

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague

Faculty of Economics and Management

Department of Management



Diploma Thesis

Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

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CZECH UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES PRAGUE

Faculty of Economics and Management

DIPLOMA THESIS ASSIGNMENT

Kaushal Patel

Economics Policy and
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Administration

Thesis title
Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

Objectives of thesis

The diploma thesis aims to analyze relevant secondary data on Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning. This analysis will be combined with original primary reconnaissance aiming to analyze current state of Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning and suggested improvement suggestion for particular company based on own research.

Methodology

“Literature Review” part will be elaborated based on relevant secondary data analysis and synthesis.

“Analysis” part will result from relevant secondary data and original primary reconnaissance combination.

Recommended structure:

1. Introduction
2. Goals and Methodology
3. Literature Review
4. Analysis
5. Results and Discussion
6. Conclusions
7. References
8. Appendices

The proposed extent of the thesis

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Keywords

strategic thinking, strategic planning, management, strategy, performance

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my diploma thesis titled “**Strategic thinking and strategic planning**” by myself and I have used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis. As the author of the diploma thesis, I declare that the thesis does not break copyrights of any their person.

In Prague on

Acknowledgement

Any individual task carried out cannot be completed without the help of different sources which directly or indirectly contribute to the achievement of the project.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ing. Michal Chocholoušek, Ph.D., and all my friends who morally supported me while my writing the thesis. I want to mainly thank my family members for their continuous support and motivation.

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Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

Abstract

Strategic thinking is a process that must be followed by strategic planning in order to bring about positive changes in an organization. Strategic thinking and planning apply innovation within the periphery of an organization that influences the external environment of the company. The research is aimed at developing a focused study on the aspects of strategic thinking and strategic planning in an organizational context. A company will be selected to demonstrate the implications of strategic thinking followed by strategic planning within the company operations and processes. The outcomes of such implementation will be investigated to understand the effectiveness it brings to the processes and excellence to the company performance. The current research will use qualitative and quantitative research design to get access to the data to reach the research outcomes. The data will be collected using primary and secondary research techniques. The research will consider the managers and the employees as the research participants. These entities will be included in conduction of survey and interview through a thorough process of recording data. Data from the participants in the survey will be collected through survey questionnaires as tool.

Keywords: Strategic Thinking, Strategic Planning, Performance, SMEs, Organizational Context, Innovation Performance, Interactive, Iterative, Leadership, External Environment

Strategické myšlení a strategické plánování

Abstrakt

Strategické myšlení je proces, po kterém musí následovat strategické plánování, aby došlo k pozitivním změnám v organizaci. Strategické myšlení a plánování aplikuje inovace na periferii organizace, která ovlivňuje vnější prostředí společnosti. Výzkum je zaměřen na vývoj zaměřené studie o aspektech strategického myšlení a strategického plánování v organizačním kontextu. Společnost bude vybrána, aby prokázala důsledky strategického myšlení následovaného strategickým plánováním v rámci operací a procesů společnosti. Výsledky takové implementace budou prozkoumány, aby bylo možné pochopit efektivitu, kterou přináší procesům, a dokonalost výkonu společnosti. Současný výzkum bude využívat kvalitativní a kvantitativní design výzkumu k získání přístupu k datům k dosažení výsledků výzkumu. Údaje budou shromažďovány pomocí primárních a sekundárních výzkumných technik. Výzkum bude považovat manažery a zaměstnance za účastníky výzkumu. Tyto subjekty budou zahrnuty do provádění průzkumu a pohovoru prostřednictvím důkladného procesu zaznamenávání údajů. Údaje od účastníků průzkumu budou shromažďovány prostřednictvím dotazníků jako nástroje.

Klíčová slova: Strategické myšlení, strategické plánování, výkonnost, malé a střední podniky, organizační kontext, inovační výkon, interaktivní, iterativní, vedení, vnější prostředí

Content

1	Introduction	11
2	Goals and Methodology	13
2.1	Aims.....	13
2.2	Methodology	13
3	Literature Review	18
3.1	Strategic Approach: a need of sustainability.....	21
3.2	Strategic planning procedure	22
3.3	Operations under Strategic thinking and planning	25
3.4	Understanding Strategic Thinking & Strategic Planning	26
3.5	Importance of strategic planning for Apple Inc	28
3.6	Marketing Strategy of Apple Inc	29
3.7	Incorporation of strategic thinking & strategic planning by Apple Inc. to expand their business	31
3.8	Success factors for Apple Inc.....	31
3.9	SWOT analysis	32
3.10	Establishing long-term objectives for driving the market.....	34
3.11	Gaps in Literature	35
3.12	Summary	35
4	Analysis	36
5	Results and Discussions	54
6	Conclusion	57
7	References	61
8	Apendixes.....	64

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual framework	12
Figure 2. Paradigms in Consumer satisfaction	19
Figure 3. Significance of Objectives in OKR Model	19
Figure 4. Significance of Result in OKR Model	20
Figure 5. SWOT Analysis Model	22
Figure 6. Strategic Planning in company operations	23
Figure 7. The 4P Marketing Model	30
Figure 8. Net income of Apple from 2005 to 2019	31
Figure 9. Strategic planning as an essential element	42
Figure 10. Emphasize on strategic thinking as core element	43
Figure 11. Strategic planning in improving productivity	44
Figure 12. Impact of Strategic thinking on professional growth	45
Figure 13. HR policies in creating strategic thinking and planning approach	46
Figure 14. Encouragement and motivation in thinking differently	47
Figure 15. Automatic of target as a function of strategic planning	48
Figure 16. Approach of team leader in workforce motivation	49
Figure 17. Strategic thinking and planning as elements of business sustainability	50
Figure 18. Company operations relevant to strategic planning	51
Figure 19. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.'s business expansion	52
Figure 20. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.'s business expansion	53

List of Tables

Table 1. Importance of Strategic Planning in the development of Apple Inc	37
Table 2. Influence of innovation in expanding business productivity of Apple.....	38
Table 3. Steps implemented by Apple Inc. in promoting strategic thinking	39
Table 4. when is strategic thinking essentially required for an organization?	40
Table 5. HR Policies in maintaining workforce efficiency and productivity	41
Table 6. Strategic planning as an essential element	42
Table 7. Emphasize on strategic thinking as core element	43
Table 8. Strategic planning in improving productivity	44
Table 9. Impact of Strategic thinking on professional growth.....	45
Table 10. HR policies in creating strategic thinking and planning approach	46
Table 11. Encouragement and motivation in thinking differently	47
Table 12. Automatic of target as a function of strategic planning	48
Table 13. Approach of team leader in workforce motivation	49
Table 14.Strategic thinking and planning as elements of business sustainability	50
Table 15. Company operations relevant to strategic planning	51
Table 16. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.'s business expansion.....	52
Table 17. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.'s business expansion.....	53

List of Pictures

Picture 1. Aspects of Strategic Planning.	25
Picture 2. Strategy Development Cycle	27

1 Introduction

Research background

Strategic planning and thinking have been found to be highly effective for the development of the business operations in any organization. It has been found to be one of the most important aspects of business to allow the company to cope up with the internal as well as external environmental changes. Past research has found that strategic planning and thinking should be conducted critically in order to understand what critical aspects must be produced in the market operations (Nickols, 2016). Each business organization is unique and each of them has certain unique market conditions to manipulate. The potential of strategic planning and thinking have been highlighted in a number of ways in the past research.

Research significance

The present research has aimed in improvising the study of application of strategic planning and thinking in an organization. The significance of the research is that it has aimed to develop a study on the strategic thinking and strategic planning operations conducted by the company Apple Inc. that has been able to develop a niche market for its own (Fischer & Roberts, 2018). The way the company has used its potential to develop its attributes in its target market is liable to add new dimensions to the research in the current thesis. Besides, the significance of the research lies in the fact that it would conduct an effective study to understand the difference between the strategic planning and strategic thinking along with the process of implementation that must be followed for fruitful application of the same

Objectives

- To understand the internal operations of business organization in general and roles played by different managers and heads
- To investigate the importance of strategic implementation through strategic thinking and strategic planning and consequences of the implementation
- To study the internal operations of Apple Inc. and asses them based on learning of the role of strategic thinking and planning

Research question

What the significance of implementation of strategic thinking an strategic planning in Apple Inc. and how has it improved Apple’s performance?

Conceptual framework

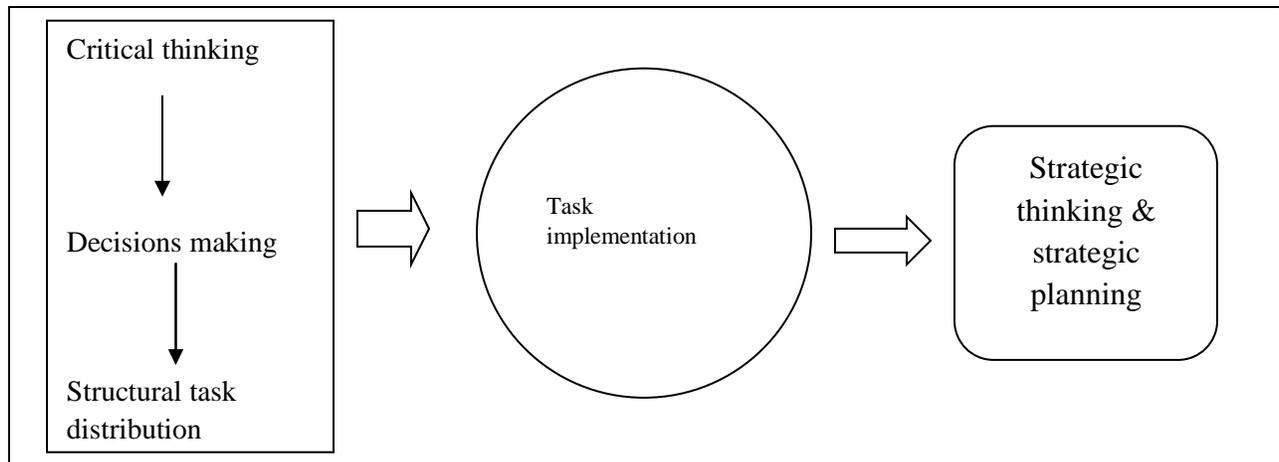


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

(Source: Self-developed)

The above steps are followed by the research to reach to its outcomes. The current research, therefore, has aimed to take a look at the operations conducted by Apple Inc. to understand the high class and highly productive operations. Study of the business aspects would take account of these significant topics in its study and discussion. The contribution of the business environment and the internal strategic operations has therefore been studied as an effective driver of success from a business perspective.

2 Goals and Methodology

2.1 Aims

This study aims to analyse relevant secondary data on Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning. This analysis will be combined with original primary reconnaissance aiming to analyse current state of Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning and suggested improvement suggestion for particular company based on own research.

2.2 Methodology

This section of the research system will underline and perceive the work of the various techniques for research methods that will be joined in the investigation. This would effectively collect various forms of information and data from various sources on the given topic to finally reach the conclusion. Research methodology thus provides a detailed insight into the tools and various forms of knowledge systems employed for collecting and analysing data that align with the aims and objectives of the research. In this manner, with the utilization of various examination strategies, the segment of the procedure will feature the fuse of various research reasoning, the techniques for data analysis and interpretation is provided in the research methodology that not only helps the researcher to keep a track of the methods and tools used but also helps others to understand each and every claim in the research through empirical evidence.

Research philosophy

The use of the research philosophy based on the current topic of research can be believed to be affected by various ideal models of the research that basically includes a few common knowledge systems like phenomenology, epistemology, and axiology. A survey from the points of view of research, the utilization of the ways of thinking of the research may incorporate realism, subjectivism, interpretive, and positivism. It has been discovered that each section of the research depends on earlier assumptions about the kind of information and the forms of knowledge systems used (Tracy, 2019). The examination theory mirrors the creator's basic suspicions that fill in as the base for the exploration procedure. So as to effectively diagram and examine the general

information on different measures through the company has introduced strategic thinking and strategic planning in order to influence the internal and external operations of the company and therefore, influence the market.

The consolidation of the way of thinking of positivism has been supported for the empowerment of various determination and cross-checks of the examination with separation dependent on the realities, thoughts, and the ideas identified with the exploration measurement. Moreover, what's more, the essential usage of the way of thinking of positivism has additionally adequately helped the scientist for the execution of the key accomplishments dependent on the exact or credible assortment of data, realities that have helped in the age of the compelling outcomes. This would guarantee the satisfaction of the discoveries of the examined data dependent on the different measures through which Apple Inc. has influenced its operations through the process of strategic thinking and strategic planning. not only that, this process also examines the utility of technology and human resource in the field of expanding the business empire of Apple Inc through which it has been able to both influence the market and pose stiff competition to rival firms.

Research approach

In regard to the current subject of the research, the researcher has used a *deductive approach* to study the ways through which strategic thinking and strategic planning have been incorporated within the organization followed by the impacts that these brought about both within the company and the market outside. The general research has been directed and data has been gathered from academic surveys, articles, reports, and other secondary sources of data along with primary sources of data; Hence, the determination of the deductive methodology is appropriated (*Queirós et al. 2017*). Moreover, as there would be no production of any new ideas, models or hypotheses nor will the procedure of assessing or updating any old speculations, models or ideas, the determination of the deductive way to deal with the research is advocated.

Research design

For the current research topic, the researcher uses a mixed method, which is a conglomeration of both qualitative and quantitative ways of collecting and analysing data to reach his pre-decided research questions and hypothesis. The researcher puts forth a series of open-ended questionnaires

and ethnographic field work by focusing on the managers and employees of the work which satisfies the qualitative approach. On the other hand, the researcher uses close ended questionnaires and surveys followed by analysing them using various statistical models to extract quantitative data. The conglomeration of both qualitative and quantitative data thus provides the researcher with enough data to carry out his research on strategic thinking and strategic planning within organizations.

The execution of the research is portrayed as the incorporating of the different methodologies that are utilized to empower or encourage the powerful usage or the reconciliation of the predefined components and the fundamental segments of the exploration zone as far as the legitimate and the judicious way. Along these lines it very well may be said that the general reasonableness of the fundamental examination configuration adequately addresses the essential exploration issue. Notwithstanding the said measures, the fuse of various forms of approaches helps the researcher to achieve various outcomes and discoveries with more precision and greater authenticity for ensuring the right satisfaction of the motivation behind the research (Rahman, 2017).

Sampling

Sampling forms yet another important aspect or serves as an important prerequisite for ensuring efficient and successful results. The people who serve as a representative of a greater community are generally considered to be the sample and the number of people chosen for the same comprises the sample size. The sample for a specific research can be chosen through two distinct modes of sampling- probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The researcher in order to conduct his research considers the employers and managers of Apple Inc. as his sample whereby, the managers, especially the ones associated with human resources were provided with structured questionnaires, the responses of which would be collected and then analyzed (Blanca *et al.* 2018).

Data collection

Considering the given research topic, specifying, and justifying the modes of data collection used for the research is extremely important. In regard to the current research theme which involves studying the importance of strategic thinking and strategic planning within an organization and thereby mapping the benefits of the same within the periphery of the organization and beyond that, in the market, calls for the employment of both primary and secondary data collection method which involves both data collection from primary as well as secondary sources (Williams *et al.* 2017). While on one hand, secondary sources of data comprise data from journals, books and other pieces of literature whereby the data used was initially collected for some other purpose and the interpretation of the same is being used for the current topic, primary sources of data are collected within a well-defined field of the research. In this case, primary data is collected from the managers and the employees of an organization to check the role of managers along with technology in bringing about strategic thinking and strategic planning for the organization and also map the response of the employees to check the impact of the same in increasing the profits and expansion of the company.

Data analysis procedure

The data collected through both secondary and primary sources are analysed through a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is often considered to be the most efficient way of analysing data collected through qualitative or mixed methods. This includes incorporating various themes within the domain of strategic thinking and strategic planning and thereby analysing the responses of the primary sources to gain fruitful results.

Research strategy

It is imperative to have a well-designed and a properly framed research strategy in order to carry out an efficient research and have successful outcomes. In the given research topic of investigating and examining the different measures through which strategic thinking and strategic planning have created an impact in the functioning of business environments and also thrown considerable light on the role of technology and human resources having a properly defined research strategy with all the necessary modes of data collection is imperative. As per the given topic, the researcher has employed a mixed-method system in order to get maximum results that align with the aims and objectives of the research (Snyder, 2019).

Research limitations

The following are the limitations of the research.

The paucity of time-since the research involves studying secondary sources of data and examining primary sources of data, conducting the research, and gaining fruitful results might be time taking.

Lack of resources- both secondary and primary sources of data require a lot of resources which include access to various secondary sources of data and narrowing down an adequate sample. Conducting such research might also require a lot of financial resources, the lack of which would make the execution of the procedure a difficult one.

Inadequate sample- often the sample was chosen within an organization might not be sufficient to represent a broader community which might lead to faulty research conclusions. As a result, choosing a sample and the correct sample which would adequately represent a broader base might be difficult, especially for amateurs. Further, biases within the sample might also lead to unexpected complications.

Ethical considerations

The researcher must look into various ethical issues and avoid them in order to avoid ethical complications in the research. This includes gaining access to secondary sources of data through proper methods, de-identifying any person or community before using the sources and not crossing the boundaries set for the scope of using these data (Hughes, 2018). Further, the researcher should take special care towards not violating the rights or not demeaning any community or work interests of the employees while collecting data through primary sources. The data that are gathered from the primary sources needs to be protected under the ***Data Protection Act (1998)***.

3 Literature Review

Introduction

The term business and trade often arrive with an alignment to a potential risk-taking opportunity. The measure of success and failure of an entity is often assessed through an assessment of the diagnostic ability utilized prior and in course of operation of the nominated enterprise. The achievement of Apple Inc. in the core domains of technology is nothing less than a credible acknowledgment of it as a pioneer being founded by Late Steve Jobs and presently leads by Mr. Tim Cook (Malфона, 2018). The company has portrayed a tremendous achievement in driving a core consumer segment dedicated towards its innovative standards along with optimum pricing standards well above its competitors. The researcher in this segment attempts to define the influence of technology as a core catalyst in expanding the integration of strategic approach in modern day trade. The success and prevailing business credentials of Apple Inc. in the domains of software and information technology made it an attractive choice for portraying the importance of strategic planning and thinking in achievement of sustainable business standards. In this segment the researcher attempts to portray the various paradigms that can be considered as an impact of a strategic approach which rationalizes the analytical choice being considered by the decision-makers in an organization. It will attempt to create a lucid overview on the utilities and hindrances being acquired by contemporary organizations while accepting and rejecting the potential components in a strategic approach.



Figure 2. Paradigms in Consumer satisfaction

(Source: Self-Developed)

Objectives and Key Results (OKR): This model of strategic planning emphasizes on a percentage-based analysis of the objectives relating to their outcomes. The framework is based upon a simple nomenclature of the terms *Objectives and Results* as depicted in below.

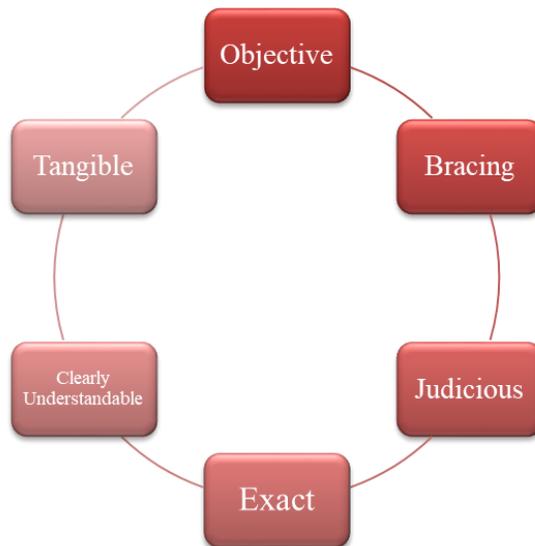


Figure 3. Significance of Objectives in OKR Model

(Source: Self-Developed)

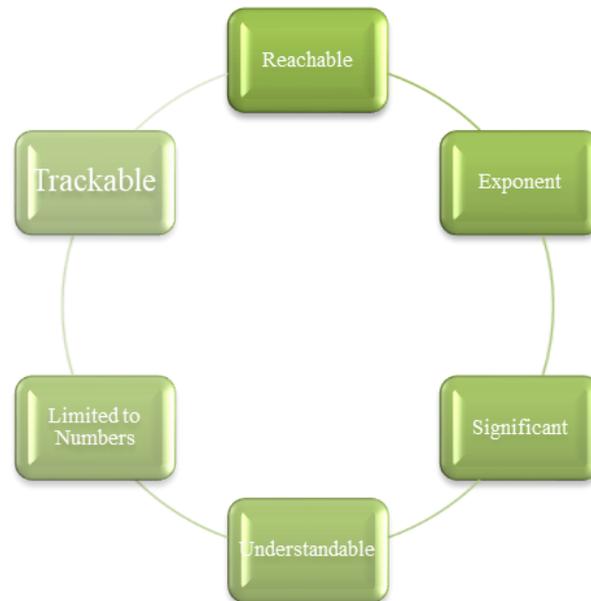


Figure 4. Significance of Result in OKR Model

(Source: Soboleva & Parshutina, 2016)

The differential models of strategic planning in the above segment, mostly relates to the influences of internal factors of the business. It emphasizes on a periodic performance monitoring and forming strategies in accordance to the identified gaps from the periodic assessments. However, the role of external factors of a business environment namely competition, supplier and buyer approach, socio-cultural aspects and administrative polices of the local governments are indispensable to the achievement of sustainable goals. Thus, researchers in previous works have laid the foundation of strategic algorithms relating to the justification of the sustainable standards in contemporary trade domains (Majama&Magang, 2017). The following can be considered as some of embellishes relating to the influence of strategic planning in analysing the external influences of a business environment.

- SWOT Analysis
- Porter's Five Force
- PESTLE Analysis
- Visioning
- VRIO framework

3.1 Strategic Approach: a need of sustainability

The term strategy implies a logical framework normally aligned to the miniature objectives being formulated as roadmaps for a task. Evolutions of the business procedures and approaches precisely over the previous two decades along with the social revolution have boosted the concepts of nuclear businesses and start-up firms. Most of these entities operate with a short-term objective and nearly 65% of the respondents in a survey on strategic planning have responded that they hardly consider the span of a year in trade operations. The following are some of the critical influences of a strategic approach being implemented in order to ensure the achievement of sustainable standards in trade.

Increase in Production and Outcome: Productivity of an organization can be considered as the aggregate of the contribution of the internal and external factors of the business environment. Expansion in productivity is often influenced by the identification of the resource standards concerning their viabilities and potential utilities in the process of production (Abu Amuna, Al Shobaki & Abu-Naser, 2017). An organization needs to gradually increase its margins of productivity which can only be achieved through a positive demand curve and expansive consumer acknowledgement within the considered market segment. PESTLE Analysis is an example of a strategic tool that is utilized for the assessment of the business factors and their relative influences in expanding the productivity of an organization.

Analysis of Strengths and Weakness: The strength and weaknesses of a business entity reflects a peculiarity of evolution in course of its operation in market. As a new entrant the strength of the company may be its innovated product or service portfolio and its enthusiastic work approach. However, low capital investments, diminished brand acknowledgment and highly competitive rivalry can be considered as some of the weaknesses of a business entity in the initial phases. The force of the impact relating to the magnitude of persistence on a positive and negative curve can be considered as critical influences to a strategic framework. As indicated by Kemp (2018), the *Porter's five forces* are a critical model utilized for analyzing the force of the various paradigms in a business environment like supplier, buyer, competitor and stakeholder.



Figure 5.SWOT Analysis Model

(Source: Dubrovina, Liamina & Moiseeva, 2017)

Creation of Strategic framework: The implementation of the relevant tools of strategic thinking is relevant to the identification of the influences in trade. However, it does not depict the possible outcome which may only be achieved through effective implementation of the strategic framework (Toma, Marinescu & Grădinaru, 2016). Thus, Visioning and VRIO framework has been considered as very simple yet effective approaches for designing a strategic framework for monitoring regular operations after acute consideration of the analytical outcomes on the influences of macro and micro factors for business environment.

3.2 Strategic planning procedure

The term *Strategy* is often defined as a function of implementation and is vaguely relevant in absence of an appropriate plan of action. Thus, the concept of strategic planning is critical concerning their aspect of implementation in the operational approach of an organization. The following segment attempts to promote an overview about strategic planning in a dissected presentation of its relevancy to contemporary business operation.

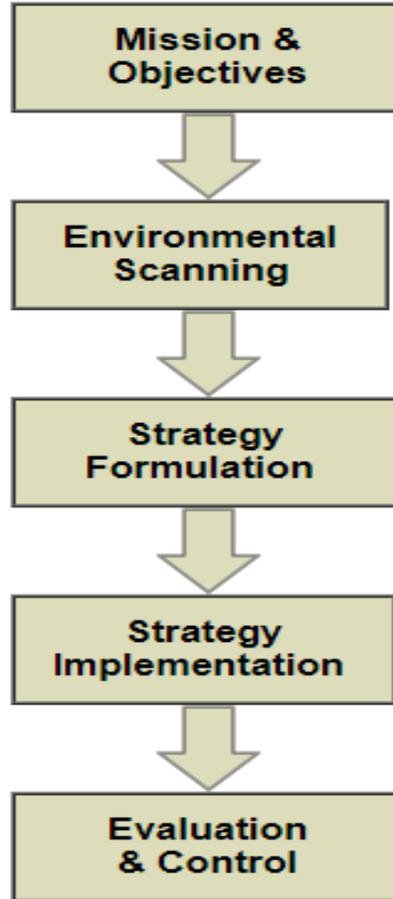


Figure 6. Strategic Planning in company operations

(Source: Kopnina, 2017)

Strategic planning in context of an organizational application may remain as a myth without a suitable framework of implementation concerning monitoring and control over the operational activities. The liability of an organization to its stakeholders integrates a provocative canvas of smooth operations which enhances productivity by engaging stakeholder relevancy and boosting the measure of resource utility on a daily flow. The following can be depicted as some of the essential influences of strategic operations on a business entity.

- Mission and Vision of an organization is considered as the core of an organizational business agenda. It aids the governing board in framing policies and assessment of financial and productivity standards at periodic intervals

- Environmental assessment in business refers to proper analyses of the probable influences of the factors involved in the macro and micro business environments (Zorlu, 2018). It projects the importance of a proper analyses of business factors and establishment of a proper draft for strategic approach
- Strategic drafting in formulation is an area developed by utilizing expert opinions and analytical components from the environmental assessment of enterprise. It is a layered approach where every alternative for the best and worst scenario for the trade is considered,
- One of the most critical areas in strategic planning procedure can be broadly rifted in two areas. Strategic implementation is the primary area which determines the effectiveness of the strategies formulated for operation.
- The final phase of a strategic planning procedure is reflected by the effectiveness of its evaluation and monitoring protocols (Taşgit, Çömlekçi&Çakır, 2018). It demands a regular monitoring of the strategic implementation and periodic evaluation of performance outcomes.

Thus, the strategic planning procedure is a cyclic approach and after the evaluation the assessment of the influences of business environment becomes active again. The sustainability of a business is deeply influenced by the alignment and adherence to a strategic planning approach.



Picture 1. Aspects of Strategic Planning.

(Source: Self-Developed)

3.3 Operations under Strategic thinking and planning

Business operations in the modern day have been typically influenced by a competitive constraint which has expanded through an integrated platform of consumer acknowledgement. The response of a contemporary business entity demands the need of an effective and fast channel in order to ensure the preservation of market credibility. The distinctive reflection of the operational approaches through a relatively steady bias of guiding the operational functions can be nominated as a core parameter of relevant business operations.

Strategic framework in modern day business arrives with a rational expansion of the profiles which can be nominated through a categorical bias of the boom in information technology sector. It has compelled modern day business entity in keeping a regular control of workflow which includes consumer satisfaction and positive reviews on the social profile. It enhances the authenticity of the sellers and their accountability to the consumers which must be driven by the seller's approach of inducing a long-term sustainability in the global market. An apprehension of the simultaneous

factors relating to a precise integration of functional approaches can derive through the necessity of strategic accountability concerning the achievement of the proposed trade objectives. The liability of the stakeholders to the organization can be reflected through an acute idea of their perceptions and individual contributions in enhancing organization performance. Apple Inc. has illustrated amazing standards of using stakeholder liability for disposing its product performance which optimises its credential distinctively from its competitors in the global market (Strekalova, 2018). The intent of its major consumer base in adhering to the brand credibility of Apple Inc. and rejecting viable options from its competitors even by increasing their disposable margins for purchase can be definitely illustrated as a terrific implementation of strategic thinking and planning in enhancing business canvas.

3.4 Understanding Strategic Thinking & Strategic Planning

The ability to think strategically is essential for individuals and organization's growth. A strategic thinking has to happen even before a strategic decision. And when more than one strategic decision is taken, it is combined together to get a strategic plan, which further leads to implementation or action. Refer the below diagrammatic representation of Strategy Development.

Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking and analysis can be defined as a set of goals, plans, and ideas which is required to survive and exist in a competitive, changing environment. It requires proper research, problem-solving skills, communication and leadership skills.

Strategic thinking is a valuable skill for everyone in an organization and becomes increasingly essential with the growth of career. Developing good strategic thinking skills include exposure to strategic roles and gathering experiences that will help in identifying patterns.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning refers to creating specific business strategies, implementing them, and evaluating the results of executed plans for a company's overall long-term goals (Ahmed, 2016). Strategic planning undergoes a proper process before it is executed, so that it can be executed in a cost-efficient manner with a high likelihood of success, while avoiding undue financial risks.

The below image depicts the cyclic convention of Strategy Development, step-by-step which every organization follows in order to become successful in terms of business.



Picture 2. Strategy Development Cycle

(Source: Flores, Montoya & Mena, 2016)

Strategy development is the direction a business takes to achieve success in the future. It includes research and identifying strategic options, selecting the best one and thinking of how resources will be utilized in the organization to achieve the objectives. A business, big or small should keep in mind a few points which they should always follow in order to become successful.

- Understanding the current situation of the business, where it stands
- Reflect how current position is achieved
- Be clear about the mission and vision of the company
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses
- Analyze the business environment
- Evaluate the strategies

- Set objectives
- Communicate
- Implementation of the strategies
- Review the progress

3.5 Importance of strategic planning for Apple Inc

Strategic planning is a part of the strategic management model. It is a process where strategies are planned and then they are executed as per their goals. In any business, a clear goal needs to be set and it should know and plan out the ways in which the target or goal can be achieved. Strategic planning helps find ways to improve the business performance, how the organization can reach its full potential, grow business by developing and manufacturing new improved products and help solve organizational problems with the growth of the business.

Apple Inc. is one of the biggest American multinational companies that manufacture software and consumer electronics (Hanlon, 2019). Over its existence of 30 years, it has seen a lot of changes in the computer industry. Their best-known products are iPhone, iPad, Macintosh computers, Apple watch etc. They have 13.9% share in the smartphone market and upto 60% of its revenue comes from overseas markets. In 2010, Apple included “Siri” in their products which is an intelligent assistant which uses voice queries to answer questions, perform actions with the use of the internet.

Although Apple products are very expensive, they have the most profitable fan-base on the planet. Their main principle is their simplicity. They have managed to connect with people through their simplicity. The goals of Apple are as follows:

1. To provide the best and upgraded products
2. To maintain investor support
3. To ensure that the company has a long-run profitability, production and service

As opined by Shuen (2018), strategic planning also includes how the company is marketing itself to catch the pace of the market. Understanding the customer requirements and planning accordingly helps improve the business profit and stay up-to-date according to the market demands.

3.6 Marketing Strategy of Apple Inc

Marketing strategy is nothing but a long-term plan of action to achieve a long-term goal or aim of an organization. When it comes to the marketing strategy of Apple the most important thing to tell about them is, their marketing strategy is primarily based on simplicity.

They have never competed with any other brands in the market, as they know that their product will sell itself without relying on any advertisement or any kind of situation (Sarpong, Eyres& Batsakis, 2019). Unlike any other brands, Apple loves to create a mystery and buzz while launching any of their new products. Although Apple is a huge brand name, it rarely posts anything on social media like Twitter or Facebook. In their Twitter account, they never give any new product updates or announcements from Apple Inc. This helps in increasing customer's excitement and curiosity. Apple's marketing strategy involves Target Market Strategy, Marketing Mix and the 4 P's.

- ***Target Market Strategy:*** Target market strategy targets a particular group of customers. The target marketing strategy is where marketing mix comes together to create the right offer and marketing approach for each target segment (Dave, 2018).
Apple's target audience includes the tech-savvy teenagers, youngsters and then the businessmen. The usage of Apple products like laptops, iPads make their lives flexible and for businessmen it helps them for better presentations and business purposes.

4 P's: The 4P concept of marketing can be considered as the 4 basic pillars for the marketing industry (Payne, 2017). Apple Inc. uses all four P strategies to accomplish their goals and objectives.



Figure 7. The 4P Marketing Model

(Source: Self Developed)

→ **Product Strategy-** A product should fulfil demands and requirements of a customer. A product to be successful, marketers need to understand the life cycle of a product and the product needs to be upgraded and updated with every stage. Apple products are more flexible, easy to carry, and are well designed and they always look into upgrading their products.

→ **Place Strategy-**In some cases, this may refer to placing a product in certain stores, but it also refers to the product's placement on a specific store's display or the store location. Apple stores are generally located at easy and easily accessible places where people can reach quickly and buy the product of their own choice (Fernando, 2017).

→ **Pricing Strategy-** Price is paid by consumers or customers. Although Apple product prices are slightly on the higher range, its customers are ready to pay for it as it is totally worth it, after the product satisfaction.

→ **Promotion Strategy-** Promotion refers to advertisement, public relations, and promotional strategies. Marketing a product largely depends upon the way it has been promoted to the public, and as a result of which people have found interest in it to purchase it. Apple's primary promotional

tool is advertisement which includes television advertisement, hoardings at places which would attract a large number of people.

3.7 Incorporation of strategic thinking & strategic planning by Apple Inc. to expand their business

Any and every organization needs a strategic management plan which includes strategic thinking and strategic planning (Bryson, Edwards, & Van Slyke, 2018) in today's world of competition. And a company like Apple In. is no exception to this. Apple's effective strategic management plan has resulted and in the huge growth of business worldwide. The ability of an organization to meet its long-term goals is determined by its strategic management processes; and only a strategic management plan helps in achieving the long-term and short-terms goals of a business.

3.8 Success factors for Apple Inc.

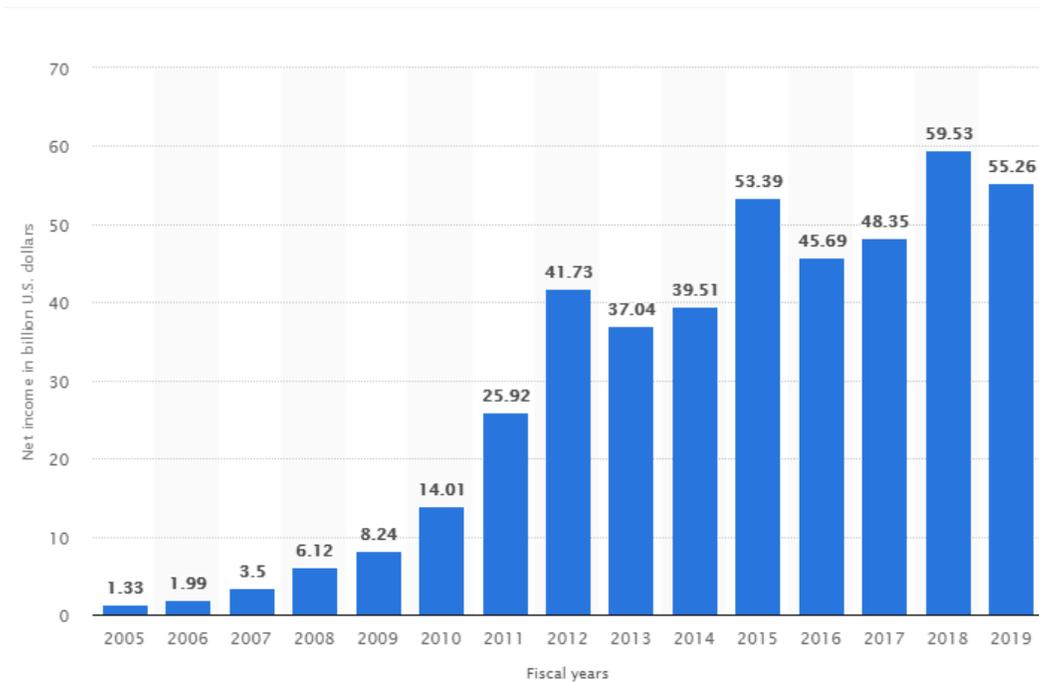


Figure 8. Net income of Apple from 2005 to 2019

(Source: www.statista.com, 2020)

The above graph depicts the net income of Apple Inc. from year 2005 to 2019. Apple has reported a net income of \$55.26 million and their global revenue rose to \$260.17 billion in the same year.

Steve Jobs as we know was the most famous face in the tech world, as the CEO and co-founder of Apple Inc. Apple has become the worlds. It could not compete with the PC wars with Microsoft. It got a new direction in the business industry when it introduced iPhones and iPods in the market. Apple's after sales service and stores provides gold standard services for selling and supporting tech gadgets. Looking back at Apple's illustrious 40+ years of history; it is found that there are a number of components that have contributed to their superior success story (PUSH, 2016).

Apple has a diverse business model broken down into products and services. Even though iPhone sales still represent 54% of the overall sales in 2019, the company also offers services and subscriptions which are growing substantially. The accessories business has become a unit of over \$24.4 billion and growing (Pourhejazy& Kwon, 2016). As Apple's sales of iPhone slowed down in 2019 compared to 2018, the company pushed more on tech accessories, which offset and were the fastest growing business segment.

Thus, we can say that the above-mentioned factors are some of the reasons which have kept Apple Inc. on top of the business industries successfully over the years.

3.9 SWOT analysis

Apple Inc.'s success is because of its ability to utilize business strengths while overcoming the weaknesses and threats and effectively exploiting the opportunities in the industry. SWOT analysis (Gürel& Tat, 2017) is an analytical study showing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization. With this analysis, it helps to take a closer look at their business progression.

→ **Strength:** Apple Inc.'s biggest strength is their high business growth which started when they included more varieties of products besides just computers, which resulted in tremendous sales. The company has grown at a tremendous rate, creating a strong brand image, high profit margin, and rapid innovation process. Below are the strengths of Apple Inc:

- Brand identity
- Innovative products
- Loyal customers
- Brand value reputation
- Marketing and advertising
- Distribution chain

→ **Weakness:** Weaknesses are obstacles to the growth of the company. So, weakness is always emphasized on, as the overall growth and market of a business depends upon the weakness of a company (Lee & Soon, 2017). Below listed are the weaknesses of Apple Inc:

- Incompatibility
- Limited distribution network
- Matching customer expectations
- Lack of competition
- Premium pricing
- Lack of promotions and marketing

→ **Opportunity:** Opportunities are factors that are based on the industry atmosphere. Opportunities influence the policy direction of the business. Following are Apple Inc.'s most important opportunities:

- Steady customer growth
- Qualified professionals
- Use of artificial intelligence
- Expand distribution network

→ **Threats:** Despite the strengths and opportunities, Apple Inc. also has threats, which includes:

- Counterfeit products
- Rising labor costs in other countries
- Lawsuits
- Market penetration

Thus, the SWOT analysis for Apple Inc. shows that the strengths can effectively influence the company and address the weaknesses and exploit the opportunities.

3.10 Establishing long-term objectives for driving the market

Every business requires long-term and short-term goals for the ultimate growth in the market. Concentrating on short-term goals will help in developing the long-term goals in the long run. Short-term goals are the ones which a business wants to accomplish in 6 months or less. Long-term goals are the ones which aim at fulfilling the company's goals or vision. It should be like, what should the business look like in 10 years and more precisely, in future. Apple has changed a lot about how we live our day-to-day lives. It has changed the meaning and dimension of technology as a whole. Keeping in mind the company's mission and vision, Apple has set-up some long-term and short-term goals which include, responsibilities of the environment, learning to design and develop, enhancing and expanding, and supporting the community.

Apple aims at renewing energy sources to support the environment (Arocha, 2017). Its constant and rigorous research and development (R&D) has led to its huge expansion in the world market. They invest a huge amount on their R&D work every year, which increased from \$2.4 in 2011 to \$4.5 billion in 2013. Apple has always been ahead of time from its competitors. And hence, Apple's products are much advanced and futuristic compared to the current market. Apple's design and programming is almost flawless and hence, their products have never received any complaints like apps crashing, malware or virus attacks, or frequent annoying pop-ups. Their dynamic business

plan and their business strategy to understand the pulse and demand of their customers is one of the main reasons behind their success story.

3.11 Gaps in Literature

The inclusion of the differential arguments to expand the scope of the research has been dissected through an erroneous authenticity of the work. The relevancy of the information obtained from different literary sources can be considered as a typical limitation of the research work. The nomination of the information concerning the strategic core of the research may vary in accordance with their relevant implications in accordance with the demands of a real time scenario. Thus, the liability of strategic thinking and planning cannot be generalized through their implications on the business standards and market credentials of Apple Inc.

3.12 Summary

The literary segment attempts to portray the core context of implications of a strategic approach in trade. It attempts to expand the canvas of the research by analyzing the performance standards and strategic implications of Apple Inc. which can be considered as the core of their sustainable standards in a short span of operations. The viability of creating a niche market along with staunch pricing standards for the functional product and service portfolio can be considered as exemplary demonstration of competitive sustenance. The research attempts to acknowledge innovation and thinking as potential boosters to strategic planning which needs to be backed up optimum utilization of resource standards. The nomination of creative standards in core business operations along with an average draft of the functional nominees can be considered as a core element of the literary segment.

4 Analysis

Concerning the practical part, here, there was conducted an interview with managers and questionnaire form that were conducted in online mode. Online questionnaire and interview for this study were conducted in zoom platform over the period of 24 days from September 15th to October 8th. Managers and employees were chosen from LinkedIn profile of Facebook Inc. and being invited to Zoom platform for a special interview for research study. Employees and managers were selected based on random method.

Questions for managers

1. How important has strategic planning been for the development of Apple Inc. in your view and why?

Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
Strategic planning is the core element of business development for any organization. Lifestyle these days is undergoing continuous updates. People change gadgets like babies used to change diapers before! Each gadget is more updated from its previous version and there is an increasing demand for gadgets that can 'do more'. Better performance and more efficiency have become the chief mantra of new gadgets. Apple being one of the leading firms producing electronic gadgets, has to constantly	Apple Inc. has global or umbrella strategies for a few products and each different process or team has devised their own strategies to function better. Each team works to certain set goals in the beginning of each FY that culminates into the greater goal of Apple Inc. There is a continuous change in technology and the way we communicate therefore a specific planning is necessary to keep up with the change. Also, our R&D team works on stringent and specific strategies	Strategic planning stems from strategic and methodical thinking. It is a combination of analytical thinking blended with creative and visionary ways of looking at a common challenge. Apple has one of the best accesses to customer information around the globe which has also helped in determining users and using patterns. Therefore, strategic planning at each step becomes an absolute essential element of growth and development of any organization.	Strategic planning helps instilling and implementing the vision of the firm. The key vision of Apple Inc. is very customer centric as it believes in best user experiences through developing innovative hardware and software. As it is very clear that innovation and customer-centricity is adopted as the key business strategies and therefore implementation of these two becomes very important and an integral part of the organizational development. To develop strategic planning and gain from it, any organization should ideally identify its	Strategic planning does not only deal with the external factors, sales environment and customer centricity but it also has to do with planning within the organization. Administration, workforce and smooth running of the firm internally are essential factors that must be looked into as a part of the firm's strategy. Apple Inc has a brilliant balance between managing workforce and maintaining the efficiency and productivity of the workforce at the same time. HR policies and strategies have been designed to ensure work life balance for

<p>keep these demands in mind while manufacturing or producing new gadgets or upgrading old ones. As a global organisation, Apple Inc. has developed several business strategies to produce better gadgets and increase its sales.</p>	<p>chalked out by the global leadership of the firm. This has led Apple Inc. to emerge as one of the leading firms of electronic gadgets.</p>		<p>strengths, weaknesses, and which areas they want to develop on or eliminate from their scope.</p>	<p>the employees. Apple acknowledges that a healthy and most importantly happy workforce has high efficiency and productivity. Therefore, strategic planning is implemented at each step in the organization and one can see the result in the market about Apple Inc. being the leading manufacturers of electronic gadgets.</p>
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Table 1. Importance of Strategic Planning in the development of Apple Inc

(Source: Self-Developed)

2.How is innovation helping in ushering new technology and increasing productivity of Apple Inc. according to you?

Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
<p>Apple Inc. is widely known as the world's #1 innovative company. The innovation strategies of the company include designing and producing new products which have newest technologies embedded in them but at</p>	<p>In spite of the fact that Apple culturally breeds innovation and barely indulges in corporate hierarchy when it comes to innovation, a constantly innovating firm requires discipline and strategies to</p>	<p>Apple has kept proving its success in product designing time and again. Not only product design but it has excelled in technological upgradation of its products in a user-friendly manner. It is now a norm for any</p>	<p>Apple has the unique concept of building innovation strategies in both the top-down and bottom-up processes. The senior managers describe to their team what exactly they want from their dream application and the design</p>	<p>Innovation in Apple Inc is not only fostered as an external process that drives the consumers to buy exciting products manufactured by the organization, but internally also. The processes and development of the skill set</p>

<p>the same time are user friendly products. Both software and hardware development is looked into with equal care so that the consumers are gifted with a unique experience. Most of the finest products of Apple are innovated culturally. The process of innovation is not process driven in the firm, but innovation is practiced as a culture in the organization.</p>	<p>function. To keep being on top of the innovation ladder, an organization requires an encouraging yet disciplined leadership. The innovation leaders in Apple continuously think in terms of pipelines and platforms of innovative products. Therefore, they keep driving the pace of innovation upwards. Innovations for even the smallest processes are encouraged in the organization.</p>	<p>organization to innovate and automate to remain in the market, but technology is combined with user friendliness here in Apple. Apple users are thus brand loyal and hardly move to other brands for this unique combination. Apple's innovation strategies have incorporated the element of creativity which also makes it exciting for the users to use Apple products.</p>	<p>team creates a few probable designs of the software and presents the best ideas from their teams. Cost effectiveness is also discussed with the necessary teams and then the perfect innovation fitting the perfect technology is presented in the most cost-effective manner to create a product that is deliverable. This is how a dream is morphed into reality by indulging in innovative technological developments.</p>	<p>of the workforce is driven by innovation and technology. There are frequent meetings of the employees and managers where innovation as a strategy is discussed also employees are allowed to put in their 'craziest' ideas so that there are no constraints in brainstorming and innovating. This also enhances team building and the employees enjoy these sessions.</p>
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Table 2. Influence of innovation in expanding business productivity of Apple

(Source: Self-Developed)

3. What do you think are the steps that have been implemented by Apple Inc to promote strategic thinking?

Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
<p>Apple as a firm promotes strategic thinking in all its employees. They are asked to adopt 'strategic thinking as a lifestyle practice'. Not only in times of 'roadblocks' but also in times when the journey is smooth, our organization has insisted on strategic thinking as a lifestyle practice. We as</p>	<p>We as managers at Apple Inc. are encouraged to think in a visionary manner, i.e. thinking in a positive way by suspending judgement or disbelief regarding any bad situation that is being faced by the organization. This is also a part of strategic thinking that we engage</p>	<p>Apple encourages its employees to broaden the understanding of the present environment. It is the chronological or preventive method of strategic thinking. It is taking an honest way out. Knowing the resources that you have, and you can afford. The ability to rectify or bring about</p>	<p>Articulating the underlying objectives is also an important part of strategic thinking that is encouraged in our organization. This kind of strategic thinking can be classified under the critical and contradiction methods of thinking. This method of thought leads one into action. There is no scope for excuses about any</p>	<p>The employees are encouraged to brainstorm at any meeting or event. Brainstorming about strategic priorities is encouraged in the organization at a global level in the organization. There is an acceptance of both the 'tried and true' and 'bold and new' ideas in the organization. 'Good ideas'</p>

managers are expected to know the market situation and engage in analytical thinking and trickle it down to our team. Engage in team activities that build the capability of strategic thinking among team members.	in as managers and senior managers. Forward thinking is one of the key elements of strategic thinking imbibed by our organization and we also encourage our team members to think in this manner and also take responsibility for their actions.	change in the current situation also needs to be critically analysed and this analysis essentially needs strategic thinking. Judging if any preventive action is necessary or not is also a part of the practice of strategic thinking. This is a holistic way of analysis and practicing this as professionals will also help in growth in the career of the individual.	resources like time or money. The root cause of any problem is identified and worked upon. This is one of the integral parts of strategic thinking that our organization encourages all its employees with.	are always welcome and strategic thinking is encouraged as a habit or culture more than an element in Apple Inc.
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Table 3. Steps implemented by Apple Inc. in promoting strategic thinking

(Source: Self-Developed)

4. When do you think is strategic planning most required in any organization?

Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
I believe strategic planning is required at any time at both an organizational and at a process level. Strategic planning does not require a course of events or any unfortunate event to occur before it starts. At an organizational level, each small step taken affects the entire chain of	At Apple Inc. we are generally encouraged to strategically think at any time and in any situation but I would mention a particular occasion when strategic thinking becomes indispensable. During any major structural change that an organization undergoes, whether that is about	In general, strategic planning should be the 'mantra' of one's life. Our organization inculcates strategic thinking in its employees. There are certain situations when strategic planning becomes the only possible way out of the situation. For example, if there is a significant increase or	To be talking in general terms, there are hardly times when you can skip out on strategic planning. But when asked specifically, there are situations like policy change in a firm which cannot be approached without strategic planning. In case of a policy change or a shift in focus of an	Not only while taking decisions at the firm level is strategic planning required but also at the internal administrative level and in Human Resource policies. There needs to be precautionary strategic planning as to what is to be done internally in case of accidents like fire or earthquake or any natural

employees as well as the market. We even plan leaves of our team members strategically, so I personally do not think that there are any particular situations that lead one into strategic planning. It is a way of life adopted by Apple employees.	merging of departments or processes or a merger that takes place. Cultural differences should be addressed, and mistrusts removed among employees with the help of strategic thinking. Also, if there is a major change in the leadership, it should be addressed with the help of strategic and subtle planning. Any structural change in the organization has to be addressed by the means of strategic planning.	decrease in funding of an organization, strategic planning is indispensable. There might be some tough calls that the leadership needs to take about setting priorities or rearranging priorities. This requires a great level of strategic planning.	organization, there needs to be strategic planning to approach it and resolve the issue and implement new policies. At such times, strategic planning is an important tool that can be used.	calamity that causes trouble to infrastructural assets or any human resources. Any administrative disruptions are to be foreseen and strategies are to be chalked out priorly in case of the outbreak of any such accident or incident.
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Table 4. when is strategic thinking essentially required for an organization?

(Source: Self-Developed)

5. How do the HR policies maintain balance between profitability and workforce efficiency in Apple Inc. according to you?

Manager 1	Manager 2	Manager 3	Manager 4	Manager 5
The HR manager ensures that the employees abide by the HR policies laid down as umbrella rules by the firm. Although there are umbrella rules but there are also rules specific to the culture and geographic location of the office. It is important that both the umbrella norms and the local norms are kept in mind while	HR policies that lead to a better work life balance and give an opportunity to work flexibly without much intervention from the corporate hierarchy, is always more preferable for an employee. At Apple Inc the HR policies offer flexibility at work and there are policies of work from home and opting for	The HR policies include Paid Time Off for all employees irrespective of rank or hierarchy. Any employee can rightfully take PTO in a FY and generally very limited PTO is carried forward to the next FY. This policy is to encourage the employees to take time off to either cultivate their passions or spend time	Leave of Absence is also allowed in the HR policy of Apple Inc. which is allowing the employee to take unpaid leave in cases of family emergencies like premature birth of a baby, taking care of sick parents, extending maternity leave for 4-8 weeks, moving to a new location with spouse etc. This policy allows employees to deal with	At Apple Inc. there are regular engagement activities that keep the employees active and happy at work. Team meetings with fun activities, annual parties, eating out with the team encourage greater team bonding and team spirit. Picnics and other events like monthly celebration of employee birthdays make the

<p>implementing HR policies on employees. HR policies which respect cultures of the office location, are bound to be more popular among employees thus helping them maintain the happiness quotient at work. Research says that happier employees are more productive employees who are more efficient at the workplace.</p>	<p>flexi-timings for office work. These HR policies have created a positive environment in the workplace in turn increasing the efficiency of the employees.</p>	<p>with their families so that there is work life balance and the employees are satisfied with their employer organization. This also ensures retention of employees and makes the organization more employee friendly in nature.</p>	<p>personal problems without having to be disturbed by work life on a constant basis. This increases the confidence of the employees on the employer and makes the workplace like a second home for them. Happier employees are seen to have greater productivity at work.</p>	<p>employees feel important and wanted by the organization. These engagement activities are a part of the HR policy of Apple Inc. so that there is an air of harmony and togetherness in the work front. These things make the employees want to come to work and work wonders in increasing productivity and efficiency of employees.</p>
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Table 5. HR Policies in maintaining workforce efficiency and productivity

(Source: Self-Developed)

Survey for employees

1. Strategic planning has been an important element in your firm.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	30	60%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	10%	50

Table 6. Strategic planning as an essential element

(Source: Self-Developed)

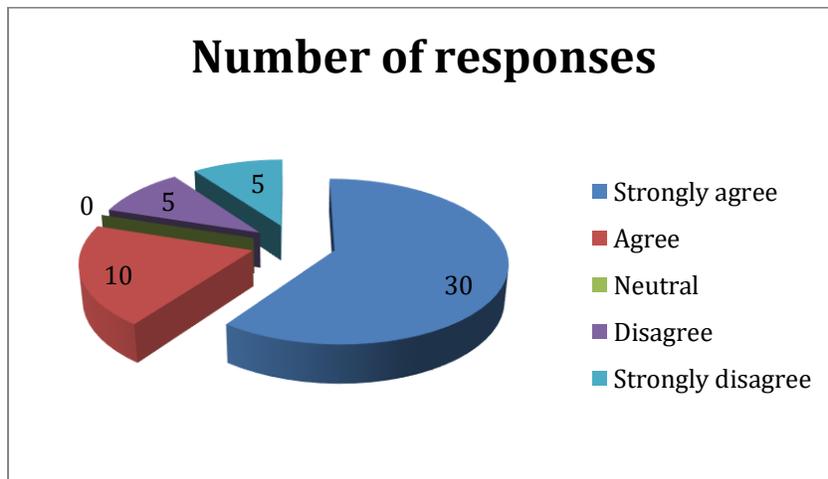


Figure 9. Strategic planning as an essential element

(Source: Self-Developed)

Strategic planning has been one of the core elements of Apple Inc. 60% of the respondents who are employees of the firm have confirmed that strategic planning is implemented at every step. Be it the organization as a global whole or as processes or teams, meetings are held where strategic planning is practiced and implemented at every step. Each team works to certain set goals in the beginning of each FY that culminates into the greater goal of Apple Inc. Strategic planning helps instilling and implementing the vision of the firm in the employees.

2. The organization has instilled in you the core elements of strategic thinking.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	34	68%	50
<i>Agree</i>	8	16%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	4	8%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	4	8%	50

Table 7. Emphasize on strategic thinking as core element

(Source: Self-Developed)

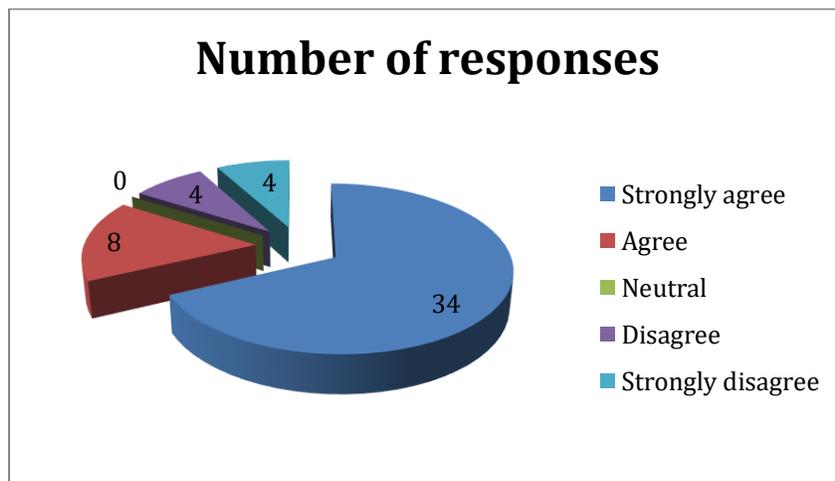


Figure 10. Emphasize on strategic thinking as core element

(Source: Self-Developed)

Most of the employees i.e. 68% of them strongly agree to the fact that their organization has instilled in them the quality of strategic thinking. They confirm that they are encouraged to plan every step strategically. Strategic planning stems from strategic and methodical thinking. It is a combination of analytical thinking blended with creative and visionary ways of looking at a common challenge.

3. Strategic planning helps improve productivity of the firm?

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	40	80%	50
<i>Agree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	4	8%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	2%	50

Table 8. Strategic planning in improving productivity

(Source: Self-Developed)

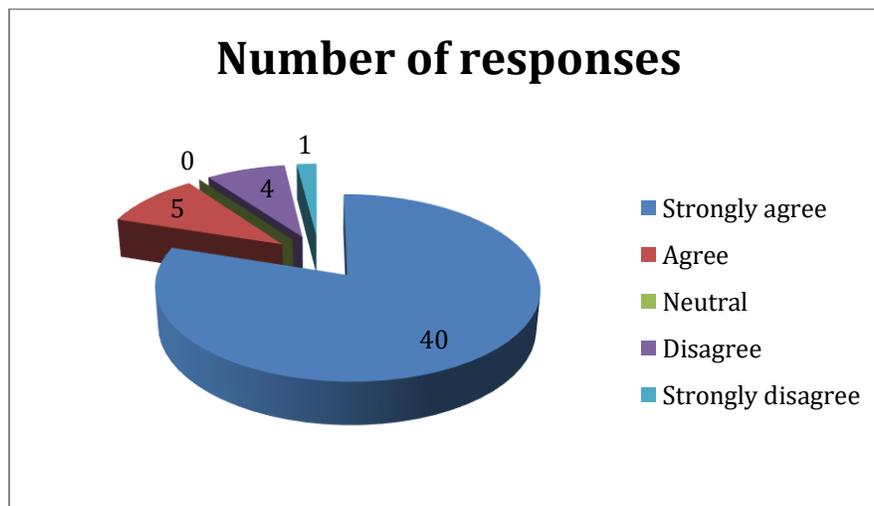


Figure 11. Strategic planning in improving productivity

(Source: Self-Developed)

80% of the employees believe that strategic planning is the core element of business development for any organization. Apple Inc. has global or umbrella strategies for a few products and also each different process or team has devised their own strategies to function better. Each team works to certain set goals in the beginning of each FY that culminates into the greater goal of Apple Inc. There is a continuous change in technology and the way the employees communicate therefore a specific planning is necessary to keep up with the change. This leads to an efficient workforce increasing the productivity of the firm as a whole.

4. Strategic thinking has helped you grow as a professional individual.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	25	50%	50
<i>Agree</i>	13	26%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	7	14%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	10%	50

Table 9. Impact of Strategic thinking on professional growth

(Source: Self-Developed)

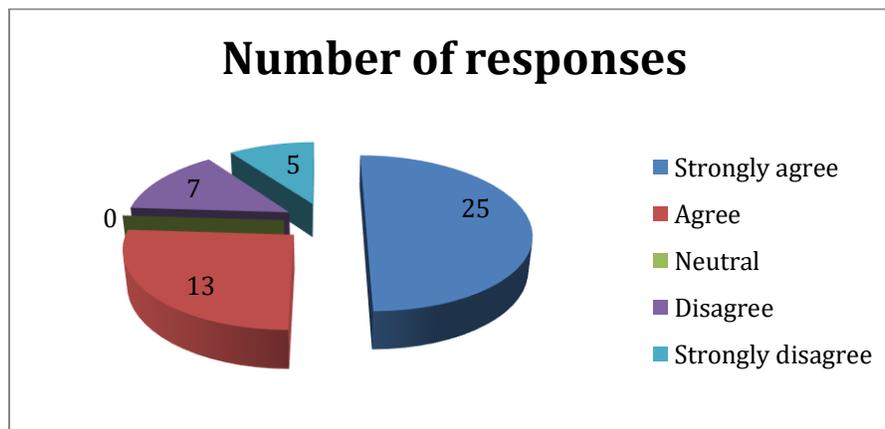


Figure 12. Impact of Strategic thinking on professional growth

(Source: Self-Developed)

50% of the employees agree to the fact that they have grown as professional individuals due to their firm instilling the core values of strategic thinking in them. They can now implement analytical thinking and manage their work better. Also, they have a more positive attitude towards customer feedback and can plan corrections accordingly. They have also become much more open to feedback from peers and seniors.

5. You aligned with the HR policies of your firm.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	20	40%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	15	30%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	10%	50

Table 10. HR policies in creating strategic thinking and planning approach

(Source: Self-Developed)

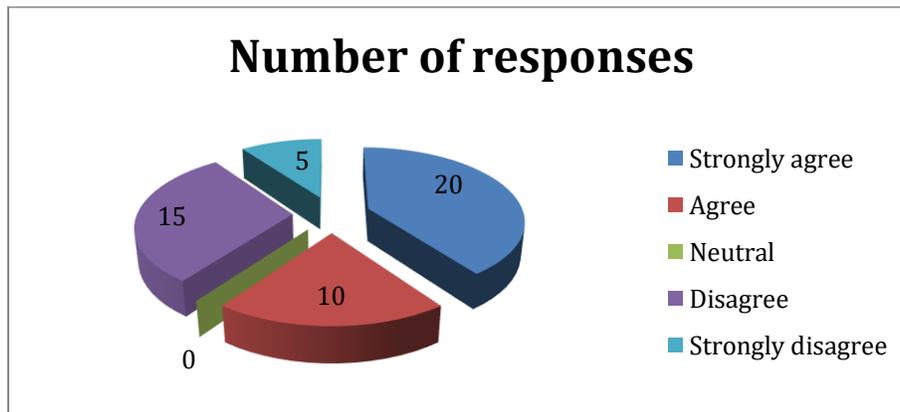


Figure 13. HR policies in creating strategic thinking and planning approach

(Source: Self-Developed)

40% of the employees are aligned with the HR policies of the firm, i.e. they know most guidelines laid down for abiding by. They also know the ‘go to people’ in cases of reporting issues. They are also aligned with and aware of the HR policies regarding flexibility of work, PTO and other policies regarding leaves of the firm. But there are also a few employees who are unsure if they know all the HR policies implemented in their firm and do not regularly keep an eye on updates in these policies.

6. You are encouraged to innovate and ‘think differently’ in your work processes.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	36	72%	50
<i>Agree</i>	14	28%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%	50

Table 11. Encouragement and motivation in thinking differently

(Source: Self-Developed)

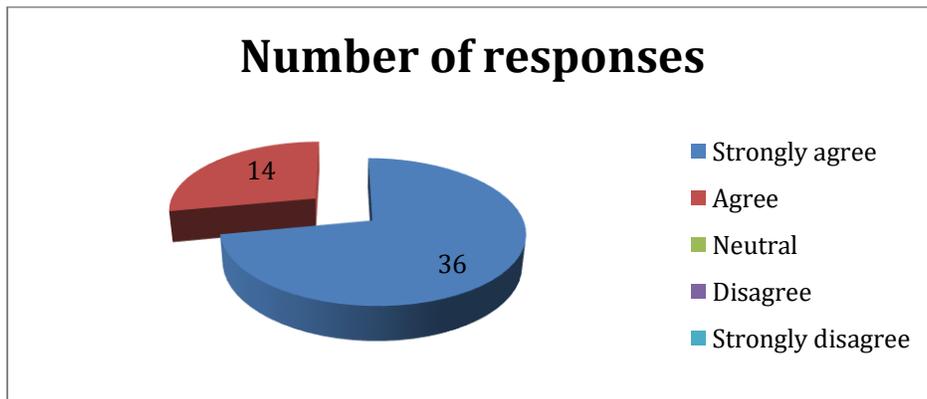


Figure 14. Encouragement and motivation in thinking differently

(Source: Self-Developed)

72% of the employees strongly agree to the fact that Apple Inc. allows them and encourages them to think differently and in an innovative manner at every step. Apple is known as the world’s #1 innovative company. The employees confirm that there are meetings held very frequently where their craziest dream app is discussed, and they can flood the meeting with new ideas and innovative outcomes. These meetings take place without any corporate hierarchy and free thinking is encouraged.

7. You are updated on the automation targets of your firm.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	25	50%	50
<i>Agree</i>	14	28%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	2%	50

Table 12. Automatic of target as a function of strategic planning

(Source: Self-Developed)

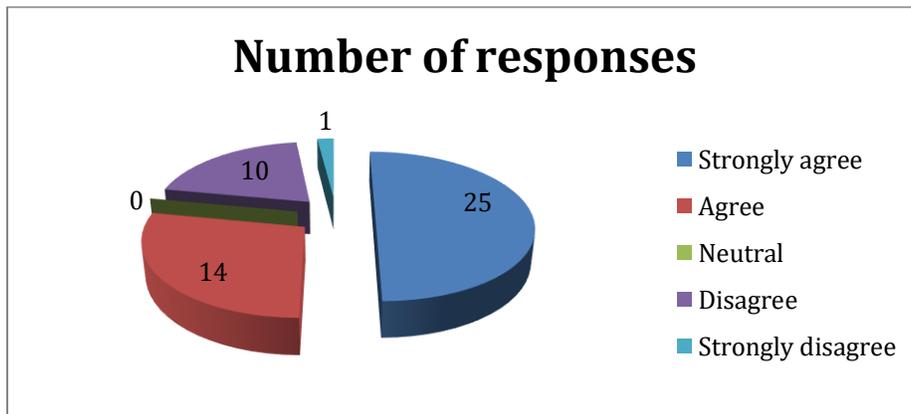


Figure 15. Automatic of target as a function of strategic planning

(Source: Self-Developed)

50% of the employees are updated and aware of automation targets in the firm. Apple as a company encourages automating at very minute levels. Even the teams and processes other than the manufacturing and producing unit are asked to automate processes that could save time and human effort so that the workforce can invest their time in more innovation and skill development rather than do manual and repetitive work.

8. Your team leader imbibes the greater goal of your firm and leads accordingly.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	30	60%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%	50

Table 13. Approach of team leader in workforce motivation

(Source: Self-Developed)

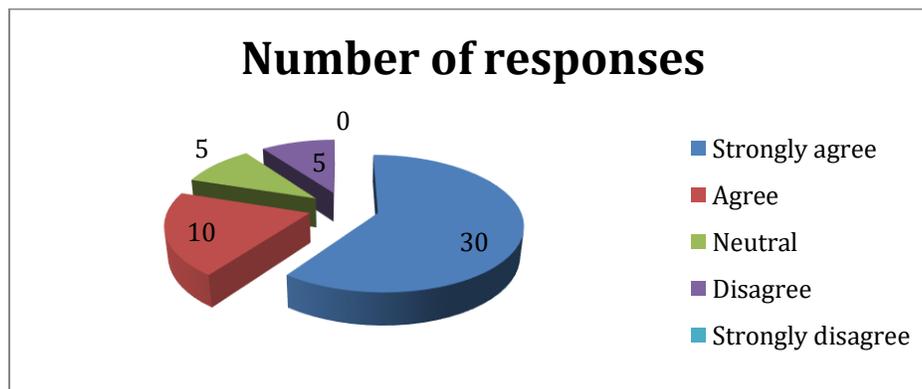


Figure 16. Approach of team leader in workforce motivation

(Source: Self-Developed)

60% of the surveyed employees strongly agree that their firm has an exempting leadership. The leadership leads by example in this firm according to most of the employees. Be it in implementing strategic planning, thinking strategically to chalk out future plans and goals of the processes or be it abiding by HR policies or upholding values like work life balance. The employees are encouraged to take paid leaves and day offs.

9. Strategic thinking and planning are sustainable business elements.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	35	70%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%	50

Table 14. Strategic thinking and planning as elements of business sustainability

(Source: Self-Developed)

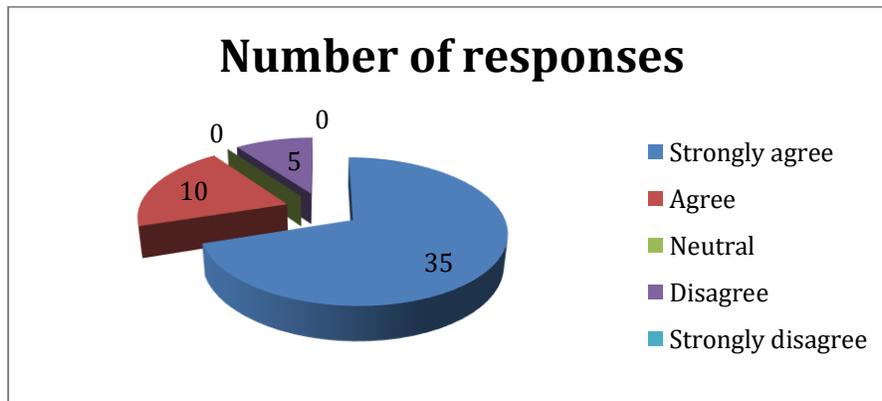


Figure 17 Strategic thinking and planning as elements of business sustainability

(Source: Self-Developed)

70% of the employees are of the view that strategic planning stems from strategic thinking itself. Both strategic thinking and strategic planning are core elements of maintaining a sustainable business. Strategic planning covers and cushions the scope of any accidents, losses incurred, natural calamities and a lot of other unforeseen events which could incur great losses for the firm. This leads to a sustainability of any business.

10. The company operations also work based on strategic planning.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	35	70%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%	50

Table 15. Company operations relevant to strategic planning

(Source: Self-Developed)

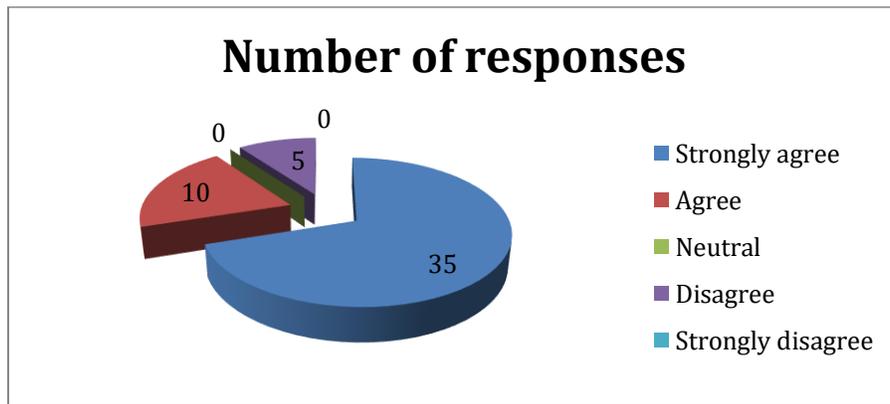


Figure 18. Company operations relevant to strategic planning

(Source: Self-Developed)

70% of the surveyed employees believe that the operations of the firm work according to strategic planning as well. There are strategic meetings discussing operational strategies of the entire firm and internal working of the firm in a smooth manner. For the same reason, the operations also work on the principle of strategic planning and thinking.

11. Strategic planning has led to the expansion of business of Apple Inc

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	30	60%	50
<i>Agree</i>	15	30%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	5	10%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%	50

Table 16. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.’s business expansion

(Source: Self-Developed)

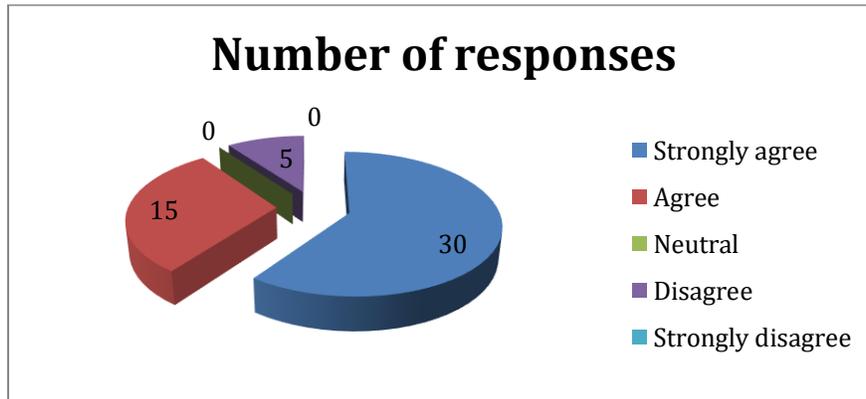


Figure 19. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.’s business expansion

(Source: Self-Developed)

60% of the employees strongly agree that strategic planning is one of the core elements leading to the expansion of Apple’s business in every sense. Strategic planning helps instilling a proper implementation the vision of the firm. The key vision of Apple Inc. is very customer centric as it believes in best user experiences through developing innovative hardware and software. As it is very clear that innovation and customer-centricity is adopted as the key business strategies and therefore implementation of these two becomes very important and an integral part of the organizational development.

12. The HR policies facilitate maintenance of work life balance of employees.

	Number of responses	Percentage of respondents	Total number of respondents
<i>Strongly agree</i>	25	50%	50
<i>Agree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Neutral</i>	0	0%	50
<i>Disagree</i>	10	20%	50
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	10%	50

Table 17. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.’s business expansion

(Source: Self-Developed)

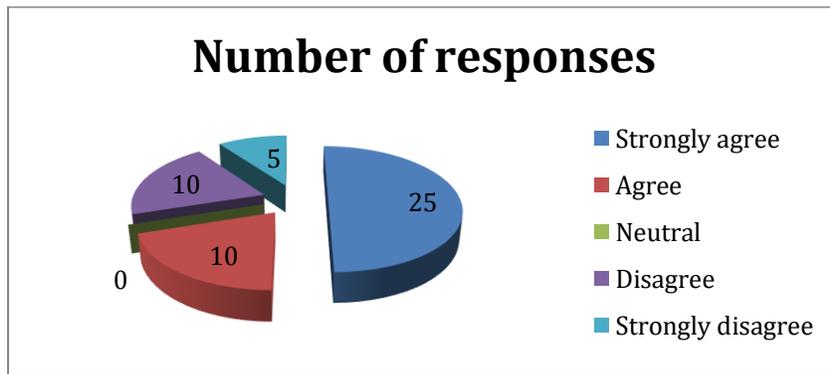


Figure 20. Strategic planning as a contributor of Apple Inc.’s business expansion

(Source: Self-Developed)

At Apple Inc. the HR policies offer flexibility at work and there are policies of work from home and opting for flexi-timings for office work. If the employee shows responsibility for using these leverages, then work life balance is well maintained and the employees can be both efficient at work yet enjoying time with their family. These HR policies have created a positive environment in the workplace in turn increasing the efficiency of the employees.

5 Results and Discussions

From data gathered from online interview and online questionnaire, it can be clarified that Apple Inc. is one of the leading companies in the electronic and gadget producing industry, globally. Managers and online buyers of Apple products mention that the Apple Inc. is also known to be the most innovative company in the world. It has been prevailing in the market for the last 30 years and has an immense popularity among its users and non-users. Apple has been able to create a brand value which not only is unique but reflects the status of the user, according to a research. It has sustained in the market at its peak for the last 20 years and has continuously worked on their hardware and software and upgraded them for user satisfaction. The two key terms that are the focus of the company are 'customer-centricity' and 'innovation'. The fast lifestyle of the consumers is leading to new requirements in their personal gadgets every day. Necessity being the mother of invention, the firm considers it a necessity to cater to customer needs and therefore innovates, invents and upgrades their product and product design within very short spans of time. Such innovation and inventions require specific and strategic planning to be executed. When the managers were questioned, they confirmed that the firm has adopted strategic planning as a core element of business strategy. They also stated that Apple Inc has global or umbrella strategies for a few products and also each different process or team has devised their own strategies to function better. Each team works to certain set goals in the beginning of each FY that culminates into the greater goal of Apple Inc. Strategic planning helps instilling and implementing the vision of the firm. Apple has one of the best access to customer information around the globe which has also helped in determining users and using patterns. This has helped in developing further strategies of product design, technology implementation and marketing. Therefore, strategic planning at each step becomes an absolute essential element of growth and development of any organization. Not only is strategic planning required for the growth of a firm but also it is required for sustaining the goodwill of the firm and remaining at the peak of its sales for a long time.

Apple has been a path breaker in strategic planning because it has not only implemented these on the external level but also at the firm level to ensure an efficient and productive workforce. Apple Inc. has a brilliant balance between managing workforce and maintaining the efficiency and productivity of the workforce at the same time. HR policies and strategies have been designed to ensure work life balance for the employees. Apple acknowledges that a healthy and most

importantly happy workforce has high efficiency and productivity. Therefore, strategic planning is implemented at each step in the organization and one can see the result in the market about Apple Inc. being the leading manufacturers of electronic gadgets.

Apple Inc being one of the leading gadget producers in the world put immense emphasis on upgradation of technology as one of its core business strategies. The customer base who uses Apple products are generally seen to be tech savvy and they primarily bank on the brand for its technologically advanced products. Products that can 'do more', more efficiently and in a smoother manner. The innovation strategies of the company include designing and producing new products which have newest technologies embedded in them but at the same time are user friendly products. Both software and hardware development is looked into with equal care so that the consumers are gifted with a unique experience. Most of the finest products of Apple are innovated culturally. The process of innovation is not process driven in the firm, but innovation is practiced as a culture in the organization. Corporate hierarchy is not an 'Apple model'. Innovation is culturally bred as a free-flowing strategy so that the innovation is genuine and does not pressurize the workforce to innovate for the sake of it. Apple being a gadget producing company innovation will automatically usher in technological developments which will reflect on the products. Although Apple culturally breeds innovation and barely indulges in corporate hierarchy when it comes to innovation, a constantly innovating firm requires discipline and strategies to function. To keep being on top of the innovation ladder, an organization requires an encouraging yet disciplined leadership. The innovation leaders in Apple continuously think in terms of pipelines and platforms of innovative products. Therefore, they keep driving the pace of innovation upwards. Innovations for even the smallest processes are encouraged in the organization.

Not only product design but it has excelled in technological upgradation of its products in a user-friendly manner. It is now a norm for any organization to innovate and automate to remain in the market, but technology is combined with user friendliness here in Apple. Apple users are thus brand loyal and hardly move to other brands for this unique combination. Apple's innovation strategies have incorporated the element of creativity which also makes it exciting for the users to use Apple products. Apple has the unique concept of building innovation strategies in both the top-down and bottom-up processes. The senior managers describe to their team what exactly they

want from their dream application and the design team creates a few probable designs of the software and presents the best ideas from their teams. Cost effectiveness is also discussed with the necessary teams and then the perfect innovation fitting the perfect technology is presented in the most cost-effective manner to create a product that is deliverable. This is how a dream is morphed into reality by indulging in innovative technological developments. Apple considers technology, innovation and creativity to be their key drivers of business and strategies are etched accordingly.

As per suggested improvement recommendation for Apple based on analysis conducted, it can be recommended for apple to use an acquisition strategy. Apple can acquire any companies to back up its product lines and influence its policies and decisions. It would be beneficial for Apple to acquire already existing business to stay in an expanding strategy. From my perspective, I'd recommend applying the strategy of hostile acquisition where Apple can purchase 50% of share of company that is related to its products and thus, Apple will back up its products by also training its employees. By acquiring other company would add some benefits such as minimization of competition, adding an extra customer base and developing the performance.

Based on the goals of this research, it was revealed that the both primary and secondary data on Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning are connected as online interview and questionnaire revealed that manager and employees reflected how important the Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning is in Apple Inc. in terms of their productivity, different way of thinking, as business elements and the way the Apple Inc. worked in strategic planning way that were also successfully supported by secondary already existing data.

6 Conclusion

To sum up, the last chapter of the thesis is associated with the laying down the ideology that the research has gained as concluding them as the outcome of the research. The issue selected for the research has been studied by focusing in multiple dimensions of functioning in terms of independence of an international firm Apple Inc. on the strategic thinking and planning process to make decisions regarding company operations. The research has focused on understanding the potential of the strategic planning and thinking in terms of decisions making to evolve the functions of international organizations. The business organizations have come into existence in terms of development of an interconnected functioning to ensure that the business at all stages and all locations are based on a single value and strategy. In order to maintain such aspects, the business organizations have ensured that the opportunities produced by these organizations are majorly driven by the technological development and technology incorporation within the business. However, the current research has been able to identify a research gap while studying the operations and secret to the success of such large international business organizations that has been able to develop a niche market of their own. While a number of researches have been conducted on the inclusion and implementation of modern technology in big international corporations, comparatively little stress have been produced on the implementation or the use of decisions making process in similar organizations. As a result, there has been ineffective understanding of the fact that decision making process is important in an organization and is the core function of a business. Therefore, the research has conducted data collection in both empirical and theoretical manner to understand how the process of data collection is implemented in an organization to produce fruitful results as performance outcome of the organization. in order to conduct the research, the study has considered collection of general data from a large number of organizations during the literature review in order to understand the pros and cons and research on further dimensions to extract industry data. On the other hand, the major focus of the research was on the Apple Inc. as the convincing operations and performance of the company has attracted the attention of the researchers. Thus, in-depth collection of data has been conducted in the research in order to derive the attributes of strategic learning and its implementation through strategic thinking and planning. Interaction with company managers and the employees have also produced a greater insight on the strategic decision making.

- To understand the internal operations of business organization in general and roles played by different managers and heads

The roles of different managers have been broadly highlighted during the data collection functions in the research. While conducting primary data collection a number of managers have been included in the interview to understand how the strategic thinking and planning affects the internal operations of an organization. While Apple Inc. has been taken into consideration, the research has collected data on the part of the implementation of the strategic thinking within the operations of the organization. The primary data collection on the other hand has considered collecting data that regards understanding of the internal operations. The role of the managers in an organization in terms of decision making is matter of fact an important functionality. When the employees in an organization that implements strategic thinking and planning towards decisions making were asked about the management functions conducted that drives such strategic planning and implementation functions, the employees have said that they are highly encouraged to put forward any idea that have been produced by them as a result of brain storming. Therefore, the research has understood the fact that business operations are important to be conducted through ensuring that the employees are provided the scope to put forward their ideology. Here, the role of the managers has been found to be large enhancing the potential of each department. Managers like human resources managers, technology managers, etc. function with a team that is equipped with talents to handle the modern issues in international organizations. Thus, the managers allow these talents to perceive an issue occurring within the organization from their own perspective. Thus, norms of critical thinking are also induced among these employees working in the forefront to implement the decisions made by the core authority of the organization. This is found to be helpful to remove the stagnancy in decision making and improving the performance through inducing innovations. Thus, the major role played by the managers in the organization, as found from the research data collection is to act like a bridge between the core management authority of the organization and executive level officers to ensure flow of information and ideologies in both the directions. Thus, avoiding unidirectional data and information flow has been found to be an effective outcome of such functions.

- To investigate the importance of strategic implementation through strategic thinking and strategic planning and consequences of the implementation

The strategic thinking and strategic planning is deeply rooted in the company operations. Operations at each phase are found to be effective for the development of the contribution to the company decisions making. Therefore, it is important for an international organization like Apple Inc. to ensure that the potential of the employees are added to the company potential to enhance the company performance to satisfy customer demands. A market in the present day demands for something that would be adding to the appreciation produced by the organization previously. The data collection in the international organization has found the fact that employees in the organization are encouraged to align with the organizational strategy as well as values. While aligning the employees with organizational procedure is helpful for the business to run on a single track it is also important for the business to conduct an effective strategic thinking and strategic planning. Basing the company operations on strategic thinking and planning is therefore seen as a measure of these organizations to implement decorum within the company functions. Thus, the research has understood that the importance of such functioning is high enough for an organization to produce maximum attribute out of such functions. The importance has also been highlighted through the fact that such strategic thinking and planning is also seen fruitful for the organization to cover up any risk of losses, accidents within the organization as well as outside it. Thus, it has been understood that the strategic thinking and planning in an organization enables development of the potential to ensure that balance is maintained within the organization. HR policies are often found to be aligned with these policies to ensure that each level of operations have effects of such strategic functions instilled.

- To study the internal operations of Apple Inc. and assess them on the basis of learning of the role of strategic thinking and planning

While the research has been conducted on other international organizations similar to Apple Inc. there is a need to assess the operations conducted by the firm based on the findings of the research. It has been found through data collection in most of the cases that business opportunities are required to be assessed based on the potential of the organization as well as its other internal attributes. The data collected from secondary sources on Apple Inc. shows that the company has highly effective and influential internal environment that allow it to take control of all kinds of environmental situations. While it has been learnt through the primary data collection that Apple Inc. has implemented a number of steps to ensure that their entire operations are aligned to the

strategic decisions making at the core of the organization, the critical thinking takes an important role in this process. The liability of the business operations is more effective to integrate right technology at the right time that has allowed the company to bind its entire workforce under a single umbrella. This has helped in increasing of the productivity and has ushered the organization with new opportunities to attract new individuals in the market. Therefore, while the internal operations of Apple Inc. are brought under discussions the research has found that the business attributes have been effectively balanced by the multiple departments of the organization that include financial department, Information Technology department, Human Resources department, etc.

The research has been formulated on the aspect that there is high requirement of the strategic thinking and planning functions to ensure that the business performance are fruitful to satisfy the market demand or the demands of the customers. The areas of strategic thinking and strategic planning have been stressed in the current research to understand their role in the success of an organization as big as Apple Inc. that also functions with a niche customer base in its target market. The future research may function with other attributes that open other dimensions of the research. The present research has not put much stress on the process of alignment of the workforce to its internal decision-making committee. Therefore, future research may concentrate the research on such aspects.

To summarise the current research, it must be stated that the market potential of Apple Inc. was the main reason to integrate the opportunities of the business of the company in the current research. A number of data has been collected from international organizations regarding their management procedures using strategic thinking and planning. These learning have been aligned with the company to understand the importance and effectiveness of strategic thinking and learning to stand out in the market in terms of performance.

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8 Appendixes

Questionnaire on Strategic Thinking and Strategic Planning

How important has strategic planning been for the development of Apple Inc. in your view and why?

Your answer _____

How is innovation helping in ushering new technology and increasing productivity of Apple Inc. according to you?

Your answer _____

What do you think are the steps that have been implemented by Apple Inc to promote strategic thinking?

Your answer _____

When do you think is strategic planning most required in any organization?

Your answer _____

How do the HR policies maintain balance between profitability and workforce efficiency in Apple Inc. according to you?

Your answer

Strategic planning has been an important element in your firm.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The organization has instilled in you the core elements of strategic thinking.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Strategic planning helps improve productivity of the firm?

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Strategic thinking has helped you grow as a professional individual.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

You aligned with the HR policies of your firm.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

You are encouraged to innovate and 'think differently' in your work processes.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

You are updated on the automation targets of your firm.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Your team leader imbibes the greater goal of your firm and leads accordingly.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Strategic thinking and planning are sustainable business elements.

- Never
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

The company operations also work based on strategic planning.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Strategic planning has led to the expansion of business of Apple Inc

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

The HR policies facilitate maintenance of work life balance of employees.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree