

Strategic Positioning And Market Leadership: A Comprehensive Analysis Of Mopani Copper Mines

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Abstract

In the current research, the researcher has used the method of online and offline survey as well as offline interviews as a means of collecting primary data, which are both qualitative and quantitative in nature, respectively. Three survey questions for all the employees were given, and the employees were provided with the printouts of the survey questionnaire manually from hand to hand and with a pen, so that they could fill in those forms then and there only. Every respondent was given suffice time to answer. This method was handy for the lower-level employees, because physical distribution of the questionnaires helped them participate in the research.

The present research has three samples - employees from human resource management, who are in authoritative posts, the General employees and thirdly, the ones from managerial positions.

The employees of Mopani Copper Mine, a total of 145, participated and the researcher opted for a random, probability sampling method for the survey participants so that each of them gets an unbiased opportunity to respond to the questions and express their opinions. As for the interviews, the sampling technique has been convenient non-probability, and eminent and eligible participants were selected, who have sufficient knowledge about the research topic or issue.

In the current research, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from interviews and surveys respectively. The Researcher used transcripts and logical considerations which helped critically and analyzed the findings based on literature. For the survey data, the survey question-answers were arranged in a tabulated format.

Keywords: Strategic Position, Market leadership, Mopani Copper Mine, Factors, Zambia

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I. Introduction

Background to issue

The primary source of foreign currency in Zambia comes from mining and it has been a major contributor in the country's economic growth. There are four major copper mining fields in the country, based on which several smaller mining zones have developed. Although the national government buys majority of the mining companies and their shares, foreign mining companies have tied up with the Zambia government to earn from mining. The government had planned for keeping 15% of the total shares of the mining companies (Zambia Invest, 2020).

Zambia has benefitted through its copper mine deposits after the copper price boom in the global market. However, as the alternative to mining industry, there is very little scope for employment; people in local areas tend to opt for the career of mining labor, earning very little wages for their living. Despite the fact that mine, labors get higher wages in comparison to that of labors in other Zambian industries. However, despite higher wages, the standard of living is very low, and the wages are not sufficient for a better lifestyle (ALREI, 2020).

Gap in existing research

Although the current chapter offers a wide variety of in-depth knowledge about research topic variables and their associated aspects, some evident gaps have remained unattended. As mentioned by Danese, Manfe and Romano (2018), in literature review chapters, not all the related aspects are discussed, and researchers often had to select one option from the alternatives, making the scope of future improvement a reality. In the current research the researcher due to the limitation of the time, had to limit the circumference of literary sources. Another major gap that remained in the chapter is the lack of literary works that directly linked the research topic variables. This problem matters academically because it will add to board of knowledge to the researchers.

Research Objectives

- i. To evaluate the internal resources and capabilities of Mopani Copper Mines that contribute to its competitive advantage.
- ii. To analyze the external market conditions and competitive forces impacting MCM's market position.
- iii. To assess the strategic decisions and initiatives undertaken by MCM to enhance its market leadership.
- iv. To propose strategic recommendations for Mopani Copper Mines to sustain and improve its market position.

Structure of the paper

Title page, Main Body (Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion), References.

II. Literature Review

Internal Resources and Capabilities

A range of literary sources have been sought out, assessed and referred in order to make in depth comprehension of the chosen thesis topic and the legitimacy of the variables, in the context of being related to one another. As mentioned by Bush, Abdul Hamid, Ng and Kaparou (2018), literature review of a research gives the research the literary foundation, based on which the research aims, objectives are verified and logically criticized.

Global Perspective

Internal resources and capabilities are critical determinants of a firm's competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Globally, mining companies have been focusing on enhancing their technological capabilities and operational efficiencies to gain a competitive edge. For instance, Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton have invested significantly in automation and digitization to streamline operations and reduce costs (Parreira, 2020). These advancements highlight the importance of leveraging technology to enhance internal capabilities and maintain market leadership.

Regional Perspective

In the African context, the mining industry is characterized by its rich mineral resources and significant economic potential. However, many African mining companies face challenges related to infrastructure, regulatory compliance, and technological adoption. According to the African Development Bank (2021), investments in infrastructure and technology are crucial for enhancing the operational capabilities of mining companies in the region. Companies like Anglo American and De Beers have demonstrated that strategic investments in internal resources, such as advanced mining equipment and skilled labor, can lead to improved productivity and competitive positioning.

Local Perspective

At the local level, Mopani Copper Mines (MCM) has focused on developing its internal resources to sustain its competitive advantage in Zambia's mining sector. MCM has invested in modern mining equipment, employee training programs, and sustainability initiatives to enhance its operational efficiency and environmental performance (ZCCM-IH, 2020). These efforts are aimed at strengthening MCM's internal capabilities, which are crucial for maintaining its market leadership in the Zambian mining industry.

Limitation in existing literature

The gaps identified are that data have not been clarified, reported, or elucidated, there is incompleteness of data, timeliness of data, and there is lack of appropriate data coverage for policy decisions to shaky data flows of the research topic.

Clear rationale that leads to my research questions

The mining industry is characterized by intense competition and rapidly changing market conditions. For MCM to maintain its leadership, it must continuously adapt its strategies to address these challenges. However, there is limited research on the specific strategic actions that have propelled MCM to its current position. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of MCM's strategic positioning and market leadership, thereby offering insights that can guide future strategic decisions.

As mentioned by Wilson et al. (2018), balancing the different priorities of an organization is necessary and in order to make the balancing effective, in depth assessment of organizational internals must be taken under consideration. The research will offer knowledge about the way issues of lowered productivity develops and organizations will gain better knowledge about the true implication of strategic position and market leadership effects in the long-term.

III. Conceptual/ Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework outlines the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the study, illustrating how the implementation of improved inventory systems affects business performance in small clothing retail stores in Lusaka.

Relevant Theory

Strategic Decisions Theory (SDT) External Market Conditions

Global Perspective

External market conditions, including market demand, commodity prices, and regulatory environments, significantly influence the strategic positioning of mining companies. Globally, the mining industry has experienced volatility due to fluctuating commodity prices and changing regulatory landscapes. According to a report by the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM, 2022), companies must continuously adapt to external market conditions to remain competitive. For example, the global push for sustainable mining practices has led companies to adopt environmentally friendly technologies and comply with stricter regulations.

Regional Perspective

In the African context, external market conditions are shaped by regional trade agreements, economic policies, and regulatory frameworks. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to create a single market for goods and services, which could impact the competitive dynamics of the mining industry (UNCTAD, 2019). Additionally, regional regulations, such as those imposed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), influence the operational strategies of mining companies in Africa. Understanding these external factors is essential for companies to navigate the complexities of the regional market.

Local Perspective

In Zambia, the mining sector is heavily influenced by national policies, regulatory requirements, and socio-economic conditions. The Zambian government has implemented policies to promote local content and community development, which impact the strategic decisions of mining companies (Lungu, 2019). For MCM, navigating the local regulatory environment and responding to community expectations are critical for sustaining its market position. Moreover, fluctuations in copper prices and global demand for copper also affect MCM's strategic planning and operational performance.

Market Leadership and Position

Global Perspective

Market leadership in the mining industry is characterized by a company's ability to maintain a dominant market position through innovation, efficiency, and strategic agility. Companies like Newmont Mining and Barrick Gold have achieved market leadership by consistently delivering high production volumes, maintaining low-cost operations, and investing in cutting-edge technologies (PwC, 2019). These companies exemplify how strategic positioning and continuous improvement can lead to sustained market leadership.

Regional Perspective

In Africa, market leadership is influenced by a company's ability to navigate complex regulatory environments, engage with local communities, and leverage regional trade opportunities. Companies like Sibanye-Stillwater and Impala Platinum have demonstrated market leadership by implementing robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and maintaining strong relationships with regulatory bodies (African Mining IQ, 2020). These efforts contribute to their reputation and competitive positioning in the African mining sector.

Local Perspective

Mopani Copper Mines aims to maintain its market leadership in Zambia by focusing on operational excellence, community engagement, and sustainable practices. MCM's initiatives, such as its partnership with local communities for socio-economic development and investment in environmentally friendly technologies, underscore its commitment to maintaining a leadership position in the Zambian mining industry (ZCCM-IH, 2020). These strategies not only enhance MCM's market leadership but also contribute to its long-term sustainability and community goodwill.

Conceptual model and linkages between variables/themes

Customer Satisfaction

Strategic Position

1. Market Leadership

2. Financial Capabilities
3. Operational Efficiency

IV. Methodology

Research design

In general, there are two basic types of research conducted by researchers: primary and secondary. Primary research, as stated by (Sampson et al., 2018), is the research process in which researchers collect data for research directly from data sources with the participation of human participants. However, as argued by (Shields & Whetsell, 2018), on the other hand, there is a secondary research type, in which data and information are collected solely from the dominant literary sources that have already been presented by other prominent researchers, without the involvement of any human participant.

Population and sample for the study

Population of the Study

The population chosen for the current research is the human resource of Mopani Copper Mine employees in management, and general employees. As mentioned by Stone, Schneider, Krueger, Schwartz and Deaton (2019), the selection of sample determines the accuracy of the collected data as the samples play the role of the evaluation platform that judges the research objective in terms of real-life legitimacy. Therefore, the present research has three samples - employees from human resource management, who are in authoritative posts, the General employees and thirdly, the ones from managerial positions.

Sample for the Study

The chosen sample size is 5 from Management, and 50 from authoritative positions and Human Resource personnel), 85 regular employees of Mopani Copper Mine giving a total number of 140 expected participants. As assessed by Ryan (2018), there are a number of sampling techniques, which are implied for selecting the relevant samples, such as random probability and convenience non-probability.

Sampling method (s) for the Study

There are several sampling techniques, which are implied for selecting the relevant samples, such as random probability and convenience non-probability. The researcher has opted for the random probability sampling method for the survey participants so that each of them has an unbiased opportunity to respond to the questions and express their opinions.

Sampling technique (s) for the Study

In terms of interviews, the sampling technique has been convenience so that only the eminent and eligible participants could be selected, who have sufficient knowledge of the research topic or issue.

Data Sources

Depending on the way the data are collected in research, there are two major types of data sources, primary data and secondary data.

Data Presentation and Analysis

As described by (Uerz et al., 2018), they are collected directly from human respondents, while secondary data sources are collected from literary sources such as books, journal articles, newspapers, government reports, and peer-reviewed articles. In the current research, both secondary and primary data were collected. In the current investigation, the researcher has also used online and offline surveys, as well as interviews, as means of collecting primary data, which are qualitative and quantitative in nature, respectively.

Reliability and validity of the study

The reliability and validity of the study analysis data depend on the type of data analyzed. In the current investigation, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from interviews and surveys, respectively. Regarding the analysis of interview-based data, as mentioned by (Ma et al., 2018), the use of transcripts and logical considerations of the researcher are required, which help them to critically analyze the findings based on literature. For the survey data, the survey question-answers were arranged in a tabulated format, with the frequency of responses being put along with their response percentages, options, and total respondents. The statistical findings were calculated using mean, mode, and standard deviation, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Finally, charts, bar graphs, and diagrams were used for data representation.

Ethical and legal considerations of the study

In the current research, the researcher has maintained a very strict norm of ethical consideration. Firstly, it has been observed that no biased data have been provided to the investigation and all data, regardless of whether they were primary or secondary, have been kept in their true form. During interviews and surveys, the identities of the respondents were kept confidential, no irrelevant personal questions were asked, and no personal data was used for any other purpose than the research itself, as per the 2018 Data Protection Bill (Lusaka Times, 2018). The respondents were not forced to do the research and were free to discontinue the same if they felt discomfort.

Study Limitation / Accessibility Issues

At the time of conducting research, researchers face the problems of accessing certain data sources, which is generally termed accessibility issues. As mentioned by (Ameen et al., 2018), accessibility issues arise as most researchers conduct their research with limited resources. In the current research, the researcher has mainly opted for interview and survey questions, the use of the internet, which at the time of the research was interrupted temporarily, making many respondents leave the survey in between. In terms of the interview, only a limited number of supervisors were available.

V. Findings / Results

How far do you agree that poor strategic position and market leadership can make you quit jobs?

Options	response frequency	percentage of respondents	total respondents
Strongly Agree	27	36%	75
Agree	22	29.3%	75
Neutral	2	2.7%	75
Disagree	15	20%	75
Strongly Disagree	9	12 %	75

Data findings and analysis

The majority of the mining employees, working at Mopani Copper Mine, accounting 36% of the 75 respondents strongly agree that they might think about quitting their jobs at the mines in case there is poor strategic position and market leadership. The second highest percentage of respondents, 29.3% of the respondents also agree that poor strategic position and market leadership would make them quit their jobs in the mines of Mopani Copper Mine. The third and fourth highest percentages of respondents, accounting 20% and 12% disagreed respectively, and strongly disagree that poor strategic position and market leadership would make them opt for quitting their jobs.

How far do you agree that poor strategic position and market leadership hinders employee Productivity?

Options	response frequency	percentage of respondents	total respondents
Strongly Agree	15	33.3%	45
Agree	10	22.2%	45
Neutral	2	4.5%	45
Disagree	13	28.8 %	45
Strongly Disagree	5	11.2 %	45

Data Findings and Analysis

During the current survey question, it is found that 33.3% of the 45 respondents, accounting the majority of the opted options strongly agree that poor strategic position and market leadership make employee's productivity declines. An addition of 22.22% of employees also agrees that the poor strategic position and market position is related to declining employee productivity. Out of the total number of respondents, only 4.5% remained neutral to the question, while 28.8 % of the responding employees, which is the second highest percentage of response disagreed that poor strategic position and market position does undermine the employee productivity. It is also seen that 11.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed that poor strategic position and market leadership generate pressure that hinders employee performance at the workplace.

VI. Discussion

As the current thesis finds its completion through literary discussions, data collection and finding analysis, it becomes transparent that Strategic positioning and market leadership is an important part of organizational offering and a prime factor that makes a seemingly ordinary job profile lucrative. Considering the minimal benefits a lower level employee gets, the good strategic positioning and market leadership catered to a lot of significance and often become the only valuable policies available. The strategic positioning and market leadership give employees and the company's ability to take make strategic positioning and market leadership,

which other institutions would reject, as majority of the ordinary employees do not possess the required skills to be provided. Strategic positioning and market leadership therefore, are capable of manipulating the degree of satisfaction generation among the employees, which directly influence the employee productivity and morale. Which in turn the company will be at a strategic position

Linking Objectives with Finding

Objective 1

The first objective of the current thesis aims to evaluate the internal resources and capabilities of Mopani Copper Mines that contribute to its competitive advantage and consider their respective significance in organizational setting. In order to meet the requirements of the current objective of the thesis paper the secondary sources that are mainly focused on thematic and variable based discussions, which again are presented in the literature review section. The subheadings including concepts of strategic positioning and market leadership, the factors leading to strategic positioning and market leadership, the benefits of strategic positioning and market leadership and the drawbacks of strategic positioning and market leadership along with the theories related to strategic positioning and market leadership provided detailed description about strategic positioning and market leadership and its associated facts.

Objective 2

The second objective of the current research has aimed analyzing the external market conditions and competitive forces impacting Mopani Copper Mines's market position.

In order to meet the requirements of the current object a combination of literary sources, survey question response and interview question answers have been deemed necessary. The issues of strategic positioning and market leadership as observed in the context of employee productivity and morale the subheading, namely, challenges in providing strategic positioning and market leadership, challenges implementing strategic positioning and market leadership to increase employee morale and productivity are considered useful for meeting the requirements of the current objective.

Objective 3

The primary data, which was required for the current objective of the research that indulges in the assessment of the strategic decisions and initiatives undertaken by Mopani Copper Mine to enhance its market leadership has been met with the data derived from the responses of the survey questions and interview questions. In terms of the survey questions that were asked to the employees of Mopani Copper Mine, it was noted that questions numbered 3, 4, and 8, offered the perspective of employees about the impact of strategic positioning and market leadership on employee productivity and morale. In their response to survey questions has offered quantitative data that has reflected the views of the employees of Mopani Copper Mine.

Objective 4

The current objective of the thesis tends to propose strategic recommendations for Mopani Copper Mines to sustain and improve its market position in the backdrop of strategic positioning and market leadership has been met properly. The highest contribution has come from the primary data although the secondary data made available in the literature review section has also provided ample information. As for the primary data the response to survey questions number 9 and 10 asked to employees of Mopani Copper Mine along with survey same question asked to authoritative employees have given ample idea about the preferences of the employees, as well as the employees who are engaged in authoritative actions. The detailed information gathered in the form of the responses to the interview question number 3 and 5 has also made the meeting of the aim of the current objective possible.

VII. Conclusion

Summary of key insights

The data analysis suggest that, in order to make the employee and customer satisfied, as well as morale high, the management must make strategic positioning and market leadership a top priority so as to make sound policies which will put the company on a strategic position and have good market leadership. In addition, the employees must also be given scope of earning incentives. The striving towards earning incentives will not only improve the employee productivity, it will also cover the good conditions compared to other market players and would improve the employee morale significantly.

Recommendations of the study

Increasing strategic positioning and market leadership.

Government Initiatives

The increasing of the strategic positioning and market leadership policies will improve the satisfaction of the employees and the company, as they will get a better position on the market that are sufficient for their desired purposes. In addition, the putting up of good strategic positioning and market leadership would also mean that the organization would earn more revenue from the good market positioning, which would be the employees of the institution. It is also worth the notice that employees will be satisfied after they get good conditions, and their satisfaction would help in improving employee productivity and morale evidently.

Increasing the Time for strategic positioning

The management of the chosen organization would be able to retain high level of employee productivity and morale, in case it increases the conditions of service the good the strategic positioning and market leadership would mean that the proper policies that are made will reflect the intended purposes. The ability to manage the strategic positioning and market leadership despite the hard market, the productivity and morale would remain high as the employees would be satisfied emotionally and economically.

Implementing strategic positioning and market leadership

The implementation of the strategic positioning and market leadership is very effective in terms of retaining high employee productivity and morale on a high and satisfactory level. However, in order to make the good strategic positioning effective, the organizational management have to have market leadership analysis, so that it can earn same satisfactory interest based on the strategic positioning.

Implement Strategic Positioning and Market leadership based on Priority

The strategic positioning and market leadership policies offering, based on priority of the need instead of first-come first-serve basis would make the policies loans more effective in generating satisfaction in the minds of the employees. The offering of the good market leadership based on priority would also keep the employees, satisfied, who opted for to be with the company based on good strategic positioning and market leadership. The satisfaction generated from the incorporation of offering good strategic positioning and market leadership based on priority would retain employee morale and their productivity high.

Scope for future research

The current research paper, with all its focus as well as limitations, holds a significant degree of potential in terms of the future scope that is concerned. The current research dives into the assessment of the impact of strategic positioning and market leadership on the employee productivity and employee morale, as observed in the context of Mopani Copper Mine which makes it a source of secondary data for future aspirants striving to explore the same topic or topics closely resembling the current one.

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