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Introduction

This report is based on the case study of Volkswagen that will discuss the competitive strength of the company over the past five years. The report will discuss the key strategies that the company has been implementing in their business operations from the past five years and how this has helped them to achieve their organisational goals. The report will also discuss the company's capabilities and resources that have helped them achieve competitive advantage over the past five years and how the resources will enable them to achieve their future goals. Further the report will also discuss the competitiveness of the company considering the sustainability and environment globally. Lastly, the report will also analyse and examine the sustainable practices that the company must follow or adhere to in order to gain competitive strength in the automobile industry in the future.

“Discuss the key business strategy of VW over the past five years with key evidences and why was the strategy changed or pursued”

Volkswagen is the abbreviation of VW, a motor vehicle manufacturer founded by the German Labour Front in the year 1937. Volkswagen is mainly known for the production of quality and latest vehicles. The brand is more popular among the people as it has a good starting price with excellent efficiency in fuel and low cost for maintenance of the vehicles. Some of the business strategies that the company formulated within their business operations over the past five years has helped them gain competitive advantage and significantly changed the value of the firm in the automobile industry (Jung and Sharon, 2019). Over the past five years, the company enhanced the innovation, research and development to fully transform their brand. The company committed to e-drive vehicles, their main purpose is to fight against the change in climate, increase the innovation's pace to face and tackle the challenges over their competitors. The company aims to maintain and achieve sustainability in their operating margin by investing over 18 billion Euros in hybridization, digitalisation and e-mobility (Ahmadi-Gh and Bello-Pintado, 2022). The corporate strategy of the company was rolled out and entirely emphasised on EV development, software, service mobility and connected services. According to their business strategy of dubbed new auto, they will now focus on the share growth of EVs in the lineup of the brand along with the group that expects battery-electric vehicles to account for 50% of their production by the year 2030 and by 2020 100%. The company also expects pooling of their revenue and shifting their business's profit to battery electric vehicles and boosts their services and software by autonomous technology of driving. Under their new business strategy, Volkswagen proposes to charge battery tech and infrastructure as an important aspect and thereby, is planning to create a battery supply chain that can be controlled. Since, the European market demands more fuel-efficient and smaller vehicles; the company facilitated their manufacturing process to meet the challenge by collaborating with the new brands to the market. The company focused on meeting the preferences of the customers so as to reach a point to

dominate over 10% of the global market. With the green technology, Volkswagen made strides in Europe which helped them to design hybrid models in the production of the car. They used the green technology to attract the emotional customers towards the “green issues” in order to sell off their hybrid cars. Volkswagen after the emission scandal tried to bring a certain amount of sustainability within the business where eco-friendly cars were an option that they were trying to consider (Poier, 2020). This helped them to achieve competitive advantage in the European market as they were the first producers to launch. To attract the younger customers aged between 18 to 30, they set the interest rates according to the customers age so as to make them feel ease in payment and meet their finances. They even put in additional efforts and money to train their associated sales target. The company even provided incentives to the buyers to make them feel they were provided with a good deal, this strategy helped them achieve success. The company was able to gain competitive strength in Europe and North America due to their careful study of cultural differences and lifestyles of the customers in the countries. Thus, their collaboration strategies with the top Chinese and American companies helped them to meet their goals and expand and become leaders in the foreign markets. The company, apart from this, even focused on staying up-to-date with the new markets where the mini-car and hybrids were once untapped. Thus, the company mainly focused on making the automobile industry quieter, cleaner and safer to promote new driving experiences to their customers (BBC, 2018).

SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis of Volkswagen clearly shows the strengths and weaknesses that the company has while operating within the market. It will provide information about the internal environment within which Volkswagen operates in.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• The product portfolio is very strong • Uses the diversification strategy • Strong financial performance	• Emission scandals • Weak marketing strategies outside Europe

Opportunities	Threats
• Volkswagen can focus on the eco-friendly cars • Expanding the business into emerging markets	• Heavy competition within the market • Ongoing lawsuits

Table 1: SWOT table of Volkswagen

Source: (created by the learner)

Analysis

Strengths

The main strength that Volkswagen has is based on the diversified product portfolio that they have within the business. The company has different products that are based on the needs and demands of the customers. The strong portfolio also helps the company in gaining a certain competitive edge within the market. Volkswagen has been able to use the diversification strategy successfully where they differentiated their own products and its features from other products within the automotive industry that are sold by the competitors. Also, the company has been known for the financial strength that they have within the market. The company and ranked #8 in sales revenue along with a rank #37 in profitability among all the business organisations that are participating within the automotive industry. This shows that Volkswagen has had an effective financial performance in recent years.

Weaknesses

There are certain emission scandals that Volkswagen has to deal with where they had been facing allegations related to a software that the company had put into their vehicles in order to cheat the amount of emission that was being shown by the vehicles (Jacobs and Kalbers, 2019). The company has also faced from marketing strategies adopted in foreign markets like Volkswagen tried to sell the electric motor cars within the Chinese market

Opportunities

There is a great opportunity for Volkswagen to back their sustainable brand image with investing

into eco friendly cars. It will also help them in mitigating any carbon emission scandal that they are facing. Investing into eco-friendly cars can also help the company in attracting new customers that can successfully mitigate their pain through these cars. Another great opportunity that the company has is to expand their business into certain emerging markets where there are new sets of customers waiting to purchase the vehicles that are being made by Volkswagen using their technological capital and a wide variety of resources (Jawed *et al.*, 2022).

Threats

The biggest threat that Volkswagen faces within the market is the threat of competition where other companies like Audi, Honda, General Motors, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) and Nissan are trying to attract the customers towards their business by bringing in different innovations into the business. The company has also been facing certain lawsuits within the countries UK, US and France which pose a threat to them while operating within these markets.

“Identify with evidence the resources and capabilities of the company over the past five years and to what extent the company has aligned resources and capabilities to their current business strategies”

The business model of Volkswagen has fundamentally been changing from the sales of vehicles to mobility and software services which are largely boosted by the key technology of autonomous driving. The company focuses on three areas in their production process such as new approaches to production, business model 2.0 and technology. Therefore, the resources and capabilities of the company over the past five years are as follows-

The company's **revenue margin** has considerably been rising since the year 2018; however, by the year 2022, the revenue of the company has decreased in the year 2020 and was able to increase by 6% in the year 2022. In the year 2018, VW generated income of £278.54 billion, in 2019, they generated £282.95 billion, in the year 2020 they generated £278.57 billion, in the year 2021 by £296.01 billion and in the year 2022 by £288.24 billion (Ramsdale, 2020).

In the private sector, Volkswagen is one of the largest employers. The company employed around 662,575 people as per the year 2020 which also included the Chinese Joint Ventures. But with the end of 2019, there was a decrease in the **workforce** by 1.3%. The human resources within the company empower to transform by setting innovative trends. The workforce of the company is highly employee-oriented that strives for excellence in the operations and thus, yields value added contributions.

The type of customers that Volkswagen sells their products to includes upper-middle class, middle class and upper class section. Volkswagen tried the greenwashing technique to analyse the engagement that the customers have with the idea of bringing sustainability within the business (Topal *et al.*, 2020). The VW regard themselves as sustainable mobility and innovative provider for all their private and commercial customers all over the globe. With their unique product portfolio, they have been able to encompass innovative financial services and twelve successful brands for their customers. In Germany and the rest of Europe, the company has established a business fleet customer base. The company is **customer** oriented and by allowing their customers to provide easy financial services and reduced interest rates, they have been able to attract the young customers between the age of 18 to 30. They are well known among the customers basically for their German engineering at an affordable price. The company has maintained their customer base by targeting the narrow market and to the markets which have not been exploited by other motor vehicles companies.

For over two decades, Volkswagen has been able to maintain their market share on the European market. The passenger's cars brand of VW is available in more than 150 countries globally and the company produces vehicles in over 30 locations in 13 different countries. As per the year 2022, the registration of cars share of the brand in Europe stood at 10.9%. The company mainly uses differentiated targeting strategy to offer specific products to the specified segments of the customer's base. They use competitive pricing strategy to deliver their cars of different features and sizes all over the world (Allam *et al.*, 2020). They have been able to maintain their **market**

share by distributing their products in the prime location so as to ensure quick and safe delivery. Due to their attractive presence in the international market, they have been able to create and make identity for their brand all over the world. With the creative promotional schemes and programs, the company has been maintaining their market share and with their green technology they have boosted their sales by gaining the confidence of emotional customers towards the 'green issues'.

VRIO analysis

The VRIO analysis is a strategic tool that is used by business organisations to gain a competitive advantage within the market and make sure that the resources that are available to them can be utilised successfully. The VRIO analysis is based on 4 different factors which will show the competencies that are available to Volkswagen.

Valuable - The competencies that are considered to be valuable for Volkswagen are the brand image that the company has in the market while achieving sustainability. The brand image in relation to sustainability is an important factor that shows how valuable the service being offered by Volkswagen to their specific customers. There is a certain amount of brand integrity which attracts the customers towards the company. The ability of the company to bring in a certain amount of technology into the business so that the vehicles that are being offered can be based on the needs that the customers have. The brand image valuation can be done by analysing the brand identity score of Volkswagen (LEE, 2022). The average brand recognition boost is 25% which is better than the competitors making it better for them to attract the customers and makes it highly valuable. The Brand Index score of Volkswagen has always been close to 80 which shows that they had a strong brand image within the market which made their image within the market valuable. The technological capital that Volkswagen has makes the business more valuable because they are able to bring in different technologies within the business that enhances the accuracy of the production process along with the enhanced features offered within

the vehicles. The technological capital helps the company in communication, capacity building, and identifying barriers within the business making it more valuable.

Rare - The products that are being launched into the market by Volkswagen are not rare as there are other companies that are able to offer similar vehicles. However, the features that are being offered might differ from other companies. The company has a problem solving culture within the business which allows them to go through difficult situations within the business. The brand image is another factor that can be considered within the rare competencies of the company as the customers are heavily attracted to the brand values that the Volkswagen communicates through their marketing efforts (Amaya *et al.*, 2022). The channel management during the distribution of the products for the company is a rare factor as it helps the company in gaining a competitive advantage within the market by reaching out to the customers faster. Having the technological capital is a rare feature because the companies having this capital requires a certain amount of financial strength which other companies within the automotive industry do not have.

Inimitable - In terms of the features and the quality of the products are not immutable that easily as Volkswagen uses an unique set of raw materials for making the vehicles that they are launching within the market. The brand image of the company is something that Volkswagen determines their operations on. The image that they have created within the market determines the customer experiences. Hence the products and the brand image of the Volkswagen is inimitable and can be successful in helping gain a competitive edge within the market. The technological capital is an inimitable feature of the company as it requires employees who have the ICT skills and the experience of using different technology within the products that they are investing in. The factor of CSR needs to be considered within the competencies of Volkswagen (Bonsu, 2020).

Organisation - Volkswagen is one of the leading business organisations within the automobile industry and they have a strong brand image which allows them to attract customers by bringing changes within their products/vehicles. The financial strength that the company has also allows

them to bring in different digital innovations into the business which is crucial in competing within the market.

Competitive advantage	Competencies	Valuable	Rare	Inimitable	Organised
Competitive parity	Brand Image	Yes	No		
Temporary competitive advantage	Quality of the products	yes	yes	No	
Unused competitive advantage	Technological capital	Yes	Yes	yes	No
Sustainable competitive advantage		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 2: Vrio analysis table

(Source: created by the learner)

It can be understood through the VRIO analysis that the competencies that have been discussed like the quality of the products that they are offering within the market along with the strong image of the company helps them in gaining a sustainable competitive advantage within the market helping them enhance the scope of their business gradually. Volkswagen also has the technological capital which can play an essential role within the market while competing with other companies.

“Evaluation on how VW has tried to become more competitive with respect to sustainability and the environment”

Volkswagen has accomplished great prosperity and even endured an economic crisis. The global marketing schemes and campaigns have helped the company to survive and grow in the automobile industry. The company's core business strategy is facilitating sustainability in their operations through future growth and development. They focus on measuring goals for decarbonisation, e-mobility services, digitalisation and responsible supply chain. The company

has even faced lots of challenges and threats to their well being of the finances and had to incur huge costs with respect to the environmental efforts. However, they have been able to maintain their strength in the industry and have obtained a huge share in the market (Turna, 2022). The members of the management board take decisions regarding the sustainable development of the company. Considering the sustainability of the business, the company believes in working with suppliers who are socially committed towards reducing harm to the environment. The supply chain of the company focuses on resource procurement and decarbonisation. Among the partners of VW, they have raised awareness regarding the issues of the environment. The company rates the potential supplier's level of sustainability and reviews protocol breaches. VW ensures that the suppliers do not abuse or harm the rights of the workers. The company is mainly focused in reducing the emissions of carbon and they together work with their suppliers for the cause or issues on the environment. In the production of the company's HV battery cells and other aluminium parts, they have been using renewable energy. To solve the environmental issues, the company offers mobility services and innovative car technologies. The group of Volkswagen supports the community and education projects as part of their societal duty and responsibilities. They highly support the community and educational projects and to foster cooperation they participated with the external parties such as the politicians and the society as a whole. Volkswagen is remarkably known for their quality of services that they provide before and after the sale of their products. The company focuses on retaining the satisfaction level of the customers by equipping feedback from them and resolution to the necessities of the customers. To mitigate the impact of global warming, the company has been focusing on battery based electro mobility. Through print and media advertising the company communicates the sustainability of their brand along with sustainability within their supply chains (Wissuwa and Durach, 2021).

The sustainability of Volkswagen merely includes social, ecological, and economic objectives; they aim at creating and offering values and proper or adequate working conditions and thus

conserve the environment and resources. They have targeted the 2 degree Celsius target of the Paris climate agreement by becoming net carbon neutral, this is because they believe that the carbon-neutral economy will benefit every individual in terms of security, meaning and more future. Even during the pandemic, the company has been able to contribute towards the society by donating aid supplies and conducting 25,000 tests of coronavirus. In the year 2020, the company successfully achieved the monitoring of the US agreement that followed the diesel issues. The company becomes a stronger business by changing the processes, systems and structures. Their focus on the four key areas of circular economy, decarbonisation, workforce transformation and responsibility in the business supply chain has enabled them to ensure effective sustainability operationalisation with clear processes and responsibilities. Overall, the company maintained the sustainability of their business by competing for their everyday customers and by opening a plant and building vehicles at affordable prices. Thus, with their innovative campaigns and advertisements, the company has been able to retain potential customers and gain competitive advantage in the industry.

Pestle analysis

The pestle analysis is based on the external environment in which the company operates. The analysis will offer knowledge about the different external factors that impact on the business of Volkswagen within the UK posing either as a threat or an opportunity for the business going forward within the market.

Political factors - The political stability of the UK government heavily influences the business of the organisations that are operating within it. Volkswagen also faced this factor where the political stability being good helps the company get a good amount of support from the government while bringing innovations within the business (Gholipour, 2019). However, the Brexit issue had impacted on the business of Volkswagen negatively where the UK withdrew themselves from the European Union which impacted on the people who were living within the UK working in

companies to leave the nation and go back to their respective nations that fall under the European Union.

Economic factors - The GDP of the UK is a determining factor which influences the range of accessibility that the company can have in terms of bringing different resources into the business. The current economy of the UK is £2.9 trillion billion pounds (Sattar *et al.*, 2020). The current economy of the UK is going through a certain inflation where Volkswagen faces a certain difficulty in operating successfully and making sure that the cost of operation is reduced. Also, the inflation acts as a threat for the company as the increasing prices impacts on the profit earning ability that they have. The rising unemployment rate is another factor that Volkswagen had to consider within their business. It provides them an opportunity to bring in new employees within the company who were waiting for an opportunity.

Social factors - The consumer market within the UK is very big considering the people that are interested in automobiles offered by Volkswagen. The UK also has a multicultural diversity where the people are always welcoming new features within the automobiles. This acts as an opportunity for the company in enhancing the business within the market. 2021 is a year that itself saw an increase in the number of people purchasing automobile vehicles within the UK by around 15%. Due to the high amount of investments being made in this industry it offers a great opportunity for Volkswagen to sell their cars successfully (Skeete *et al.*, 2020).

Technological factors - Volkswagen has a strong technological capital which allows them to bring in different technological advancements within the business that are essential for the success of the business. The UK is a nation where the automotive industry is constantly bringing in new technologies to meet the demands of the customers. The government of the UK also encourages companies like Volkswagen to bring in new technological features into the market so that the overall turnover through the automotive industry increases as it will help in meeting the demands of the customers (Olabi *et al.*, 2021).

Legal factors - There are certain legal factors that the company needs to consider while operating within the UK. These legal factors include the Employment Act of 1966. According to this legislation Volkswagen needs to consider the rights that each employee has to make sure that the culture of the organisation can be maintained. The Equality Act of 2010 also needs to be followed where the employees need to be treated fairly while working within the company and also offer them fair opportunities in their individual careers within Volkswagen (De Cabo *et al.*, 2019).

Environmental factors - The implementation of the eco friendly cars is an initiative that the company can take while operating within the automotive industry. The constant rise in the amount of carbon being emitted by the cars within Volkswagen can be a long term threat as companies are becoming sustainable and are measuring the amount of emission that they are having impacting on the environment. The Environment Act of 2021 has become an essential factor within the business of the companies operating within the UK.

“Recommendations on how the sustainability practices can help the organisation to develop competitive advantages in the future”

Volkswagen has been able to maintain competitive advantage in the industry through their customer-oriented approach and many other factors, however there are some areas that the company can take action into to develop or gain competitive advantage in the future. Sustainable business practices refers to the process or ways that the company can follow to run a business in a more social and environment friendly way. The ways can be formulated by the company to protect the people living in the environment and thereby, reducing the wastage of money or natural resources and also taking steps for conservation.

- Volkswagen must be aware of the impacts of the products that they are going to produce. The company should aim at using materials and chemicals that are environment friendly and thus prefer to use energy efficient products. One of the most important steps that the company can take is they can try to source materials for their production process locally

and thus, design their cars in such a way that it becomes easy to repair and also increase the longevity of their vehicles (Dewitz, 2019).

- The company must reuse the items as much as possible as this will help them to reduce wastage and they will not have to put in additional effort in their business operations. They can assist their supply chain of the business to report and calculate the emissions of GHG and to develop strategies to reduce the footprints of carbon. As the logistics operations of the automotive industry produce large quantities of greenhouse gases. This will help them to determine the impact of the GHG emissions that can affect the operational activities of the company and the perception of the public globally.
- The company must also develop the resources to check the water wastage so as to meet the regulations related to the environmental issues. The company can reduce waste by reusing water and saving costs. This can be done by building a water treatment plant and ensuring that the water is used in the most effective way and that it can be reused in other departments of production (Helmold, 2020).
- Volkswagen can also gain competitive advantage by providing people with options to choose to fix or repair the items rather than looking out for other new devices. Such accessibility will then automatically help the business make a sustainable practice. This includes manufacturing the cheaper parts or allowing the customers to a third party repair service. They can also help their customers by providing them content online that will guide them to repair themselves.

Conclusion

This report has analysed the competitive strength of Volkswagen in maintaining their growth and sustainability in the auto industry for the past five years. The report has discussed the key business strategies of the company that has helped them achieve their organisational goals. The report further discussed the resources and capabilities of the company in achieving competitive advantage in the industry. The report has also discussed the competitiveness of the company in implementing their business strategies with respect to environment and sustainability. Finally, the report has discussed the sustainability practices that the company can use to gain competitive advantage in the industry globally.

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