**STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AT POSTAL CORPORATION OF KENYA, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY**

# ABSTRACT

The Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) operates in a dynamic environment influenced by technological change, shifting consumer needs, and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. PCK faces multiple challenges including a decline in traditional mail usage, financial limitations hindering infrastructure upgrades, obsolete systems, regulatory issues, and workforce attrition. This study evaluated how strategic positioning strategies impact PCK’s sustainable competitive advantage in Nairobi City County, with a focus on ICT adoption, e-commerce integration, and hybrid work models. The research was guided by several theoretical frameworks: Competitive Advantage Theory, Resource-Based View, Flexible Firm Model, and Technology Acceptance Model. Using a descriptive design, the study targeted 61 managerial staff members at the PCK head office, utilizing a census sampling approach due to the small population size. Data was collected through online and offline questionnaires, validated through pilot testing and reliability checks, including Cronbach's Alpha. Analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression methods. Findings revealed that strategic positioning significantly contributes to PCK's competitive edge. Specifically, ICT adoption improves operational efficiency, e-commerce expands market access, and hybrid work models enhance productivity and cost control. Despite these benefits, PCK still faces challenges in fully embracing e-commerce. The study concludes that embracing digital transformation is essential for sustainability. It recommends further investment in ICT infrastructure, development of e-commerce capabilities, adoption of digital payment systems, and refinement of hybrid work strategies. These actions are vital for strengthening competitiveness and ensuring long-term organizational relevance in the digital era.

**Key Words:** *Strategic positioning, ICT adoption, E-commerce, Hybrid work, Competitive advantage, Postal Corporation of Kenya, Digital transformation*

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The modern business landscape is characterized by rapid technological advancement, heightened competition, globalization, and shifting public demands—all of which profoundly influence how organizations operate. Aldaibat (2012) emphasizes that businesses, whether public or private, must develop ideas and strategies to navigate this ever-changing macro environment. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these dynamics by compelling organizations to adopt digital models and automated processes to maintain competitiveness. Ozatay and Sak (2020) note that the pandemic eliminated many innovation barriers, leaving only those institutions that clung to traditional operational cultures behind. Consequently, organizations began implementing strategic initiatives to boost their effectiveness and secure a competitive market position.

In Kenya, the accelerated adoption of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) by public and private sectors is evident. Indicators such as a 42% increase in 4G transceivers to 25,191 and a 21.2% rise in licensed Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to 366 reflect this shift. Additionally, internet subscriptions climbed by 11.7% to 44.4 million in 2020, with fiber-to-home broadband subscriptions increasing by 67.6% as remote and hybrid work models took hold. Conversely, fiber-to-office subscriptions dropped by 8.6%, signaling a shift toward decentralized digital work environments. The Economic Survey (2021) attributes these trends partly to the pandemic-driven push for ICT adoption and digital transformation. This shift has altered stakeholder expectations and interactions, including how businesses engage with customers, employees, and suppliers. According to the Federation of Kenya Employers (2022), the pandemic disrupted operations across multiple sectors, pushing organizations to adopt strategies that support business continuity and enhance competitiveness.

The Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), a public institution governed by the Postal Corporation of Kenya Act of 1998, is mandated to deliver accessible, affordable, and reliable postal services across the country. PCK’s mission centers on providing innovative communication, distribution, and payment solutions that deliver stakeholder value. In response to the rapidly evolving market dynamics, PCK has implemented several strategic initiatives to boost its competitiveness. These include collaboration with East African postal services to facilitate Postal Money Transfers via the Universal Postal Union’s (UPU) International Financial System (IFS), and using the International Postal System (IPS) for mail and EMS services among UPU member states. Nairobi has emerged as a central transit hub for global mailing, and PCK plans to establish a modern International Mails Transit Centre at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to reinforce its role in regional logistics.

Despite these efforts, PCK continues to face significant challenges. One major issue is intense competition from digital communication platforms, which has led to a steady decline in traditional mail usage (Njuguna, 2022). This shift has been compounded by financial constraints that limit the corporation’s capacity to modernize its infrastructure (Business Daily, 2021). Much of PCK's existing infrastructure remains outdated, creating inefficiencies that manifest in delayed deliveries and poor service quality—issues frequently raised by customers (CAK, 2022). Additionally, regulatory challenges and brain drain to the private sector further weaken PCK’s operational capacity and adaptability (KNBS, 2021). Although the strategic use of ICT, e-commerce, and hybrid work models is increasingly acknowledged as vital for competitiveness, empirical studies exploring their specific impact on PCK remain limited. This gap underscores the need for focused research to evaluate how these strategic tools influence PCK’s market positioning and long-term sustainability.

Strategic positioning, as articulated by Porter (1979), is the deliberate effort by a firm to align itself with market forces in a way that neutralizes competition. It involves leveraging internal capabilities to create defensive barriers against external pressures. Porter (1985) further refined the concept, emphasizing the importance of creating unique customer value and distinguishing a company from its rivals to achieve a competitive advantage. Strategic positioning may involve various approaches such as enhancing product quality, optimizing operational efficiency, or adopting niche market strategies. Kotler and Keller (2016) echo this sentiment, suggesting that integrating traditional sales methods with strategic positioning can yield stronger market outcomes.

For successful strategic positioning, firms must conduct thorough internal and external assessments to understand their strengths, weaknesses, market conditions, and competitive pressures. Porter (2001) stresses that operational effectiveness alone is insufficient without a strategic approach that delivers unique value. Hakansson and Snehota (1995) and Barakova (2010) argue that building networks with customers and suppliers, or adopting aggressive market penetration strategies, are essential tactics to enhance positioning. Similarly, Cockburn et al. (2000) note that businesses must engage in deliberate, differentiating activities that competitors find difficult to replicate. Barney (2020) highlights that strategic positioning must tap into rare and inimitable organizational resources to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage.

PCK’s strategic plan for 2022–2025 reflects an awareness of these principles. It identifies ICT integration, hybrid working models, and e-commerce initiatives as critical tools to strengthen its competitive edge. These initiatives aim to streamline operations, expand service offerings, and meet evolving consumer expectations. The corporation’s strategic positioning efforts will likely be evaluated based on how well these elements contribute to long-term sustainability and market relevance. As the landscape continues to evolve, PCK’s ability to effectively implement these tools will determine its success in navigating the challenges of the digital era and sustaining its role in Kenya’s communications infrastructure.

The adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role in an organization's strategic positioning by enabling effective communication, collaboration, and improved operational efficiency. Deloitte (2020) defines ICT adoption as the integration of technological systems and procedures into an organization’s functions and strategies to boost productivity, efficiency, communication, and decision-making. This involves utilizing a wide array of digital resources including software, hardware, digital platforms, and communication channels. As noted by Kabuba (2014), technological advancements have transformed how businesses, customers, suppliers, and industries interact, offering both new opportunities and significant challenges. Wunderlich et al. (2014) highlight that the adoption of new technologies is influenced by various factors including organizational, technological, social, environmental, and economic aspects.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated ICT adoption, particularly in communication. Previously, email and in-person meetings were predominant. However, during the pandemic, organizations rapidly transitioned to video conferencing and messaging platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack, which enabled real-time collaboration and efficient project management (Yang et al., 2021; Woz, 2022). These platforms allowed for virtual meetings and thematic chat rooms, enhancing team communication and workflow. Additionally, cloud-based applications like Google Workspace and Microsoft Office 365 enabled businesses to recreate office environments digitally, supporting continuity in remote work settings (Narayanamurthy & Tortorella, 2021).

Cloud technologies have also addressed key challenges associated with automation, including data accessibility, security, and reliability. Employees can now work remotely with internet access and a device, while cloud platforms facilitate synchronized operations across locations (Woz, 2022). Allen, Golden, and Shockley (2015) noted that employees frequently rely on technology to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, enabling telecommuting and remote work arrangements. Telework allows employees to perform their tasks from outside the traditional office setting by leveraging ICT tools. This has changed the traditional work landscape, promoting flexibility and work-life integration. The current study explores how ICT adoption contributes to an organization’s competitive advantage by improving collaboration, communication, efficiency, and cost management.

E-commerce has rapidly emerged as the most efficient mode of conducting business, transforming global commerce and contributing to the globalization of economies. According to the WTO (2013), most business transactions today are conducted electronically, including online purchases, electronic payments, internet banking, and digital reservations. While this has brought about structural changes in how businesses operate, it has also introduced challenges, particularly in maintaining ethical standards. UNCTAD (2007) and Tiwari & Buse (2007) define e-commerce as the use of digital tools for commercial activities, encompassing mobile commerce and electronic customer relationship management (e-CRM), where firms utilize technology to attract and retain customers.

In Kenya, the telecommunications sector has been at the forefront of adopting e-commerce platforms. For instance, Safaricom’s “My Safaricom App” facilitates online transactions for individuals and corporate users alike. The rise of e-commerce has led to significant shifts in global business practices, influencing governance and ethical considerations (Kabongo & Asa, 2006). In Kenya, the trend is steadily growing, particularly in areas such as electronic payments (e-payments), mobile payments (m-payments), and online banking (e-banking). This study focuses on online buying and selling as key areas of e-commerce, aiming to understand their impact on sustainable competitive advantage at the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK). Through this focus, the research evaluates how e-commerce can serve as a strategic positioning tool that enhances operational effectiveness.

Hybrid working arrangements have become increasingly prevalent as organizations seek flexible work models that boost productivity and ensure business continuity. Since the 2008 financial crisis, many organizations have adopted new working structures, including severance plans and redundancy schemes, to cut costs and improve efficiency (Natrajan, Sanjeev, & Singh, 2019). Hybrid working involves a combination of remote and office-based work, allowing employees the flexibility to work from locations of their choice based on their roles and circumstances (Putri & Amran, 2021).

This model has been widely adopted by private sector firms and later integrated into the public sector to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. ICT companies were among the first to implement hybrid work models, offering employees safe and flexible work arrangements with remote duties and adaptable hours (Radonić et al., 2021). Global tech giants like Twitter, Apple, Microsoft, Spotify, and Zoom have institutionalized hybrid working as a strategic approach to maximizing productivity and aligning with stakeholder needs (Coann, 2021). Shopify CEO Tobi Lutke announced in 2020 that the company would transition to a predominantly remote work model, with some operations based in Ireland and Canada, reflecting the growing acceptance of hybrid structures.

In Kenya, the adoption of digital services surged in response to the pandemic. Online learning, e-commerce, teleworking, and video streaming increased, highlighting the growing need for digital infrastructure and connectivity (Kenya Economic Survey, 2021). The surge in internet-based activities also revealed the need to address the digital divide through enhanced connectivity and digital support. According to the ILO and the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE) (2022), by the end of the pandemic, about 29% of Kenyan employees were working remotely. This shift influenced how public services engaged with customers and heightened the demand for hybrid work models.

Each organization adapts its hybrid working model to meet its unique needs and the preferences of its workforce (Griffis, 2021). ICT adoption plays a vital role in making hybrid work viable by supporting flexible job designs and enabling employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Studies show that teleworking and flexible work hours may remain preferred by employees even after the pandemic (Contreras, Baykal & Abid, 2020). Creating family-friendly and flexible work environments has been associated with increased employee satisfaction and well-being (Feeney & Stritch, 2019).

This research investigates two key variables of hybrid work: career satisfaction and work stress management. Effective stress management is essential for maintaining employee well-being and productivity in hybrid setups (Gordon et al., 2020). At the same time, career satisfaction plays a crucial role in employee motivation and retention, both of which significantly influence organizational performance (Lockwood, 2007). The study aims to determine how hybrid work models contribute to sustainable competitive advantage at PCK by examining their impact on employee satisfaction and stress control mechanisms. By integrating ICT, e-commerce, and hybrid working models, organizations like PCK can strategically position themselves for long-term sustainability and success.

Sustainable competitive advantage refers to a company’s ability to maintain superior performance over its rivals through unique capabilities, strategic positioning, and effective use of resources. Davidow and Uttal (2005) assert that this advantage stems from possessing certain attributes or a combination of qualities that enable an organization to outperform competitors. According to Porter (1985), a company gains a competitive edge either by offering similar value at a lower cost or by providing unique advantages that exceed those of rival products, thereby delivering greater value to customers and boosting profitability. These advantages are categorized into cost leadership and differentiation, also known as positional advantages. By leveraging internal competencies and strategically allocating resources, firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantages that result in long-term value creation.

Porter’s Five Forces framework further explains the dynamics of sustainable competitive advantage by analyzing market attractiveness through the bargaining power of suppliers and buyers, the threat of substitute products, and the threat of new entrants (Barney & Hesterly, 2019). As these forces evolve, companies must continuously reassess their market strategies. A sustainable competitive edge is vital for enduring success, as it shields firms from intense competition and shifting market conditions. To achieve and sustain this edge, companies must capitalize on their unique capabilities, deliver superior customer value, and remain agile in a dynamic business environment (Barney, 2021; Kotler & Keller, 2021). This strategic flexibility not only supports resilience but also ensures sustained growth and profitability over time.

Companies with a sustainable competitive advantage benefit significantly through increased profitability, often achieved by commanding premium prices due to differentiated offerings (Porter, 1985). Unique value propositions allow firms to enhance market appeal and enjoy better financial outcomes (Kotler & Keller, 2021). Additionally, such firms tend to experience long-term financial stability and are better positioned to weather market fluctuations (Grant, 2021). By erecting barriers to entry, they limit competition, strengthening their position even during economic downturns (Barney, 2021; Teece, 2020). These barriers protect firms against potential competitors and help maintain stability in volatile environments.

Key indicators of sustainable competitive advantage include market share, superior performance, and job efficiency. Market share, a measure of a company’s dominance in its sector, reflects competitive strength and customer loyalty (Geroski & Buse, 2021). Superior performance entails achieving better financial and operational outcomes than rivals through strategic planning and effective resource utilization (Barney, 2020). Job efficiency, marked by streamlined operations and empowered employees, further drives productivity and profitability (Schmidt & Hunter, 2022). Tracking these indicators helps organizations fine-tune strategies and maintain a strong competitive position.

The Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) serves as a case study for examining sustainable competitive advantage. Established under the Postal Corporation of Kenya Act of 1998, PCK operates as a public commercial enterprise mandated to provide accessible, reliable, and affordable postal services across the country. This mandate aligns with the 1948 United Nations Charter on Universal Human Rights, which emphasizes the universal right to communication. PCK’s service portfolio includes postal and courier services, clearing and forwarding, and financial and agency services. These are delivered through channels such as letter post, parcel and post cargo, express courier (EMS), financial services, and philatelic materials. Operating over 768 outlets with 5,000 stamp vendors nationwide, PCK aims to provide universal postal service while also contributing to community development. PCK’s governance structure includes a government-appointed board of directors and a CEO titled the Postmaster General, who is responsible for executing the corporation's strategic vision. The organization is structured around key departments, including logistics, marketing, finance, human resources, ICT, and change management (Kioko, 2014). PCK is currently focused on becoming self-sustaining and transforming into a modern national and regional hub for e-commerce and logistics. This strategic goal is detailed in its 2022–2025 Strategic Plan. However, since the plan’s implementation, no formal research has assessed its impact on PCK’s competitiveness. This study seeks to evaluate the effects of strategic positioning tools—such as ICT adoption, e-commerce initiatives, and hybrid work models—on PCK’s sustainable competitive advantage in the logistics and communication sector

**1.1 Research Problem**

The postal industry is undergoing profound changes driven by globalization, deregulation, technological advancements, and government reforms, making its future increasingly uncertain. These dynamics have exposed structural weaknesses and forced many organizations, including the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), to accelerate digital transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic particularly highlighted the urgency for change, prompting a widespread shift from traditional office setups to digital platforms and e-commerce. As competition intensifies and alternative communication and delivery services proliferate, PCK has experienced a sharp decline in customer turnout, underscoring the growing threat to its market position. One of the key challenges PCK faces is declining mail volume, as digital communication becomes the norm, negatively impacting revenue. Additionally, the organization struggles to modernize its infrastructure and technological systems, which are essential to meeting customer expectations and international standards. PCK also contends with increasing competition from private courier firms and battles financial sustainability due to rising operational costs and shrinking revenue streams. Customer service has also suffered, with major branches reporting low foot traffic, and regulatory constraints have hindered the rollout of new services.

In November 2022, Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Information, Communications, and the Digital Economy criticized PCK for failing to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the fourth industrial revolution, as outlined in its strategic plan. That same year, due to financial strain, the organization announced layoffs of over 500 employees and significant salary reductions, further emphasizing the need for an urgent digital overhaul. PCK leadership has acknowledged the pressing need to pivot toward digital platforms to remain viable. The organization’s strategic plan stresses the importance of adopting resilient digital infrastructure to deliver seamless customer experiences. With e-commerce changing consumer behavior by offering more convenient alternatives, PCK must reinvent itself as a trustworthy brand serving both online and offline customers. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has transformed human capital management, introducing remote and hybrid work models that can enhance employee engagement.

Michael Porter (2001) warned that being a current market leader does not guarantee future success, urging firms to maintain strong strategic positioning. For PCK, this means redefining its tactics and operations to stay competitive. Strategic positioning is well-explored in research, including studies on companies like Safaricom and G4S Kenya, as well as public universities. These studies highlight the importance of quality management, technological innovation, and documenting strategic capabilities. However, many fail to explain how these strategies translate into measurable performance improvements, particularly in public sector contexts.

The accelerated adoption of technology post-COVID-19 has further highlighted gaps in understanding how digital tools improve efficiency. While some studies show a positive link between IT infrastructure and productivity in private companies, little is known about the impact in public organizations like PCK. The current research seeks to bridge this gap by examining ICT adoption as a strategic tool and how it influences communication, collaboration, and investment decisions at PCK. In the realm of e-commerce, research has focused on procurement efficiencies in private enterprises but has not adequately addressed the regulatory challenges faced by public sector institutions. PCK, as a public commercial entity, must navigate these complexities while optimizing its online operations. Hybrid work models are another underexplored area. Although recent studies indicate positive employee attitudes toward hybrid work, few have assessed its strategic potential in enhancing competitive positioning, particularly in public institutions. This proposed investigation aims to assess how strategic positioning in ICT adoption, e-commerce, and hybrid working models can provide PCK with a sustainable competitive advantage. It will explore how these elements, when effectively implemented, can strengthen PCK’s position in the communication sector amidst growing challenges. By addressing existing gaps in research, particularly concerning public sector implementation of strategic innovations, the study seeks to inform a roadmap for PCK's transformation into a resilient and competitive enterprise in the digital age.

**1.2 Research Objective**

This study was guided by the following general objective to: establish the influence of strategic positioning on sustainable competitive advantage at Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County.

Specific Objectives were to; examine the effect of ICT adoption as a strategic positioning tool for sustainable competitive advantage, assess the influence of E-commerce as a strategic positioning tool for sustainable competitive advantage, and to determine the influence of hybrid working arrangements as a strategic positioning tool for sustainable competitive advantage at the Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County.

**1.3 Research Questions**

The ensuing research questions outlined this investigation:

What is the effect of ICT Adoption as a strategic positioning tool on the sustainable competitive advantage at Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County?

What is the influence of E-commerce as a strategic positioning tool on sustainable competitive advantage at Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County?

What is the influence of hybrid working arrangements as a strategic positioning tool on sustainable competitive advantage at Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County?

**1.4 Justification of the Study**

Advancements in technology and new policies have transformed the global business environment, prompting companies to seek innovative strategies to maintain a competitive edge. This research was particularly significant for the Postal Corporation of Kenya and other telecommunications firms, offering valuable insights into strategic positioning as a means to enhance competitiveness. The findings were useful for both public and private sector practitioners aiming to boost performance through strategic change management. Additionally, the study provided a foundation for policy development and contributed to the academic field of strategic supervision, serving as a reference for future researchers, intellectuals, and academicians exploring similar topics.

**1.5 Study Limitations**

Data collection faced challenges due to respondent reluctance, but assurances of confidentiality and educational use helped. Limited funds were mitigated by utilizing university resources, including the Internet, Kusoma Website, and library. To address time constraints, the researcher developed a schedule for effective time management, ensuring the study progressed efficiently.

**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study is grounded in four key theoretical frameworks: Competitive Advantage Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), Flexible-Firm Model, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). These theories collectively offer insights into how organizations can develop and sustain competitive advantage, especially in dynamic business environments influenced by technological advancement and flexible work arrangements.

The Competitive Advantage Theory, introduced by Michael Porter in 1985, posits that for a company to succeed, it must establish an attractive industry structure and maintain a strong relative position within that industry. Porter identifies generic strategies essential for achieving economic profit and competitive edge, primarily through cost leadership or differentiation. Cost leadership involves lowering costs below competitors to gain higher profits, even if the product quality is average. Conversely, differentiation allows firms to charge premium prices by offering unique products or services valued by customers, provided costs remain controlled. Porter further highlights indicators of competitive advantage such as market share, job efficiency, and superior performance. Market share reflects a firm’s success in capturing and retaining customers, which enhances visibility and trust. Job efficiency relates to how effectively resources are used to meet organizational goals, leading to improved productivity and agility. Superior performance encompasses better financial outcomes and operational metrics relative to competitors, often yielding higher profit margins and a stronger reputation. Porter emphasizes that achieving sustainable competitive advantage requires deep understanding and strategic use of a firm’s unique strengths, enabling it to surpass rivals through well-executed strategies. This theory forms a critical foundation for analyzing how strategic initiatives can improve the competitive position and sustainability of an organization like the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK).

The Resource-Based View (RBV), proposed by Wernerfelt in 1984, is one of the most influential theories explaining the sources of competitive advantage. RBV asserts that a company’s unique resources and capabilities are central to its strategy and performance, shaping its ability to outperform competitors. Resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable (VRIN) are particularly significant in conferring sustainable competitive advantages. The integration of e-commerce within an organization exemplifies the RBV approach, as it leverages digital capabilities to expand market reach, streamline operations, and enhance customer experiences. Unique technological assets like proprietary payment systems or advanced data analytics can differentiate a firm, enabling superior online shopping experiences and efficient order fulfillment. Internal resources such as skilled IT staff and robust supply chains further support e-commerce success. Additionally, RBV highlights resource complementarity, where different resources synergize to create greater value—for instance, combining customer relationship management systems with e-commerce platforms to personalize marketing and boost sales. The adoption of e-commerce thus aligns with RBV principles by strategically deploying resources to build and sustain competitive advantages in the digital marketplace, driving growth and profitability.

The Flexible-Firm Model, developed by John Atkinson in 1984, addresses the need for organizational adaptability amid market volatility and competitive pressures. Atkinson advocates for flexible staffing arrangements that allow employees to work both remotely and on-site, enhancing workforce responsiveness and efficiency. The model emphasizes differentiating roles within the workforce based on their strategic importance, creating a clear hierarchy of flexibility. Flexible work options are especially relevant in today’s evolving work environments, as they enable employees to better balance personal and professional demands, leading to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement. Moreover, by permitting workers to select optimal conditions—whether quiet home offices or collaborative spaces—job efficiency and productivity improve, benefiting overall organizational performance. However, critics warn that excessive flexibility may pose risks, including potential discrimination against lower-skilled or peripheral workers and challenges in managing diverse work arrangements effectively.

Finally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), formulated by Fred Davis in 1989, seeks to explain how and why individuals and organizations adopt new technologies. Developed as an improvement over the Theory of Reasoned Action, TAM focuses on two main determinants: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. The model suggests that if a technology is seen as easy to use, users are more likely to perceive it as beneficial, thereby increasing their likelihood of adoption. TAM has been widely validated in research examining technology adoption in firms, demonstrating its utility in predicting acceptance and integration of information and communication technologies (ICT). The model is particularly relevant for understanding how ICT adoption can enhance communication, collaboration, and operational efficiency within organizations. By applying TAM, the study aims to explore how the adoption of ICT contributes to the Postal Corporation of Kenya’s sustainable competitive advantage, shedding light on how technological acceptance influences organizational performance in contemporary settings.

Together, these four theories provide a comprehensive lens to examine how strategic management, resource utilization, workforce flexibility, and technology adoption interplay to enhance organizational competitiveness and sustainability. Porter’s Competitive Advantage Theory underscores the importance of strategic positioning and unique strengths, while RBV focuses on leveraging distinctive resources and capabilities. The Flexible-Firm Model addresses the human and operational adaptability necessary in fluctuating markets, and TAM explains the behavioral drivers behind technology adoption crucial for modern business success. By integrating these perspectives, the study builds a robust theoretical framework to analyze how organizations like the Postal Corporation of Kenya can navigate evolving industry landscapes and technological advancements to maintain competitive advantage and long-term viability.

**2.1 Empirical Review**

The empirical review explores extensive research conducted on the themes relevant to this study, particularly focusing on strategic positioning, ICT adoption, e-commerce, and hybrid working arrangements, all in relation to achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Reviewing the existing literature helps identify gaps that this study aims to address, especially within public sector organizations.

***Strategic Positioning and Sustainable Competitive Advantage***

Strategic positioning involves continuous improvement guided by Quality Management Principles such as customer focus, employee involvement, top management support, informed decision-making, and a process-oriented organizational approach (Njenga, 2016). While these principles and the use of resource and institutional capital are fundamental to gaining a sustainable competitive position, Njenga’s research falls short in explaining how these factors concretely lead to superior performance and long-term competitive advantage. Farhiya (2016) examined strategic positioning in a non-governmental organization (NGO), the Ethiopian Norwegian Refugee Council, and found that the organization's ability to quickly position itself enhanced its operational success. However, this study is limited to the NGO sector and does not extend to the public sector, leaving a contextual gap. Simiyu (2017) investigated the private security firm G4S Kenya, demonstrating that strategic positioning can improve market presence and operational efficiency. Nonetheless, it did not address the public sector’s unique environment, creating a research gap regarding strategic positioning in public institutions such as the Postal Corporation of Kenya. Similarly, Kosgey (2013) explored the strategic positioning of newly established Kenyan public universities, focusing on academic reputation and stakeholder engagement. While insightful for the education sector, it does not address strategic tools such as ICT adoption, e-commerce, or hybrid work models that might enhance competitiveness in broader public sector organizations.

***ICT Adoption and Sustainable Competitive Advantage***

Several studies have explored technology adoption and its impact on organizational performance. Lakhwani et al. (2020) studied IT firms in Malaysia and found that technological change and IT infrastructure positively influence productivity, though IT knowledge management surprisingly had a negative impact. Their research, however, is limited to technology’s effect on efficiency rather than a broader strategic perspective. Tusiimemukama (2019) focused on Uganda’s beverage sector, revealing a positive link between technology adoption and job performance, though the model explained only a small portion (17.4%) of the variance, indicating other factors remain unexplored. This highlights the need for research on how ICT adoption impacts not just job performance but also strategic communication, collaboration, operational efficiency, and investment in ICT infrastructure to sustain competitive advantage. Muiruri (2021) found that adoption of advanced auditing technologies boosted productivity and client relationships in Kenyan multinational accounting firms. However, this research is concentrated on the private multinational context, leaving unanswered questions about ICT adoption in public commercial enterprises, such as those governed by the Postal Corporation of Kenya Act, 1998, which operate under different management and ICT frameworks. Additionally, Junglas et al. (2022) discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of high-tech organizational transformations, especially remote work technologies. Although this trend suggests potential operational benefits, empirical proof of these efficiencies remains insufficient.

***E-commerce and Sustainable Competitive Advantage***

E-commerce adoption has been shown to streamline procurement and enhance operational efficiency. Zhao and Zhang (2023) demonstrated that online buying platforms improve procurement speed and reduce costs, but their study does not tackle the specific challenges faced by public commercial enterprises like the Postal Corporation of Kenya, such as managing supplier relationships and public sector compliance. Similarly, Patel and Kumar (2022) showed that digital sales channels extend market reach and improve customer engagement, yet their findings overlook the impact of these channels on strategic competitive advantage in the public sector. Thompson and Nguyen (2021) noted that public commercial enterprises are adapting to digital procurement trends but lack understanding of their long-term sustainability effects. This gap calls for investigation into how online buying and selling can support strategic goals and competitive sustainability in public enterprises.

***Hybrid Working Arrangements and Sustainable Competitive Advantage***

Hybrid work models, blending remote and office work, have gained popularity and generally received positive public sentiment. Trivedi and Patel (2022), analyzing Twitter data, found that a majority of public opinions favor hybrid work, associating it with increased career satisfaction. However, their study focused on general attitudes rather than the strategic impact of hybrid work on organizational competitive advantage, which remains unexplored. Yang, Kim, and Hong (2021) examined knowledge workers’ perceptions in the U.S. during COVID-19, revealing that hybrid work improved work-life balance, productivity, and stress management due to office flexibility, supportive home environments, and managerial efforts. This suggests hybrid work arrangements can enhance employee satisfaction and productivity. In Kenya, Opuko and Munjuri (2017) studied flexible work practices in a courier distribution firm, finding strong positive correlations between flexible work and productivity. Their study explained nearly all variations in business efficiency, highlighting the significant impact of flexible working arrangements on performance. However, their focus was on flexible work practices broadly rather than on hybrid work specifically or its influence on strategic competitive advantage. The current study seeks to fill this gap by examining hybrid work arrangements from a strategic perspective within a public commercial enterprise. The literature underscores the importance of strategic positioning, ICT adoption, e-commerce, and hybrid working arrangements in enhancing organizational performance and competitive advantage. However, most studies focus on private or NGO sectors, with limited exploration of public commercial enterprises, which operate under different regulatory, managerial, and infrastructural conditions. Furthermore, while ICT adoption and e-commerce adoption have been linked to operational efficiency, their strategic role in sustaining competitive advantage in public entities remains under-researched. Similarly, hybrid work models have been positively received and linked to productivity gains, but their strategic implications for public sector competitiveness need further investigation. The gaps identified in these empirical studies suggest a clear need for research focused on public commercial enterprises like the Postal Corporation of Kenya, to understand how these factors can be strategically integrated to achieve long-term sustainable competitive advantage.

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**3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design provided a structured framework for data collection, analysis, and measurement to achieve the study’s objectives (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). A descriptive research design was chosen because it effectively captures the current state of affairs, making it suitable for exploring characteristics, attitudes, and social or educational issues through structured questionnaires (Kombo & Tromp, 2016; Orodho & Kombo, 2017). Additionally, a correlational design enabled quantitative analysis to draw conclusions from the data, while cross-sectional analysis allowed data collection at a single point in time (Babbie, 2010). This approach ensured flexibility and acknowledged factors beyond the researcher’s control. The target population consisted of Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) managerial staff at the Nairobi head office, selected for their role in strategic decision-making. These managers were spread across 13 departments, including Operations, Human Resources, Finance, and Corporate Communications, providing a focused unit of analysis for the study**.**

The study employed a census sampling technique, targeting all managers from the 13 departments at the Postal Corporation of Kenya’s Head Office in Nairobi. This approach was suitable due to the relatively small population size, allowing comprehensive data collection from every member without sampling error, thereby increasing the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Data was collected primarily through a structured questionnaire featuring closed-ended questions designed on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire, divided into four sections, included demographic information and questions related to both independent variables and sustainable competitive advantage. To facilitate easy access, the questionnaire was administered mainly via Google Forms, with a drop-and-pick method offered to those without online access.

Before the main data collection, a pilot study with six respondents was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. This sample size was appropriate based on established recommendations for pilot studies. Validity was ensured by designing questions that clearly represented the intended concepts, supported by expert reviews and supervisor feedback to confirm content and face validity. Reliability was measured using Cronbach’s alpha to assess internal consistency, targeting a minimum coefficient of 0.7 to confirm the instrument’s dependability.

The data collection procedure was formally authorized by Kenyatta University Business School and NACOSTI, and involved coordination with Postal Corporation management to clarify the study’s purpose and obligations. Research assistants distributed and collected questionnaires, with follow-ups via phone and visits to encourage participation. Data analysis employed SPSS software using descriptive statistics—such as means, frequencies, and percentages—and inferential statistics including correlation and multiple regression. These analyses examined relationships between variables, with results presented through tables, graphs, and pie charts to illustrate the association between performance and independent variables as a linear function, thereby supporting the study’s objectives.

**4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 Response Rate**

A response rate is the percentage of valid responses from eligible participants, crucial for ensuring survey accuracy and credibility by minimizing nonresponse bias. It’s calculated by dividing completed questionnaires by those distributed. A high response rate, ideally between 60% and 80%, improves sample representativeness and the reliability of findings. In this study, 55 out of 61 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 90.16% response rate, which exceeds the recommended range and is satisfactory for statistical analysis.

***Table 1: Response Rate***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Response | 55 | 90.16% |
| Non response | 6 | 9.84% |
| **Total** | **61** | **100** |

**Source: Survey Data (2025)**

**4.2 Descriptive Statistics**

The study analyzed several key variables affecting the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK), focusing on ICT adoption, e-commerce integration, hybrid working arrangements, and sustainable competitive advantage. Each variable was measured using descriptive statistics including mean scores and standard deviations, revealing insights about organizational strategies and their impact on competitiveness.

Regarding ICT adoption, the aggregate mean score was 4.018, indicating general agreement among respondents that ICT plays a vital role within the organization. The low standard deviation (0.346) suggested consistent perceptions about ICT’s importance. Respondents strongly agreed that ICT adoption enhances operational efficiency and reduces costs (mean 4.349), improves communication efficiency (mean 4.159), and that investment in ICT infrastructure directly impacts competitive ability (mean 4.210). These findings align with existing literature highlighting the strategic advantage ICT offers by optimizing workflows and internal communications. The organization was also seen as having a clear ICT integration strategy (mean 4.211), positively influencing product and service quality (mean 3.841). However, challenges remain; some respondents noted barriers to effective ICT adoption (mean 3.587), and although training is provided (mean 4.012), variability in responses suggests some employees feel inadequately prepared. These challenges emphasize the need for continuous ICT infrastructure development and ongoing staff training to fully realize ICT’s potential in driving strategic advantage in the postal and logistics sector.

On e-commerce, the aggregate mean was similarly high at 4.014, indicating agreement on its strategic importance. The low standard deviation (0.364) showed uniformity in perceptions. Respondents strongly agreed that e-commerce differentiates PCK from competitors (mean 4.595), enhances market competitiveness (mean 4.452), but also recognized barriers in leveraging e-commerce effectively (mean 4.512). Past research supports these findings, suggesting that businesses integrating e-commerce improve operational efficiency, market reach, and customer satisfaction. Respondents also agreed that e-commerce strategies are integrated into PCK’s overall business plan (mean 3.851), boost innovation capabilities (mean 3.678), and that customer data from e-commerce channels is used to sustain competitive advantage (mean 4.015). These insights reinforce the idea that digital transformation through e-commerce supports PCK’s strategic positioning, enabling it to remain relevant and competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace.

For hybrid working arrangements, the aggregate mean was 4.085, again indicating strong agreement about its positive impact. The standard deviation of 0.529 reflected relatively low variation in views. Respondents strongly agreed that hybrid work models improve market competitiveness and help manage employee work stress (mean 4.354). Employees have flexibility in adjusting work hours to meet personal needs (mean 4.214), telecommuting options are available (mean 3.924), and part-time schedules are supported (mean 3.952). Temporary work-from-home policies and alternative work locations further promote adaptability. Productivity effects related to balancing work and family tasks were acknowledged (mean 4.225), as was the positive impact of flexible job arrangements on employee efficacy (mean 3.878). Research has shown hybrid work enhances employee morale, work-life balance, and retention, which in turn strengthens organizational competitiveness. PCK’s incorporation of hybrid arrangements into its business strategy (mean 4.012) reflects a proactive approach to workforce trends, contributing to sustainable competitive advantage by fostering employee well-being, productivity, and operational resilience.

Finally, on sustainable competitive advantage, the aggregate mean was the highest at 4.216, with low variability (standard deviation 0.230). Respondents agreed that PCK has expanded its market share despite competition (mean 4.516), attracted customers through strong brand and service offerings (mean 4.125), and delivers high-quality services compared to competitors (mean 3.975). Strategic initiatives such as technology adoption and service diversification were seen as improving performance (mean 3.857), while financial sustainability was recognized as supporting long-term growth (mean 4.056). Employees were perceived as well-equipped to perform efficiently (mean 4.065), and automation and improved work processes enhanced service delivery (mean 4.214). Importantly, the organization fosters a culture of innovation and efficiency (mean 4.437), underpinning its competitive edge. These results suggest that PCK’s sustainable competitive advantage derives from a combination of market expansion, brand strength, operational efficiency, employee capability, and a culture that promotes continuous innovation.

**4.3 Correlation Analysis**

Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to assess the strength and direction of relationships between variables. In this study, it examined the associations between ICT adoption, e-commerce, hybrid working arrangements, and sustainable competitive advantage at the Postal Corporation of Kenya. The analysis offers insights into how these factors impact performance indicators like market share, operational efficiency, and service delivery. Results are detailed in Table 2

***Table 2 Correlation analysis***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ICT Adoption |  E-Commerce  | Hybrid working arrangement | sustainable competitive advantage.  |
| ICT Adoption | Pearson Correlation | 1 |  |  |  |
| Sig. (2-tailed) |  |  |  |  |
| N | 126 |  |  |  |
| E-Commerce | Pearson Correlation | .705\*\* | 1 |  |  |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 |  |  |  |
| N | 126 | 126 |  |  |
| Hybrid working arrangement | Pearson Correlation | .827\*\* | .955\*\* | 1 |  |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 |  |  |
| N | 126 | 126 | 126 |  |
| Sustainable competitive advantage. | Pearson Correlation | .898\*\* | .804\*\* | .733\*\* | 1 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 |  |
| N | 126 | 126 | 126 | 126 |

**Source: Research Data (2025)**

**4.4 Model Summary**

Table 3 summarizes a regression analysis exploring how ICT Adoption, E-Commerce, and Hybrid Working Arrangements influence Sustainable Competitive Advantage at the Postal Corporation of Kenya, Nairobi City County. These strategic positioning variables serve as independent factors impacting the organization’s competitive sustainability. The model shows a strong correlation (R = 0.921) between strategic positioning—ICT adoption, e-commerce, and hybrid work—and the Postal Corporation of Kenya’s sustainable competitive advantage. It explains 84.8% of variance, with high predictive accuracy (standard error 0.2985)

***Table 3: Model Summary***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .943a | .889 | .885 | .3128 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), ICT adoption, E-commerce, Hybrid working arrangement and sustainable competitive advantage.  |

4.5 Analysis of Variance

Table 4 shows the ANOVA results for a regression model analyzing factors affecting the sustainable competitive advantage of the Postal Corporation of Kenya in Nairobi City County. The model includes ICT Adoption, E-Commerce, and Hybrid Working Arrangement as predictors. With a Sum of Squares of 94.487, an F-value of 241.449, and a p-value of 0.000, the model is statistically significant. This confirms that these factors strongly influence the corporation’s sustainable competitive advantage, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

***Table 4: ANOVA***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| 1 | Regression | 94.487 | 4 | 23.622 | 241.449 | .000b |
| Residual | 11.838 | 121 | .098 |  |  |
| Total | 106.325 | 125 |  |  |  |
| a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), ICT Adoption, E-Commerce, and Hybrid Working Arrangement |

**Source: Research Data (2025)**

**4.6 Coefficients**

The Postal Corporation of Kenya’s sustainable competitive advantage has a baseline value of 0.387 when ICT adoption, e-commerce, and hybrid working arrangements are absent, indicating a significant starting point for evaluating its market position. ICT adoption positively influences competitive advantage, with a coefficient of 0.157, showing that digital transformation enhances efficiency and service delivery. This aligns with research highlighting ICT’s role in improving operational efficiency and customer satisfaction in postal services. Similarly, e-commerce contributes positively with a coefficient of 0.164, reflecting its role in expanding market reach and boosting service efficiency. Studies emphasize that effective e-commerce integration relies on strong digital infrastructure, customer engagement, and logistics, underlining the need for strategic digital transformation. Most notably, hybrid working arrangements have the strongest impact, with a coefficient of 0.482, demonstrating that flexible work models significantly improve organizational performance. Research supports that hybrid work increases employee productivity, reduces costs, and enhances decision-making and service delivery. Overall, these findings highlight that embracing ICT, e-commerce, and flexible work structures are essential strategies for the Postal Corporation of Kenya to achieve and sustain competitive advantage in the evolving postal sector.

***Table 5 Coefficients***

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| B | Std. Error | Beta |
| 1 | (Constant) | .387 | .106 |  | 3.661 | .000 |
| ICT adoption | .157 | .073 | .178 | 2.153 | .033 |
| E-commerce | .164 | .105 | .369 | 2.576 | .012 |
| Hybrid Working Arrangements | .482 | .105 | .557 | 4.596 | .000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Sustainable Competitive Advantage |

**Source: Research Data (2025)**

**5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

The study concludes that strategic positioning plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable competitive advantage at the Postal Corporation of Kenya in Nairobi City County. By adopting tailored strategies, the Corporation can improve operational efficiency, market relevance, and customer satisfaction, enabling it to overcome challenges such as competition from digital platforms. ICT adoption emerges as a key strategic tool, enhancing service delivery, operational processes, and customer engagement through digital and automated platforms. Additionally, integrating E-commerce solutions has expanded the Corporation’s service offerings, meeting increased demand for parcel delivery and online transactions, thus opening new revenue streams and improving accessibility. The study also highlights the positive impact of hybrid working arrangements, which promote flexibility, productivity, and cost efficiency while supporting staff morale and service continuity. Overall, these strategic approaches ICT adoption, E-commerce integration, and hybrid work models collectively strengthen the Corporation’s competitive edge and ensure long-term sustainability in a dynamic market environment.

**6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study’s findings, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the strategic positioning and sustainable competitive advantage of the Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) in Nairobi City County. The organization should invest in advanced ICT infrastructure and digital transformation, including automation, cybersecurity, AI, and big data analytics, to improve efficiency and service delivery. Expanding e-commerce capabilities through strategic partnerships, improved last-mile delivery, and user-friendly digital platforms is crucial to attract more customers and facilitate seamless transactions. Adopting innovative payment solutions will further enhance customer convenience. Additionally, embracing hybrid working arrangements can boost productivity and workforce flexibility; this requires clear remote work policies, digital collaboration tools, and employee training. These steps will improve employee satisfaction, reduce operational costs, and maintain service quality. PCK should also regularly evaluate its strategic approaches using market analysis and customer feedback to adapt to evolving industry dynamics. For future research, studies could compare strategic positioning’s impact on postal corporations in other regions, explore ICT adoption in different state-owned or private courier services, and examine the role of e-commerce and hybrid work models on long-term competitiveness. Investigating other strategic tools like partnerships, product diversification, and sustainability initiatives would also offer valuable insights for maintaining a competitive edge in the postal and courier sector.

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