

ENHANCING STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STRATEGIC THINKING DIMENSIONS OF TOP MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses how to enhance strategic performance with its economic and social components, through activating the strategic thinking of top management and investing its most important results, represented by flexibility, originality and sense of problems, within the framework of the dynamic environment within which organizations operate. As the research problem indicated that there is a clear deficiency in employing strategic thinking in improving strategic performance, so there is importance in proposing a set of solutions to address them, and to achieve the objectives of the research, the descriptive analytical approach was adopted in its application, as the questionnaire was adopted as a tool to obtain research data that was prepared on the basis To a number of ready-made measures, after subjecting them to validity and reliability tests, and the Rasheed Bank / Sabaa Branch was chosen as the field of application, and the research sample was chosen by a simple random sample method consisting of (49) individuals. The statistical tools resulted in a number of results, most of which affirmed the existence of a relationship and influence with significant moral significance for strategic thinking in improving strategic performance. Accordingly, the main and subsidiary hypotheses included in the research were accepted, and it was recommended that the experiences of developed countries in this field be examined and try to convey their results. And employ them in the local environment.

Key words: strategic thinking, strategic performance, environment, business organizations, Top management.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of strategic thinking has entered widely in the literature of strategic management as it is one of the oldest activities in the study of strategic operations. However, its study did not develop until the nineties of the twentieth century, and the topic of performance and performance management is one of the topics that have received the attention of researchers in their various intellectual directions, including Psychologists, sociologists, human engineering, economics, and management, in addition to the contribution of American and Japanese ideas and their applications in improving strategic performance and crystallizing its manifestations. In practice, all

organizations in general and organizations that seek to gain a competitive advantage through the individuals working in them in particular have been interested in this topic. This has become one of the most important challenges faced by managers of the twenty-first century, and for this importance the research tried to identify the effect of strategic thinking in improving the strategic performance of contemporary organizations. This research is located in four topics. The first research is devoted to the scientific methodology for research. As for the second topic, Through which the researcher tried to define the research variables in theory, and the third topic came to diagnose the reality of it The importance of the research variables as well as testing the main and subsidiary hypotheses from which the research was launched. Finally, the fourth topic is devoted to presenting the most important conclusions that came out of the research, while trying to present a number of recommendations that would enhance knowledge and to the extent that it relates to the research variables. In this paragraph, we will try to identify the main problem of the research, its importance, the main objectives and assumptions from which it was launched, as well as identifying the most important tools used in collecting and analyzing data, along with clarifying some of the characteristics of the surveyed sample:

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Despite the very important role that strategic thinking plays in achieving the organization's goals and helping it to stay and continue working by improving its ability to adapt to all changes that may occur in the internal or external environment of the organization through improving its strategic performance, there is a group. Among the factors that hinder this process, in particular, are those related to the core capabilities and resources that the organization possesses or the activities that it exercises, and here the importance of strategic thinking in rationalizing all aspects of performance practiced by organizations and at all their organizational levels, especially the strategic ones. Here, the research problem arises in the presence of clear deficiencies in the interest in strategic thinking and trying to employ it in improving all areas of strategic performance within the organization, and a number of questions may be raised from this problem as follows:

- Is there sufficient awareness of the research organization about the importance of improving strategic performance within the framework of strategic thinking?
- What is the nature of the relationship and influence between strategic thinking and strategic performance of the research organization.

RESEARCH IMPORTANCE:

The importance of research is evidenced by the importance of the studied variables, as strategic thinking is the main engine for all internal changes and innovations that the organization can make in order to adapt to the changes that occur in its external environment, and the increasing interest in the issue of strategic performance as a result of the increase in the role it plays in exploiting opportunities And avoid the threats presented to it by the surrounding environment. As well as the

practical importance that emerges through the researcher's attempt to diagnose the reality and importance of the variables discussed through the answers of the individuals of the research sample, and the importance of the research can be determined through the following points:

- Providing a set of solutions to many of the problems facing the organization discussed in the field of strategic thinking and employing them in improving strategic performance.
- Attempting to present a set of recommendations that would enhance the level of knowledge and application of the research sample related to research variables, and proposals regarding future research projects.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE :

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- An attempt to provide a modest addition to the Iraqi library of one of the important topics in the field of business administration in general and strategic management in particular.
- Attempting to diagnose the reality and importance of strategic thinking in light of the answers of the members of the research sample.
- Determine the role of thinking and the degree of its contribution to strategic performance through the answers of the members of the research sample.

HYPOTHESIS RESEARCH SCHEME:

The hypothetical diagram shows an explanation of the basic idea of the research, as well as clarifying the correlation and influence relationships between the independent variable "strategic thinking" and the dependent variable "strategic performance". The expected result of that is the success of the dependent variable, as shown in Figure (1):

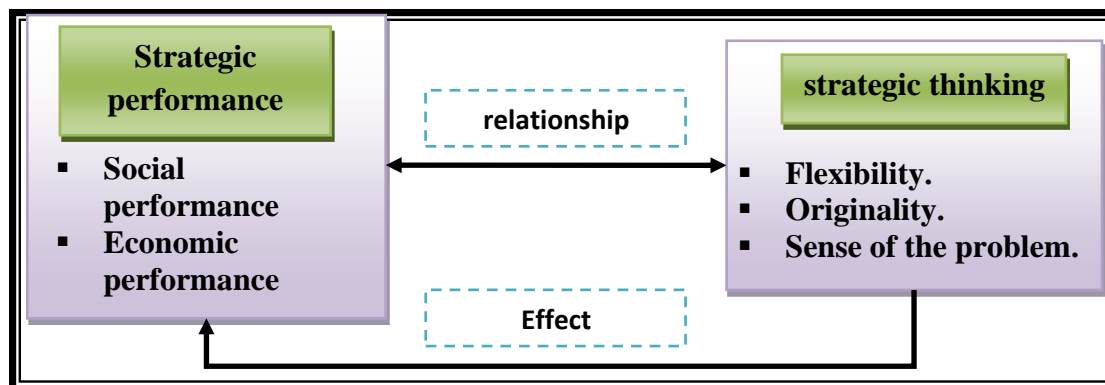


Figure (1) the hypothetical outline of the research

RESEARCH ASSUMES :

The current research includes two main hypotheses, as follows:

- The first main hypothesis states: "There is a significant correlation relationship between strategic thinking and the strategic performance of the researched organization".
- The second main hypothesis states: "Strategic thinking has a statistically significant effect on the strategic performance of the researched organization".

SEARCH TOOLS :

The research data was obtained by preparing a questionnaire based on a number of ready-made measures, after having been adapted to suit the purposes of the current research. As the questionnaire was subjected to its approved standards to tests of validity and reliability, as the questionnaire was presented to a number of arbitrators specialized in the fields of business administration, measurement and evaluation of (6) and in light of the observations and opinions of the referees, the paragraphs of the questionnaire were modified and some of them were deleted, and most of the paragraphs of the questionnaire were obtained on An agreement percentage reached (89%), and to ensure the stability of the research tool, the researchers applied it to an exploratory sample consisting of (20) members of the research community, and after (10) days the questionnaire was distributed again to the same group, and the value of the stability factor of the questionnaire as a whole was according to The coefficient "Cronbach-Alpha" (83%) is acceptable and statistically significant at the same time, and this means that the resolution of different scales with high stability can be adopted at different times for the same individuals and give the same results. The ready-made statistical program (SPSS) and the (Excel) program were used to enter and analyze the research data, and among the most important statistical tools that were used in the following application:

- Frequency coefficient: for the purpose of determining the percentage of agreement about the research paragraphs.
- The arithmetic mean: It is used to determine the level of the answer about the paragraphs and to know the level of variables or the average of that group.
- Standard Deviation: It is used to find out the level of dispersion of the sample answers about the arithmetic mean, which is the positive square root of the variance.
- Coefficient of variation: It is extracted by dividing the standard deviation on the value of the arithmetic mean to determine the importance of the research variables.
- Spearman's correlation coefficient: to determine the type of relationship between the explanatory and responsive research variables.
- Simple Linear Regression Coefficient: to measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

COMMUNITY AND SAMPLE RESEARCH :

The banking sector was chosen as a community for the practical side, as the Rasheed Bank / Sabaa Branch was chosen as a field for application, as the research sample was chosen by a simple random sample of employees working in the bank and the sample size reached (49) individuals, and it is necessary to note that the proportion of females working in the organization The surveyed respondents are higher than the percentage of males, and most of the members of the surveyed sample are holders of a university degree, and have a service of more than (5) years, and this may help to increase the accuracy and conviction when answering the paragraphs of the questionnaire, and thus this will be reflected on the researcher's ability to achieve The desired goals of his research.

REVIEWS OF THEORETICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

STRATEGIC THINKING

Strategic thinking is one of the contemporary trends in drawing the strategic vision for business organizations and defining the most important features of their strategic directions. The term strategic thinking was used in an academic framework in 1994. The development of strategic thinking continued with the development of human life in the twentieth century, and it became more practiced, especially by countries and companies. To achieve its strategic goals, and after reaching the march of human life to the information and knowledge revolution, strategic thinking has moved to an advanced level of use that has become included in various practical fields (Paper , 1999 : 3). In other words, strategic thinking results in the most successful strategy that the organization can formulate and implement, as it is based on a set of visions that have been agreed upon and is based on following a methodological framework that moves towards the future, and through which the thinker can direct the organization starting from the transition from daily administrative operations and facing crises and reaching a different vision. For internal and external factors capable of achieving change in the surrounding environment to achieve in the end (Larson & Hansen, 2005 : 328). It is also expressed in an approach concerned with treating insight, resulting from the good use of intuition and creativity in drawing strategic directions (Goldman & Casey, 2010 : 120). Accordingly, strategic thinking results in a successful strategy that combines a large number of factors related to the internal and external environment, the objectives of the organization, human resources and issues related to the prevailing culture within the organization and how to benefit from its scarce resources (Kim & Rhee, 2011 : 245). Accordingly, the concept of strategic thinking appeared as an alternative to strategic planning to overcome the mistakes that occurred during its applications to serve the strategic directives of business organizations, as most of the new ideas in the field of management appeared in a democratic climate that allows the participation of the largest number of individuals while giving them the greatest organized freedom

to express Their opinions, and not imposing any restrictions on the suggestions and ideas submitted by them (Zahra & Nambisan, 2012: 220). It also refers to those mental and intellectual capabilities and skills necessary for the individual to undertake strategic actions and practice the tasks of strategic management, from the process of defining the mission, goals and objectives of the organization, formulating the strategy, implementing it and monitoring the implementation process (Ridgley , 2012 : 6-8). There are a number of principles on which strategic thinking is based, which can be identified in the following: Strategic thinking requires a commitment from leadership. Strategic thinking is a means and not an end. Strategic thinking requires broad participation. Strategic thinking is practical and not theoretical. Strategic thinking is a necessity (Conway , 2014 :4). It should be noted that strategic thinking is related to several elements: 1- Perception: Perception is a process of selection and organization, where we find that conferences are in a form that provides the decision maker with meaningful experiences. 2- Memory: it is defined as the individual memorizing what he had learned in the past, and is indicated by subsequent remembrance and gratitude or memorization with some economy. 3- Imagination: Imagination is seen as the processes that produce and exchange thought that differs in terms of form or content due to the different sources of perception (Kopnina, 2017 : 28).

STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE

Within the framework of defining a concept of strategic performance, its recent emergence as an independent field of knowledge from the fields of management science has rendered its concept without a specific definition despite the existence of some agreement about its dimensions and indicators. Strategic performance has been referred to as translating strategic plans into results and helping managers to respond quickly and effectively to unexpected changes (Cokins, 2003 :2). It also defines strategic performance as different from practical performance in that financial ratios are prepared in the future and takes the surrounding economic environment into consideration in terms of studying demand, competitors 'trends and the impact of changes in the political, economic and social aspects of the organization (Micheli & Manzoni, 2010 : 466). It is also known as the ability of the organization to translate its strategic plans into results and actions to achieve the best possible performance capable of adapting to the changes in the surrounding environment and thus contribute to enhancing its competitive position in the environment in which it operates (Grigoroudis el at, 2012: 105). It has also been referred to as the process by which the organization's mission, goals and strategy can be systematically clarified to enhance its ability to make the right decisions at the right time (Bisbe & Malagueno, 2012 :297). There is a set of approaches that can be adopted in measuring the strategic performance of business organizations, but in general the most important of these approaches will be identified as follows: the financial approach, the cognitive approach, the stakeholder approach, the competitive values approach, and the comparative approach (Srivastava & Sushil , 2013 : 556). It also defined strategic performance as the degree to which the organization achieves value for each of its customers and stakeholders,

and on the largest possible scale (Sande & Haugland, 2015 : 188). It is a reflection of the organization's ability to achieve its goals in the long term, as a result of using the resources available to it as efficiently as possible and directing them towards those goals (Pollanen et al, 2016 :3). As for the importance of strategic performance, it has been shown that it receives great attention and almost represents the holistic phenomenon of all branches and fields of knowledge because it reflects the correctness of the strategic direction of the organization and an actual and realistic test of the credibility of the adopted strategic approach (Gelhard et al, 2016 : 2). Within the framework of this research, the strategic performance consists of: 1- Social performance: It refers to the intangible human performance that the organization presents to society and stakeholders through the social dimension. 2- Economic performance: it refers to the tangible material performance that the organization provides to society and stakeholders (Schutz et al, 2019 :3).

THE THEORETICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDIED VARIABLES

Strategic thinking is one of the sources of strategic performance in the era of information technology in which business organizations operate (Johannessen , 2001 : 8). As strategic thinking plays a major role in enhancing strategic performance, which emerges through its transfer from the human resources working for the organization to our customers in light of the experiences, skills and capabilities that emerge in the services provided to them, which in turn can be reflected in enhancing the competitive advantage of the organization (Nelson & Mccann , 2005 : 4). Strategic thinking is also the best weapon for preserving the scarce talent and human resources that the organization possesses and which can be invested in improving its strategic performance and thus expanding its market share in the industry within which it operates (Hallin , 2009 : 7). Accordingly, strategic thinking constitutes the formation of the supporting balance for the strategic performance of business organizations and the main resource to enhance their competitive advantage, and based on what has been mentioned, the main and subsidiary hypotheses included in this research were formulated (Smith , 2011 : 312).

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYZES AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS TESTS

This variable was measured through two dimensions: "flexibility, originality, and sense of the problem". As for the strategic performance variable, it was measured through two dimensions: "social performance, economic performance". and Table (1) shows the level of responses of the sample members searched for the paragraphs of this variable:

Table (1) Descriptive analysis of the searched variables

T	Variables	Agreement percentage	Arithmetic mean	standard deviation	Coefficient of variation
1	Flexibility	%75	3.5	0.93	0.26
2	Originality	%79	3.8	0.83	0.19
3	Sense of the problem	%82	3.8	0.79	0.21
	Total strategic thinking	%79	3.7	0.85	0.23
4	Social performance	%75	3.7	0.63	0.17
5	Economic performance	%79	4.1	0.82	0.20
	Strategic performance	%74	3.6	0.95	0.27

To determine the overall importance of the strategic thinking variable, one can refer to Table (1), as the percentage of agreement on this variable reached (79%), which is higher than the standard percentage of agreement amounting to (66.7%), and the mean value of the total of this variable was (3.7), which is It is also higher than the hypothetical arithmetic mean value of (3), with a standard deviation (0.85) and a coefficient of variation (0.23). Therefore, these results reflect the assertion of most members of the sample researched on the senior management of the researched organization who has sufficient strategic thinking to face all the developments that may be Affects them in the environment in which they operate. We note from Table (1) that the strategic performance variable was measured through (10) paragraphs, and the percentage of agreement on this dimension reached (74%), which is higher than the standard percentage of agreement amounting to (66.7%), and what confirms this result is The value of the arithmetic mean of the total strategic performance variable, which amounted to (3.6), which is higher than the value of the hypothetical mean of (3), and with a standard deviation of its value (0.95). This result reflects an acceptable harmony between the answers of the individuals of the sample researched about the paragraphs of this dimension and the value of the coefficient of variation reached (0.27), and these results reflect, and in clear evidence, most of the members of the surveyed sample confirm the interest of the administration in the researched organization to enhance its strategic performance by satisfying its customers and workers and introducing new technologies in its various operations, which could be reflected in enhancing the market share of the organization researched in the sector Operating within it.

Table (2) shows the values of the correlations coefficient between the response variable, strategic performance at the vertical level, and the explanatory variable, strategic thinking and its dimensions that include "flexibility, originality, sense of problems", which represent the horizontal level of the table, and in the following details of these results:

Table (2) results of correlation relationships

	Flexibility	Originality	Sense of the problem	Total strategic thinking
Strategic performance	**0.51	*0.39	*0.36	*0.43

* Correlation at the level of significance 0.05.

** Correlation at the level of significance 0.01.

It is clear from Table (2) that the value of the correlation coefficient between the total strategic thinking variable and the strategic performance variable amounted to (0.43 *), which is a positive and significant relationship at the level (0.05). A moral significance with the strategic performance variable, which is equivalent to a percentage (100%) of the total correlations, and these results indicate and clearly demonstrate the importance of strategic thinking in improving the strategic performance of the researched organization, and these results allow accepting the first main hypothesis of the research which stated: There is a significant correlation between strategic thinking and the strategic performance of the researched organization.

Table (3) shows the results of analyzing the effect of strategic thinking "the explanatory variable" through its three dimensions in improving the strategic performance "response variable" by using the simple linear regression method, and the results were as follows:

Table (3) Results of influence relationships

	β	a	R²	F	Moral
Flexibility	0.37	1.32	0.26	9.47	0.001
Originality	0.32	1.19	0.15	8.32	0.05
Sense of the problem	0.41	1.24	0.13	9.79	0.001
Total strategic thinking	0.39	1.22	0.19	10.12	0.001

Through Table (7) it is possible to determine the total effect of the strategic thinking variable on improving strategic performance. We find that the calculated value of (f) reached (10.12), which is greater than its tabular value at a significant level (0.05) and with confidence limits (95%), and these results confirm The presence of an effect of strategic thinking on strategic performance, as the value of the constant reached (1.22a =), which means that there is a strategic performance of (1.22) even if strategic thinking is equal to zero, and the value of (0.39B =) means that changing strategic thinking by one unit It will lead to a change in strategic performance by (0.39), while the value of (R2) reached (0.19), and this means that (19%) of the variance in strategic performance is a variation explained by the strategic thinking that entered the model, and that (81%)) Is a variance explained by other factors that did not enter the regression model. In addition, the number

of regression models that achieved a significant effect, as shown in Table (6), amounted to (3) models out of (3), meaning that their percentage is equal to (100%) of the total influencing relationships of significant significance. Since the total strategic thinking has achieved a moral effect in improving the strategic performance, there is a justification not to reject the second main hypothesis of the research, which is: "Strategic thinking affects a statistically significant effect on the strategic performance of the researched organization".

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the answers of the members of the researched sample affirmed that their organization enjoys sufficient strategic thinking that helps it perform tasks and duties at all levels, and it is upon the necessity for the researched organization to identify the most important areas that it enjoys in the field of strategic thinking, which it can use to improve its strategic performance. The results of the analysis also indicated that the senior management of the researched organization has a high capacity to identify all areas that help it to raise the level of strategic performance. Therefore, the researchers suggest encouraging practices that help improve the strategic performance of the researched organization in coordination between all management and at the various organizational levels, to ensure that there is no Any conflict in the implementation of these decisions. It is also possible to improve strategic performance using strategic thinking more effectively through the dimension of flexibility, which has achieved the highest statistically positive correlations with the variable of strategic performance. Therefore, work must be done to establish communication links with academic institutions, whether they are: Iraqi universities or research centers. Arab or foreign mother, to know everything new in the field of strategic thinking and its relationship to strategic performance. It was also found through the results of the analysis that strategic thinking affects and its moral implications in improving the strategic performance of the researched organization. Therefore, it is recommended to re-conduct the current research in other educational, health and industrial sectors and to study the possibility of generalizing its results in the Iraqi environment.

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