
Role of Marketing Strategy in Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage –Evidence from IT Firms in Bengaluru

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Abstract: The paper examines the role of marketing strategy in establishing a sustainable competitive advantage for information technology firms. The present study draws on the Resource-Based View (RBV) as its theoretical foundation. Here, marketing strategy is operationalized as an organizational competency to explore competitiveness. Here, sustainable competitive advantage is operationalized using the development and improvement of business, company growth and performance, reduced costs, exploiting target market opportunities, and defending against competitive threats as its dimensions. The target population is marketing managers in the IT industry in Bengaluru. The sample size for this research was 100, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The data were tested and analyzed using statistical tools such as the one-sample chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The findings indicate that there is statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to sustainable competitive advantage. Elaborating on the results, the constructs reveal the significance, development and improvement of business ($X^2 = 152.50$, $p < 0.001$), company growth and performance ($X^2 = 96.40$, $p < 0.001$), reducing costs ($X^2 = 61.04$, $p < 0.001$), exploiting target market opportunities ($X^2 = 61.04$, $p < 0.001$), and defending against competitive threats ($X^2 = 27.12$, $p < 0.001$), which show a significant relationship with marketing strategy. This study contributes to research on sustainable competitive advantage theorized on the resource-based view (RBV), which investigates the significant association it has with marketing strategy for sustainability. This research broadens the application of the resource-based view (RBV). The current contribution explores a pragmatic perspective for IT-sector marketing managers for establishing competitiveness in the long run.

Keywords: Competitive advantage, IT firms, marketing managers, marketing strategy, resource-based view, sustainability, sustainable competitive advantage.

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing Strategy in Building Sustainable Competitive Advantage

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business environment, organizations do not have effective marketing strategies, so staying competitive and outperforming rivals has become a new problem. Consequently, a



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sustainable competitive advantage has not been achieved. There is a decrease in the use of analytical skills that are vital to comprehending and analyzing competition. Barney (1991) argues that a valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resource achieves a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm. Sustainable competitive advantage is linked to the resource-based view (RBV), which forms the theoretical framework for this study. However, RBV has usually been criticized for having a greater focus on the internal resources of the firm as opposed to external resources and factors, and market conditions. In this study, RBV contributes a relevant framework that identifies how marketing strategy contributes to achieving sustainable competitive advantage for a firm. Firms should consistently modify these competencies and capabilities to meet changing customer demands and market conditions. Marketing strategy is one of the competencies identified that helps in competition as companies are facing growing pressure with sustainability goals. In the current study, RBV shows a theoretical basis for exploring the relationship between marketing strategy and the operationalized dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage.

Sustainability Perspective of Marketing Strategy

Integrating sustainability through marketing strategies helps incorporate social and environmental aspects into routine marketing decisions, which can improve competitiveness. Sustainability is considered a conceptual perspective for this study, through which the marketing strategy is explored, highlighting the sustainable creation of value for stakeholders. This creates a lasting, sustainable competitive advantage instead of measuring sustainability as an independent construct. Sustainability here refers to the value that must be created for all its stakeholders. This helps foster goodwill and also strengthen relationships that attract future business opportunities. Based on the Resource-Based View, marketing strategy is treated as a capability that can be strategically used as a source to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm. The sustainability of unique marketing strategies of different IT firms enhances the firm's in-market positioning. It not only acts as a promotional tool for firms but also facilitates resource consumption by addressing market demands with the help of organizational capabilities, by reducing underperformers. Creativity and innovativeness help in outsmarting competitors due to the difficulty of replication. By institutionalizing sustainability for long-term goals, marketing strategy plays a critical role in managerial decisions. Therefore, marketing strategy enables decision-making processes by allocating the resources of the firm effectively and outperforming competitive rivals by sustaining the competitive advantage.

This study aligns with the scope of sustainability accounting and management by examining marketing strategy as a strategic capability that supports long-term organisational sustainability rather than merely short-term market performance. Sustainable competitive advantage enables organisations to utilise resources efficiently, create enduring customer value, strengthen organisational resilience, and maintain competitiveness in dynamic business environments. Accordingly, the study contributes to sustainability management literature by demonstrating how marketing strategy can support both organisational competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the Resource-Based View (RBV). In accordance with the RBV, a firm achieves a sustainable competitive advantage from its respective internal resources, capabilities, and competencies. These internal resources, capabilities, and competencies should be valuable, rare, inimitable, non-substitutable, and organized to capture value. The firm also gains a superior position from its position in the market and other external resources. Sustainable competitive advantage and the Resource-Based View (RBV) are very much relevant in all sectors of business. Elaborating on its relevance in the information technology sector, technology undergoes very quick changes, innovations, and new and frequent developments, because of which a competitive advantage gained from any product or service would be short-term. Therefore, organizations should utilize other sources to maintain a long-term competitive advantage that is sustainable.

Contribution of the Study

This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it supports the Resource-Based View (RBV) by demonstrating how marketing strategy may function as a strategic organisational capability that supports sustainable competitive advantage within the Indian IT sector. Practically, the findings provide managers with insights into how marketing strategy can be leveraged to improve organisational performance, identify market opportunities, optimise resource utilisation, and strengthen long-term competitiveness in dynamic business environments.

Research Questions for this Study

What is the role of marketing strategy in achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the IT sector in Bengaluru?

This paper is structured in the following manner. Following the introduction, we have Section 2, a literature review examining previous contributions that are relevant to the present study, then highlighting the research gap in detail and the hypotheses developed for this study. Next, Section 3 presents the conceptual framework of the study and describes the methods used in detail to conduct this study. This is followed by Section 4, the results, presenting the empirical findings of the study. Then we have Section 5, presenting the discussion, describing the results, comparing them with previous studies, and also including the theoretical, practical, and managerial sustainability implications for the study. This section ends with limitations and future scope for research. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

The following works of literature have been reviewed.

Marketing Strategy: A Strategic Resource

Varadarajan (2010) defines marketing strategy as a set of decisions that drive an organisation's approach to products, markets, and resource allocation. This enables bodies to create, communicate, and provide products that are valuable to customers in exchange for their patronage and achieve specific objectives. A sustainable marketing strategy aims to secure a competitive advantage by establishing a desirable, unique, and defensible position (Obermiller, Burke, & Atwood, 2008). Varadarajan (2010) says that marketing strategy includes an organisation's decision-making process, which determines choices regarding products, markets, marketing activities, and resources. It aims to create, communicate, and deliver valuable products in exchange for goods and services. The method allows the organisation to reach its desired goals. A numerical analysis is conducted on a generalised model that accommodates marketplace growth, expansion, and competition for market share. (Danaher, Bonfrer, & Dhar, 2008). Gone are the days when marketing was optional. Gaining a competitive advantage has become important for companies. This is because the scope of marketing has expanded beyond just personal and interpersonal needs to cater to future generations' requirements. In essence, marketing is now a fundamental requirement for businesses (Dam & Apeldoorn, 1996). Ryall and Sorenson (2007) find that brokers who act as intermediaries between two or more parties can have a comparative edge in a biform game, but only if they mediate for more than two parties and do not confront replacements for the connections they provide. The fact that two or more entities are interdependent does not necessarily mean that they are obligated to follow a specific pattern of exchange. Marketing support can be approached from different angles, such as environmental or social issues. It is important to consider all three aspects of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. Prior research focuses solely on analysing environmental and green marketing strategies (Polonsky, 1995). Advertisements can have a lasting effect on customers, which can lead to increased sales and a head start (Unnava & Sirdeshmukh, 1994). Not all advertisements lead to a sustainable competitive advantage. They vary among industries and firms (Middleton, 1991). Numerous advertising and marketing departments are facing a challenging task (Erickson, 1985).

Bharadwaj, Varadarajan, and Fahy (1993) propose a conceptual model that has helped in building propositions in strategic management and marketing. Greenley (1989) states that marketing strategy is a long-term plan aimed at achieving specific objectives. Varadarajan and Clark (1994) define marketing strategy as the efficient allocation and coordination of marketing resources to achieve specific goals within a particular product's market, so companies need to identify their target audience(s) and develop a cohesive marketing plan that includes the four key elements customised to meet the specific requirements and preferences of their clients in these segments. Slater and Olson (2001) say that researchers have yet to thoroughly explore the field of marketing strategy, which aims to achieve a competitive advantage.

The above literature indicates that the existence of a marketing strategy does not automatically play an important role in contributing to sustainable competitive advantage. But, according to the Resource-Based View (RBV), competitive advantage is achieved only when capabilities and resources are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable. Therefore, organisations must continuously transform and adapt their marketing strategies to sustain superior performance in the long run.

Marketing Strategy and Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Ichsan, Farida, and Listyorini (2022) aim to provide empirical evidence regarding the marketing performance effects driven by management strategies in the market, specifically focusing on the competitive advantages of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Ancol area. The research identifies marketing performance as the dependent variable, influenced by competitive advantages as an intervening variable, along with market strategies. The findings indicate that the implementation of market management strategies has a significant positive impact on competitive advantages. Furthermore, market management strategies effectively influence marketing performance through competitive advantages. In line with the previous paper, the author examines the relationship between product innovation and sustainable competitive advantage, explores the relationship between product innovation and market driving, and investigates the relationship between market driving and sustainable competitive advantage. The results indicate that the effect of product innovation (PI) on sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) is significantly positive, the effect of product innovation (PI) on market driving (MD) is significantly positive, and the effect of market driving (MD) on sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) is also significantly positive. This study's findings suggest that both product innovation and market driving significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage (Kuncoro & Suriani, 2018). Hosseini, Soltani, and Mehdizadeh (2018) utilize the observation method to examine this case, in which Toos Nirro, along with other players in the electrical industry, places great emphasis on prioritizing four key elements for their clients: efficiency, quality, innovation, and responsibility. To ensure that they are always at the forefront of new product development, they conduct an in-depth study of internal aspects to identify and evaluate competitive advantage factors. However, it is important not to overlook environmental factors. Guimarães, Severo, Dorion, Coallier, and Olea (2016) suggest that having a sustainable competitive advantage is crucial for achieving excellent economic outcomes. It is considered a fundamental attribute for organizations to succeed. Mathur and Nair (2016) say that it is important for an organization to assign clear objectives and roles to every employee to achieve strategic purposes. If the systems are poorly designed, they may result in slow and inefficient communication among different departments and unwanted outcomes. On the other hand, well-designed systems can facilitate fast and appropriate decision-making through effective communication channels. The author emphasizes the significance of managerial structure in gaining a competitive advantage. Mukerjee (2016) emphasizes that to gain, achieve, and sustain a competitive advantage, companies must focus on the factors outlined in the studies and proposals and take proactive measures to ensure survival in the market. This analysis of existing literature and the practices of industry-leading enterprises diagnoses positive research propositions. The author explains that for a competitive advantage to be sustainable and maintained over time, it must meet certain criteria. A lasting competitive advantage is a crucial aspect of any business or marketing strategy, providing a notable advantage over existing and potential competitors. Marketers face the task of creating innovative solutions to meet the growing global demand for an improved quality of life, while simultaneously ensuring development. A dependable competitive advantage is one that the company can maintain and competitors find difficult to vanquish over time, giving the firm an edge over its rivals. It is

essential for marketing to play a critical role in building corporate strength through sustainable competitive advantage, while incorporating it into all consumer brands (Bharti, 2016). Through creative and innovative marketing strategies, the business is navigating this new phase (Hudson, 2016). In today's fast-changing environment, organizations need a sustainable competitive advantage to adapt and succeed. By formulating effective strategies, organizations can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, with marketing strategies being a significant type. This approach is characteristic of knowledge-based organizations that develop their marketing strategies from their own insights. In other words, their marketing strategy is intelligent. This paper aims to offer a new perspective on developing marketing strategies focused on sustaining competitive advantage and creating intelligent marketing strategies through innovative knowledge, ultimately to achieve superior performance. Consequently, a comprehensive model is developed for Intelligent Marketing Strategy (Aghazadeh, 2015). Companies are implementing standards to achieve it. They evaluate their performance using a balanced scorecard, which has a positive impact on sustaining competitive advantage (Hakkak & Ghodsi, 2015). Alharthi (2012) says that customer relationship management capabilities have improved using organizational learning and business intelligence to implement efficient and quality processes, leading to a sustainable competitive edge. To achieve a dependable competitive advantage, different industries use varying strategies. In the service industry, sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through various organizational skills and resources. Using the resource-based perspective of a firm, the analysis of eight audit companies in Malaysia finds that companies of different sizes are utilizing resources in diverse ways (Phua, Lau, & Patel, 2011). To remain advantageous, businesses need to carve out unique spaces in the market and establish themselves as leaders in particular niches. A competitive advantage sets a business strategy apart from its competitors (Agić, Kurtović, & Čičić, 2012). According to the article, both resource and institutional capital are important for sustainable competitive advantage. Companies and organizations use Lean and Six Sigma techniques to maintain their advantage. A dynamic model is used to analyze advertising competition in a mature duopoly market, with analytical results for pure market share competition (Krähmer, 2006). Based on an empirical example, it appears that the advertising practices of the two major national brewers, Anheuser-Busch and Miller, align with theoretical findings suggesting that rivals and competitors adjust their advertising expenses to gain a competitive edge in a growing market for both companies (Nachum, 2001). To gain and sustain an emulous upper hand, a company must possess the capacity to consistently outperform its rivals. This requires a combination of factors, including innovation, efficient operations, effective marketing, and a strong understanding of the market and consumers' needs. By excelling in these areas, a company can stay ahead and achieve long-term success. To sustain its advantage, the firm must continually improve and acquire new resources, strategies, and skills to constantly outperform. Adapting to changing environments and generating new resources and strategies to respond to crises and tough competition is essential for businesses to stay competitive (Oliver, 1997).

There is much research on competitive advantage, but much of the existing literature focuses on banking, manufacturing, retailing, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Comparatively limited empirical attention has been given to studying and understanding the role of marketing strategy in achieving sustainable competitive advantage within knowledge-intensive sectors such as information technology. This limitation highlights the need for further investigation in the context of IT firms.

Sustainability-Oriented Marketing, Digital Marketing, Innovation and Competitive Advantage

Digital marketing is an increasingly important trend, with internet marketing concepts becoming a powerful medium. Various electronic devices, such as cell phones, digital billboards, tablets, laptops, and portable gaming devices, play a significant role in this field. It reviews various digital marketing concepts and tactics employed by major global companies (Denga, Vajjhala, & Rakshit, 2022). This study states its purpose to assess the impact of relationship marketing methods on long-term competitive advantage. The research empirically demonstrates that relationship marketing tactics can help banks in Ghana achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. The study finds that commitment, communication, and bonding have a positive and significant impact on relationship marketing and long-term competitive advantage. This study has deepened our understanding of bank marketing in Ghana by demonstrating that banks can gain a sustainable competitive

advantage by investing in relationship marketing practices, particularly in communication, commitment, and dispute resolution (Affran, Dza, & Oduro, 2019). According to the literature, retailing represents the ultimate stage of a distribution channel, which involves all the entities that participate in the physical movement and transfer of goods and services from the producer to the final consumer. Retail services, on the other hand, refer to the capacity to provide services to customers, which they may opt to use or not (Mulky, 2013). According to the authors, a customer-focused mindset in marketing is essential for businesses to outperform their rivals and achieve growth and profitability. However, companies often either overspend or underinvest in marketing. Proper budgeting of all marketing efforts is necessary to ensure their effectiveness. It is an estimated cost prediction that aids in designing, pricing, and distributing products or services. It aims to provide various methods for calculating the marketing budget and suggests actions that can be taken to allocate costs for sales activities in a way that minimises waste, reduces marketing expenses, and successfully builds profitable brands (Rajani & Shukla, 2016). Many e-commerce businesses are struggling to make a profit despite the growth of electronic commerce. Digital marketing techniques utilise the benefits and challenges of technology and the digital medium, building on the principles of traditional marketing. To enhance profitability, e-commerce enterprises need to redirect their attention from customer acquisition towards revenue expansion. This study reveals ways for internet organisations to respond to competitive forces and gain an advantage, using Porter's five competitive forces model and McCarthy's (1960) four marketing mix models. It provides valuable insights into creating and implementing e-business strategies that increase profits (Azadi, 2011). As sustainability and resource conservation gain more attention worldwide, consumers are exhibiting a growing preference for eco-friendly services and products. A critical factor in developing environmentally friendly, renewable, and green products is sustainability. It involves considering various factors, such as product quality, the greatest consumer benefits, the highest safety requirements, and the reduction of any potential negative environmental effects. This study examines the "cradle to grave" aspect of products by businesses in the fertiliser industry to evaluate their responsible behaviour across their life cycle. It concludes with an evaluation of the fertiliser industry's performance in terms of product responsibility, regarding the safety of consumers, labelling of products, communication in marketing, compliance, and privacy for consumers (Kundu, 2016). Sustainability principles require resource conservation and reduced consumption, but marketing principles encourage selling more, which leads to increased production and resource consumption (Jones, Clarke-Hill, Comfort, & Hillier, 2008). Thus, to reduce the impact on the environment and society, profits must be earned while maintaining a balance. Problem-solving and finding answers are interconnected. However, solutions to one problem can lead to new challenges, as seen in marketing strategies (Charter, Peattie, Ottman, & Polonsky, 2006). El-Ansary (2006) agrees that it should be made an essential component of any strategic plan. Companies that fail to become truly sustainable cannot survive in the field for long. However, only a few firms are attempting to consider integrating dependability into their marketing strategies, and some continue to sell unsustainable products. Therefore, the first step should be to target and position early adopter consumer segments that are ready to buy tenable products. For a successful sustainability marketing strategy, it is important to segment, target, and position customers based on defensible criteria. This way, a sustainability marketing mix can be designed to offer better products and services, prices, distribution, and promotion (Fraj-Andrés, Martínez-Salinas, & Matute-Vallejo, 2009). Marketing strategy has gone through various phases over time, and sustainability has emerged as a critical issue in recent years. The author discusses the evolution of sustainability in sales drives and explores its future (Kumar, Rahman, Kazmi, & Goyal, 2012). Incorporating sustainability provides a competitive edge, cost savings, and innovation (Buysse & Verbeke, 2003). The link between sustainability and marketing has been underexplored from a social perspective (Maignan, Ferrell, & Ferrell, 2005). A recent research study discusses the integrated relationship between ESG and sustainability insights. The findings indicate the organization's alignment with ethical practices, compliance with stakeholder expectations, and achievement of a sustainable future (Ovais, Jain, & Choudhary, 2025). International sustainability reporting frameworks, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards and the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) standards, encourage organisations to disclose sustainability-related information beyond traditional financial performance by incorporating environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance practices. Sustainability

management has undergone new developments, which focus on the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) norms in organizations for sustainability reporting and strategic decision-making. In the context of marketing strategy, the integration of sustainability accounting principles and ESG considerations enables organisations to align marketing decisions with broader sustainability objectives. Sustainability reporting provides stakeholders with transparent information regarding responsible business practices, while ESG-oriented strategies enhance organisational reputation, stakeholder trust, and long-term value creation. Consequently, marketing strategy should be viewed not only as a tool for improving market performance but also as a strategic capability that supports sustainable competitive advantage through responsible resource utilisation and stakeholder-oriented management.

The literature highlights the importance of sustainability-oriented marketing, digital innovation, and the integration of ESG practices and sustainability reporting in organizations. These are regarded as factors in organizational success and support achieving competitive advantage and sustainability. Consequently, minimal empirical research has been conducted on the integration of marketing strategy and these factors in the IT sector, leading to the current study.

Research Gap

The above works of literature have helped in identifying research gaps for the current study. Past literature talks about different frameworks on marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage using market management strategies (Ichsan et al., 2022), innovation (Kuncoro & Suriani, 2018), strategic marketing capabilities (Varadarajan, 2010), relationship marketing (Affran et al., 2019), and digital marketing (Denga et al., 2022). Irrespective of these extensive research contributions, a few research gaps are yet to be filled. Firstly, most existing research has focused on manufacturing firms, small and medium enterprises, banks, and retail businesses, with minimal focus on the information technology sector, especially in Bengaluru, which is one of the country's premier tech hubs. Secondly, sustainable competitive advantage was not examined as a multifaceted variable incorporating the right dimensions. There is very little evidence on marketing strategy contributing to growing their business, reducing costs, and defending against competitive pressures in IT firms. Competitive advantage was always used as a single dimension. Finally, as the importance of sustainability is increasing in strategic management, very few empirical studies have looked at how marketing strategy through the resource-based view can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in the long run. To address these gaps, the role of marketing strategy in achieving sustainable competitive advantage – evidence from IT firms in Bengaluru is investigated.

The purpose of this research is to discuss the influence of marketing strategy on sustainable competitive advantage, which is measured using the company's growth, performance, development, and improvement of business, reducing costs, exploiting target market opportunities, and defending against competitive threats. For a more thorough study, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H₁: Marketing strategy has a significant association with the development and improvement of business.

H₂: Marketing strategy has a significant association with the company's growth and performance.

H₃: Marketing strategy has a significant association with reduced costs.

H₄: Marketing strategy has a significant association with exploiting target-market opportunities.

H₅: Marketing strategy has a significant association with defense against competitive threats.

METHOD

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework for testing marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage. It is a chi-square model to test the hypothesis framed for it. It shows the relationship between the variables used to measure the study. They are taken from the literature (Joshi, 2015).

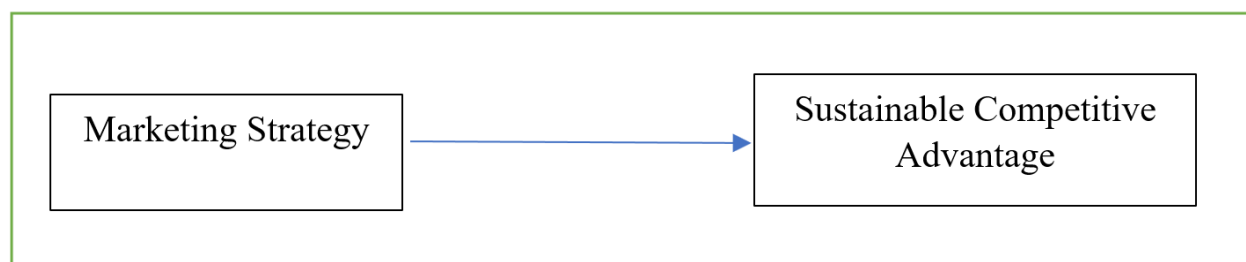


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework for testing marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage

The data are collected from primary sources. The study is conducted with a questionnaire of 14 items, which includes four demographic variables and ten Likert-scale structured statements. The study is exploratory. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. The responses were collected from selected marketing managers working in different companies in the information technology industry in Bengaluru, which is the target population. The respondents are marketing managers with the required professional expertise in strategic capabilities. Therefore, the findings cannot be interpreted for any other sectors or geographical locations, but only with respect to IT firms in Bengaluru. The sample size for the current study is 100 respondents. Though the sample is from a specialised group, a sample size of 100 was appropriate for the current study. Also, the general rule of thumb was applied, which is 10 respondents for each statement, resulting in 100 respondents.

Though the study has limited external validity with respect to the findings, it is accepted for exploratory research. The research tools and techniques used for data analysis include statistical techniques through SPSS Version 23 and Microsoft Excel. The tools used to analyse the data are hypothesis testing and the one-sample Chi-square goodness-of-fit analysis to examine respondents' perceptions regarding marketing strategy and dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage. The test is used to determine whether the observed distribution of responses across the Likert-scale categories differed significantly from an equal distribution. The analysis focused on identifying whether respondents exhibited statistically significant agreement or disagreement with the statements included in the questionnaire. For this study, marketing strategy is used as the independent variable, measured using five constructs, such as resource consumption, creativity and innovation, competitive advantage, sustainability, and the decision-making process. These five constructs are combined to represent marketing strategy. The statements were designed to capture the perceptions of the respondents.

The questionnaire items were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. For analytical purposes, responses to the five marketing strategy items were aggregated and subsequently dichotomised into two response categories to facilitate the one-sample Chi-square goodness-of-fit analysis. Responses indicating agreement (strongly agree and agree) were grouped into one category as 'Agree', while all other responses (neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) were grouped into the second category as 'Disagree'. The resulting dichotomous variable was analysed using a one-sample Chi-square goodness-of-fit test to examine the distribution of respondents' perceptions regarding the role of marketing strategy in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Sustainable competitive advantage is the dependent variable, with constructs such as development and improvement of the business, the company's growth and performance, reduced costs, exploiting target market opportunities, and defending against competitive threats.

The key demographic variables are identified. Table 1 describes the demographics of the respondents, where the male respondents are more numerous than the female respondents. Respondents are mostly between 30 and 40 years of age, most of whom are postgraduates. The majority have more than 10 years of experience, which is reflected in the accuracy of the data collected.

Table 1: Demographics of the respondents

Description	Total	Percentage
Gender		
Male	53	53%
Female	47	47%
Age		
20-30	22	22%
30-40	57	57%
40-50	21	21%
Education		
Graduate	19	19%
Postgraduate	42	42%
Professional qualification	39	39%
Years of Experience		
0-5 years	19	19%
5-10 years	37	37%
Above 10 years	44	44%

RESULTS

Reliability Test

To ensure the data's reliability, a test is conducted using Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of a group of items. The Cronbach's alpha results for the scale indicate that the data collected from the primary source are reliable, with a computed reliability score of 0.670. The common criterion for an acceptable limit is 0.70, but for exploratory research, newly developed or adapted scales, any value above 0.60 is considered acceptable. For the statistical analysis, both MS Excel and SPSS are utilized.

The validity of the questionnaire items developed was derived from extensive literature on both measured variables used in the study. Content validity was strengthened by examining their relevance to existing concepts for clarity and understanding. The approaches and measures used in existing academic research provided evidence that the questionnaire sufficiently addresses the research area.

Chi-Square and Hypotheses Tests Results

This research adopted the one-sample chi-square goodness-of-fit test to explore whether respondent agreement is statistically present among the variables. Here, causal effects are not established, but the relationship between the variables is explored. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test evaluates the distribution of perceptions. It is particularly useful in examining variations in categorical variables. The chi-square test presented in Table 2 appears to test whether responses to each statement are evenly distributed across Likert-scale categories. The one-sample chi-square goodness-of-fit test distribution in Table 2 has different interpretations for each variable. If the significance level is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted.

The results indicate statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to the development and improvement of business ($X^2=152.50$, $p<0.001$), indicating the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, H1 is supported. In the second case, the results indicate statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to the company's growth and performance ($X^2=96.40$, $p<0.001$), indicating the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, H2 is supported. In the third case, the results indicate statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to reducing costs ($X^2=61.04$, $p<0.001$), indicating the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, H3 is supported. In the fourth case, the results indicate statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to exploiting target market opportunities ($X^2=61.04$, $p<0.001$), indicating the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, H4 is supported. In the last case, the results indicate statistically significant respondent agreement that marketing strategy contributes to defending against

competitive threats ($X^2=27.12$, $p<0.001$), indicating the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, H5 is supported. This research suggests that marketing strategy is a significant source of sustainable competitive advantage, leading to business development and improvement, cost reduction, exploitation of target market opportunities, and defense against competitive threats.

Table 2: One-sample Chi-square goodness-of-fit Distribution

No.	Variables	Chi-Square	df	Sig.	Decision
1	Marketing strategy	25.000	1	0.000	Supported
2	Development and improvement of business	152.500	4	0.000	Supported
3	Company's growth and performance	96.400	4	0.000	Supported
4	Reduced cost	61.040	3	0.000	Supported
5	Exploits target market opportunities	61.040	3	0.000	Supported
6	Defends against competitive threats	27.120	3	0.000	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study's findings highlight the influence of marketing strategy on the development and improvement of businesses, company growth and performance, reduced costs, exploitation of target market opportunities, and defense against competitive threats. Comparing some of the past literature with the current study brings some insights and contributes to existing knowledge. Literature shows that for a company's competitive advantage, several factors can impact its sustainability. One of the main factors is the level of contention. If many companies are competing in the same space, it may be difficult for any one company to establish an edge that can last (Oliver, 1997). Rapid technological change can make a company's products or services obsolete, which can erode its unique perceived benefits. Additionally, external factors, such as economic conditions and changes in consumer preferences, can also impact the sustainability of a company's competitive advantage (Agić et al., 2012).

One way of maintaining an upmanship is by taking advantage of target market opportunities. This can be done by identifying and concentrating on certain market segments that show strong potential with respect to growth and profitability. This helps in dominating its rivals and serving the needs of its customers (El-Ansary, 2006). Marketing strategy has a key element, which is a strategic advantage, that is the development and maintenance of the USPs (Slater & Olson, 2001). It also helps a company to maintain its market position and defend itself against potential threats (Mukerjee, 2016). By understanding and satisfying the needs of their target audience and distinguishing themselves from competitors, companies can establish a strong presence in the field and protect themselves from potential challenges. This can lead to long-term success and profitability, according to Greenley (1989). Marketing strategy is a crucial component of a company's overall business plans and is responsible for generating sales and revenue growth. To achieve the specific objectives of an organisation, the process of strategizing and implementing the pricing, promotion, and distribution of concepts, goods, or services is required. Reducing costs is a vital component of marketing strategy, which can be accomplished in several ways: optimising distribution channels, utilising the benefits of producing at a larger scale, and using cost-saving technologies (Varadarajan, 2010).

To maintain their edge, companies must be able to adapt to these changes. Overall, sustainable competitive advantage is crucial for firms to factor into their strategic planning. While it is not easy to achieve or maintain, they can increase their chances of establishing a sustainable competitive advantage by developing unique products or services, building a strong brand, acquiring key resources, and continuously adapting and innovating (Nachum, 2001). It is essential to manage the effects of market changes caused by the pandemic on all sectors of the economy. This includes dealing with increased competition, addressing sustainability concerns, evaluating operational challenges and alternatives in an uncertain environment, and identifying consumers' needs with innovative products and services.

Theoretical Implications

The study makes a significant contribution to the literature by providing empirical support for the Resource-Based View (RBV). It highlights the association between marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage as an organizational capability. The RBV presents that gaining a sustainable competitive advantage by a firm occurs when its resources and capabilities are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Evidence from this study shows that marketing strategy contributes to customer value creation, exploring market opportunities, and building competitiveness, which helps organizations achieve long-term sustainability. Therefore, the applicability of the resource-based view is demonstrated within the context of the IT industry. The findings empirically present the relevance of the Resource-Based View (RBV) through marketing strategy used as an organizational capability in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. This contributes to creating competitiveness in knowledge-intensive organizations and adds to the existing literature.

Sustainability Implications

Considering sustainability, the contribution of the marketing strategy as a resource contributes not only to organizational feasibility but also broadens sustainability goals in the long run. This is achieved through efficiently utilizing resources, creating value for customers, strategically adapting to market conditions, and always transforming. Accordingly, integrating marketing strategies with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) norms helps to achieve business growth and organizational practices simultaneously. The findings also indicate a sustainability accounting approach to marketing strategies promoting organizational commitment to sustaining value creation. This communication happens through sustainability reporting frameworks that support conventional methods. In addition, the integration of marketing strategies with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives enables organizations to strengthen stakeholder trust, improve corporate reputation, and reinforce long-term competitive positioning. Accordingly, sustainable competitive advantage should be viewed not only in terms of economic performance but also in relation to responsible governance, stakeholder accountability, and long-term organizational resilience. Therefore, results show that marketing strategy aids firms in sustaining competitiveness while improving sustainable business performance. This enables sustainability and growth.

Managerial and Practical Implications

The findings from this study provide some insights for managers in the IT sector. Firstly, efficient allocation of resources for analysing customers' feedback and systematic market intelligence. Secondly, regular review of marketing strategies and upgrading to the trends that would help in technological changes and customer demands. Lastly, to sustain competitiveness in the future by aligning marketing strategy with innovation and business development. These recommendations help organizations to perform better and tackle threats from rivals.

Limitations and Future Research

This study acknowledges certain limitations. Firstly, the prospect of bias exists due to reliance on the reported data, which could have been a result of similar response patterns. However, substantial efforts were taken to administer the survey. Secondly, the study has analysed the opinions of only 100 respondents, which may limit its scope. It is focused solely on the perceptions of marketing managers rather than objective organizational performance measures. Also, these marketing managers were from different companies in the IT industry in Bengaluru. This makes it difficult to generalise the findings to other cities, regions, and industries. Thirdly, certain aspects of the analysis rely on statistical packages that are based solely on mathematical propositions. Also, a one-sample chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to examine response distributions rather than relationships among constructs for the analysis. Therefore, the interpretation of the results is based on perceived associations between marketing strategy and dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage.

There is scope for future research on the role of marketing strategy over different geographical regions, sectors, and industries. Exploring these will improve the generalisability of the results of this study. Research

can be done on other capabilities, resources, and competencies in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. Future researchers can use other statistical tools and tests, namely SEM and regression analysis. This helps in providing strong relationships among these constructs.

CONCLUSION

The study explored employees' perceptions of the role of marketing strategy in achieving sustainable competitive advantage by taking evidence from marketing managers working in IT firms in Bangalore. This research suggests that marketing strategy is a significant source of sustainable competitive advantage, contributing to the development and improvement of businesses, reduced costs, exploiting target-market opportunities, and defending against competitive threats.

There is a significant contribution to the resource-based view, which is the theoretical foundation. Based on the findings, this paper explores the role of marketing strategy in sustaining a competitive advantage. It emphasizes that to succeed in a market, a company must be able to create and sustain its competitive advantages, which is crucial because it would set the firm apart from its competitors and attract more customers. IT firms can gain an edge by creating well-planned marketing strategies.

Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. The prospect of bias exists due to the reliance on the reported data, which could have resulted from similar response patterns. However, substantial efforts were taken to administer the survey. The study has analysed the opinions of a limited number of respondents, which may limit its scope. It is focused solely on marketing managers in different companies in the IT industry in Bengaluru, making it difficult to generalise the findings to other cities. The analysis is based only on statistical packages that are based solely on mathematical propositions. To conclude, the study enables insightful knowledge for researchers and other practitioners regarding the significant association between marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage. The findings also lay the foundation for further research on this topic on a larger scale, exploring a variety of resources differing from industry to industry.

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT: The study involved minimal risk and followed ethical guidelines for social science fieldwork. Formal approval from an Institutional Review Board was not required under the policies of the Institute for Research Ethics Committee of the Christ University, Bangalore, India. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and all data were anonymized to protect participant confidentiality.

TRANSPARENCY: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

COMPETING INTERESTS: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS: Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Appendix 1 presents the questionnaire used to collect data for the study, including the demographic questions and the measurement items for marketing strategy and sustainable competitive advantage.

Section A - Demographic profile

No.	Particulars	Please select the appropriate option
1	Age:	a) 20-30yrs b) 30-40yrs c) 40-50yrs
2	Gender:	a) Male b) Female c) Other
3	Years of experience:	a) 0-5yrs b) 5-10yrs c) Above 10yrs
4	Educational Qualification	a) Graduate b) Postgraduate c) Professional qualification

Section B – Marketing Strategy

Please indicate your opinion about Marketing Strategy - (5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree))		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Marketing strategy helps with resource consumption.					
2	Marketing strategy is creative and innovative.					
3	Marketing strategy is a source of gaining a competitive advantage.					
4	Marketing strategy helps in sustainability.					
5	Marketing strategy helps in the decision-making process.					

Section C - Sustainable Competitive Advantage

	Please indicate your opinion about sustainable competitive advantage - (5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree))	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	A strategy is considered a sustainable competitive advantage when it contributes to the development and improvement of business.					
2	A strategy is considered a sustainable competitive advantage when it contributes to a company's growth and performance.					
3	A strategy is considered a sustainable competitive advantage when it contributes to reduced cost.					
4	A strategy is considered a sustainable competitive advantage when it contributes to exploiting target market opportunities.					
5	A strategy is considered a sustainable competitive advantage when it contributes to defending against competitive threats.					