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The moderating role of strategic flexibility in the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage

(A case study in the banking sector in Khartoum State)

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Abstract ;

The study aimed to determine the impact of strategic vigilance on sustainable competitive advantage and the modifying role of strategic flexibility.
(250) questionnaires were distributed and (203) questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 87.2%. The study concluded that there is an impact of strategic vigilance on sustainable competitive advantage, and there is no Modifying effect of strategic flexibility. The study recommended the importance of strategic vigilance, paying attention to strategic flexibility and working to create a stable and attractive environment, and the necessity of developing a clear strategy that contributes to enhancing strategic vigilance, sustainable competitive advantage, and strategic flexibility in banking institutions.

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1. *Introduction*

In a highly competitive environment, organizations seek to gain competitive advantages by adding value to the customer, or achieving excellence by predicting the events that change around them, and strengthening capabilities and energies. Thus, paying attention to strategic vigilance has become the guaranteed path to achieving sustainable competitive advantage and is considered one of the most important resources that... Capable of creating a competitive advantage (Maazza, 2021), business organizations face, in the context of increasing environmental and competitive pressures, fundamental problems represented in their continuous quest to search for sources through which they can achieve excellence in the competitive field, and despite the success, continuity, and survival of modern organizations. In a highly competitive environment that is rapidly changing, it must have strategic vigilance to confront these changes (Maha, 2020)

Study questions: This problem raised several questions for the researcher, which are summarized as follows:

1-What is the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage?

2-What is the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage with strategic flexibility as a modifying variable?

Objectives of the study: The study aimed to: identify the modifying role of strategic flexibility in the relationship between strategic vigilance and competitive advantage. From this main objective there are a number of the following sub-objectives:

1- Study the level of dimensions of strategic vigilance prevailing in the banking sector, which is characterized by positive and negative characteristics, focusing on the positive aspects and avoiding the negative aspects.

2- Study the level of strategic vigilance practice in the banking sector with the aim of increasing sustainable competitive advantage.

3- Knowing the type of relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage among managers in the banking sector, and identifying the most influential dimensions and focusing on them.

Importance of the study: The importance of the study is divided into the following:

Theoretical importance:

1- The research contributes to filling the knowledge gap that previous studies overlooked, especially in Sudan, by the extent of knowledge of the relationship

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between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage and knowledge of the dimensions of strategic vigilance that have the greatest impact on the dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage, especially in the banking sector.

2- The contribution of the study is through studying strategic flexibility as a variable between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage.

3- Contributing to enriching scientific research and building scientific knowledge by testing the concepts of the study and its variables by seeking to test the theory of resources and the theory of dynamic capabilities in the context of the banking sector.

4- This study may contribute to opening new horizons for researchers, and the study can be considered a starting point for future studies in the same field. Therefore, it is hoped that it will provide a new addition, and that this study will combine different topics, and its variables will be specified in a way that contributes to devising new concepts, data, and relationships. About its topics.

Scientific importance: Since the concept of strategic vigilance is relatively new in the administrative environment, subjecting it to an applied study gives clear importance within the scientific framework of advanced management methods in acquiring knowledge, increasing creative skills and capabilities, and using them for improvement, distinction, and gaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Organizations must strive to pay attention to it.

1- It enables institutional managers to know the mechanism by which strategic alertness is measured in their organization and thus contributes to the most applicable dimensions compared to other less important dimensions, which makes it necessary to focus on the dimensions of importance.

2- It enables decision makers in service institutions to know the mechanism through which sustainable competitive advantage is measured in their organization and thus helps them know the most applicable dimensions in comparison with other less important dimensions, which makes it possible to focus on the dimensions of importance.

3- Contributing to the results, proposals and recommendations that the study will reach regarding the relationship between strategic vigilance (technological vigilance - commercial vigilance - competitive vigilance) and sustainable competitive advantage (quality - delivery - cost) in the Sudanese banking sector and the possibility of benefiting from the study's outcomes in the practical reality of the sector. Drains.

4-The study can direct the attention of managers and decision makers to the importance of strategic flexibility in the banking sector.

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5-The study aims to draw the attention of decision makers to the importance of strategic flexibility and its role in clarifying the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage in the banking sector.

Previous studies:

Study (Ridwan, Halima, 2021): The study aims to identify the contribution of information and communications technology in activating strategic vigilance in the Kondo Foundation (the study population). For this purpose, a questionnaire was adopted as a tool for collecting information. The study sample consisted of (33) employees of the institution. The subject of the study is based on the facilitated sample. Strategic alertness was divided into three dimensions: (technological alertness - competitive alertness - commercial alertness). The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to suit this study. The data was analyzed using the statistical packages program. The study found that there was a statistically significant effect of information and communication technology on strategic alertness in its three dimensions at the Condor Foundation. There was no statistically significant effect of information and communication technology on strategic alertness due to the variables (gender - age - educational level - job position - years of experience).

Study (Amer, Mahmoud, Moataz: 2021): The study aimed to identify the selection function as one of the human resources management practices and its impact on achieving sustainable competitive advantage in companies providing Internet services - Gaza Strip (study population). To conduct the study, the researchers adopted the descriptive analytical approach. For this purpose, the questionnaire was adopted as a tool for collecting information, and a comprehensive survey method was used, while (SPSS) program was used to enter the data, process it, and test the hypotheses. The study reached the following results: The interest of workers in companies providing Internet services in the Gaza governorates is to a large degree in the dimension of choice, and it gained weight. Relative (75.1%). There was moderate agreement by the study sample regarding the area of sustainable competitive advantage in companies providing Internet services in the Gaza governorates, as this was evident by obtaining a relative weight (67.6%).

Study (Rehab Ali: 2020): This study aimed to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable performance, in addition to determining whether dynamic capabilities have a mediating role and the modifying effect of strategic flexibility in Sudanese service sector institutions. The problem of the study was to know what is the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on performance. Sustainability in service institutions operating in Khartoum State?

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Do dynamic capabilities mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable performance? Does strategic flexibility moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and dynamic capabilities? The study assumed the existence of a relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable performance, and that dynamic capabilities mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable performance, and that strategic flexibility moderates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable performance. A questionnaire was designed to collect primary data from a non-probability (facilitated) sample, where a number of ((226) questionnaires were retrieved (216), with a response rate of (98.58%). The study reached a set of results, the most important of which are: the existence of a partial effect of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable performance, and the existence of a partial relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and dynamic capabilities. The results also indicated the existence of a partial relationship between Dynamic capabilities and sustainable performance, and no moderating effect of strategic flexibility between entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable performance was found.

2. Strategic vigilance:

2-1 concept:

The concept of vigilance strategy: Vigilance linguistically: means a state of awareness, that is, a person being in a state of readiness to monitor something that may happen without knowing exactly what it is. (Union of International Experts and Consultants, 2004 AD, p. 11). He defined it (Thamer Al-Bakri, 2008 AD, p. 15) as collecting, processing and storing information, and all the strong and weak signals emanating from the internal and external environment of the organization. Accordingly, vigilance is an information context through which the organization investigates Its external environment, in order to act in advance, so instead of the organization reacting, it is the one that pushes for the change so that it is a party to it (Hassan Ali Al-Zoghbi, p. 16, 2005 AD).

2-2 Dimensions of strategic vigilance:

Strategic vigilance is divided into several types according to the information that the organization wants to monitor, and we distinguish between the following types:

1- Technological vigilance: It is the systematic and organized exploitation of industrial information. Technological vigilance is based on knowledge in order to be aware of all useful innovations, which provide assistance to the organization's basic technical developments to confront competition. (Rouach, 2010, P18)

2- Commercial vigilance: It is also called marketing vigilance, and it is a continuous, repetitive and ethical process through which the organization monitors its surroundings and

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analyzes its marketing environment, searching for signals that pose opportunities or threats to it that may affect its sustainability. It also aims to monitor competitors' products in order to guide the manager's decisions in order to improve Work performance. (Dumas, 2004, p. 4)

3- Competitive vigilance: It is a situation in which the organization is in a state of monitoring and following up on what is happening in its field of business, by collecting information related to its competitors present in the market, and those likely to appear in the future, then analyzing that information and exploiting it by knowing the strengths and weaknesses of competitors, and then formulating The strategy that allows for confrontation that includes the continuation of the advantage for the organization and the stabilization of its competitive ability. (Zaghdar 2011, p. 29).

3- Sustainable competitive advantage:

3-1 Concept:

The concept of competitive advantage: Porter says, "Competitive advantage arises as soon as the organization is able to discover new, more effective methods, and they can be embodied in the field, meaning as soon as the organization is able to innovate and create in its broad sense." (Porter, 1993, P48). Hoffman defined sustainable competitive advantage as "if an organization can implement a strategy that contributes to creating value that current and potential competitors cannot implement and when other competing companies are unable to benefit from imitating this strategy." (Hoffman, 2000, P1). While Hitt believes that sustainable competitive advantage "means achieving when the organization adds and creates value through a strategy that other organizations are unable to adopt or find costly." (Hitt, Treland, Duane and all, 2012, P 311) Ali Al-Salami defined it as "that distinct skill, technology, or resource that allows the organization to produce benefits and values for customers that exceed what competitors offer, and confirms its distinction and difference from these competitors from the customers' point of view." Who in turn accept this difference and distinction." (Al-Sulami, 2001, p. 104)

3-2 Dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage:

The dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage are the most important factors that help achieve it, which are mainly reflected in the competitive dimension that the organization chooses, which enables it to continuously excel in the markets it deals with, as these dimensions, or what is also called the term competitive precedence's It has been classified into several basic groups, according to the viewpoints of researchers and those interested in this subject: These dimensions are: quality, delivery, and cost.

- Quality: The concept of quality also includes "the basic perceived characteristics of goods or services that

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meet or exceed customers' expectations, especially those related to the characteristics and performance on the basis of which the activities of institutions are viewed as producing added value, as quality is one of the characteristics and indicators of the performance of the good or service." It plays an important role in the competition process and in making organizational performance distinct (Roger Calantone, p495, 2000).

- **Delivery:** This term reflects time, which is considered one of the basic sources for achieving a competitive advantage for the organization, given the importance that time represents to the customer and his increasing interest in it. This has led to the emergence of what is known as competition based on the time element, by reducing the latter as much as possible for the benefit of customers (Falaq, 2016, p. 286)

-Cost: It means that there is a proportionality between the cost resulting from providing the service or product with the specifications. Usually, institutions resort to reducing the cost by reducing the fixed cost, exercising continuous control over primary resources, working to reduce wage rates, and achieving high levels of productivity, due to the decrease in Cost, the institution achieves a competitive advantage as a result of lowering its prices based on its lower cost or selling at the same prevailing prices, but the return is higher than the rest of the institutions due to a wide gap between revenues and costs (Al-Rosan, 2007, p. 142).

4- Strategic flexibility:

4-1 concept:

The concept of strategic flexibility: The literature related to strategic flexibility indicates that Eccles was the first to use this term in the 1950s (Rashid-Hamid, 2019, p. 259), and this concept is considered one of the most important and most comprehensive concepts due to its ability to deal with situations of ambiguity and uncertainty. The uncertainty and changes that the business environment is currently exposed to, which is known as the concepts of restructuring, change engineering, and the emergence of learning organizations, are factors that have advanced the organization to reach what is known as flexible management (Khalil-Al-Sheikh, 2019, p. 114). He defined it (Akram, 2016, p. 32) as assuming the flexibility option is a response to the emergence of a need called sudden management, and he believes that it can be measured through two types: external flexibility through diversification, internal flexibility through fluidity of resources. The researcher notes the diversity of opinions of thinkers and writers regarding the concept of strategic flexibility, but they agree on some of its main components, which are its ability to absorb and adapt to the changes that occur within the internal and external environments, and accordingly (Wang, et

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al, Shalender & Yadav, 2019, p79) and (Al-Mulla, 2019 AD, p. 228) to the concept of strategic flexibility as the organization's ability and ability to achieve the highest possible response to environmental changes (internal and external).

4-2 Dimensions of strategic flexibility:

The varied views on the dimensions of strategic flexibility that determine the success of implementing and planning organizations' resources. After reviewing the dimensions of strategic flexibility that are most common and used according to a number of researchers and their consistency with the research objectives and hypotheses, they were classified for the purposes of the current research methodology into three dimensions, which are (Market flexibility - production flexibility - competitive flexibility), which can be presented as follows:

-Market flexibility: It refers to the organization's ability to re-evaluate its marketing efforts in local and international markets within a short period of time, in response to environmental changes (Al-Tahrawi, 2019, p. 59), and (Alharaisa, 2018, p. 166) defined it as the organization's ability to respond. To market changes and adapt to them in order to grow and survive. It can also be said that market flexibility is the organization's ability to enter and exit markets, and to position itself in existing and new markets, as a flexible organization in the market gains a competitive advantage as a result of its ability to change and quickly reposition itself in competitive global markets (Shalender & Singh, 2015, p34). .

-Productive flexibility: It means the organization's ability to manufacture its products, so that they are suitable in most local and international markets within a short period, in response to environmental variables (Al-Tahrawi, 2019, p. 58). In the same context, (Alharaisa, p. 167, 2018) defined it (Al-Dahan, 2018, p. 17) as the organization's ability to advance quickly or provide goods or services at competitive prices in most major global markets. Competitive flexibility provides the organization with the ability to compete in a global market characterized by high competitive intensity, technological uncertainty, and demand. Therefore, it must adopt flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances to provide its best. Organizations that have flexibility in responding to new competitive behaviors can redistribute important resources and use Various strategic options to compete effectively (Abbott & Banerji, 2003, p23)

Competitive flexibility: Competitive flexibility can be defined as the ability of organizations to respond to distinct and changing customer needs, as well as competitive factors and changes in the external environment, and to adapt to them (Alharaisa, 2018, p35). Competitive flexibility gives companies the ability to compete effectively in highly competitive

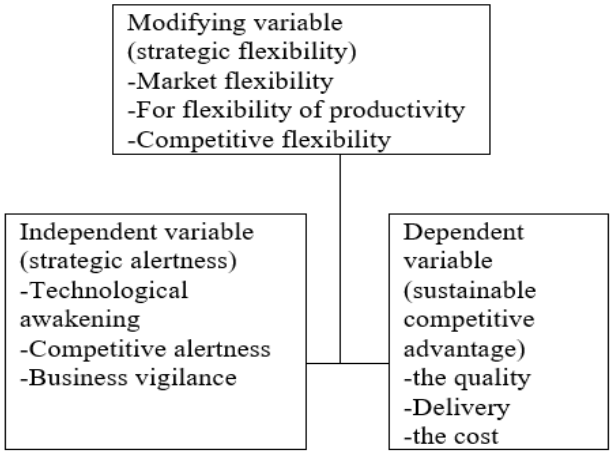
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markets characterized by uncertain demand and rapid technological change, and it is considered an important tool for exploiting opportunities and confronting competitor threats. Competitive flexibility also represents the company's ability to respond to meet the unique needs of customers, and to diagnose changes in the business environment and adapt to them (Abbott & Banerji, 2003, p23).

5-Study model & analysis:

5-1 Study model & analysis:

Through theories and previous studies and the study gaps in them, the current study has concluded the development of the study model to achieve the purpose of the research and reach its specific goals. The researcher has adopted the following model to study the relationships of the study variables:



5-2 Study Methodology:

The method is defined as the method followed by the researcher in his study of the problem with the aim of discovering the truth. It is also known as the art of correctly organizing a series of numerous ideas, either in order to reveal the truth or prove it and the fact that each phenomenon or problem under study is characterized by special qualities and characteristics that distinguish it. Unlike others, each study must have a special approach that is compatible with the nature of the data and variables related to it. The study, by its nature, may be exploratory, descriptive, or to test the validity of hypotheses based on the development of existing information in that field (Mohamed Essam: 2017).

In preparing this study, reliance was placed on the descriptive analytical approach, which starts with an initial feeling of the existence of a problem represented by the existence of goals that have not been achieved to one degree or another and identifying the obstacles that prevented the achievement of these goals.

5-3 data analysis:

Reliability analysis Consistency analysis is used to find the internal consistency of the data and it ranges from (0 to 1). The value of (Cro-Nbach's alpha) was calculated to find the internal consistency of the data. If the values of the C-N'Bach coefficient are closer to (1), the internal consistency of the variables is considered significant. Due to the limitations of the Cronbach's alpha test (Hair et al, 2022), it was suggested that the value of (Composite reliability) should be more than 0.70. Therefore, it is technically better to use a different measure to

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calculate internal consistency, which is (CR)

Table No. (1)

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)
Delivery	0.891	0.892	0.920
the cost	0.880	0.890	0.912
the quality	0.901	0.901	0.927
Production flexibility	0.890	0.892	0.919
Marketing flexibility	0.821	0.825	0.882
Competitive flexibility	0.800	0.815	0.882
Business vigilance	0.857	0.862	0.903
Technological awakening	0.843	0.869	0.894
Competitive alertness	0.837	0.842	0.892

Table (1) indicates that all CR values are greater than the condition they specified (Hair et al, 2019, which is more than 0.7.

Prepared by researchers from the 2023 field study

5-4 Hypothesis testing

Main hypothesis No. 1: There is a positive relationship between strategic alertness and sustainable competitive advantage.

For the purpose of identifying the significance of the effect between the variables, we relied on structural equation modeling, in which the path analysis method was used, which means studying and analyzing the relationships between one or more independent variables, whether these variables are continuous or discrete. The significance level (0.05) was relied upon to judge the The extent of the significance of the effect, where the calculated significance level was compared with the value of the approved significance level. The effects are considered statistically significant if the value of the calculated significance level is smaller than the considered significance level (0.05) and vice versa. The following table shows path analysis values.

Table No. (2) The path from strategic alertness to sustainable competitive advantage (Estimate)

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Commercial vigilance -> delivery	0.327	0.332	0.082	3.965	0.000
Commercial vigilance -> cost	0.031	0.040	0.110	0.285	0.776
Commercial vigilance -> quality	0.320	0.319	0.077	4.155	0.000
Technological vigilance -> delivery	0.091	0.091	0.075	1.213	0.225
Technological vigilance -> cost	0.211	0.210	0.084	2.531	0.011
Technological alertness -> quality	0.161	0.158	0.071	2.248	0.025
Competitive alertness -> delivery	0.272	0.271	0.089	3.061	0.002
Competitive vigilance -> cost	0.315	0.312	0.099	3.199	0.001
Competitive alertness -> quality	0.337	0.340	0.070	4.825	0.000

Prepared by researchers from the 2023 field study

Main hypothesis No.2: The moderating role of strategic flexibility in the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage

For the purpose of identifying the significance of the effect between the variables, we relied on structural equation modeling, in which the path analysis method was used, which means studying and analyzing the relationships between one or more independent variables,

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whether these variables are continuous or discrete. The significance level (0.05) was relied upon to judge the extent of the significance of the effect, where the calculated significance level was compared with the value of the approved significance level. The effects are considered statistically significant if the value of the calculated significance level is smaller than the considered significance level (0.05) and vice versa. The following table shows path analysis values.

Table 3: The moderating role of strategic flexibility in the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
Strategic flexibility -> sustainable competitive advantage	0.620	0.622	0.072	8.576	0.000
Strategic vigilance -> sustainable competitive advantage	0.212	0.211	0.078	2.701	0.007
Strategic flexibility x strategic alertness -> sustainable competitive advantage	−0.025	−0.024	0.050	0.501	0.616

Prepared by researchers from the 2023 field study

5-5 Summary of results:

The results of the study indicated that there is an effect of commercial alertness on the delivery dimension, there is no effect of commercial alertness on the cost dimension, there is an effect of commercial alertness on quality, there is no effect of technological alertness on the delivery dimension, there is an effect of technological alertness on the cost dimension, there is an effect of technological alertness On quality, there is an effect of competitive alertness on the delivery dimension, there is an effect of competitive alertness on the cost dimension, there is an effect of competitive alertness on quality, there is no effect of commercial alertness on the delivery dimension. In light of shopping flexibility as a modified variable, there is no effect of commercial alertness on the cost dimension in In light of shopping flexibility as a modifying variable, there is no effect of commercial vigilance on quality. In light of shopping flexibility as a modifying variable, there is no effect of technological vigilance on the delivery dimension. In light of marketing flexibility as a modifying variable, there is no effect of technological vigilance on the cost dimension. In light of shopping flexibility as a modifying variable, no. There is an effect of technological alertness on quality in light of marketing flexibility as a modifying variable. There is no effect of competitive alertness on the delivery dimension in light of marketing flexibility as a modifying variable. There is no effect of competitive alertness on the cost dimension in light of marketing flexibility as a modified variable. There is no effect of competitive alertness on quality. In light of shopping flexibility as a modifying variable.

Recommendations: In light of the findings of the current study, and by answering the study's questions and achieving its

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objectives, the study was able to come up with a set of recommendations that enable decision makers in the banking sector institutions in Khartoum State to benefit from them, and which could contribute to enhancing the capacity of the banking sector institutions. To achieve sustainable competitive advantage, through the effective application of strategic vigilance to sustainable competitive advantage, and based on this, the researcher recommends the following:

1- Emphasizing the importance of strategic vigilance by institutions in the banking sector in Khartoum State, because of its clear effects on the competitive advantage of institutions and its continuity. This is what this study and previous studies have confirmed that have examined the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable competitive advantage.

2- Emphasizing the need to pay attention to technological vigilance, competitive vigilance, and commercial vigilance, as they are the main components of strategic vigilance in the environment of banking sector institutions because of their role in improving competitive advantage and strategic flexibility.

3- Increasing companies' interest in strategic flexibility and working to create a stable and attractive environment through market flexibility, production flexibility, and competitive flexibility.

4-The need for all banking sector institutions to cooperate by developing a clear strategy that contributes to enhancing strategic vigilance, competitive advantage and strategic flexibility in service institutions, through cooperation and coordination between banking sector institutions.

6- Conclusion:

The study aimed to choose the relationship between strategic vigilance and sustainable business advantage, given the presence of strategic flexibility as a modifying variable, through the use of resource theory and dynamic capabilities theory as a basis for building the study model, which was developed by reviewing many previous studies related to the variables of the study. The study used structural equation modeling to test its hypotheses and answer its sub-questions and concluded that there is an effect between strategic alertness and sustainable competitive advantage. The results of the study showed that strategic flexibility does not modify the relationship between strategic alertness and sustainable competitive advantage, as these results are considered a guideline for companies and institutions. The banking sector in Khartoum State, which can improve its performance and also serve as a reference in the field of future research.

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