

The Role of Information and Communication Technology in Enhancing Competitive Advantage: A Field Study on a Sample of Customers of Omar Ben Omar Mills

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing the competitive advantage of the Omar Ben Omar Mills Complex in Guelma from the customers' perspective. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how technology improves institutional performance and competitiveness in a dynamic market. Using a descriptive methodology, the study analyzed data from institutional reports, interviews, and a questionnaire targeting 120 customers. The findings indicate that ICT investment significantly improved external operations efficiency, product quality, and client communication. Modern technology enabled the company to accurately address customer needs and develop suitable products, enhancing its local and international market share. Moreover, leveraging social media strengthened direct and effective interactions with the target audience, fostering sustainable customer relationships and achieving a robust competitive edge.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technology, Competitive Advantage, Economic enterprise.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the world is currently witnessing successive waves of rapid changes and developments that affect various aspects of life, including social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions. The economic sector represents a cornerstone for driving economic growth and societal progress, serving as a key criterion for categorizing countries as developed or developing. Despite the widespread proliferation of virtual businesses that achieve significant profits online, such as network marketing, traditional institutions continue to face major challenges amidst accelerating changes and evolving consumer demands.

To overcome these challenges, economic institutions must adopt sustainable strategies that adapt to both influential and influenced changes to achieve their goals and ensure continuity. In the context of intense competition among institutions today, traditional methods are no longer sufficient. Organizations are now required to develop a competitive advantage that distinguishes them from their competitors.

Competitive advantage is defined as an organization's ability to achieve high operational efficiency, market control, innovation, development, and provision of products or services with quality exceeding that of competitors. This advantage serves as a cornerstone for ensuring an organization's market presence and reinforcing its position.

In this context, investment in information and communication technology (ICT) is considered one of the fundamental factors contributing to achieving competitive advantage. ICT has become one of the most critical global investment sectors, following oil and weaponry, due to its pivotal role in enhancing productivity, improving services, and reducing costs.

Algerian economic institutions, both public and private, are not exempt from this development, especially following Algeria's transition



to a market economy in the late 1980s. With the subsequent economic liberalization and exposure to global markets, Algerian institutions face foreign competition. This has created an urgent need for modern management practices and technologies to achieve competitive advantages, with ICT being among these critical tools.

The food industry sector is particularly vital for local economic and social development. It has experienced significant growth in recent years due to the size of the Algerian market and investment potential in this field, especially as an alternative to the hydrocarbon sector, which has suffered from declining revenues due to falling oil prices (Abou Abdellah). Among the active institutions in this sector is the "Omar Ben Omar" Food Industries Group, a prominent industrial entity in this field, facing fierce competition, especially in the pasta segment. Competitors include national private companies like Mabrouka, La Belle, Safina, and Sim, as well as international brands such as Randa, El Warda El Beida, and Panzani, which actively operate in the Algerian market and achieve considerable profits (Naamoun and Sridi, 2016, p. 219).

This situation necessitates that the "Omar Ben Omar" Group takes swift measures to improve its conditions through a series of actions that ensure market survival, production continuity, and leading positions in this sector by creating its unique competitive advantage. This can be achieved by keeping pace with the developments accompanying the communication and ICT revolution, which has opened new horizons and numerous opportunities.

Thus, the research problem becomes evident due to the growing importance of ICT and its applications' impact on enabling organizations to acquire competitive advantages amidst intense competition. This study aims to address this issue by conducting a field study to examine how ICT contributes to enhancing the competitive advantage of "Omar Ben Omar Mills." The primary research question guiding this study is as

follows:

How does ICT contribute to enhancing the competitive advantage of "Omar Ben Omar Mills" compared to competing institutions?

This main question branches into several sub-questions:

- What are the nature and applications of ICT used by "Omar Ben Omar Mills" for promoting its products?
- How do these applications affect improving the quality of products and services provided by "Omar Ben Omar Mills"?
- What role does ICT play in enhancing customer satisfaction and maintaining market share?

Defining Key Concepts:

Definition of ICT:

Nabil Ali defines ICT as synonymous with information technology, based on the premise that the raw material for information technology comprises data, information, and knowledge, with the computer and its software being its primary tools. These tools transform raw data into informational goods and services, distributed through instant human-machine interaction, direct and indirect broadcasting, or through data networks connecting computers and their peripherals (Ali, 1994, p. 234).

ICT can also be defined as all forms of technology used to create, store, exchange, display, and use information in various forms (data, images, etc.) (El Fidha and Charki, 2008, p. 124).

Definition of Competitive Advantage:

Nabil Morsi Khalil defines competitive advantage as a feature or element of superiority achieved by an organization when following a specific competitive strategy (Khalil, 1998, p. 37). It is also defined as a skill, technique, or resource that enables an organization to deliver value and benefits to customers beyond what competitors offer. This differentiation

and excellence are recognized by customers, as it provides greater benefits compared to competitors (Al-Salmi, 1998, p. 104).

Competitive advantage can thus be strategically defined as a distinctive competitive position achieved by providing high-quality products or services that enable an organization to dominate markets and maximize profitability. This, in turn, facilitates continuous development and innovation, supported by efficient operations at both managerial and production levels through the adoption and application of ICT in all its dimensions.

Definition of the Economic Institution:

Many researchers have defined the economic institution from economic, social, and legal perspectives. However, our study focuses on the economic perspective, as it examines an economic institution and aims to define its concept in this context: The economic institution is a system managed efficiently through precise mechanisms. As per the following definition: “An economic institution is the combination of human, material, and financial production elements, which are utilized, managed, and organized to produce goods or services intended for sale in an efficient manner. This efficiency is ensured through management control tools such as budget management, analytical accounting techniques, and indicator tables” (Dakhmouche, 2001, p. 3).

Despite varying definitions, they all agree that an economic institution is a legally organized entity aimed at profit through the exchange of goods or services. Thus, we define the economic institution as an open economic system legally framed, with internal and external communications designed to exchange goods and services to achieve profit.

Methodological Framework of the Study:

Study Approach:

The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, which is most suitable for studying and analyzing social and economic phenomena in various contexts. This methodology is characterized by its ability to provide an accurate description of the phenomenon under study and analyze its influencing factors, allowing for realistic conclusions and practical recommendations.

Study Sample:

A simple random sample of 120 female consumers who use "Omar Ben Omar Mills" products was selected. This sample was chosen based on the study's objectives to understand consumer behavior, evaluate their attitudes toward using ICT in product promotion, and assess the role of these technologies in enhancing the institution's competitive advantage. The sample size of 120 participants was deemed sufficient for conducting a comprehensive analysis while maintaining the feasibility of the field study.

The study focused on women, as they are directly or indirectly responsible for household spending and purchasing food products, often influencing their partners' choices of specific brands. This is supported by various studies, including one by Dr. Khaled Saad Al-Najjar titled "*Managing Family Budgets*", which found that women in Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia are directly responsible for more than 70.05% of food purchases (Al-Najjar, 2017). Another study by researcher Nadia Ferhat confirmed that Algerian women today are primarily responsible for all household decisions, especially food purchases (Ferhat, 2012, p. 291).



Study Tool:

The questionnaire was the primary data collection tool, with its axes linked to the study’s problem and questions. It aimed to assess the impact of ICT tools, networks, software, databases, and competencies on product quality, market share, operational efficiency, and their use in supporting creativity and development within the institution under study.

The questionnaires were distributed through interviews at three major grocery stores (supérettes) in Skikda: Meta Mall, Orange, and Mini Prix, between November 12, 2024, and December 7, 2024. The questionnaires were collected immediately after participants completed them. The questions focused on ICT indicators and competitive advantage dimensions to help determine the contribution of ICT in enhancing the competitive advantage of "Omar Ben Omar Mills."

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Processing:

First Section: Personal Data

Table 1: Socio-demographic Data of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	25–35	88	73.35
	36–45	20	16.62
	46–55	8	6.68
	56 and above	4	3.35
Total		120	100
Marital	Married	72	60

Status			
	Single	48	40
	Divorced	0	0
	Widow	0	0
Total		120	100
Consumption Period			
	Less than 1 year	12	10
	1–3 years	16	13.34
	4–5 years	36	30
	More than 5 years	56	46.66
Total		120	100
Occupation			
	Employee	28	23.33
	Teacher	64	53.33
	Housewife	16	13.34
	Student	12	10
Total		120	100

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The data shows a relative balance in the diversity of the sample, as the results indicate the following:

Age Group:

These results highlight that young and middle-aged consumers form the primary customer base, reflecting the institution's ability to attract these demographics, who are often the most active spenders on food products. This age diversity helps in understanding different consumer needs and opinions. The presence of younger and mature age groups suggests the need for marketing strategies tailored to these demographics while maintaining product quality to meet their expectations.

Marital Status:

There were no cases of widowed or divorced respondents. These figures highlight that married women are the primary consumers of the products, reflecting their central role in purchasing decisions related to family needs. This indicator is significant in the study, as it implies that family stability plays a crucial role in decision-making, including the choice to purchase "Omar Ben Omar Mills" products.

Consumption Duration:

The high percentages for long-term consumers reflect strong loyalty to the institution's products, which is a positive indicator of product quality and customer satisfaction. The sustained purchase behavior indicates a stable relationship between the brand and its customers. However, the institution should strive to expand its base of new consumers and ensure the satisfaction of those with shorter consumption periods to build and enhance their loyalty.

Occupation:

The variation in occupational categories can be attributed to the locations where the survey was distributed, which included grocery stores near a

primary school, an administrative hub, and a university. Additionally, the timing of distribution (between 4:00 PM and 5:30 PM) coincided with typical workday end times. The dominance of teachers and employees, who are educated and aware, is beneficial for obtaining accurate responses, as these groups are more likely to make purchasing decisions based on thoughtful and informed considerations, which will be discussed later in the analysis.

Section Two: The Use of ICT by Omar Ben Omar Mills

Table 2: Distribution of the Sample Based on the Means Through Which They Learned About Omar Ben Omar Mills Products

Means	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Advertising	12	10.00
Social Media	68	56.67
Family	36	30.00
Friend	4	3.33
Total	120	100

Source: Prepared by the researchers

A careful analysis of these percentages shows that awareness through social media takes the lion's share. This can be attributed to the significant current usage of information and communication technology, particularly through internet-based networks by individuals, as well as the modern economic enterprise's adoption of new communication technologies for promoting its products and studying its target audience. This percentage aligns with Algeria's ranking as the third (03) country after Egypt and Saudi Arabia in terms of social media subscribers (Samawi, 2018).



The family’s role in product awareness cannot be ignored, as this result can be attributed to the nature of the Algerian family, whether extended or nuclear, which considers family members a trusted source of information and advice (Ben Baatouch, 2012, p. 81). Advertising came in third place, which can be explained by Othman Ben Omar Mills' recent policy in this area. The company has limited its product promotion to social media platforms, international exhibitions, or sports team sponsorships, without conducting advertisements since 2015—a four-year hiatus before resuming in 2019 with an advertisement for the holy month of Ramadan.

This policy adopted by the company under study aligns with the theoretical framework, specifically in the chapter on competitive advantage. It becomes evident that the company has embraced Porter's "Cost Leadership" strategy, focusing on reducing production and promotional costs. This is precisely what Othman Ben Omar Mills is currently doing by promoting its products through free social media platforms as opposed to traditional advertising, which is usually associated with high costs.

Table 3: Percentage of Sample Participants Owning Social Media Accounts

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	116	96.66%
No	4	3.34%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

These findings are reasonable given the widespread use of social media in Algeria. A 2019 study published in El-Bilad newspaper titled "Foreign

Study: Algerians Among the Most Frequent Users of Social Media" ranked Algeria 19th globally in social media users, with approximately 3.5 million users, according to the annual report by the Hootsuite organization (Hamida, 2019).

This aligns with similar studies, such as Shaimaa Ibrahim's survey of Arab women, which found that 93.33% of her sample (females) owned at least one social media account (Ibrahim, 2018). Furthermore, a study on men and women owning social media accounts reported 65% ownership for women compared to 35% for men, attributed to women's emotional nature and their need for social expression and communication (Taibi, 2015).

Table 4: Percentage of Sample Participants Following Omar Ben Omar Mills' Social Media Pages

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	66.66%
No	40	33.34%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

As shown in Table 3, the participants' ownership of social media accounts facilitates access to the company's pages. Additionally, the company can efficiently reach its customers through advertisements on popular and widely-followed social media pages. These pages are often recommended by the platforms themselves or shared by friends or family, piquing users' curiosity.

However, the notable percentage of participants who do not follow these pages could be due to the specific demographics of the sample, which consisted primarily of married, working women (see Table 1). These

women may use social media mainly for local or global news updates and to communicate with family or friends. A study by Ali Aqlah Najadat found that 65.7% of married, working women owned social media accounts but did not have sufficient time to browse them (spending less than 30 minutes daily) and used them primarily for news updates (Najadat, 2014, p. 128).

Table 5: Most Followed Social Media Pages of Omar Ben Omar Mills.

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	84	70%
Instagram	12	10%
YouTube	24	20%
Twitter	0	0%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

Facebook’s dominance is attributed to its popularity among Algerians. A study by the consulting firm *Emar for Research and Consulting* reported that 13 million Algerians browse social media daily, with Facebook leading at 49% usage in the eastern region, followed by 46% in the center and 44% in the west and south (WAG, 2018).

Women particularly prefer Facebook, as confirmed by a study by Khawla Tiab, which found that 59% of female social media users favored Facebook for its user-friendly interface (Tiab, 2018, p. 132). YouTube and Instagram are also significant due to their exclusive video content, while Twitter's absence in the sample reflects its political focus and 140-character limit, which contrasts with women's preference for more

expressive platforms, as noted by psychologist Dr. Emma Short in her study on university-employed women (Sedq, 2017).

Table 6: Purpose of Following Omar Ben Omar Mills' Social Media Pages.

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Viewing Offers	32	26.67%
Sharing Recipes with Friends	40	33.33%
Learning About Specific Products	20	16.67%
Commenting on Posts	28	23.33%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

These closely aligned percentages are logical when analyzed in light of Table 5, which showed that over 70% of participants preferred browsing the company’s Facebook page. This platform facilitates the sharing of recipes with friends and family, easily accessing promotional offers, and commenting to express opinions, indicating active engagement between the company and its customers.

As noted by Ibrahim Mohammed and Amina Ali, the impact of social media lies in fostering interaction among participants, leading to the exchange of opinions. Through this interaction, the page owner (Omar Ben Omar Mills) can instantly assess consumer opinions and easily track engagement with advertisements, a stark contrast to traditional media, where feedback is slower (Mohammed and Ali, 2018, p. 64).

This observation was further confirmed by the company’s marketing representative, who highlighted that such interaction creates a strong competitive advantage for the company.



Table 7: Awareness of the Existence of Omar Ben Omar Mills' Official Website

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	63.33%
No	44	36.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

This result shows that most participants are aware of the company's official website. This can be attributed to the visibility of the website link on the company's social media pages, as highlighted in Table 5, and its inclusion on all product packaging. This reflects the company’s strategic use of information and communication technologies to connect with its customers and diversify its communication channels.

Table 8: Frequency of Browsing Omar Ben Omar Mills' Official Website.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	40	33.33%
No	80	66.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

These results suggest that, although a majority of participants are aware of the website’s existence, most do not browse it. This finding aligns with our previous analysis, as their awareness of the website comes mainly from its presence on social media pages or product packaging.

Additionally, the lack of engagement with the website may be attributed to insufficient promotion. Upon reviewing the website, it was noted that the information provided is limited and largely duplicates content available on social media. Consequently, consumers do not feel the need to visit the website. This is further corroborated by the website’s visitor count, which is under 1,500, compared to the 3 million followers on Facebook and around 48,000 on Instagram. The company's YouTube channel also had a modest following of around 1,500 subscribers.

Table 9: Purpose of Browsing Omar Ben Omar Mills' Official Website
(For those who answered "Yes")

Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Learning about products	20	50%
Learning about the company	8	20%
Contacting the company	8	20%
Submitting complaints or suggestions	4	10%
Total	40	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

This suggests that the primary reason for visiting the website is the unique presentation of the products, which differs from the content shared on social media. The website focuses on detailed product descriptions and pricing while ensuring information accuracy, as it is directly managed by Omar Ben Omar Mills. Additionally, it provides links to the company’s official social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter) for further engagement. In contrast, social media primarily promotes products, encourages interaction, and



facilitates communication with the company through email or phone numbers displayed on the website.

Table 10: Means of Contacting the Company in Case of Defective Products.

Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social media	19	70.37%
Phone	8	26.66%
Official website	0	0%
Email	2	7.41%
Total	30	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

Based on the table presented, which represents the communication method used by the sample participants in the case of a defective product, the highest percentage was attributed to social media at 70.37%, followed by the use of the telephone at 22.66%. Email ranked third at 7.41%, while the official website was not chosen as a communication tool by the study sample.

These findings reveal that the most commonly used communication technology by the sample in the case of defective products is social media. This is due to its widespread use among the participants, exceeding 96%, as indicated in Table 6. Although economic institutions often hesitate to address product defects on social media to avoid rumors and crises, many major companies have effectively managed their crises using these platforms. For example, TOYOTA heavily relied on social media to handle its brake crisis.

Additionally, the Algerian researcher "Aichouche Farid," in his book *"Communication in Crisis Management,"* highlighted the effectiveness of a company's official website and social media in managing crises, particularly during critical periods (Aichouche, 2011, p. 132). This approach is currently being adopted by Omar Ben Omar Mills, especially during the recent defamation crisis involving journalist "Abdou Semmar." The company issued several statements defending itself in both Arabic and French (refer to Appendix X), as well as outlining its crisis management steps on its official social media pages.

Regarding telephone usage, the company encourages direct communication by displaying its contact numbers on product packaging and official platforms. This was observed during our visit to the company, where, during our interview with the marketing representative, there were three phone calls concerning defective products. The company responded promptly, providing guidance, advice, and apologies, and directed the callers to email for more detailed inquiries.

Table 11: Ability to Contact Omar Ben Omar Mills Under Normal Conditions

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	20%
No	96	80%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The results suggest that most participants did not feel the need to contact the company unless there was a defective product, as highlighted in Table 10. This behavior can be explained by the availability of all necessary information about the company and its products on its official website or social media pages, which eliminates the need for direct contact.

This behavior could indicate a low incidence of product issues, suggesting high customer satisfaction and reducing the necessity for direct communication. It also reflects the company's success in leveraging technology to provide an efficient customer experience through alternative communication channels.

On the other hand, this behavior may also indicate a passive customer interaction pattern, where customers prefer not to use communication channels even for minor inquiries or issues. This presents a challenge for the company to encourage customers to engage through these channels, thereby fostering stronger relationships and increasing customer loyalty.

To address this, the company could enhance its communication channels and make them more attractive and user-friendly. For instance, offering interactive options such as live chat or automated responses to frequently asked questions could encourage customers to communicate more actively and benefit from direct support.

Table 12: Response Speed of Omar Ben Omar Mills to Customer Inquiries
(For those who answered "Yes")

Response Time	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Immediate	16	66.67%
After a delay	8	33.33%
No response	0	0%
Total	24	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

This analysis reflects the company's commitment to enhancing direct communication with its customers, which is a positive indicator of the

quality of customer service and the level of dedication shown by the company to address customer needs. Immediate responses demonstrate the company's readiness and the efficiency of its support team in handling inquiries or complaints, thereby boosting customer trust and fostering a positive brand image.

The percentage of delayed responses (33.33%) suggests that some inquiries require additional processing time. This may result from the nature of the inquiries or the volume of calls received by the company, emphasizing the need to study and optimize response mechanisms for cases that require more time.

The absence of unanswered inquiries (0%) underscores the company's commitment to responding to all communications, even if some require longer processing times. This indicates the company's desire to strengthen its relationship with customers and its dedication to providing outstanding services.

However, the company could leverage these findings to reduce response times for delayed inquiries by allocating additional human and technical resources. For instance, employing AI-driven responses or establishing a dedicated support line for urgent cases could enhance efficiency.

Additionally, these results emphasize the importance of improving customer communication as part of a broader strategy to enhance the customer experience. Opening new channels, such as live chat through the website or mobile apps, could help minimize wait times and ensure faster, more efficient responses. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also strengthens brand loyalty.

Table 13: Methods of Discovering the Company's New Products

Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social media	72	60%
Advertising	28	23.33%
Official website	0	0%
Found in stores	20	16.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The analysis suggests that Omar Ben Omar Mills effectively utilizes modern communication technologies, particularly social media, as the primary means of promoting its new products. This reflects the distinct advantages of social media, which stands out as a key component of modern communication technologies.

Advertising, though no longer exclusive to traditional television platforms, also plays a significant role. Ads are often featured on the company’s YouTube channel or as pre-rolls on popular local and global videos and widely followed platforms. A notable proportion of participants also reported discovering new products directly in stores, emphasizing the company's market presence. The prominent display of new Omar Ben Omar products by storeowners indicates their confidence in the brand, which further aids in its promotion.

Table 14: Reasons for Choosing Omar Ben Omar Mills' Products

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Product quality	60	50%
Price	28	23.33%
Brand reputation	20	16.67%
Packaging style	12	10%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

These statistics indicate that half of the participants selected Omar Ben Omar products due to their quality. This highlights the company's success in promoting the quality of its products, as it has obtained several ISO certifications for quality and food safety. Such certifications are key competitive advantages the company actively seeks to emphasize.

This reputation was reinforced by the U.S. ambassador in a *Dernière Heure* newspaper article on the Jazairis news search engine, where he acknowledged the high quality of Omar Ben Omar products and expressed an interest in enhancing trade and economic exchanges between the U.S. and Algeria based on this foundation (Talhi, 2011).

Additionally, a study by Professor "Bouzgarari Abla" found that 55.8% of her sample chose Omar Ben Omar products specifically for their quality (Bouzgarari, 2014, p. 267). The table's findings also suggest that a notable portion of participants viewed the company's prices as affordable and aligned with their purchasing power, likely attributed to the products' high quality.



Table 15: Consistency of Advertised Products with Reality

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	112	93.33%
No	8	6.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

From the results of Table 15, it can be concluded that the company adopts a transparency strategy in promoting its products through various media. This strategy aligns with the definition provided by the researcher *Marie-Hélène* in her book *"COMMUNICATOR"*, where she defines transparency as: "total openness towards the public, characterized by seriousness, credibility, and engagement with the media." This openness fosters customer loyalty and ensures they feel that the company prioritizes their interests and meets their expectations.

The alignment of products with advertisements also demonstrates the effectiveness of the company's marketing tools. When advertising messages accurately reflect reality, it reduces the likelihood of customer complaints or dissatisfaction and enhances the brand's reputation. This success can be attributed to the company's ability to employ advertising techniques that accurately present product characteristics, avoiding exaggerations that could harm its image.

Table 16: Most Consumed Products of Omar Ben Omar Mills

Product Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Various types of pasta	56	46.67%
Semolina	40	33.33%
Couscous	24	20%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The close consumption rates among Omar Ben Omar Mills' products demonstrate the company's strong market share across all its product lines. Pasta holds the largest market share, as this category includes a wide range of short and long pasta varieties, as mentioned in the company's product portfolio. Semolina represents a significant share, given that the eastern region of Algeria is known for its traditional dishes where semolina is a key ingredient. Similarly, couscous, the leading traditional dish across Algeria, faces strong competition, especially in the western regions, as noted by the company's communication officer.

Table 17: Purchasing the Company's Products Despite Price Increases

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	88	73.33%
No	32	26.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers



Table 17 reflects a high level of customer loyalty to Omar Ben Omar Mills' products, as 73.33% of the sample expressed their willingness to continue purchasing the products even with a price increase. This indicates the strength of the brand and consumers' trust in the quality of the products offered. Such loyalty reflects customers' perception of the relationship between quality and value, as they consider the products worth the additional cost based on their positive experiences with the brand.

On the other hand, the 26.67% who stated they would not continue purchasing the products at higher prices may represent a segment with higher price sensitivity or those influenced by economic factors that affect their purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, the large proportion showing loyalty suggests that the company has successfully built a strong and sustainable relationship with its customers, supported by the quality of its products and effective market communication.

From the data presented in the table, it can be concluded that there is significant loyalty to Omar Ben Omar Mills' products. The majority insist on buying the products even if prices increase, which demonstrates the trust of the company's customers in the brand. They view the products as worth their price due to their quality, as most respondents in the study sample indicated that the primary reason for purchasing Omar Ben Omar products is their quality (refer to the results in Table 24).

Table 18: Customers' Willingness to Try the Company's New Products.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	112	93.33%
No	8	6.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

This indicates the company's success in building a strong reputation based on the quality of its products and its ability to meet customer expectations. Customers' trust in the brand makes them willing to try any new product bearing the company's name, reflecting exceptional loyalty that translates into continuous consumer commitment.

On the other hand, the 6.67% who declined to purchase new products likely represent a conservative group that prefers to wait or rely on prior experiences before making a purchase decision. However, this small percentage does not significantly affect the company's overall performance but rather highlights the importance of continuously offering products that meet high customer expectations.

These findings align with the study by Amira Boudier (2015), which highlighted a strong relationship between customers and the Omar Ben Omar brand, reinforcing the company's position as one of the leading players in the local market. This relationship reflects high levels of satisfaction and preference among customers, indicating that the brand is not merely a promotional tool but a symbol of quality and trust in the eyes of consumers.

Thus, the company can leverage this trust and loyalty through sustainable innovation strategies that strengthen customer engagement, ensuring the introduction of new products that meet evolving needs while maintaining its distinguished reputation in the market.

Table 19: Availability of the Company's Products in the Market.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Always	108	90%
Shortages	12	10%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers



The findings from the above table indicate that Omar Ben Omar Mills' products are widely available in the market. According to the overwhelming majority of the study sample, the products are consistently present. This supports the company's strategy in this field, which aligns with Porter's focus strategy. Ensuring a continuous supply of goods prevents customers from opting for alternative products and hinders the entry of substitute goods, which are considered one of Porter's most competitive forces.

Similarly, product availability reduces competitive intensity among rivals. A slowdown in production or weak distribution exposes the company to the risk of losing market share and customers finding alternatives.

Table 20: Compatibility of Product Prices with Customers' Purchasing Power.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	50%
No	60	50%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The equal results shown in the table indicate that some customers find Omar Ben Omar products affordable, while others consider them expensive, given a 5 DZD increase per 500 grams compared to competing products such as "Mahbouba," "Safina," and "Sim." However, the higher prices are justified, as previously analyzed in earlier tables, due to the quality of the products. The company imports high-quality wheat from abroad, with 60% of the wheat used in its products being non-subsidized imported wheat. This was confirmed by the Head of

Quality Control during an interview, explaining that the company adopts a product differentiation strategy by maintaining product quality, packaging style, and even higher prices, which are justified. This ensures differentiation and distinction from competitors, encouraging customers to purchase the company’s products even if prices increase, as reflected by a loyalty rate exceeding 70%.

Table 21: Efforts by the Company to Encourage Customers to Purchase Products

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	66.66%
No	40	33.34%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

Examining the results of this table indicates that most participants are aware of the company’s marketing and promotional strategies. Since the study sample primarily consists of social media users, this suggests that the company leverages information and communication technologies to encourage customers to purchase its products by offering promotions.

Recently, the company launched special offers for Ramadan 2024 and insisted on sharing daily recipes using its products during the holy month. It focused on all details of product consumption by publishing new ideas on how to use its products (step-by-step instructions) and even how to present them on a serving dish.

These efforts, observed on the company’s official social media pages, encourage and motivate consumers to purchase its products.



Table 22: The Company's Acceptance of Customer Suggestions for Innovation and Development.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	66.67%
No	40	33.33%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The majority of the results confirm that Omar Ben Omar Mills is receptive to customer suggestions for innovation and development of its products. This factor has become increasingly important for any company seeking to maintain or grow its market share. Through suggestions submitted by customers, the company can study customer desires and expectations, taking steps and measures to develop new products or innovate new production techniques that align with customer preferences. Allowing customers to submit their suggestions is considered the most strategic and reliable option for the company to address potential disruptions in its environment.

Table 23: Participation of the Study Sample in Surveys Proposed by the Company via Social Media

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	64	53.33%
No	56	46.67%
Total	120	100%

Source: Prepared by the researchers

The results of this table suggest that most of the study participants interact with Omar Ben Omar Mills, as evidenced by their participation in surveys conducted by the company. This outcome can also be attributed to the fact that most of the participants are active on social media, which enables them to participate automatically in such surveys.

However, a notable percentage refused to participate in such surveys. This can be explained by the fact that most of the participants are married, working women who may not have the time to engage in surveys conducted by the company. Furthermore, upon reviewing the surveys presented by the company, it was observed that the surveys are lengthy and require significant time from participants, which explains the reluctance of the study sample to participate.

3. Study Results

The study we conducted, which revolves around the contribution of information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhancing the competitive advantage of Omar Ben Omar Mills in Guelma, revealed a set of findings that contributed to answering the study's questions posed in the problem statement. These findings can be summarized as follows:

- The study demonstrated that the most significant competitive advantage of Omar Ben Omar Mills is the quality of its products. The company emphasizes using various ICT tools to enhance its leadership and the quality of its products by leveraging modern communication technologies to promote product quality through social media platforms. Facebook ranks first in promoting the idea of the quality of Omar Ben Omar Mills' products, followed by Instagram in second place, YouTube in third place, and Twitter in last place.
- The study showed that the use of modern communication technologies (such as social networks, email, and mobile applications) has improved communication channels with customers. Customers were



able to express their opinions and inquiries faster and more effectively, helping the company meet their needs more efficiently.

- The study demonstrated that the availability of ICT has increased customer participation in the activities and offers provided by the company. Customers found that these tools allowed them to access special offers, consultations, and other services more easily.
- Omar Ben Omar Mills holds a significant market share, reflected in customer loyalty to its products. This study, based on the survey tool, showed that most customers have been purchasing the company's products for more than five years. The company utilizes various ICT tools to enhance its current market share, expand it, and explore new markets by leveraging ICT to analyze the competitive environment and study the market. This enables the company to dominate both local and foreign markets, as it is the only company in this field that exports its products abroad.
- Omar Ben Omar Mills has achieved significant profits in recent years, which has enabled the adoption of various modern ICT tools. These tools have been utilized for innovation and development within the company, improving products, creating new ones, and using various programs to design modern and attractive packaging for the company's products.
- ICT contributes to enhancing the competitive advantage of Omar Ben Omar Mills by improving the quality of its products, helping the company dominate markets, fostering innovation and development, and supporting the efficiency of its operations at both internal and external levels.

4. Conclusion

Today, economic institutions face significant challenges that require continuous adaptation to a complex and dynamic economic environment. The study of Omar Ben Omar Mills revealed that ICT has become a key strategic tool for enhancing competitive advantage. These technologies have improved product quality, facilitated effective communication with customers, and strengthened the relationship between the company and its customers. By leveraging social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, the company has improved the promotion of its products and expanded its reach into new markets.

The study also focused on how the company has benefited from modern communication technologies to improve communication channels with customers. This has strengthened their interaction with the company and increased their participation in activities and offers, helping meet their needs more effectively and efficiently.

ICT has also supported innovation and creativity within the company. By utilizing these technologies to develop new products and design modern packaging, Omar Ben Omar Mills has distinguished itself in both local and international markets. The company has invested in modern technologies to analyze the competitive environment and study the market, enabling it to adapt to market changes and identify potential opportunities and threats.

It is evident that enhancing competitive advantage requires continuous investment in ICT and the adoption of innovative strategies to leverage these tools for improving performance and fostering innovation. The study calls on Algerian institutions to adopt these technologies sustainably to ensure continued success and growth in local and international markets. Therefore, Algerian institutions should continue to enhance their digital capabilities and develop competitive strategies to



ensure excellence amidst the rapid challenges and transformations in the global economic environment.

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