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## The Impact of Operations Strategies in Sustainable Competitive Advantage For A Sample of Organizations Operating in The Private Sector - Iraq / Basra

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keyword2, Sustainable

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### A B S T R A C T

Objective: The research aims to Knowing the nature of the linkage and influence relationship between operations strategy and sustainable competitive advantage in the fields of water, metal processing, beverages, wood, furniture, and detergents can achieve sustainable competitive advantage by integrating specific resources and capabilities. Design/Research Method: Most of the preparation of this research is based on resource based theory and competitive advantage theory. The research relied on the analytical descriptive research method. The target organizations in the Research were 10 licensed organizations operating in different fields in Basra Governorate. The random sampling method was adopted to avoid bias to represent the community, as 100 questionnaires were distributed and 90 questionnaires were retrieved ready for analysis. Finding: Organizations included in the research, it is necessary for these organizations to achieve compatibility between the strategies of their different operations and strategies of investors. Limitation: The main limitation of the research is that it did not consider how much capital should be allocated to certain business activities, how much shareholder value should be created, and how to attract new groups of investors. Implication: Based on the results of the research, the two researchers recommend that organizations should conduct tests on the environment in which organizations operate in order to come up with operational strategies that cannot be imitated and can contribute to enhancing their sustainable competitive advantage .



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## 1. Introduction

The business environment has changed dramatically recently, as many organizations find themselves in a very critical situation, as to whether it is appropriate to continue implementing their traditional operations or to succumb to these changes and adapt their operational processes to be more strategic, to maintain their competitiveness in the market and increase the level of performance. Some of these local organizations began to adapt their operational strategies, and thus those organizations that embraced the changes gained a competitive advantage over those that did not (Mutunga & Wamitu, 2022:63)

Competitive advantage refers to the ability of organizations to achieve better performance than competitors in their environment, so when the market environment is characterized by rapid change and clearly unsustainable competitive advantages, operations strategy is recognized as an important tool for achieving great performance paths (Pratono et al., 2019: 3), where Sustainable competitive advantage refers to the state of an organization's pursuit of the unique features of the product and the endeavor to differentiate the consumer's product from its competitors (Tiwari et al., 2023: 2). Due to the increase in the number of consumers participating in consumer activity, organizations usually create new business models and competitively challenge existing organizations. Accordingly, there is a need to discover better business models, and to be able to quickly and flexibly find strategies that adapt to market needs (Na et al., 2019: 2)

### 1.1. Research Problem

The research problem is summarized in the following question: **(What is the impact of operations strategies on achieving sustainable competitive advantage)**, and a set of sub-questions are derived from it, as follows:

- A. Is there a role and impact of different operations strategies in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage for the research sample organizations?
- B. Do (the research sample organizations) adopt operations strategies in order to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors in their field of industry?
- C. Do the difficulties faced by (the research sample organizations) in practicing their various operations limit their ability to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage?

### 1.2. Research Objectives

Competitive advantage revolves around how operations strategies are implemented and that the goal of strategies in every organization is to ensure that resources are allocated and used in the best possible way. Strategies are suitable for organizations to adapt to the rapid changes that occur every day due to changes in innovation, technology and environment. However, different challenges are foreseen in adopting strategies in all aspects of business (Kiloh et al., 2020: 3)

Despite the extensive literature on sustainable competitive advantage, limited study has been conducted to investigate the impact of operations strategies on sustainable competitive advantage in private sector organizations. Therefore, the research sought to answer the following research questions: What are the operational strategies adopted by the sample organizations for research in the city of Basra? What are the sustainable competitive advantages achieved through the operations strategies adopted by these organizations? The research objectives are summarized as follows:

- A. Knowing the nature of the linkage and influence relationship between operations strategy and sustainable competitive advantage, and the benefits resulting from this relationship that facilitate the work of the organization.
- B. Identifying the reality of the actual work of the researched organizations and knowing the nature of competition for the different sectors in which they operate.
- C. Finding the best sustainable competitive advantages that the researched organizations can achieve by adopting the organization's operations strategy model.

## **2. Literature Review**

The theoretical side of the research studies the field of previous studies and research related to operations strategies and their relationship to sustainable competitive advantages and lays the theoretical basis for the issues that will be discussed in this research. In other words, the literature review of this research mainly deals with the relationship between operations strategies and how they affect sustainable competitive advantages such as cost, quality, reliability, flexibility, and delivery.

### **2.1. Operations Strategy**

Strategy is generally defined as a tool for achieving competitive advantage, as the strategy works to improve the advantages and reduce the competitive determinants that the organization can face, then the operations strategy is a guide for companies to increase their ability to compete, because if the organization implements an effective operations strategy such as cost leadership or product differentiation You will determine success in the sector in which you work. (Chong & Ali, 2022: 300) Operations strategies are the decisions that determine the long-term capacity of the organization's activities and their contribution to the overall strategy of the organization by achieving continuous alignment between market needs and operational resources (Sutawijaya & Nawangsari, 2019: 22)

The current research seeks to discuss how organizations from different sectors can achieve compatibility between the practices and production processes that they implement with the competitive standards that their customers value more in order to become more able to achieve sustainable competitive advantages (Lohmann et al., 2019: 2) The application of operations strategy can provide managers with important information that enables them to make decisions characterized by accuracy and speed to develop other strategies, and identifying companies that have a sustainable competitive advantage is a rather simple task if performance can be measured through one performance indicator However, in the context of multiple scales, this problem is complex (Veiga et al., 2019: 746).

### **2.2. Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

In today's competitive business world, every organization needs the appropriate facilities to create distinguished results through the strategy it follows and thus outperform others in the market in which it operates, and that the implementation of a value creation strategy that is not adopted by any other organization at the same time is said to be the organization It has a competitive advantage (Hadamamine & Atan, 2019: 3).

Sustainable competitive advantage is the most common concept in the field of strategic management, as it explains the factors that affect performance across companies, and this

sustainable competitive advantage is achieved through the effective implementation of strategies that affect the general activities of the organization, and the organization needs to make practical innovations to maintain its competitive balance and guarantee success.(Arsawan et al.,2022:3).

### **2.3. Operations Strategies And Sustainable Competitive Advantage :**

Several studies have discussed the interrelationship between operations strategies and sustainable competitive advantage. These empirical discussions with regard to operations strategies and competitive advantage showed a consensus among scholars that cost leadership strategy is useful for achieving goals and drives mainly towards achieving sustainable competitive advantage.(Arsawan et al.,2022:3). Cost leadership also influences the market price, allowing for increased sales volume, profit margin, service provision, and reduced operational costs and waste. Some also added that the competitive advantage is the result of cost reduction and operational excellence without the need for quality, while others concluded that the competitive advantage is derived from product differentiation along with quality, efficiency and innovation.( Egwakhe et al.,2020:19)

Operations strategy decisions are an important part of the organizational planning process that achieves compatibility between operations goals, operational goals, and the goals of the larger organization, as strategic operations decisions must achieve customer satisfaction and thus win in the competitive situation, and this means that what the organization offers must be superior to what competitors offer in Market (Kiloh et al., 2020: 25) When an organization retains sources of competitive advantage, whether arising from protected market positions or the company's own resources and competencies, it will retain this advantage. Supply advantages (such as cost advantages) often represent a low level, while there are other demand-based advantages which can represent strong barriers to competitors when combined particularly with economies of scale (Maury & Benjamin, 2018:5).

## **3. Materials and Methods**

The research part contains the methodology used to conduct this research.

### **3.1. Research Design**

The problem presented in this research is better studied using the descriptive research design, and the descriptive study is concerned with knowing what, where and how of a phenomenon. This methodology approach also allows the findings to be generalizable (Magutu et al., 2016).

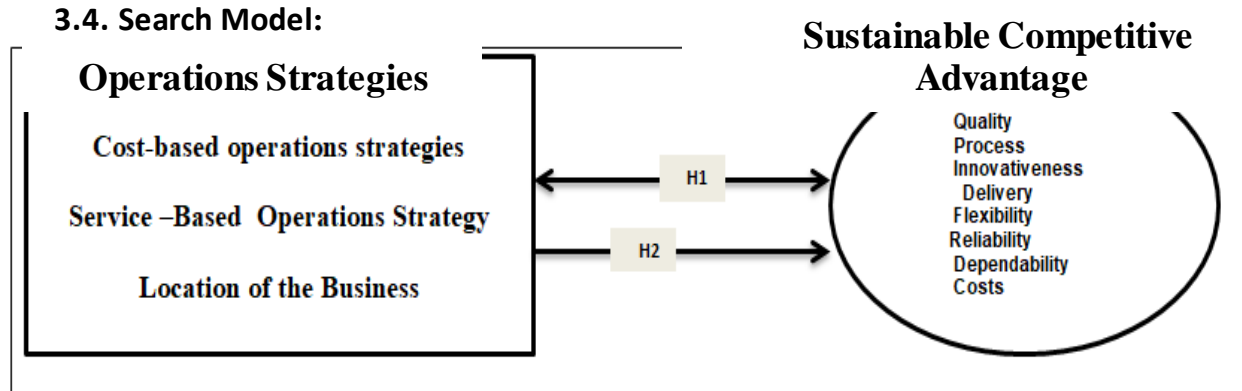
### **3.2. Population**

The target community for this research is 10 companies operating within the private sector and in different industries in the city of Basra.

### **3.3. Research Hypotheses:**

**H1-**There is a statistically significant correlation between Operations Strategies and Sustainable Competitive Advantage at a significance level of 0.05 .

**H2-** There is a statistically significant effect of Operations Strategies on sustainable competitive advantage at a significance level of 0.05.



**Figure (1): Search Model**

### 3.5. Data Collection Method

The research used a questionnaire and an analytical study designed based on a review of previous studies that are consistent with the objective of the current research.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis includes sorting and organizing the collected data. Data analysis also includes examining the collected data to test their validity. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data, the information was arranged systematically. It must also be noted that the Spearman correlation coefficient was adopted because it is used to evaluate the monotonic relationship between ordinal variables.

In short, the regression equation that was used in this research is:

**sustainable competitive advantages**

$$= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

**$\beta_0$** - Statistical constant

**$X_1$** - Value-Based Operations Strategy

**$X_2$** - Cost-Based Operations Strategy

**$X_3$** - Service-Based Operations Strategy

**$X_4$**  - The organization's Location

**$\beta_1 - \beta_4$**  = measure of the sensitivity of the  $X_i$  variable to changes in OS

**$\epsilon$**  = concept of error

## 4. Results And Discussions

This section is to present and interpret the results:

### 4.1. Response Rate

Table No(1) shows The research targeted a sample of 100 respondents. However, out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 90 respondents filled out and returned the questionnaires completely, which represents a response rate of 90%. However, 10% of the respondents refrained from filling out the questionnaires, and this was for a variety of reasons such as the lack of availability of the respondents to fill them in a timely manner.

**Table(1) Response Rate**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Filled in questionnaires	90	90%
Non response	10	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **4.2. General Information**

The research aims to form general information about the respondent, and this information was used to form the results of the research based on the experience of the respondents and the knowledge of the respondents about the information that was presented to them.

### **4.2.1. Research Respondents Section**

Table No (2) shows the sections of the samples targeted by the research in the surveyed organizations. Among the results, (34%) of the respondents worked in the operations department, followed by (28%) of the respondents in the services department, and finally (38%) of the respondents worked in the strategic management, and this in turn. It means that all the departments targeted by the two researchers participated in the research.

**Table(2) department Of Respondents**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Operation department	31	34%
Strategic department	34	38%
Services department	25	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **4.2.2. The Job Position Of The Respondents**

The aim of this part of the research is to know the job that the respondents occupy in their organizations. It is clear from the results that (10%) of the respondents were entrepreneurs, (10%) of the respondents were managers, (35%) heads of departments, and (15%) were supervisors, and (30%) were technical and administrative workers.

### **4.2.3. Working Period**

It is clear from Table (3) the Period of work for the research sample individuals in their organizations.

**Table (3) Working Period**

<b>Working Period</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1- 5 years	40	44%
6 – 10 years	25	28%
11 – 15 years	20	22%
16 and more years	5	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100%</b>

From Table (3), it is clear that (44%) of the respondents have worked in their organization for a period ranging from (1-5) years, (28%) of the respondents have worked in their organization for a period of (6-10) years, (22%) of the respondents They worked in their organization from (11-15) years, and finally (6%) worked in their organization for (16 and more) years. This means that most of the respondents to this study have worked for a long time within the organization, and therefore they were aware of the information included in the study questionnaire related to their organizations. organization.

#### 4.2.4. Period of Practicing Operations Strategies

This part of the Research aims to find out the period during which each of the surveyed organizations practiced the operations strategy to carry out their work.

**Table(4) Period of Practicing Operations Strategies**

Years of Practice	Frequency	Percent
1-3 years	28	31%
4-6 years	26	29%
7-10 years	18	20%
10 and more years	18	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is clear from the results of the table (4) that 40% of the responding organizations have practiced the implementation of the operations strategy for (7 years and more), (29%) of the responding organizations have adopted the operations strategy for a period ranging from 4-6 years, finally (31%) of the organizations The research sample has adopted operations strategy practices for a period ranging between (1-3) years.

#### 4.2.5. Adoption of Operations Strategies

The research aimed to find out whether the surveyed organizations adopted operations strategies to enhance their sustainable competitive advantage or not. According to the results, some of the respondents claimed that their organization has adopted operations strategies to enhance sustainable competitive advantage. Hence, this result is consistent with (Kiloh et al.,2018 ) The operations strategy is an important option in the business sector to achieve a competitive advantage, and therefore it can be said that organizations that apply a good operations strategy will have the ability to achieve sustainable competitive advantage compared to organizations that lack the application of a well-defined operations strategy.

### 4.3. Operations strategies and Location of the Business for the private business sector

#### 4.3.1. Value-Based Operations Strategy

**Table (5) Value-Based Operations Strategy**

Value-Based Operations Strategy	Mean	S.D
Our company seeks to achieve compatibility between its commercial and financial strategies and the strategies of investors in order to increase the total return due to competitors.	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.302</b>
Our company is constantly striving to achieve compatibility between the size of the current performance and the size of the investment that it wishes to make in the future.	<b>3.93</b>	<b>0.801</b>
The company seeks to determine the capital that should be allocated to certain businesses, the amount of value that must be achieved for shareholders, and ways to attract new investors.	<b>4.32</b>	<b>0.609</b>
The company is characterized by the growth of revenues compared to the volume of the amounts invested, which leads to achieving high profits for shareholders.	<b>3.27</b>	<b>0.892</b>

From the results Table (5), it is clear that most of the respondents agree that the organization needs to consider the amount of capital that it must allocate for specific businesses, the amount of return that must be achieved for shareholders, and knowledge of ways to attract new shareholders, as shown by an average 4.32 , Respondents also agree that organizations need to achieve a fit between the volume of revenues generated

at the present time and the volume of investments they intend to make in the future, as evidenced by an average of 3.93, It also appears from the analysis of the results that the companies are constantly striving to achieve compatibility between their operations strategy and the investors' strategies in order to increase the total return achieved for the shareholders, with an average of 3.29, Most of the respondents also agreed that the company achieves a growth in the volume of revenue generated compared to the volume of investment, which leads to an increase in the volume of profits for its investors, as indicated by an average of 3.27.

#### 4.3.2. Cost-Based operations strategies

**Table (6) Cost-Based operations strategies**

	Mean	S.D
Our organization adopts a cost-based operations strategy and focuses on providing products with high cost efficiency compared to our competitors.	<b>4.92</b>	<b>0.247</b>
Our organization determines the price of its products based on production costs rather than other factors such as the competitive external environment.	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.252</b>
An organization's competitive strategy is based on efficiency and cost-effectiveness throughout the value chain.	<b>4.01</b>	<b>1.000</b>
Our company seeks to maintain its current competitive position based on providing products at a low cost, due to the difficulty of developing new competitive positions in the highly competitive market.	<b>3.26</b>	<b>0.989</b>

It is clear from the results the table (6) that most of the respondents agreed that their organization designs its own operations strategy in a way that enables it to provide its products based on the lowest cost and as shown. 4.92 The respondents also agreed that the competitive strategy adopted by the organization is based on cost-effectiveness. Along the entire length of the value chain, with an arithmetic mean of 4.01, the respondents agree that their organization determines the prices of their products based on production costs rather than external factors, and with an average of 3.88 By providing low-cost products instead of seeking to enter new competitive market positions, with an average of 3.26

#### 4.3.3. Service –Based Operations Strategy

**Table(7) Service -Based operations strategies**

<b>Service Based Operations Strategy</b>	Mean	S.D
Our organization is developing service-based operations strategies represented by customer service, product service, or both	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.989</b>
Our organization provides high-quality service to customers, and accordingly, it is gaining a large customer base as a result of its efforts.	<b>4.20</b>	<b>0.869</b>
Our organization is developing fast self-checkout registers with the aim of reducing customer waiting time	<b>3.30</b>	<b>1.289</b>
Our organization guarantees fast delivery of products to its customers, as well as providing delivery service to the customer	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.740</b>
Our organization thinks beyond numbers and has a vision of a long-term strategy for the customer	<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.725</b>
Our organization invests a lot in research in order to achieve and maintain customer satisfaction	<b>4.20</b>	<b>0.774</b>

It is clear from the results above the table (7) that Most respondents agree that an organization should think beyond the language of numbers and develop a long-term strategy for the customer within its operations, as evidenced by an average of 4.41. Respondents also agree that the organization provides high-quality service to its



customers, which earns it a wide customer base. In the field of research in order to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction and retention, with an average response of 4.20 for both paragraphs, another number of the Research sample agreed that their organizations develop a service-based operations strategy represented by customer service or product or both together, that the organization works to achieve delivery The rapid delivery of products to its customers and the work to provide a delivery service to customers with an average of 3.88 for both paragraphs, finally occupied the third paragraph (our organization is working on developing self-payment registers that are characterized by speed to reduce the waiting time for the customer with an average of 3.30).

#### **4.3.4. Location of the Business**

**Table(8) Location of the Business**

<b>Location of the Business</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>
Our expansion brings access to additional material sources and new markets	4.19	0.142
The site strategy of our organization is in line with the company's strategy as a whole and is part of it	4.31	0.587
The location strategy of our organization, in turn, is a plan to obtain the optimal location for the organization by defining the organization's goals and needs	4.19	0.655
The geographical location of our organization plays an important role in its success and the profits it achieves	4.09	0.641
The first stage of preparing a site strategy is to determine what the organization requires from this site	4.00	0.921
Our organization evaluates sites at a certain value based on the costs and returns achieved by each alternative site	3.81	0.679

From above Table No (8) show Most of the respondents agreed that the organization's website strategy is commensurate with and part of the organization's strategy as a whole, as evidenced by an average score of 4.31. The respondents also agreed that expansion enables the organization to access additional financial resources in addition to the possibility of entering new markets with the possibility of considering the organization's strategy as a plan to obtain the optimal location for the organization with an average of 4.19 for both. Paragraphs, as shown that the geographical location of the organization plays an important role in its success and the profits that can be achieved, with an average score of 4.09. of the chosen site, with an average of 4.00. Finally, respondents agreed that the organization rates sites at a certain value based on the cost-benefit they generate from each site, with an average of 3.81.

#### **4.4. sustainable competitive advantage**

Table (9) shows the agreement of the individuals who used the research regarding the impact of the operations strategy on the sustainable competitive advantage of the organization, as most of the respondents agreed that the process and quality had improved at a significant level, as shown by an average of 4.28 and 4.19, respectively. They improved, as is evident, with an average of 4.80 and 4.60, respectively. Costs, speed of delivery, flexibility, and innovation also improved, with an average of 3.92, 3.71, 3.59, and 3.51, respectively.

**Table(9) sustainable competitive advantage**

sustainable competitive advantage	mean	STDev
Quality	4.28	0.953
Process	4.19	0.954
Innovativeness	3.51	0.898
Delivery	3.71	0.754
Flexibility	3.95	0.958
Reliability	4.80	0.643
Dependability	4.60	0.756
Costs	3.92	1.038

#### 4.5. Inferential Analysis

To find the correlation between the variables of the Research, the researchers used the Pearson correlation coefficient. From the results in below table no (10) , it is clear that there is a positive correlation between sustainable competitive advantage and value-based strategies, as is evident with the correlation value of 0.519. It is also clear that there is a correlation between sustainable competitive advantage and cost-based strategies, with a correlation value of 0. 639. There is also a positive correlation between the organization's sustainable competitive advantage and service-based strategies, with a correlation value of 0.732. There is also a positive correlation between the organization's sustainable competitive advantage and the organization's location, with a correlation value of 0.512. This, in turn, indicates a positive correlation between the sustainable competitive advantage. Value-based strategies, cost-based strategies, service-based strategies, and the location strategy of the organization.

**Table(10) coefficient of correlation**

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Sustainable competitive advantage(1)	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Value based strategies (1)	Pearson Correlation	0.519	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0031	0			
Cost based strategies (2)	Pearson Correlation	0. 639	0.3419	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0020	0.0014	0		
Service based strategies (3)	Pearson Correlation	0.732	0.1238	0.0619	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0040	0.0120	0.0041	0	
Location of the business (4)	Pearson Correlation	0.512	0.3400	0.0000	0.1658	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.0169	0.0031	1.000	0.0031	0

The coefficient of determination shows the extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be explained by the change in the independent variables or the percentage change in the dependent variable (sustainable competitive advantages) that is explained by all four independent variables (value-based business strategy, business-based strategy on cost, service-based operations strategy, and organization location).

The four independent variables addressed in our research contribute 78.7% to the sustainable competitive advantages achieved by the organization as represented by the modified R<sup>2</sup>, and this means that other operations strategies that were not addressed in this research contribute 21.3% to the competitive advantages of the organization. Therefore, more research should be conducted to investigate other operations strategies (21.3%) that contribute to achieving sustainable competitive advantages for the organization As in the table below No (11).

**Table(11)Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.820	0.787	0.691	0.4238

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to show the relationship between the four independent variables, sustainable competitive advantages as a dependent variable As in the table below No (12).

**Table(12) Regression coefficient**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Statistical constant	1.308	1.342		1.619	0.351
Value-Based Operations Strategy-X1	0.551	0.211	1.789	4.343	0.234
Cost-Based Operations Strategy-X2	0.691	0.141	0.218	3.232	0.286
Service-Based Operations Strategy-X3	0.721	0.313	0.098	3.422	0.276
organization's Location - X4	0.614	0.192	0.143	2.763	0.271

According to the resulting SPSS table 3.89, Equation ( $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$ ) becomes  
 $Y = 1.308 + 0.551 X_1 + 0.691 X_2 + 0.721 X_3 + 0.614 X_4$

The above regression equation proved that taking into account all independent variables is constant at zero, the sustainable competitive advantage would be 1.308. The presented results also show that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in a value-based operations strategy will increase the organization's sustainable competitive advantages by 0.551; A unit increase in the cost-based operations strategy will increase the sustainable competitiveness of the organization by 0.691; A unit increase in the service-based operations strategy will increase sustainable competitive advantages by 0.721, and a unit increase in the organization's location will increase the organization's sustainable competitive advantages by 0.614. This indicates that the service-based operations strategy contributes more to the organization's competitive advantages, followed by the cost-based operations strategy, and then the value-based operations strategy, while the organization's location contributes little to the organization's sustainable competitive advantages.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Research concluded that there has adopted operations strategies to enhance sustainable competitive advantage . The Research also found that organizations depend on the price of the product based on production costs rather than other factors such as the competitive economic environment. With regard to service-based operations strategy, the

Research concludes that organizations must think beyond numbers. The Research concludes that in order to increase the total return for shareholders of the surveyed organizations, it is necessary for these organizations to align their various operations strategies with those of investors.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations were made: The research recommends that since the business environment is always changing, the organizations subject to the research should develop flexible strategies, that is, conduct a continuous survey of the opinions of the changing patterns in the environment, such that these changes should include changes in customer orientations and expectations, To develop a cost-based competitive strategy, the operations function must focus primarily on minimizing costs in the production system, such as material, facility and labor costs.

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