehensive representation of key institutional decision-makers.

Data acquisition was executed utilizing an adapted, expert-validated survey instrument specifically calibrated to measure the constructs of strategic management and competitive advantage. The tripartite questionnaire first collected demographic metadata before employing a five-point Likert scale to quantify the implementation levels of strategic management practices (ranging from 1 = Not Implemented to 5 = Fully Implemented) and the corresponding extent of institutional competitive advantage concerning programs, resources, and institutional practices (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Additionally, a parallel scale evaluated the severity of systemic challenges encountered by these academic institutions. Prior to deployment, the instrument underwent rigorous expert validation to verify construct relevance, semantic clarity, and alignment with the study's theoretical underpinnings. Following the acquisition of requisite ethical clearances and institutional permissions, the surveys were administered face-to-face over a concentrated four-week temporal window; this localized, methodical approach maximized the response rate, ensured data fidelity, and strictly adhered to confidentiality protocols to protect respondent anonymity and institutional integrity.

The empirical data were systematically coded, tabulated, and subjected to rigorous statistical analyses using both descriptive and inferential methodologies to address the defined research objectives. Descriptive statistics, encompassing frequency distributions, percentages, weighted means, and standard deviations, were calculated to aggregate demographic profiles, delineate the central tendencies of strategic implementation levels, and quantify the variability in perceived competitive advantages. To test the formulated hypotheses regarding the interplay between the primary variables, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. This inferential technique facilitated the determination of the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the relationship between strategic management capabilities and institutional competitive advantage. Ultimately, the synthesized empirical findings functioned as the analytical foundation for the formulation of a comprehensive Competitive Advantage and Strategic Management Practices Action Plan Framework, designed to provide school administrators with data-driven interventions for optimizing educational resource allocation, enhancing instructional programs, and securing long-term institutional sustainability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile

This section describes the demographic background of the 129 respondents from selected private schools in Bohol for the Academic Year 2025–2026, providing a clear picture of the people working in these institutions. Looking at age, the workforce is mostly made up of young to middle-aged adults. Specifically, 40 percent of the respondents are between 26 and 35 years old, and 39 percent are between 36 and 45 years old. Older educators make up the remaining 22 percent, and there are no respondents under 25. This age pattern pairs with the gender makeup of the group, which is mostly female (57 percent compared to 43 percent male). Having a female-dominated workforce is a common finding in many educational studies. Additionally, the respondents' civil status points to a settled personal background, with more than half being married (56 percent) and a large portion being single (38 percent). Overall, these personal details map out a workforce that is generally mature, mostly female, and established in their personal lives.

In terms of their professional standing, the data reveals a very secure and stable work environment. A vast majority of the respondents, 91 percent, hold regular or permanent jobs, leaving only a small number working as contractual (8 percent) or probationary (2 percent) employees. This high level of job security connects closely to their academic ranks. Instructors make up the largest group at 54 percent, followed by full professors at 24 percent, assistant professors at 12 percent, and associate professors at 6 percent. Similarly, when looking at their actual daily roles, the group is heavily focused on classroom teaching, with 81 percent serving directly as teachers or faculty members. However, the study also includes department heads, coordinators, and school administrators, who make up the remaining 19 percent. This mix ensures that while the results largely reflect the teachers' views, the important perspectives of school leaders and managers are still included.

The respondents' length of teaching experience shows a wide and balanced range of time spent in the education field. The largest single group consists of veteran educators with 16 or more years of teaching experience (25 percent). At the same time, the study captures a good number of newer teachers, with 19 percent having less than three years of experience and 17 percent having four to six years. This blend of new and highly experienced educators provides a well-rounded view of the schools' daily operations. It is important to remember, however, that while this background information helps describe who participated in the study, it serves only as a starting point. The research did not run statistical tests to see if these specific traits—like a person's age, gender, or job title—directly changed how they viewed strategic management or school competitiveness. Therefore, these profiles simply describe the group and should not be used to claim that a specific age or rank causes a person to act differently in the workplace.

Strategic Management Practices

This section examines the overall extent to which selected private schools in Bohol apply strategic management practices to achieve their long-term goals and boost organizational performance. Strategic management is an interconnected cycle composed of four key phases: planning, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Based on the gathered data, the participating schools demonstrated a highly structured approach to management, achieving an overall weighted mean of 4.42 (SD = 0.56), which is interpreted as "Fully Implemented." Within this cycle, strategic planning emerged as the strongest area, recording the highest mean score of 4.52 (SD = 0.57).

This suggests that school leaders are highly capable of mapping out future directions and setting clear institutional goals. Strategy formulation closely followed with a strong score of 4.44 (SD = 0.62), indicating that these schools are also highly effective at designing actionable policies and programs to support their broader educational visions.

Despite the overall high ratings across all four dimensions, a closer comparison of the scores highlights specific areas where institutional processes could be improved. Both strategy implementation and strategy evaluation received the comparatively lowest average scores of 4.36 (SD = 0.63). When looking at the detailed, item-level data, the challenges within these phases become clearer. For instance, the practice of regularly monitoring implemented strategies earned a notably lower score of 4.13, and the systematic use of performance indicators during the evaluation phase scored only 4.04. Furthermore, specific tasks such as conducting thorough internal and external environmental scanning and holding consistent strategic planning activities also received relatively lower ratings. These subtle differences show that while schools excel at creating strategic visions, they experience slight friction when it comes to actively executing these plans and strictly measuring their actual outcomes.

Table No. 1
Summary Results of Strategic Management Practices

Dimensions	Weighted Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Strategic Planning	4.52	0.57	Fully Implemented
Strategy Formulation	4.44	0.62	Fully Implemented
Strategy Implementation	4.36	0.63	Fully Implemented
Strategy Evaluation	4.36	0.63	Fully Implemented
Overall Mean	**4.42**	**0.56**	**Fully Implemented**

These findings do more than just prove that private schools in Bohol have good management systems; they pinpoint exact operational gaps that require targeted interventions. Recognizing that strategy execution and performance tracking are the weakest links allows school administrators to refocus their efforts where they are needed most. Improvements must be directed toward conducting more regular planning activities, analyzing the educational environment more closely, distributing resources more effectively, and using clear metrics to track success. These specific, data-driven insights form the foundation for the proposed Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage Enhancement Action Plan Framework. By addressing these exact areas, the framework will provide educational leaders with a practical, evidence-based guide to strengthen their management processes and ensure long-term institutional success.

Competitive Advantage of Private Schools

This section presents the overall level of competitive advantage of the selected private schools in Bohol. Competitive advantage enables educational institutions to distinguish themselves through quality academic programs, effective resource utilization, and sound institutional practices. Table 2 presents the summary results of the three dimensions of competitive advantage—programs, resources, and institutional practices—providing an overall assessment of the schools' competitiveness.

Table No. 2
Summary Results of Competitive Advantage of Private Schools

Dimensions	Weighted Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Programs	4.36	0.633	Strongly Agree
Resources	4.13	0.741	Agree
Institutional Practices	4.47	0.535	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	**4.32**	**0.59**	**Strongly Agree**

Table 2 presents the summary results for competitive advantage. The overall weighted mean was 4.32 (SD = 0.59) and was verbally interpreted as Strongly Agree.

Among the three dimensions, institutional practices obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.47, followed by programs at 4.36. In contrast, resources obtained the lowest weighted mean of 4.13 and was interpreted as Agree.

The comparative results identify institutional practices as a relative strength of the participating schools, particularly transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Programs were also favorably assessed, particularly the provision of innovative and relevant academic offerings.

However, the lower rating for resources establishes this dimension as the primary area of concern in terms of competitive advantage. Item-level findings particularly identify faculty development and training, financial and material support, learning facilities and equipment, and technological resources as areas that may be strengthened.

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The programs dimension also revealed a specific area of concern in continuous curriculum improvement, while the institutional-practices dimension showed that collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators received the lowest rating within that dimension.

Consequently, the findings provide several priority areas for the proposed Action Plan Framework: resource development and mobilization, faculty development, financial and material support, technology and facilities enhancement, continuous curriculum improvement, and stronger institutional collaboration.

Test of Significant Relationship between Strategic Management Practices and Competitive Advantage of Private Schools

This section presents the relationship between strategic management practices and the competitive advantage of selected private schools in Bohol. The analysis examines whether strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation are significantly associated with competitive advantage in terms of programs, resources, and institutional practices. Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis between these variables.

Table No. 3

Test of Significant Relationship between Strategic Management Practices and Competitive Advantage of Private Schools

Strategic Management Practices and Competitive Advantage of Private Schools	Programs		Resources		Institutional Practices		OVERALL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS	
	r-value	p-value	r-value	p-value	r-value	p-value	r-value	p-value
Strategic Planning	0.72	0.000***	0.65	0.000***	0.73	0.000***	0.74	0.000***
Strategy Formulation	0.80	0.000***	0.70	0.000***	0.79	0.000***	0.81	0.000***
Strategy Implementation	0.83	0.000***	0.70	0.000***	0.79	0.000***	0.81	0.000***
Strategy Evaluation	0.82	0.000***	0.79	0.000***	0.83	0.000***	0.87	0.000***
OVERALL STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES	**0.85**	**0.000*** **	**0.79**	**0.000*** **	**0.86**	**0.000*** **	**0.89**	**0.000*** **

*Note: * = significant at p < .05; ** = significant at p < .01; *** = significant at p < .001.*

Table 3 presents the relationship between strategic management practices and competitive advantage among selected private schools in Bohol. Unlike the demographic profile, this part of the study involved inferential statistical testing; therefore, conclusions regarding significant relationships may appropriately be made.

The findings show that all dimensions of strategic management practices had statistically significant positive relationships with the dimensions of competitive advantage, with all p-values below .001. Overall strategic management practices were strongly to very strongly associated with programs (r = .85), resources (r = .79), and institutional practices (r = .86). The relationship between overall strategic management practices and overall competitive advantage was very strong and positive (r = .89, p < .001).

Among the strategic-management dimensions, strategy evaluation demonstrated the strongest relationship with overall competitive advantage (r = .87, p < .001). Strategy evaluation was also positively and significantly related to programs (r = .82), resources (r = .79), and institutional practices (r = .83). The results indicate that higher levels of strategy evaluation tend to occur together with higher levels of competitive advantage among the participating schools.

Strategy formulation and strategy implementation each demonstrated a strong positive relationship with overall competitive advantage (r = .81, p < .001). Strategy formulation was significantly associated with programs (r = .80), resources (r = .70), and institutional practices (r = .79), while strategy implementation was significantly associated with programs (r = .83), resources (r = .70), and institutional practices (r = .79).

Strategic planning likewise demonstrated significant positive relationships with programs (r = .72), resources (r = .65), institutional practices (r = .73), and overall competitive advantage (r = .74, p < .001). Although these coefficients were lower than those obtained for some of the other strategic-management dimensions, the relationships remained statistically significant and positive.

Across the dimensions of competitive advantage, institutional practices demonstrated the strongest relationship with overall strategic management practices (r = .86), closely followed by programs (r = .85). Resources obtained the comparatively lowest correlation (r = .79), although the relationship remained strong and statistically significant.

Based on the overall correlation coefficient of r = .89 with p < .001, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between strategic management practices and competitive advantage is rejected. The findings establish that strategic management practices are significantly and positively associated with competitive advantage among the selected private schools in Bohol.

However, the correlation should not be interpreted as proof of causation. The findings establish an association between the variables; they do not demonstrate that strategic management practices directly cause competitive advantage.

Taken together, the descriptive and correlational findings provide a clear basis for the proposed Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage Enhancement Action Plan Framework. The framework should particularly respond to the comparatively lower-rated areas involving regular strategic planning, environmental scanning, strategy monitoring, performance indicators, resource allocation, continuous curriculum improvement, faculty development, financial and material support, facilities and technology, institutional collaboration, and the identified challenges in sustaining competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that strategic management practices are significantly and positively associated with the competitive advantage of selected private schools in Bohol. The findings indicate that schools with stronger strategic planning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation also tend to demonstrate stronger programs, resources, and institutional practices. However, comparatively lower-rated areas, particularly in monitoring, performance evaluation, resource development, and sustaining competitiveness, require further enhancement. The findings generally affirm the principles of Strategic Management Theory, which emphasize the importance of integrated planning, implementation, and evaluation in achieving organizational goals, and the Resource-Based View, which recognizes the strategic development and utilization of institutional resources and capabilities as foundations of competitive advantage. Overall, the findings confirm that effective strategic management and competitive advantage are closely interconnected, providing the basis for the proposed Action Plan Framework.

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