Role of customer orientation as a pillar of TQM in achieving competitive strategies

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Abstract:

Study objectives : the studies objectives are focused on determining the role of " customer orientation " in achieving the competitive strategies of the Jordanian industrial   companies which hold the King Abdulla II award for excellence , in order to help those companies in developing their competitive strategies and gaining unique competitive advantages . The study results showed an effect with statistical significance of the "customer orientation" on achieving differentiation strategy. Analysis results showed a positive and moderate relation between the two variables   with correlation coefficient (0.667) .The results also showed that (44.5 %) of the variance in the variation strategy can be explained by the variance in the customer orientation. It also showed that there is an effect with statistical significance of the customer orientation pillar on achieving the total cost leadership strategy , where the analysis results showed a positive and moderate between the two variables with correlation coefficient of(0.518) , and that (26.5 %) of the variance in the differentiation strategy can be explained by the variance in the customer orientation , The study recommends that the organizations of the sample study should continue applying the customer orientation pillar and also emphasizes on the continuation of these organizations in enhancing the superiority of their competitive advantages which are based on achieving the excellence strategy , via employing the most important dimensions of products quality in this field (Superiority in product design , additional advantages , and the aesthetic appearance of the products) .It also recommends that high management in these organizations should seriously seek building competitive strategies that are based on achieving total cost leadership strategy, via increasing their organizational capabilities that are embodied in purchasing primary and materialistic resources   with the least costs . The study has showed that the Jordanian private companies which hold the King Abdullah II award for excellence KAAE primarily depend on differentiation strategy in building their competitive advantages. The study results also showed that the despite the fact that Jordanian private organizations, which hold King Abdullah II award for excellence , primarily depend on employee and customer orientation pillar in their endeavor to achieve competitive strategies , especially differentiation strategy , nevertheless the results showed a study to see Stagnancy and lack of interest in these organizations in meeting their customers' demands once advanced. The study has also shown that the Jordanian a private organizations which hold King Abdullah II Award for excellence do not dependent the leadership strategy   will the total cost in building competitive advantages .
Key word: **Customer orientation, Total quality management, Competitive strategies**

1- Introduction:

The contemporary managerial thought has witnessed a significant development since the beginnings of the nineteen eighties that is represented in the evolution of TQM concept by pioneers of scientists and thinkers. With the continuation of the Globalization's dominance on the

local and global markets as a modern de facto , and the consequent effects like removing barriers and obstacles that previously stood in the face of the global commerce , thereby turning the global markets into one global market , organizations had to equip themselves with competitive strategies that would insure their survival and development   in the shadow of high local and global competitions , consequently many researchers put forward model for competitive strategies . Of these models , Porter's Model (Porter , 1980) , who advanced general competitive strategies , which were followed by other models for the competitive strategies advanced by other researchers but the same time hold the context of Porter's model , despite the various names and classifications (Kotler & Armstrong , 20006 . 266-267) .This study focuses on the competitive strategies of the Jordanian private organizations which hold the King Abdullah II Award for Excellence KAAE , to help them in developing their competitive strategies and gaining unique competitive advantages . **King Abdullah II award for excellence** : (Directorate of industrial development , 2006 , 5-16) King Abdullah II center for excellence was established in January , in order to manage the King Abdullah II award for excellence , which is considered the highest award for excellence on the national level in all economic sectors (public sector, private sector , and business societies sector) . The center manages the following national awards :

1. King Abdullah award for excellence of the governmental performance and transparency – public sector . www.kaaps.jo
2. King Abdullah II award for excellence – private sector . www.kaaps.jo
3. King Abdulla II award for excellence – business societies sector . www.kaabas.jo

King Abdullah award is viewed as one of the most important factors that help in achieving TQM , promoting competitiveness among the working organization in all economic sectors in HKJ .The competing organizations for the award are evaluated based on five standards of evaluation , as shown in table no. (3-1)

2- The theoretical framework

Many researchers have asserted on the importance of TQM in enabling modern organizations ,especially the industrial ones to build their competitive strategies which would enable them to gain the competitive advantage that would in turn guarantee the organization's survival and evolution conditions . Henceforth , the increasing focus in this regard   has been on employing TQM pillars and product quality dimensions (performance ,features , reliability , durability, conformance, serviceability , aesthetics , perceived quality) (Garvin , 1987 , 101-109) . The most important pillar has been customer orientation pillar . (Nouri , 2013) and (Chong & Rundu , 2004) found that meeting customers' needs and desires has a positive effect in achieving the differentiation strategy . (Awino , et al , 2012) & (Waweru , 2011) found that the process of product design according to product quality dimensions , particularly the conformance and reliability , would reduce the production process costs ,therefore achieving leadership strategy with the total cost . A number of researchers put forward a number of prominent classifications in the competitive strategies , and they are as follows :

1. Miles & Snow , 1978 .
2. Porter , 1980 .
3. Treasy & Wieserman , 1995 .
4. Kotler & Armstrong , 2006 .

But the follower of the those contributions which researched what the strategies that the organization can utilize in order to achieve the competitive superiority on the other organizations , would be clearly notice the vast number of studies and researches that employed Porter's classification for the competitive strategies I their models' variables , therefore this study has employed the competitive strategies in Porter's classification mentioned in (Porter , 1980 , p 35-40)

Strategy No.1: Differentiation strategy

 It is defined as :" a strategy which aims at building the competitive advantage through market leadership , via product or service differentiation from those of the competitors " (Pitts & Lei, 2006, 322-323).

Strategy No.2:Total cost leadership strategy

It is defined as :" a strategy that aims at building the competitive advantage through market leadership , via low prices which are achieved by reduction in the total cost of the products or services "   (Pitts & Lei, 2006, 322) .

Strategy No.3:Focus strategy (Porter, 1980, 38- 40)

Defined as :" a strategy that aims at building competitive advantage through focusing on a segment of the market using one of the strategies :   total cost leadership strategy   or differentiation strategy , (Pitts & Lei, 2006, 343) . This strategy was excluded from the variables of this study , because it depends in its processes on the two previous strategies , as Porter himself indicated , and that exclusion is the common procedure that the pertinent studies and researches of this field have been used to do .(Prajogo & Sohal, 2006).

Customer orientation pillar and differentiation strategy

Differentiation strategy is distinguished by the ability to provide unique products and services , via creativity and innovation which are based on employing quality dimensions and TQM pillars . Organization's application of quality dimensions in the production process , particularly the performance , features , aesthetics , will result in providing unique and aesthetic products , which will gain customers' recognition and admiration , (Collignon & Wissler, 1993, 169).This pillar also seeks through the continuing improvement processes to develop and improve the processes and outputs of the production process , according to a scientific , scientific , precise and documented methodology , which enhances products solidity and achieves meeting the changes and developments in customers' needs and desires , therefore achieving customers loyalty to the organization's products and services no matter their prices would be raised in comparison to the competitors'   products' prices , a matter that reflects on achieving the differentiation strategy (Zhang & Xia, 2013, 9-13).This   solid relation between the determinants of the differentiation strategy from one side and the quality pillars and TQM principles on the other side has been affirmed by many researchers . (Prajogo & Sohal,   2006, 13-15) و (Maani, Putterill & Sluti, 1994, 19-37) و (Miller 1988, 280- 308) indicated that the TQM principles , particularly continuous improvement , focus on research and development (RD) processes and on creativity and innovation processes , which Porter focused on them for achieving the differentiation strategy , and indicated that the quality dimensions are the responsible for providing new technologies , and support providing sleek designs and products that would be

able to penetrate markets and achieve customers' loyalty , a matter that supports the reality of the positive relation between quality and differentiation strategy . (Nouri, 2013, 9-11).It is noteworthy to refer to some modern studies that showed that there is a positive effect of TQM on achieving leadership by the total cost strategy and the differentiation strategy . (Kismi, Ubud, Surachman & Solimun, 2013, 12-13).

Customer orientation pillar and total cost leadership strategy

Despite the dominating belief of seventies of the 20th century in the west world organizations that the quality is the cause of the raise in the total cost of production , this belief soon vanished with the publishing of the   results of research studies that were conducted by Japanese organizations , where those studies proved that the strategies that are based on some of the quality dimensions like conformance and reliability could be with high effectiveness in achieving high quality and low costs at the same time (Collignon & Wissler, 1993, 168) , via the following :

1. Innovation of simple designs for the products .
2. Precise manufacturing conforming to the simple designs .
3. Defect elimination via Zero-Defect methodology.

Applying those strategies , the Japanese organizations could sink the global markets with high quality low-priced products , eliminating the western belief of the correlation between high quality and the high price , declared their famous say :" it is not quality which costs higher , it is non-quality ", (Collignon & Wissler, 1993, 164).Based on what the results of the Japanese studies , it is possible to more illustrate the status of TQM in achieving total cost leadership strategy , through highlighting the importance of TQM pillars in the application of this strategy , therefore we find that these pillars help activating the determinants of learning strategies and experience and economics of volume through focusing on the necessity for conforming the product manufacturing with its design specifications that are tailored according to the customers' needs and desires , and also through the continuing improvement processes which result in their inevitable   consent , all that should finally reduce bad quality cost (nonconformance , modifications and re-manufacturing , inspection and quality monitoring , and failure and losses) (Magaa , Mugwindiri & Madanhire, 2013, 8; Awino, Muchara, Ogutu & Oeba, 2012, 3-7) and get us closer to the Zero-defect methodology and 6 sigma techniques , consequently reducing the total costs of the production process , and achieving the total cost leadership strategy.(Nikolaos, Dimitrios, & Fanourios, 2013,7-9; Korankye, 2013, 10) .

3- Methodology

Questionnaire model was adopted as data collecting and hypotheses testing tool, and Likert scale was also adopted for measuring the sample individuals' answers on the   study questionnaire items. Questionnaire's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of internal consistency, while questionnaire validity was approved by specialized arbitrators and via the principal factors analysis PFA .Study hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression , and the questionnaire form took 54 days in 2013 , with 273 valid questionnaire forms were delivered back   , with 90 % ratio.

– Study population

The study population was constituted of the workers in the three managerial levels in all the   ten Jordanian private organizations that hold the King Abdullah award for excellence between 1999

/2000 and 2012/2013 ,and concluded the following functional ranks : managers , departments' heads , and quality and sales committee members , with total number of 342 employees .

- **Study model**

Figure no.1 : Study model
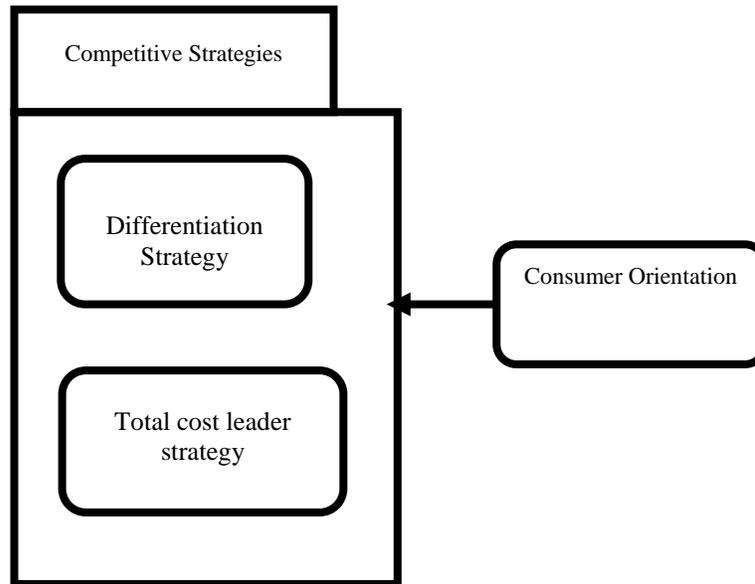
Source : prepared by the researcher , where the study model was developed based on the studies of (Okwiri, 2014, 1-9) . (Assaf , 2012 , 5-19) , (Aboyassin & Alnsour & Alkloub, 2011, 3-4) and (Al-Ali ,2009 ,23) , consequently , the independent variable in this study is represented by the customer orientation variable as one of the pillars of TQM . The dependent variable model and the derived variables from it were developed based on the model of(Porter , 1980) , consequently the dependent variable in this study is represented by the competitive strategies , and the derived variables are represented by the primary strategies in porter's model , and they are as follows :

1. Differentiation strategy.
2. Total cost leadership strategy

- **Study sample**

The study sample came on the form of a randomly layered sample , where questionnaire forms distribution to the study sample individual started in 9/4/2013 and continued till 3/6/2013 . 297 questionnaire forms were distributed on the employees randomly , with 273 delivered back out of the distributed . The validation showed that all the delivered back questionnaire forms were valid for analysis , and that means that the study sample response rate was almost 90% .

Study tool and variables' measurement

The questionnaire was adopted as means of data collection and hypotheses testing , and a pillar for studying numerous previous studies that are relevant to the study variables and its questionnaire . The researcher developed the questionnaire segment that is relevant to TQM based on the studies of (Alok & Sushil, 2013) ,(Prajogo & Sohal, 2006) ,(Hansson, 2003). The researcher also developed the questionnaire segment that is relevant to the competitive strategies ,

based on the studies of (Nouri, 2013) , (Nikolaos, Dimitrios, & Fanourios, 2013) ,(Baroto et al., 2012).

The questionnaire was constituted of 31 questions that measure the study variables , where the questions 1-16 were focused on measuring customer orientation variable , and questions 17-25 were focused on measuring the differentiation strategy , and finally , question 26-31 were focused on measuring total cost leadership strategy .Likert scale was adopted for measuring the sample individuals answers on the questionnaire items , since this scale is one of the commonly applied grade scales in humanitarian and managerial studies .

- **Data collection methods :**

The researcher utilized numerous sources in order to be able to answer the study questions and its hypotheses testing , and they are as follows :

- **Study   tool   validation   and   reliability**
  Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for internal consistency was calculated for the study variables items , where the independent variable " customer orientation " result was (0.877) , and the result for the dependent variable the differentiation strategy (0.882) , and the dependent total cost leadership strategy (0.712) , thus the value is greater than (0.60) , and this is an indication of consistency among the study tool items , and the reliability of the study tool in conducting statistical analysis .

The validity of the questionnaire was inspected using the pertinent procedures , which are represented in arbitration performed by   nine quality-specialized arbitrators and eight competitive-strategy specialized arbitrators . The questionnaire variables were subjected to the principle factor analysis , where all the values came greater than (0.40) , therefore all the variables are considered of high validity in the analysis and results elicitation process .

- **Study hypotheses**

H_0 : there is no effect with statistical significance at significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the customer orientation as one TQM pillars in achieving the differentiation strategy in the Jordanian private industrial organizations that hold KAAE .

H_1 : there is effect with statistical significance at significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the customer orientation as one TQM pillars in achieving the differentiation strategy in the Jordanian private industrial organizations that hold KAAE .

4- Data analysis

The two hypotheses of the study were tested using simple linear regression analysis SLRA , one-way Anova test , and the results were as follows :

- **Demographic analysis :**

Analysis results showed that there is a variation with statistical significance in TQM among the respondents related to scientific qualification , between the holders of " Diploma and less " , the " bachelors " and the " higher studies " , where the variation value between the " diploma holders and less " and the bachelors holders was (0.20042) , in favor of the holders of " diploma and less " . Also the variation between the holders of diploma and less and the higher studies was

(0.25594) , with the " diploma and less " holders favored and at significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) . This may refer to that the holders of diploma and less usually in the lower managerial positions , and therefore may have more interest in evaluating TQM applications , since they are the closest levels of the managerial levels to the product and the improvements that are performed on it .The results also showed that there is a variation with statistical significance in the competitive strategies among the respondents based on the scientific qualification , between the diploma and less holders and both the bachelors and high studies holders , where the variation value between the diploma and less holders and the bachelors holders (0.18747) , with the diploma and less holders favored . also the variation value between the diploma and less holders and the higher studies holders was (0.37084)   with the diploma and less holders favored at significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) , and that can be referred to the fact that the diploma and less holders usually in the lower managerial levels and therefore more interested in evaluating the competitive strategies , since they are the closest managerial level personnel to the customers and therefore the most sensitive and aware of their needs and desires .

– **Testing the 1st hypothesis H₀1:There is no effect with statistical significance at significance level** ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) **of the customer orientation as one of the TQM pillars in achieving the differentiation strategy .**

The hypothesis was tested through applying the simple linear regression analysis , in order to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (differentiation strategy) while keeping the other variables constant , as follows :

Table no.1 : results of testing of the customer orientation effect in achieving the differentiation strategy

Dependent variable	Correlation Co. R	Determination Co. R^2	Calculated F	Degree of freedom Df	Regression coefficient					
					Sig. level F*	Manifest	β	Standard error	Calculated T	Sig. Level t*
Differentiation strategy	0.667	0.445	217.571	1	0.00	Customer orientation	0.865	0.59	14.750	0.000

*the effect has statistical sig. at level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$)

Table no.1 results show that the effect of the independent variable " customer orientation " on the dependent variable " differentiation strategy " , is an effect with statistical significance , where the value of the calculated F was (217.571) with significance level (sig=0.000)   , which less than 0.05 , while the correlation coefficient (r=0.667) , which indicates the positive and moderate relation between the two variables . Moreover , the value of the coefficient of determination was ($r^2= 0.445$) , and that confirms the significance of the regression and indicated that 44.5% of the

variance in the differentiation strategy can be referred to the variance in the customer orientation .

It was also found from the regression coefficients that the value of β was (0.865) while the value of t was (14.750) with significance level (sig=0.000) , and that confirms the significance of the regression coefficient . Consequently we reject the 1st null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis , which states :**"There is an effect with statistical significance at significance level (α ≤ 0.05) of the customer orientation as one of the TQM pillars in achieving the differentiation strategy .**

This result can be explained by the fact that Jordanian organization which hold the KAAE successfully employ the application of organization's performance criterion and the leadership criterion in building their competitive advantages through achieving the differentiation strategy , since they are two criteria that focus on applying the customer orientation pillar , and that indicates that the more the interest in organizations' focus on this pillar , the more the those organizations will be able to compete in the Jordanian markets .

- **Testing 2nd hypothesis $H_0 2$: There no is effect with statistical significance at significance level (α ≤ 0.05) of the customer orientation as one of the TQM pillars in achieving total cost leadership strategy .**

The hypothesis was tested through applying the simple linear regression analysis , in order to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (total cost leadership strategy) while keeping the other variables constant , as follows :

$H_0 2$: There is no effect with statistical significance at significance level (α ≤ 0.05) , and the hypothesis was tested through applying the simple linear regression analysis , in order to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in achieving the total cost leadership strategy

Table no.2: results of testing of the customer orientation effect in achieving the total cost leadership strategy

Dependent variable	Correlation coefficient R	Determination R^2	Calculated F	Degree of freedom D f	Regression coefficient					
					Sig. level F*	Manifest	β	Standard error	Calculated T	Sig. Level t*
T C L strategy	0.581	0.265	99.202	1	0.00	Customer orientation	0.144	0.044	9.960	0.000

*the effect has statistical sig. at level (α ≤ 0.05)

Results of table no.2 indicate that the effect of the independent variable " customer orientation on the dependent variable " total cost leadership strategy " is an effect with statistical significance , where the calculated F value was (99.202) with significance level Sig, F=0.000 , which is less than 0.05 , while the correlation coefficient R=0.518 , which indicates the positive and moderate relation between the two variables .besides , the value of the determination coefficient was R^2 = 0.265 . And that confirms the significance of the regression and indicates that 26.5% of the

variance in the total cost leadership strategy could be explained by the variance in the customer orientation. The regression coefficients have also shown the value of β was 0.441, while the value t then 9.960 with significance level Sig=0.000, and that confirms the significance of the regression coefficient, and therefore we reject the 1st null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis, which states:" **There is effect with statistical significance at significance level** (α ≤ 0.05) **of the customer orientation as one of the TQM pillars in achieving total cost leadership strategy ".**This result can be explained by that the Jordanian industrial organizations that hold KAAE successfully employ the application the criterion of performance results and the leadership criterion in building their competitive advantages through achieving total cost leadership strategy , since they are two criteria that focus on applying the customer orientation pillar m and that indicates that the more the interest the organizations pay to this pillar the more the ability those organizations will have   in competing in the Jordanian markets .

5- Results:

1. The study has found that there is an effect with statistical significance of the customer and community orientation in achieving the differentiation strategy. This result is in agreement with the result of (Nouri, 2013), in that meeting customer needs and desires has a positive effect in achieving the differentiation strategy.

2. The study has found that there is an effect with statistical significance of the customer and community orientation in achieving total cost leadership strategy . it is in agreement with the result of the study of (Awino, et al., 2012) , in that the process of designing products according the dimensions of product quality , particularly conformance and reliability dimension , would reduce the production process costs ,therefore achieving total cost leadership strategy .

6- Conclusions:

1. The study has shown that the Jordanian private organizations which hold the King Abdullah II award for excellence depend primarily on differentiation strategy in building their competitive advantages , in particular focus on the customer's needs and desires , and on equipping their products with additional advantages , and on giving those products aesthetics appearance that would persuade the customer to purchase them .

2. The study has shown that on the spite of the Jordanian private organizations which hold KAAE primary dependence on the award itself in their achieving of the competitive strategies , especially the dependence of differentiation strategy on customer orientation , the statistical analysis showed the stagnancy and the weakness of the organizations' interest in meeting their customers once presented to them , which means weakness of the organizations application of the criterion of the organization's   performance results in KAAE , which focuses on the necessity for continuing measuring customers" satisfaction and analyzing its results and disclosing any negative deviations one discovered .

3. It was showed that the Jordanian private organizations that hold KAAE does not depend on total cost leadership strategy at all in their building their competitive advantages , which indicates their inability to provide the requirements of achieving this strategy , especially the weakness of the ability to purchase primary and materialistic resources with low cost, therefore will not be able to provide their products with low prices in the Jordanian market , especially with the presence of additional costs that are related to TQM application .

7- Recommendations

1. Customer orientation   pillar application should continue, taking into consideration that it is one of the TQM principles and has succeeded in building competitive advantages for those organizations that are based on achieving the Excellency strategy in the Jordanian market.

2. The pertinent organizations should continue enhancing the superiority of their competitive advantages that are based on achieving excellency strategy , via employing the most important dimensions of product quality in this field (excellence in product design , additional advantages , and product aesthetics) , which help in persuading Jordan market customers to continue purchase those products .

3. Organizations should be urged to increase their interest   in meeting their customers' demands instantly once presented   to them, via establishing managerial units that are equipped with competencies and facilities , such that they will be able to continuously and permanently measure customers' satisfaction , and analyze its results and disclose any deviations one discovered , and present the necessary solutions and recommendations for them .

4. The high management of these organizations should seriously seek to adopt building competitive advantages that are represented in purchasing primary material and resources with the least possible costs , and increase their organizational capabilities on reducing the production process through adopting the zero-defect methodology and the 6th sigma techniques , and also through employing the most important pillars of product quality   in this field (conformance , reliability) , a matter that help those organizations to provide products that meet the demanded specifications and with least possible prices , and enable them to compete with the local and global organizations and increase their shares of the Jordanian market .

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