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Effect of Collaborations on Competitive Advantage of Universities in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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Abstract:
The purpose of the study was to establish the effect of collaborations on competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. This was in the light of concern that there has been intensified competition in the higher education; there are also limited number of student who attained minimum C+ requirement for university entry. The study was anchored on resource based theory which postulates that a firm's resources should be Valuable, Rare, In-imitable and Non-substitutable (VRIN). The study employed causal comparative research design. The target population of the study was 310 employees in the universities. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were was employed to select a sample of 170 employees. Questionnaire was used to collect data. Content validity was established through consultation with experts in that area of strategic alliances. Cronbach alpha coefficient was employed to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Data was analyzed in both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were analyzed and presented in form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Pearson correlational and multiple regression analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. The study established that there was a significant relationship between collaboration ($p=0.000<0.05$ and $\beta= 0.798$) and competitive advantage of Kenyan universities. The study concluded collaborations had an effect on the competitive advantage of universities. The study also recommended that the universities forge collaborations as a means to enhance on improve on geographical and market diversification.

Keyword: *Strategic alliances, collaborations, competitive advantages, universities*

1. Introduction

A strategic alliance is a formal arrangement between two or more parties to pursue a set of agreed upon objectives while remaining independent organizations. Partners may provide the strategic alliance with resources such as products, services, distribution channels, project funding, capital equipment, knowledge, expertise, or intellectual property (Besanko, Dranove, Shanley & Schaefer, 2013). The motives of strategic alliances for universities includes: to gain access to new markets, to accelerate the pace of entry into new markets, to boost research and development and to broaden product lines and to learn new skills (Išoraite, 2011). The formation of strategic alliances has been seen as a response to globalization and increasing uncertainty and complexity in the business environment. For example, instead of treating colleges and private universities as a possible threat, establishing strategic alliances may bind the focal firms together. For universities, strategic alliance could mean that different universities and other institutions of higher learning need not compete for the same students.

Universities are trying to maximize their competitive advantage through strategic alliances. For example, to attract students from foreign countries, universities are overcoming entry barriers by collaborating with universities in the target country and reciprocate by allowing foreign universities access to students in their own countries (Sifuna, 2014). Universities forge for strategic alliances in the fields of research, and innovation with players in the corporate world for providing solutions to societal and developmental problems (Arasa & Mayunga, 2009). Globally, universities have been forging for partnerships with their counterparts abroad (Cateora & Ghauri, 2006). Nearly half (45 percent) of the institutions in USA offered one or more international collaborative programs arranged with non-U.S. institutions overseas (ACE, 2012). According to a survey by the International Association of Universities (IAU) (2013) among 782 institutions worldwide there were reported data on international collaborative degree programs, 64 percent offered joint degree programs with USA (Egron-Polak & Hudson 2014). However, along the opportunities there were a myriad of challenges ranging from identifying appropriate models for collaboration, finding partners and negotiating agreements, to managing cultural differences and expectations from the collaborating countries (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014).

In China, Thompson and Strickland (2007) observed that the University of Tulsa and the University of Petroleum Beijing launched a comprehensive collaboration of their jointly administered dual degree program. The collaboration allowed Chinese students in the fields of petroleum engineering, chemical engineering, economics, finance, and accounting to obtain a bachelor's degree from each of the two institutions. In Africa, strategic alliance has become a cornerstone of global competitiveness. This was attributed to increased unpredictable economic trends, operational efficiency, market share and customer retention and service (Lorange & Roos, 2002). In mitigating these challenges firms have formed strategic alliances. The formation of strategic alliances seeks to attain competitive advantage and survival (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2009; Gomes-Casseres, 2004; Spekman, Lynn & MacAvoy, 2010; Gomes-Casseres, 2006). According to Doz and Hamel (2008) strategic alliances were a logical and timely response to intense and rapid changes in the economic activity, technology and globalization.

The bulk of Government of Kenya funding in universities goes to personnel emoluments and operations (Kinyua, 2010), with petite provision left for research, teaching and learning materials (Gongera & Okoth, 2012). With the dwindling funding from the government, universities have entered into strategic alliances with foreign universities and local companies through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), collaborations or joint venture (Wangenge-Ouma &Nafukho, 2011). The strategic alliances were meant to build both physical and human capacity through collaborative programmes (Wangenge-Ouma & Nafukho, 2011). In other instances, universities had collaborated with industry both in the private sector and public sector, for mutual benefit like the development of patents which had profited both organizations (O'Brien, Wakeham & Walsh, 2009). Increasing competition in the higher education sector with intensified increase of private universities and inadequate funding of universities have created a room for formation of strategic alliances (Kinyua, 2010). Majority of the universities were also forming strategic alliances to preserve consumer market, to stay relevant and afloat by focusing on offering unique products that were generally valued by customers. In addition, since the rate of university expansion was much faster than that of producing critical human resources such professors, universities had utilized the availability of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) tools to develop platform such as the virtual and e-learning which benefits many students as possible benefit using one professor who does not have to be at site or could be on loan from university outside the country (Kinyanjui & Juma, 2014).

However, according to Bannerman, Philip, Jeremy and Joan (2005), few universities were likely to sustain this high-level investment in new technology-based delivery channels without the formation of strategic alliances with other players to support their expansion. The benefit from participating instrategic alliances was the circulation of resources within the supportive movement, thuscreating a multiple effect in terms of growth (Kuria, 2002). However, strategic alliances require effort on the parts of the stakeholders to ensure that problems of management and organizational differences were dealt with in a manner that utilizes the different strengths of the players since forming alliances is easy but sustaining them is the difficult part of the process (Karanja, 2006).

Cheboi (2014) detected that the government has been facing constraints in funding the universities and foreign partnerships and financing had played a crucial role in alleviating the universities' financial shortcomings (Kiptoo, 2004). Nevertheless, financial limitation still remained the universities', yet they were expected to provide quality education to their students whose population had been growing promptly (Kinyua, 2010). It was because of this situation that some universities in their attempts to be frugal in expenditure, they have considered outsourcing as an option in their efforts to cut costs, improve efficiency and meet the demands for greater accountability.

Strategic alliances have grown in frequency and complexity as organizations seek new ways of coping with global competition, environmental turbulences, shorter product life cycles and economic uncertainties. Universities in Kenya are facing major challenges with the increasing demand for higher education such as inadequate and poorly maintained teaching, learning and research facilities. Universities have to compete for scarce government resources as the exchequer has limited funds to cater for universities budgets. There has been an increase in the number of students following free primary education and introduction of module II programmes. This has resulted in a policy which devolves greater responsibilities for financing higher education to the respective institutions It is against this background that the study was conducted to investigate the effect of collaborations on competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Globally, the role of a university is to teach, conduct research and community service. The association between the university and the community is provision of human resource needs for the society. However, the higher education sector in Kenya has experienced dynamic changes in the external environment which includes increased population of students seeking higher education, turbulence in economy, new government policies and emergence of many private universities just to mention but a few. Increasingly demand for higher education with a growing population has stretched physical infrastructure of universities (Kinyua, 2010). Also, the Government of Kenya and international donors have challenged universities in Africa to justify their existence and their claims to the massive funds allocated to them. This was as result of a sharp increase in cumulative recurrent deficits from KShs. 503,280,937 in 2006 and to KShs. 1,336,099,937 in 2012 (Mwiria, Ng'ethe & Ngome, 2013).

The increased changes in the higher education have caused the universities to undergo changes to survive and compete effectively (Sifuna, 2014). It has acted as a catalyst for growing implementation of strategic alliances to address competitiveness, risks, quality assurance, market information and interdependence. With government funding dwindling for universities and the market share shrinking fast, universities fight to increase their market share. Uasin Gishu County has seen an upsurge in the entry of universities setting up in the county, many of whom have alliances with middle level tertiary institutions. However, as the number of strategic alliances continues to surge, majority have also failed (Kinyua, 2010), raising question on their effectiveness. Therefore, the study was conducted investigate the effect of collaborations on competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County.

1.2. Research Questions

The study sought to investigate the effect of collaboration on competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County

1.3. Research Hypotheses

The study hypothesized that collaborations affect the competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Resource Based View (RBV) theory as a basis for competitive advantage. The theory was put forward by Birger Wernerfeit (1984). The theory postulated that a firm's resources should have four characteristic criterions namely: Valuable, Rare, In-imitable and Non-substitutable (VRIN) to have a competitive advantage (Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2010). The Resource-Based View stresses the internal aspects of a firm and suggests that there is a relationship between a firm's competitive strategy and its accumulated resources (Das & Teng, 2000). As pointed out by Barney (1991), a firm's sustained competitive advantage is influenced by resources and capabilities that can effectively be utilized by the particular firm. Generally, the Resource-Based View explained what Das and Teng (2000) conclude that "what a firm possesses would determine what it accomplishes". Through strategic alliances, firms can access resources to achieve competitive advantages (Das & Teng, 2000). Sheppard (1995) added that the supply of resources is critical to firm's survival.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) regards firms as collections of resources that include tangible assets and capabilities (or intangible assets—usually semi-permanently attached to the firm). This collection of resources must be simultaneously different to help gain the sustainable competitive advantage. Firms need to develop difficult to replicate products within a certain time frame; and can enhance the value of their existing resources. From this perspective, firms adopt alliances as a means to extend their collection of value-creating resources, which are otherwise unattainable independently. Hence this study defined resource availability as organization's tangible assets as well as intangible assets that include technology and knowledge embedded in product material, physical assets, processes and production, and management capabilities.

1.5. Empirical Review of Literature on Collaboration and Competitive Advantage among Universities

Mansor (2017) investigated the effect of International Strategic Alliance in Higher Education Sectors (Learning for Competitive Advantage) - A Case from Malaysian Private College. This was attributed to the growing trend of internationalization of education or universities, has called either government public universities or private sponsor universities to take up the challenges. At this point, the findings from an internationalization process of higher education provider who formed strategic alliance with the purpose to achieve learning and seek competitive advantage. In particular, study International Strategic Alliances (ISAs) and organizational learning (OL) process were discussed, which took place via strategic co-operation between parent foreign partner and „child" alliance company/business.

Finally, the discussed the key elements promoting learning as well as factors that inhibit learning via the process of strategic collaboration which lead to bringing competitive advantage to the partners. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach in a selected private higher education institution from a developing country, which formed strategic alliance with an established international university from developed country. This approach was used in order to support the study of how a newly established education institution has taken opportunity to collaborate with an established university from developed country so that the process of collaboration would help management to the achieve the competitive advantage. Data were collected mainly using semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from both collaborative parties.

A study was conducted by Franco (2011) to investigate the determining factors in the success of strategic alliances among Portuguese firms. This was in the light of concern that despite alliances being seen as one of many strategies that can lead firms to success, they are not always successful. The study employed survey research design. The study had a target population of 624 firms which had formed strategic alliances from 2006-2010. Convenience sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 109 alliances formed by Portuguese firms. Questionnaire and key informant interviews were employed as data collection instruments. Data was analyzed in both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The most outstanding factors affecting alliance success were good relationship with the partner, mutual trust, a minimum commitment between the parties, and clear objectives and strategy. The logistic regression results also suggested that strategic alliance success was influenced more by process than structural factors. The study concluded that to examine strategic alliance success, potential partners, managers and institutions were advised to focus on relationships and compatibility, harmony and organizational culture, interaction between partners and government policies and previous experience.

The reviewed study was conducted in Portuguese a developed country while the current study was conducted in Kenya a developing country. The reviewed study focused on determining factors in the success of strategic alliances among Portuguese firms while the current study focused on the effect of strategic alliances on competitive advantage on universities. The reviewed study employed survey research design while the current study employed ex-post facto research design. The reviewed study employed convenience sampling technique while the current study employed stratified and simple random sampling techniques.

Išoraltė (2006) carried out a study on the importance of strategic alliances in company's activity in Pakistan. The study sought to analyze the definition of strategic alliance, its benefits, types, process of formation, and provides a few cases studies of strategic alliances. It tried to synthesize the scope and role of marketing functions in the determination of effectiveness of strategic alliances. Several propositions from a marketing viewpoint concerning the analysis of alliance process were formulated. The findings of the study indicated that Strategic alliances are no longer a strategic option but a necessity in many markets and industries, strategic alliances are increasingly becoming an important part of overall corporate strategy, as a way to grow product and service offerings, develop new markets and leverage technology and R&D, strategic alliances are an indispensable tool in today's competitive business environment.

And many global companies have multiple alliances, some global, requiring coordination with numerous partners. However, the study failed to indicate the research design, target population and the sample and sampling techniques employed in the study. The study was also conducted in Pakistan a developed country therefore this current study in Kenya a developing country. The study only focused on importance of strategic alliances while the current study focused on the effect of strategic alliances on competitive advantages on universities in Uasin Gishu County.

Jabar, Soosay, Othman and Tahir (2011) conducted a study to investigate the Factors Influencing Strategic Technology Alliance Formation of Malaysian Manufacturers. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between organizations' human resource availability, absorptive capacity and formation and success of strategic alliances performance. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study targeted 2500 manufacturing companies in Malaysia. Simple random sampling techniques were employed to select a sample 335 manufacturing organizations in Malaysia. Data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

The result established that Malaysian manufacturers needed to increase their efforts in increasing internal human resource that were the source of competitive advantage in order to achieve superior strategic alliance performance. The study also established that collaborations should be seen as opportunities to create, store and apply knowledge. The study also established that managers had to consider how to manage such strategic alliances partnerships to enhance the capabilities and performance of manufacturing companies. Therefore, a more pressing strategy was to better understand the key performance objectives of Malaysian manufacturers and shaping the manufacturing environment as managers could focus on improving their absorptive capacity and human resources in terms of technology acquisition.

However, the reviewed study was conducted in Malaysia and focused on the Factors Influencing Strategic Technology Alliance Formation of Malaysian Manufacturers while the current study was conducted in Kenya. The reviewed study focused on manufacturing companies while the current study focused on universities. Both studies employed descriptive survey research design. The reviewed employed structural equation model as data analysis technique while the current study employed multiple regression analysis.

Kinyua (2010) conducted a study to investigate the strategic alliances between Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and middle level colleges in Kenya. The purpose of this study was to shed some light on motivation of such domestic strategic alliances where internationalization is not one of such motive. The study employed case study research design. Data was gathered through interviews with three respondents who were involved in the formation and management of the alliances. Content analysis was used to analyze the information gathered. The study established that alliances were formed with a motive/s of enabling students who would otherwise be locked out of universities owing to stiff competition to progress with their studies hence exploiting this niche market. This was helped to reduce brain drain and capital leaving Kenya economy.

The collaborations intended also to tap the resources from vocational economies of scale and enjoy faster payback on investment. The network faced challenges like opportunism by some partners, lack of adequate man power, loss of trust among partners, difficulties in meeting critical deadlines by partners and lack of experience in the management of strategic alliance by some partners. The reviewed study was conducted in JKUAT while the current study was conducted among universities in Uasin Gishu County that is both public and private universities. The reviewed study focused on strategic alliances between JKUAT and middle colleges while the current study focused on effect of strategic alliances on competitive advantages. The reviewed study employed case study research design while the current study employed descriptive survey research design. The researcher considered a sample of three respondents was inadequate for research findings generalization. Also, the target population and sampling technique were missing in the study. The study only focused on one aspect of strategic alliances while the current study focused on all aspect of strategic alliances.

Sifuna (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effect of competitive strategies on performance of universities in Kenya. This was attributed to the fact that the current operational set-up in Kenya's universities is a turbulent one and highly competitive market condition. To ensure survival and sustainability in the market place the universities required adopting a competitive strategy. The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of competitive strategies on the performance of universities in Kenya. This research problem was studied using a descriptive survey design. The target population was 162 employees from which 54 were chosen as the sample size. Stratified disproportionate sampling technique was used to select the sample.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Responses in the questionnaires were tabulated, coded and processed by use of a computer Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 programme to analyze the data using descriptive statistics. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the competitive strategies and market sustainability. The findings were that economies of scale to a very great extent affect performance of universities. It was further established that capacity utilization of resources, reducing operations time and costs, efficiency and cost control, mass production and mass distribution as aspects of cost leadership affected performance in the university to great extent, differentiation based on product/service, differentiation based on promotion/ advertising campaign and differentiation based on personnel affected performance of the university and market focus affected performance of the university.

The study concluded that cost leadership affects performance of universities in Kenya through achieving economies of scale, capacity utilization of resources, reducing operations time and costs, efficiency and cost control, mass production, forming linkages with service providers, suppliers and other supplementary institutions and mass distribution and that differentiation affect performance of the university through product/service, promotion/ advertising campaign, personnel differentiation. The study recommended that universities should embrace and invest in cost leadership strategies most especially forming linkages with service providers. The study also recommended that suppliers and other supplementary institutions since it will enable them to achieve competitive advantage as compared to other universities that are not investing in these strategies

The study also recommended that universities should first understand and know their motive and capability before adopting a certain competitive strategy for example market focus. The reviewed study focused on competitive strategies employed among universities while the current study will be conducted in universities in Uasin Gishu and will focus on effect of collaborations on competitive advantage of universities. However, the study failed to indicate how the sample size was selected and from which institutions since the study focused on all the universities. The study employed descriptive survey research design which was considered appropriate.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1. Research Design

Research design is a plan that outlines the exact nature and character and course of the entire research work (Khan, 2008). According to Kothari (2006) the research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted, it constitutes blue print for collection, measurement analysis of data. Essentially research design will communicate what the researcher intends to do from writing of the hypothesis, and its operational implications to the final analysis of data. The study will employ causal comparative research design. The research design was preferred for its advantages that it presents such the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection as discussed by Creswell (2003).Therefore in this study the research was very specific on the phenomena under study, being the effect of collaborations on competitive advantages. The focus was the effect of collaborations on competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. As pointed out by Creswell (2003) causal comparative research design allowed the collection of information by administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals.

2.2. Target Population

The larger group of individuals to whom the research findings are generalized is called target population, (Noum, 2007). Furthermore, Noum, 2007 refers to a target population as the total number of subjects or the total environment of interest to the researcher. The study targeted deans/ directors, management boards and heads of academic departments of nine (8) public and private universities operating in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. These were targeted for the reason that they are at the operational level in terms of functions in the organizational structure of the universities. This means that this is the group with the responsibility to operationalize collaborations within their departments/sections. On the other hand, it is the management that is charged with the tasks of negotiating, drawing the contracts and laying the structures for the implementation of the collaborations and other strategic alliances, on behalf of the councils, within the universities. The public universities included Moi University, University of Eldoret, Kisii University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University. The private universities included The University of Eastern African Baraton, Mount Kenya University.

Category	Target
Moi University	87
University of Eldoret	79
Kisii University	13
Jomo Kenyatta University Of Agriculture And Technology	35
Nairobi University	16
Kenyatta University	16
Mount Kenya university	42
The University of Eastern Africa Baraton	23
Total	310

Table 1: Target Population
Source: Human Resource Records, 2017

2.3. Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedure

Kothari (2006), indicated that the sample should be truly representative of population characteristics without bias so that it may result in valid ad reliable conclusions. Therefore, for the sample to be representative, the sample must be arrived at through a systematic process.

Category	Target	Sample size
Moi University	87	48
University of Eldoret	79	43
Kisii University	13	7
Jomo Kenyatta University Of Agriculture And Technology	35	19
Nairobi University	16	9
Kenyatta University	16	9
Mount Kenya university	41	22
The University of eastern Africa Baraton	23	13
Total	310	170

Table 2: Sample and Sampling Procedure
Source: Researcher, 2018

The study employed stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The employees were stratified depending on their universities. After stratification, the study adopted simple random sampling techniques to select a representative sample. Simple random sampling technique ensured all the employees were given an equal chance of participating in the study. After establishing the required number of participants, an equivalent number of small papers was written (Y) for Yes and the rest of the papers (N) for No. All the staff in each designation were given a chance to pick one paper at random. Those who picked 'Yes' were allowed to participate in the study. A total sample of 170 respondents were therefore be selected to participate in the study.

2.4. Description of Research Instruments

The study employed questionnaires to collect primary data.

2.4.1. Questionnaires for the Employees

A questionnaire is a research tool that gathers data over a large sample within a short period of time (Walliman, 2011). The structured questionnaires were used to get responses from management boards members and directors/deans on the effect of collaborations on competitive advantages in universities in Uasin Gishu County. The closed ended questionnaire was formulated in the form of a Likert scale type. The advantage of using this type of questionnaire is the ease that it accords the researcher during the analysis (Noum, 2007). The open-ended questionnaires enabled the researcher to get additional information that may not have been gotten from the closed ended questionnaires. Moreover, questionnaires were easy to administer and are economical to use in terms of time and money (Noum, 2007). The closed ended questions provided a greater uniformity and are more easily processed. The structured questionnaires was accompanied by a list of all possible alternatives from which respondents would select the suitable answer that best describes their situation by simply ticking (Noum, 2007).The questionnaires designed for the purposes of this study, has 3 sections. Section A sought background data, more specifically demographic data. This was considered important to the study as it pointed out the demography of the people who have the responsibility of negotiating and implementing of strategic alliance in terms of age, gender education background and the number of years that they have held the current position and in the years of institutions (Noum, 2007). Section B sought information on effect of collaborations on competitive advantages. Section C focused on the competitive advantages of universities in Uasin Gishu county.

2.5. Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

2.5.1. Validity of the Research Instruments

The validity of research is concerned with the extent to which data measures what they are supported to measure. In measurement of validity, it is quantified if administer a test to a subject twice and get the same score on the second administration as on the first (Noum, 2007). Validity was tested through expert opinion from the research experts that will help the researcher determine if the questionnaire is answering all the research questions with an aim of ensuring that relevant data is collected. Thus, the questions were based on the research questions. The opinion of the experts which in this case was comprised of the supervisors played a very significant role in determining the validity of the research instruments. The questionnaires used for the study was pre-tested through a pilot study before actual data collection. Pilot study involved conducting an initial test of data collection instruments and processes to spot and eradicate errors. This enabled a revision of the questionnaire before actual data collection. The pilot study was done in University of Eldoret town Campus with ten staff holding managerial position as required by (Creswell, 2003). The University of Eldoret was chosen because it is a similar institution of higher learning in Eldoret region that operates at almost the same level. The results from the piloting will assist in restructuring the questions in the questionnaire that will not be clear to the respondents.

2.5.2. Reliability of the Research Instruments

Reliability is the consistency of the research instrument. According to Noum (2007), it is observed that reliability is a measure of degree to which a research will yield consistent results after repeated trials. To ensure reliability of the research instruments, the questionnaires that were used for the purposes of this study was subjected to a pilot study. The results of the pilot was used to carry out a Cronbach Alpha analysis that helped to determine the reliability of the research questions. As a general rule, a value of $\alpha > 0.7$ was considered reliable enough for each of the data sets where α is the item being tested for reliability. The results from piloting was used to assist in restructuring the questions in the questionnaire that are not clear to the respondents.

	Reliability Statistics	
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Collaboration	0.789	7
Competitive advantage	0.831	5

Table 3: Reliability Index

2.6. Description of Data Collection Procedures

The first step was to seek for a letter of introduction from Catholic University of Eastern Africa, a step which helped the researcher to get information easily. The researcher also sought a permit from The National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) to carry-out the study. After the permit had been obtained, the researcher informed the respective university management of the intended study after which an appointment with the various respondents was sought. With the help of a research assistant, the researcher distributed the questionnaires which were collected back as agreed upon between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher explained to the respondents about the research and its purpose. It was made clear that the participation was voluntary and that the respondents were free to decline or withdraw anytime during the research period. The participants were informed of the consent to make the choice to participate or not. They were guaranteed that their privacy would be protected by strict standards of anonymity.

2.7. Description of Data Analysis Procedures

The study employed quantitative approaches as data analysis techniques. Quantitative data from questionnaires was coded and entered in to the computer for computation of descriptive statistics. The data was analyzed in descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was analyzed in form of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation. Multiple regression and Pearson correlational analysis were employed to test the hypotheses. The confidence interval will be set at 95%.

The regression model was:

$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\varepsilon$

Y= the dependent variable (competitive advantages)

β_0=Yintercept (constant)

$\beta_1$toβ_4=regressioncoefficients

X_1= collaborations

ε=errorterm

3. Findings of the Study

3.1. Respondents Demographic Characteristics

The demographic information of the respondents was considered very crucial not only for subsequent discussions of the findings but also for the authenticity and generalization of the results. This section, therefore, presents respondents' background information which is considered crucial for discussions in this study such as gender, age, education level and working experience in the Kenyan Universities. The results were as shown

Statement	**Frequency**	**%**
Male	80	52.6
Female	72	47.4
Total	152	100

Table 4: Gender of the Respondents
Source: Survey Data, 2018

Majority of the university employees were male as they comprised (52.6%) of the total respondents while female were (47.4%) of the respondents. The almost equal number of the employees in the universities could be attributed to equal chance given to male and female employees. This was a clear indication that the universities had employed gender parity in their employment by giving male and female employees an equal chance.

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
20-29 years	24	15.8
30-39 years	25	16.3
40-49 years	50	33.2
50-59 years	53	34.7
Total	152	100

Table 5: Age Brackets of the Respondents
Source: Survey Data 2018

The findings revealed that (15.8%) of the respondents were between 20-29 years while between 30-39 years were 16(16.3%). Between 40-49 years were 33(33.2%) while those 50-59 years were 34(34.7). Majority of the employees were found to be between 40-49 years that is productive age that is capable of initiating, formulating and implementing strategic alliances for the competitive advantage of their universities. The young and energetic age of the employees in the Universities also indicated that majority of the employees had knowledge that would be used to ensure that the strategic alliances did not fail at an early stage.

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelors	16	10.5
Masters	69	45.1
Postgraduate Diploma	32	21.1
PhD	35	23.3
Total	152	100

Table 6: Educational Qualification of the Employees
Source: Survey Data, 2018

The education level of the respondent was not only important to researcher during data collection exercise but also in their participation in the formulation and implementation of the strategic alliances to help gain competitive advantages in the Universities. The findings revealed that 45.1% of the employees had attained a master's degree, 23.3% of the employees had attained PhD educational level, 21.1% of the employees had attained Postgraduate Diploma and 10.5% of the employees had a Bachelor's degree programmes. From the findings it was clear that majority of the employees had attained maximal educational levels and thus had all the required knowledge in the formulation and implementation of the strategic alliances in order to gain competitive advantage for their Universities.

Statement	Frequency	%
Below 1 year	8	5.3
2-5 years	19	12.6
6-10 years	53	35.1
11-15 years	58	37.9
Above 16 years	14	9.1
Total	152	100.0

Table 7: Working Experience of the Employees
Source: Survey Data, 2018

The study sought to investigate the working experience of the employees in the universities. the study established that majority 37.9% of the employees had a working experience of 11-15 years, 35.1% of the employees had a work experience of 6-10 years, 12.6% of the employees has a work experience of 2-5 years, 9.1% of the employees had work experience of more than 16 years' work experience and only 5.3% of the employees had an experience of below 1 year. The findings indicated that majority of the employees in the universities had the required knowledge to help in the implementation of strategic alliances in the universities to assist in their implementations.

3.2. Effect of Collaboration on Competitive Advantage of Kenyan Universities

The study sought to investigate the effect of collaboration on competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. Collaboration is the order of day in universities as a strategy for accessing more markets and geographical diversification. To measure effect of collaboration on competitive advantage on Kenya Universities a set of seven statements was formulated. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of agreement with each of statements. The statements were anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1-Strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agrees and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to the statements. Descriptive measures included frequency, percentage, means and standard deviation. The pertinent results are presented in Table 4.5.

Collaboration of Universities	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
Collaboration of the university with international universities have improve the market diversity this promoting the competitiveness	(52.6%)	(35.1%)	(7.0%)	(5.3%)	0(0.0%)	4.35
Increasing of the number of campus and collaboration with colleges has helped the university in penetrating to new markets	(48.9%)	(35.9%)	(5.3%)	(7.0%)	(2.9%)	4.36
The university formation of collaboration has promoted capacity development	52(52.6%)	34(35.1%)	7(7.0%)	3(3.5%)	2(1.8%)	4.33
Collaboration of the universities and colleges around Kenya has promoted market diversification into diploma courses which had improved on the competitiveness	48(49.1%)	34(35.1%)	5(5.3%)	9(8.8%)	2(1.8%)	4.21
Collaboration of the universities had promoted geographical diversification which had improved on the competitive advantage.	41(42.1%)	36(36.8%)	10(10.5%)	9(8.8%)	2(1.8%)	4.08
Collaboration of the universities with colleges has promoted product diversification which had promoted competitive advantage	53(54.4%)	29(29.8%)	12(12.3%)	3(3.5%)	0(0.0%)	4.37
Universities are forming collaboration with international universities to overcoming entry barriers	31(31.6%)	41(42.1%)	8(8.8%)	12(12.3%)	5(5.3%)	3.82

Table 8: Collaborations and Competitive Advantage of Kenyan Universities
Source: Survey Data, 2018

From Table 4.5, the researcher noted that (52.6%) and (35.1%) of the employees in the universities strongly agreed and agreed respectively that collaboration of their university with international universities have improve the market diversity this promoting the competitiveness. However, (7.0%) of the employees and 5(5.3%) of the employees were undecided and disagreed respectively that collaboration of the university with international universities have improve the market diversity thus promoting the competitiveness. Further, (48.9%) and (35.1%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that increasing of the number of campus and collaboration with colleges had helped the university in penetrating to new markets. Only, 5(5.3%) were undecided, 7(7.0%) of the employees disagreed and 3(2.9%) of the employees strongly disagreed that increasing of the number of campus and collaboration with colleges has helped the university in penetrating to new markets. On to whether the university formation of collaboration had promoted capacity development in the universities. The study established that majority 52(52.6%) and 34(35.1% of the employees strongly agreed and agreed that the university formation of collaboration had promoted capacity development, 7(7.0%) of the employees were undecided while 3(3.5%) and 2(1.8%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively the university formation of collaboration had promoted capacity development. Moreover, (49.1%) and (35.1%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively collaboration of the universities and colleges around Kenya has promoted market diversification into diploma courses which had improved on their competitiveness. Only,(5.3%), (8.8%) and (1.8%) of the employees were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed that collaboration of the universities and colleges around Kenya has promoted market diversification into diploma courses which had improved on the competitiveness

On to whether collaboration of the universities had promoted geographical diversification which had improved on the competitive advantage (42.1%) and (36.8%) strongly agreed and agreed respectively that through collaborations, universities has gained competitive advantage. Nevertheless, (10.5%), (8.8%) and (1.8%) of the employees were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that collaboration of the universities had promoted geographical diversification which had improved on the competitive advantage. The study sought to investigate whether collaboration of the universities with colleges has promoted product diversification which had promoted competitive advantage (54.4%

and (29.8%) of the employees strongly agree and agreed that collaboration of the universities with colleges has promoted product diversification which had promoted competitive advantage, (12.3%) of the employees were undecided while (3.5%) disagreed that collaboration of the universities with colleges has promoted product diversification which had promoted competitive advantage

The study also sought to investigate whether the Universities were forming collaboration with international universities to overcoming entry barriers. The study established that (31.6%) of the employees strongly agreed that universities were forming collaboration with international universities to overcoming entry barriers, (42.1%) of the employees agreed (8.8%) of the employees were undecided while 17.8% of the employees disagreed that universities were forming collaboration with international universities to overcoming entry barriers

3.3. Pearson Correlational Analysis Results

To explore the effect of collaboration and competitiveness of Kenyan Universities, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results of the Pearson Correlational analysis are summarized in table 4.9. According to the table, there is a positive and significant relationship between collaboration between the universities and colleges and international universities at (r=0.894) and competitive advantage of the Kenyan universities

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Competitive advantage of universities	1				
Collaborations	0.894	1			

Table 9: Pearson Correlation Analysis
Source: Survey Data, 2018

The results indicated that collaboration of the Universities with colleges and international universities had that highest effect on the competitive advantage of the universities as indicated by (r = 0.894). The findings implied that collaboration alliances had a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage of the universities.

3.4. Multiple Regression Results

Multiple Linear Regression analysis for effect of collaboration and competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities was done. This also aided in coming up with the coefficients of the study model as well as R square of the study. The results are as shown in Table 10 and Table 11.

Model Summary						
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.930[a]	0.865	0.863	0.17102	8.827	0.000

Table 10: Regression Analysis of Independent Variables and Competitive Advantage of Kenyan Universities
a. Predictors: (Constant), Collaborations.
b. Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of Universities

In Table 4.10 the findings indicated that there was a linear relationship between competitive advantage of the Kenyan Universities and collaborations. This showed that strategic alliances had a significant positive relationship with competitive, of Kenyan universities. The coefficient of determination (r2) was 0.863, and this shows that 86.3% of the variations in the competitive advantage can be explained by the four predictor variables in the study and the remaining 13.7% of the variations in Kenyan universities competitive advantage is explained by other factors not captured in the model.

ANOVA[b]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.487	4	12.372	423.021	.000[a]
	Residual	7.75	93	0.029		
	Total	57.237	97			
a. Predictor: (Constant), collaborations						

Coefficient[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	Constant	0.36	0.118		3.05	0.003
	Collaborations	0.324	0.047	0.798	6.944	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage of Universities in Uasin Gishu County						

Table 11: Multiple Regression Model
Source: Survey Data, 2018

The regression model was significant at (F=8.827, p=0.000) showing that the model was computed correctly, and it was fit for the study.
The regression model was:
$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+ \varepsilon$
Y= the dependent variable (competitive advantages)
β0=Yintercept (constant)
β1=regressioncoefficient
X1= collaborations
ε=errorterm
The regression equation based on the regression model was as follows;
Y= β0 + β1X1 + ε

Competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities = 0.560 + 0.798 (collaborations) +0.218 (Error rate)

From the regression equation, it can be deduced that collaborations was the most important strategic alliances variable contributing approximately 0.798 to competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. From the Table 11 all independent variables carried a positive predictive power this implies that collaborations is held at zero competitive advantage of the universities in Kenya would be significant at 0.560, p=0.003. This implies that, the competitive advantage will positive and significant. However, this is not the case because majority of the universities in Kenya have adopted different strategic alliances as a strategy to gain competitive advantage

3.5. Test of Hypotheses

The 0.05 level of significance was taken as the level of decision criteria whereby the null hypothesis was rejected if the p-value was less than 0.05 and fail to reject if otherwise. Competitive advantage (y) was calculated as an aggregate of all the parameters measuring strategic alliances in the research instrument.

- H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between collaborations and competitive advantage in Kenyan Universities.

The study results indicated that there was a significant relationship between collaboration and competitive advantage ($p=0.000<0.05$ and $\beta= 0.798$). From this results, the reject the null hypothesis as and affirm that collaboration with colleges and international universities has significant relationship with the competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. The study findings indicated from the multiple linear regression that strategic alliances' have significant relationship with competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. With a correlation of R=0.836, P=0.000 and coefficient of determination r^2 =0.863 as shown in Table 11, all the four strategic alliances identified in this study have positive relationship on the competitive advantage of Kenyan universities. The percentage change in competitive advantage in Kenyan Universities is high when all the strategic alliances are combined at 86.3% of variance in competitive advantage. From this result, we reject the null hypothesis as $P=0.000<0.05$ and affirm that strategic alliances, that is collaborations, joint ventures, non-equity alliances and equity alliances had positive and significant relationship with the competitive advantages of Kenyan universities. An increase in strategic alliances would result to increase in competitive advantage in universities in Kenyan significantly.

The study established that there was a positive and significant relationship between collaborations and competitive advantage of Kenyan Universities. The findings supported Mansor (2017) study on the effect of International Strategic Alliance in Higher Education Sectors in Malaysia which established that formation of collaborations of the newly established education institution helped in the management in the achieve the competitive advantage among the institutions. The findings also concurred with Hyder (2011) study carried out among on strategic alliances by small- and medium sized firms in Sweden. The findings also indicated that for all SMEs, learning from the alliance partners was important but the degree of learning varied considerably due to differences in scope and learning capacity of the firms. The study also indicated that collaboration with the local partners had been in most cases helpful to establish new contacts. The study concluded that search of resources, learning and technology were the main factors that influence formation of strategic alliances among SMEs in Sweden.

The findings also supported IšoraItė (2012) study on the importance of strategic alliances in company's activity in Pakistan. The findings of the study indicated that Strategic alliances were a way to grow product and service offerings, develop new markets and leverage technology and R&D, strategic alliances were an indispensable tool in today's competitive business environment. The findings also concurred with Jabar, Soosay, Othman and Tahir (2011) study on Factors Influencing Strategic Technology Alliance Formation of Malaysian Manufacturers. The result established that Malaysian manufacturers needed to increase their efforts in increasing internal human resource that were the source of competitive advantage in order to achieve superior strategic alliance performance. The study also established that collaborations should be seen as opportunities to create, store and apply knowledge. The study also established that managers had to consider how to manage such strategic alliances partnerships to enhance the capabilities and performance of manufacturing companies. Therefore, a more pressing strategy was to better understand the key performance objectives of Malaysian manufacturers and shaping the manufacturing environment as managers could focus on improving their absorptive capacity and human resources in terms of technology acquisition.

The findings also concurred with Kinyua (2010) study on effect of strategic alliances between Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and middle level colleges in Kenya which established that the alliance were formed with a motive/s of enabling students who would otherwise be locked out of universities owing to stiff competition to progress with their studies hence exploiting this niche market. This was helped to reduce brain drain and capital leaving Kenya economy. The study also established that the collaborations intended also to tap the resources from vocational economies of scale and enjoy faster payback on investment.

The findings also supported Sifuna (2014) conducted a study to investigate the effect of competitive strategies on performance of universities in Kenya. The study established that the economies of scale to a very great extent affect performance of universities. It was further established that capacity utilization of resources, reducing operations time and costs, efficiency and cost control, mass production and mass distribution as aspects of cost leadership affected performance in the university to great extent, differentiation based on product/service, differentiation based on promotion/ advertising campaign and differentiation based on personnel affected performance of the university and market focus affected performance of the university.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that collaborations has a positive and significant relationship with competitive advantage of universities in Uasin Gishu County. The study concluded that collaboration of the universities with international universities had improved the market diversity, increasing of the number of campus and collaboration with colleges has helped the university in penetrating to new market, promoted capacity development, market diversification and geographical diversification which had improved on the competitive advantage of the universities in Uasin Gishu County.

The study recommended that the Kenyan Universities should emphasis on collaboration of the universities and colleges around Kenya to help promote market diversification into diploma courses and short professional course which had improved on the competitiveness since majority of the students in KCSE gained less that C+ which is the minimal entry points to the University.

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