

The impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage: A study on a sample of Sudanese industrial companies

اثر الولاء التنظيمي في الميزة التنافسية: دراسة عينة من الشركات الصناعية السودانية

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Abstract:

The study aimed to know the impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach, and the results of the study were represented in the presence of a positive relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage. The study recommends to pay attention to organizational loyalty to benefit from existing business opportunities in achieving competitive advantages, in addition to conducting large-scale studies that address different dimensions of the study variables.

Keywords: (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty, competitive advantage)

JEL classification code : XN1, XN2

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1. Introduction :

Organizational loyalty has become increasingly important to organizations in order to excel in the market, and this study seeks to enhance organizational loyalty in order to develop and achieve competitive advantage. (Hassan, 2017, 378).

We find that the continuous change in customer desires and needs, the rapid environmental changes in the organization's environment, and the expansion of competition and markets, has made organizations follow methods and approaches in order to retain customers. This has led organizations to adopt appropriate marketing strategies in order to gain customer loyalty. (Al-Shibawe; Kazem, 2015, 50)

One of the most important challenges facing contemporary food companies today is their continuous pursuit of competitive advantage. Al-Dosari, 2024, 71) Therefore, all companies seek to achieve competitive advantage in order to increase the value they create and enhance their competitive position within the framework of the changing environment. (Hassan, 2020, 326)

1.1 Study problem:

We find that organizations and companies seek to achieve loyalty to the company, so we find that loyalty is one of the best resources for the organization to measure it with the various study variables. (Al-Sameh; Issa 2021, 84), and loyalty is considered a basic source for creating an advantage for any organization, so companies must work on the proper exploitation of the human element, and seek loyalty towards their employees (Bali, 2019)

Competitive advantage has become necessary for organizations that aim to survive and continue in global markets, and adapt to an unstable environment. Organizations must adopt a clear direction and path for their various activities, which is represented in marketing strategies (Ibrahim, 2015, 1).

After reviewing a number of previous studies, we find that most studies focused on studying organizational loyalty in a number of dimensions, including emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, and normative loyalty, as there are studies that dealt with competitive advantage with different variables and dimensions, and other studies without dimensions.

The problem of the current study is to know the impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage, and the problem of the study can be presented in the following questions:

Main question: What is the impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage?

What is the impact of organizational loyalty (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty) on competitive advantage?

What is the level of organizational loyalty (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty) in the companies studied?

What is the level of competitive advantage in the companies studied?

1.2 Importance of the study:

1.2.1 Theoretical importance:

1. This study seeks to link organizational loyalty to competitive advantage.
2. The researcher believes that this study enriches the library due to its need for this type of studies that are based on scientific foundations.
3. The importance of the study lies in the fact that it addresses the controversy among researchers, which is the topic of organizational loyalty.

1.2.2 The practical importance:

1. It helps officials and decision makers in identifying the dimensions of organizational loyalty.
2. It helps decision makers in Sudanese food companies in general in choosing any of the dimensions of organizational loyalty.

1.3 Study objectives:

1. To know the impact of organizational loyalty (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty) on competitive advantage.
2. To know the level of organizational loyalty (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty) in the companies studied.
3. To know the level of competitive advantage in the companies studied.

1.4 Operational definitions:

1.4.1 Loyalty:

Loyalty is defined as an ongoing process through which employees in the organization express their interest and concern for the organization and its continued success and survival (Attia, 2018, 9).

1.4.2 Emotional loyalty:

Emotional loyalty reflects the extent of individuals' belonging to the organization, their connection to its goals and their pursuit of achieving them, and the desire to continue working in it. (Backgrounds 2009, 292).

1.4.3 Continuous loyalty:

Continuous loyalty means that the individual dedicates his life through his personal sacrifices and investments for the survival and continuity of the group's life. (Al-Baqour, 2015, 65)

1.4.4 Normative loyalty:

Normative loyalty is the individual's connection to social relations and his behavior that leads to a sense of group cohesion. (Yakhlaf, 2018, 57)

1.4.5 Competitive advantage:

It is the distinction that enables the company to produce values and benefits for customers that exceed what competitors offer (Al-Dawri; Bousalem, 2011, 9).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The organizational loyalty:

2.1.1 The concept of loyalty:

Loyalty is considered the degree of an individual's attachment to his organization and his connection to it. (Jawdat, 2017, 93) It is defined as a psychological state that reflects the individual's relationship with the organization in which he works. (Al-Khashroom; Ali, 2011, 32) It is also defined as the state of the worker's integration with the organization in which he works. (Atiya, 2018, 103)

2.1.2 Characteristics of organizational loyalty:

Organizational loyalty is characterized by being the result of the interaction of many human and organizational factors and administrative phenomena within the organization. (Halouz; Al-Damour, 2012, 52)

2.1.3 The importance of organizational loyalty:

Organizational loyalty is positively related to the effectiveness of the organization and the degree of achievement at work. It expresses the individual's position towards his organization, his pride in it, and his willingness to defend it and its reputation as a result of his strong belief in its goals. It is related to the individual's behavior and activities, and

is closely related to job satisfaction and bearing responsibility at work, which facilitates the possibility of predicting important issues in the field of work. (Al-Zoubi, 2013, 32). Also, the high degree of organizational loyalty of individuals reduces the rate of attrition at work and improves their level of performance. The high level of organizational loyalty positively affects the organization by increasing productivity and maintaining morale. (Aziza, 2023, 64)

2.1.4 Dimensions of organizational loyalty:

2.1.4.1 Emotional organizational loyalty:

It is affected by the extent to which the individual feels that the organizational environment in which he works allows him to participate effectively, and makes him happy to belong to the organization and adopt its problems and feel that there is a brotherly atmosphere that connects him to his work. (Aziza, 2023, 54)

2.1.4.2 Continuous organizational loyalty:

It is measured by the value of the investment that the individual can achieve if he continues in the organization versus what he will lose if he joins other institutions, as the individual has invested a good part of his life in the organization. (Abu Hijal, 2019, 276)

2.1.4.3 Normative loyalty:

The individual's feeling of commitment to staying in the organization in return for the good support that the organization provides to its members, and allowing them to participate in setting the general goals of the organization, which makes the individual refrain from leaving the organization because he is morally committed to empowering the organization, achieving its goals, and implementing the policies that he participated in setting. (Halfat, 2009, 44)

2.2 The competitive advantage:

2.2.1 The concept:

Competitive advantage is considered the decisive strategic element that provides essential opportunities for the organization to achieve continuous profitability compared to its competitors, and it is the most important decisive factors for the success of organizations, and competitive advantage is determined by determining a specific competitive strategy, which contributes to increasing value and enhancing its competitive position within the environment in which it operates (Al-Abadi; Al-Otaibi, 2014, 218). And the organization's

ability to achieve the highest return and continue progress and maintain it (Al-Rafid, 2019, 135).

2.2.2 Characteristics of competitive advantage:

It is characterized by being determined based on the desires and needs of customers, and providing available opportunities in the environment, and is characterized by sustainability, strength and difficulty for competitors to imitate it. (Abu Sitta, 2013, 04)

2.2.3 The importance of competitive advantage:

The importance of competitive advantage appears in that it is a criterion for successful organizations, to distinguish themselves by creating unique and new models that are difficult to imitate or repeat their advantages. Competitive advantage is considered the main weapon to confront environmental challenges, through the organization's development of its competitive knowledge and its ability to meet customer needs. (Al-Zoubi, 2009, 60).

2.2.4 Dimensions of competitive advantage:

2.2.4.1 Improving the organization's efficiency:

It means introducing new ideas and methods that lead to high production, low cost, or added values to stand up to competitors, and reach a state of success, survival, and continuity for the organization (Boisa, 2018, 282).

2.2.4.2 Developing core capabilities:

Represented in capital, equipment, skills, knowledge, patents, material resources, finance, and talents. (Xu; et al, 2023:105). 3.

2.2.4.3 Increasing market share:

The market share measure is used to distinguish between winners and losers in the market. This measure is used to calculate the organization's share of sales in the market and compare it to competitors. (Eda; et al. 2022: 21).

2.2.4.4 Quality improvement:

Quality control refers to the procedures taken to evaluate the acceptance of a product or service by customers (Avinash; et al., 2022, 121).

2.2.5 The relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage:

Organizations work to improve skills, provide continuous education and training, protect against work risks, and motivate their

creative cadres, which makes them loyal to the organization. (Shiqat; Subaih 2011, 25).

Competitive advantage is an important factor in developing organizational loyalty due to its positive repercussions. This study aimed to highlight the role of organizational loyalty in achieving competitive advantage, through the dimensions of organizational loyalty (emotional loyalty, moral loyalty, continuous loyalty). The study concluded that there is a strong correlation between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage. (Aouni, 2017)

The study aimed to gain organizational loyalty among employees to achieve competitive advantage for the organization. One of the most prominent results is the presence of a positive relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage. (Hassan 2017, 378)

This study aims to know the impact of loyalty programs in achieving competitive advantage. It has been shown that loyalty programs have an impact on achieving competitive advantage (Aqeel et al., 2020)

This study aimed to identify the role of organizational loyalty in achieving competitive advantage and its result was the impact of all dimensions of organizational loyalty in achieving competitive advantage. (Bali, 2019)

The study aimed to know the impact of customer loyalty in improving competitive advantage, and the study concluded that the percentage of loyalty of current customers is high. (Sulaiman, 2014)

3. Applied study:

3.1 The Methodology

The methodology is the link between what is achieved from the accumulation of knowledge, theory, application, and the possibility of embodying it in business organizations.

3.1.1 Study Model:

This study tests the impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage, and also examines the level of association between the independent variables (emotional loyalty, continuous loyalty, normative loyalty), and the dependent variable competitive advantage.

The impact of organizational loyalty on competitive advantage:-



Figure (1): Study Model

3.1.2 Hypotheses:

Main Hypothesis: There is a relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage, and the following sub-hypotheses branch out from it:

1. There is a relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage.
2. There is a relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage.
3. There is a relationship between normative loyalty and competitive advantage.

3.1.3 Study Community and Sample:

The study community includes all food manufacturing companies within Khartoum State, numbering (444) companies, and the sample size was determined at (120) companies.

3.1.4 Sample Size:

The intentional sampling method was applied, and to achieve more objectivity in the study, (120) individuals were selected with a recovery rate of (95%), thus the number of questionnaires subject to the study was (114) questionnaires.

3.1.5 Study Methodology:

The published literature related to the subject of the study was referred to from previous books and studies to prepare the theoretical aspect of the study. The descriptive analytical method was also used to collect data from the study variables, analyze them statistically, and reveal the relationship between these variables.

3.1.6 Study tools and sources of information:

Collected through books and previous studies divided into two sections:

A. **Secondary sources:** include books, previous studies, and scientific articles in order to build the theoretical aspect of the research.

B. **Primary sources:** are the questionnaire prepared by the researchers specifically to collect data and information related to the subject of the study and include a number of questions that reflect the objectives of the study and its questions to be answered by the sample members.

3.1.7 Statistical methods:

The following are a number of statistical methods used in the research using the Smart Plus path analysis program, which is one of the modern and important statistical programs in analyzing data and extracting results, to describe the characteristics of the study sample, describe its variables and test its hypotheses (Sayed; Bani Shamsah; Al-Latif; Hanani, 2011, 22).

3.1.8 Reliability and validity of the study tool:

The validity and validity of the questionnaire were confirmed through the answers of the sample members from the study community according to the following table:

Table (1): shows the validity and validity of the questionnaire.

No.	dimension	Alpha
1	Emotional Loyalty	0.892
2	Continuing Loyalty	0.846
3	Normative Loyalty	0.873
4	Compatative Advantage	0.969

Source: Prepared by the researcher from the field study data 2020

3.1.9 Data presentation and analysis:

3.1.9.1 Sample response rate:

Data was collected from the field via a questionnaire directed to a sample of food industrial companies, where a questionnaire was distributed, (120) questionnaires were obtained from the total distributed questionnaires at a rate of (95%) and (6) questionnaires were not returned at a rate of (5%).

3.1.9.2 Analysis and discussion of the data of the study variables:

3.1.9.2.1 Analysis of the first variable (organizational loyalty)

Table No. (2): Results of the analysis of the first variable, organizational loyalty

No	The first variable (organizational loyalty)	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Emotional Loyalty				
1	I have the desire to spend the rest of my career in the company I work for	4.44	1.82	2
2	I feel there is a brotherly atmosphere in this company	4.46	1.85	1
3	This company has a high place in my heart	4.43	1.83	3
Continuing Loyalty				
4	My staying in this company stems from my need to work in it	30.4	1.98	10
5	The company offers me benefits that are not available in other companies in return	4.33	1.83	7
6	Many things in my life will be affected if I decide to leave the company	4.35	1.82	5
Normative Loyalty				
7	I feel the need to be committed and loyal to the organization I work for	4.36	81.1	4
8	I feel a moral obligation that drives me to continue my work in this company	4.34	1.98	6
9	I feel the need to be committed to the organization I work for	4.32	1.97	8
10	I feel completely comfortable in my work	31.4	1.99	9
All dimensions of the first variable		4.36	1.95	

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020.

By presenting the results shown in the previous table on social responsibility, it became clear that the arithmetic mean of the paragraphs of this axis ranges between (4.30 and 4.46). As we can see

from the table above, the sample members agree with its content, as the results were arranged as follows:

- 1- The paragraph "I feel that there is a brotherly atmosphere in this company" ranked first with an arithmetic mean of 4.46 and a standard deviation of 1.85
- 2- The paragraph "I have the desire to spend the rest of my professional life in the company I work for" ranked second with an arithmetic mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 1.82
- 3- The paragraph "This company has a high status in my heart" ranked third with an arithmetic mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 1.83
- 4- The paragraph "I feel the need for commitment and organizational loyalty to the company I work for" ranked fourth with an arithmetic mean of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 1.81
- 5- The paragraph "Many things in my life will be affected if I decide to leave the company" ranked fifth with an arithmetic mean of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 1.82
- 6- The paragraph "I feel a moral obligation" ranked third "It motivates me to continue working in this company" ranked sixth with an arithmetic mean of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 1.98
- 7- The paragraph "The company offers me benefits that are not available in other companies" ranked seventh with an arithmetic mean of 4.33 and a standard deviation of 1.83
- 8- The paragraph "I feel the need for organizational commitment to the company I work for" ranked eighth with an arithmetic mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 1.97
- 9- The paragraph "I feel completely comfortable in my work" ranked ninth with an arithmetic mean of 4.31 and a standard deviation of 1.99
- 10- The paragraph "My staying in this company stems from my need to work in it" ranked ninth with an arithmetic mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 1.98

In general, we notice that the general average is greater than the hypothetical mean, which indicates that the investigators agree with its content, i.e. 4.36 is greater than 3, and The investigators arranged the previous dimensions as follows: after organizational loyalty: in first place with an arithmetic mean of 4.44, then emotional loyalty, in

second place with an arithmetic mean of 4.33, then after normative loyalty, and in last place after continuous loyalty with an arithmetic mean of 4.32.

3.1.9.2.2 Analysis of the paragraphs of the second variable, competitive advantage

Table No. (3): Results of the second variable, analysis of competitive advantage

No	The second variable (comparative advantage)	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Rank
1	The company uses available resources economically and rationally.	4.36	1.99	3
2	Our company seeks to continuously reduce direct production costs.	4.47	91.1	1
3	The company uses various methods to improve quality.	4.44	1.93	2
4	Our company has the ability to respond quickly to changes required in the designs of its products.	3.97	1.00	5
5	Our company has the ability to deliver customer orders faster than competitors.	30.4	1.93	4
All dimensions of the first variable		31.4	1.88	

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020.

By presenting the results shown in the previous table on competitive advantage, it became clear that the arithmetic mean of the paragraphs of this axis ranged between (3.97 and 4.47). As we can see from the table above, the sample members agree with its content, as the results were arranged as follows:

- 1- The paragraph "Our company seeks to continuously reduce direct production costs" ranked first with an arithmetic mean of 4.47 and a standard deviation of 1.91
- 2- The paragraph "The company uses various methods to improve quality" ranked second with an arithmetic mean of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 1.93

- 3- The paragraph "The company uses available resources economically and rationally" ranked third with an arithmetic mean of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 1.99
- 4- The paragraph "Our company has the ability to deliver customer orders faster than competitors" ranked fourth with an arithmetic mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 1.93
- 5- The paragraph "Our company has the ability to respond quickly to the required changes in the designs of its products" ranked fifth with an arithmetic mean of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 1.00

In general, we note that the general average is greater than The hypothetical mean indicates that the investigators agree with its content, i.e. 4.31 is greater than 3.

3.2 Hypothesis testing and discussion:

3.2.1 Hypothesis testing

To test the first hypothesis, the (T) test and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used to determine the relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage, at the level of statistical significance ($\alpha=0.05$).

3.2.1.1 Hypothesis one: There is a relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Table No. (4): Results of the relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Significance level	T-value table	Calculated T value	R
0.05	1.65	92.58	0.95

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020.

We note from the table above that the relationship between the two variables is strong since (R) = 0.95, and the emotional loyalty variable explains 90.25% of the dependent variable (competitive advantage), as is clear from the results in the table above that the calculated (t) value is greater than the tabular (t) value at the significance level (5%), which means accepting the hypothesis, the existence of a relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage in the industrial companies under study.

3.2.1.2 The second hypothesis: There is a relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Table No. (5): Results of the relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Significance level	T-value table	Calculated T value	R
0.05	1.65	86.59	0.95

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020.

We note from the table above that the relationship between the two variables is strong since $(R) = 0.95$, and the continuous loyalty variable explains 90.25% of the dependent variable (competitive advantage), as is clear from the results in the table above that the calculated (t) value is greater than the tabular (t) value at the significance level (5%), which means accepting the hypothesis, which means there is a relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage in the industrial companies under study.

3.2.1.3 The third hypothesis: There is a relationship between normative loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Table No. (6): Results of the relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage in the companies under study.

Significance level	T-value table	Calculated T value	R
0.05	1.65	98.57	0.95

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020.

We note from the table above that the relationship between the two variables is strong since $(R) = 0.95$, and the emotional loyalty variable explains 90.25% of the dependent variable (competitive advantage), as is clear from the results in the table above that the calculated (t) value is greater than the tabular (t) value at the significance level (5%), which means accepting the alternative hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis, which means there is a

relationship between social responsibility and competitive advantage in the industrial companies under study.

Table (7): Summary of hypothesis testing:

Hypothesis	Proof Status
There is a positive relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage.	
There is a positive relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage	Supported
There is a positive relationship between continuance loyalty and competitive advantage	Supported
There is a positive relationship between normative loyalty and competitive advantage	Supported
Level of support for the hypothesis	Full support

Source: Prepared by the researcher from field study data 2020

4. Conclusion

4.1 The results:

1. The results of the study showed a positive relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage
2. There is a positive relationship between emotional loyalty and competitive advantage
3. There is a relationship between continuous loyalty and competitive advantage
4. There is a positive relationship between normative loyalty and competitive advantage

4.2 Discussion of results: The relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage.

The results of the study showed that there is a positive relationship between organizational loyalty and competitive advantage, as the retention of employees in the companies studied was not due to their desire to work continuously in most companies, and this result is consistent with the results of the study (Shiqat 2011, Aouni 2017, Hassan 2017, Okil et al. 2020, Bali 2019, and Suleiman 2014), all of which indicated that organizational loyalty has a positive impact on achieving competitive advantage.

4.3 Recommendations:

1. The food industrial institutions under study should pay attention and increase efforts to adopt the dimensions of organizational loyalty.
2. The institutions under study should increase their interest in continuous loyalty, which creates a competitive advantage for them.
3. The institutions should increase their interest in employees and provide an appropriate organizational environment to create continuous loyalty among them.
4. The institutions under study should pay attention to employees and encourage incentive and promotion opportunities in order to obtain a competitive advantage.
5. The institutions should devote efforts and attention to intangible resources, and maintain organizational loyalty that leads to a competitive advantage.
6. The institutions should rely on factors other than loyalty to obtain a competitive advantage.

4.4 Recommendations for future research:

1. Conduct a study in various cities in Sudan outside Khartoum State.
2. Conduct studies on competitive advantage in different dimensions.
3. Conduct studies in different sectors other than the food industrial community.

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