

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS IN THE
MALAYSIAN TIMBER COUNCIL**

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS
IN THE MALAYSIAN TIMBER COUNCIL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the Malaysian timber industry, a critical contributor to the country's economic growth, but now challenged by global demands for sustainability and competitiveness. My research journey began with identifying the sector's urgent need for strategies that balance industry viability with environmental stewardship. Focusing on the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), I employed a qualitative approach, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, to investigate the industry's multifaceted challenges and opportunities. Through interviews with industry stakeholders, policymakers, and MTC representatives, this study analyzes strategic initiatives to strengthen the industry's sustainability and global competitiveness. Key findings highlight the importance of adopting sustainable forest practices, expanding market access, and integrating technology for manufacturing efficiency and resilience. Additionally, the MTC's role in promoting technology adoption and supporting supply chain optimization is examined, emphasizing its impact on industry growth. Collaborative efforts, such as partnerships with academia and strategies for securing raw materials, were found essential for sustainable development. The study also evaluates MTC's role in providing critical market intelligence, fostering transparency, and enhancing stakeholder engagement. Insights reveal that MTC's credibility and proactive stance in regulatory frameworks are central to its leadership in promoting sustainable practices and trust. In conclusion, this research provides a comprehensive framework for industry resilience, offering policymakers and stakeholders practical insights to drive sustainable development and maintain global competitiveness within the Malaysian timber industry.

Keywords: Malaysian timber industry, sustainable development, global competitiveness, Malaysian Timber Council (MTC), strategic initiatives, technology adoption, market access, sustainability practices, industry resilience, information services provider, collaborative efforts, regulatory frameworks, industry-academia partnerships, transparency, trust, empirical evidence, policy implications.

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Muhtar bin Suhaili', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Signature of Student:

Date: 31 December 2024

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
APPROVAL	iii
DECLARATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	xii
 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	 1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Strategic Management	1
1.1.1 Strategic Management as an Effective Tool in Managing Fortune 500 Companies	2
1.1.2 The Practice of Strategic Management in Malaysia	9
1.1.3 The Roles and Functions of MTC	10
1.2 Problem Statements	14
1.3 Research Objectives	19
1.4 Research Questions	19
1.5 Significance of Study	21
1.6 Scope of Research	22
1.7 Definition of Terms	23
1.8 Organization of Chapters	26
1.9 Chapter Summary	29
 CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	 30
2.0 Introduction	30
2.1 Strategic Management in the Timber Industry	36
2.1.1 Malaysian Timber Council (MTC)	37
2.2 Factors Affecting Strategic Management in MTC	56
2.2.1 Definition and Components of Strategic Management	63
2.2.2 Competitive Advantage in the Timber Industry	64
2.3 Strategic Management Initiatives in the Timber Industry	64
2.3.1 Sustainable Practices and Responsible Sourcing	64
2.3.2 Technological Advancements and Innovation	64
2.3.3 Market Development and International Trade	65
2.4 Gaps in Literature	65
2.5 Conceptual Underpinnings of this Research	65
2.6 Theoretical Underpinning of this Research	69
2.7 Research Framework	76
2.8 Chapter Summary	78
 CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	 81
3.0 Introduction	81
3.1 Research Paradigm	82
3.2 Research Design	83

3.3	Research Method	86
3.3.1	Case Study Approach	87
3.3.2	Population and Sampling	88
3.4	Data Collection Method	92
3.4.1	Semi-Structured Interview	92
3.4.2	Triangulation	96
3.4.3	Secondary Data Sources	97
3.5	Reliability and Validity	98
3.6	Data Analysis	100
3.6.1	Thematic Analysis	101
3.6.2	Ethical Considerations	103
3.7	Limitations	104
3.8	Chapter Summary	106
CHAPTER 4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	108
4.0	Introduction	108
4.1	Present the Findings Related to the Assessment of MTC's Promotions and Market Development Initiative	110
4.1.1	Research Aims and Objectives	111
4.2	Interview Participant Profile	112
4.3	Presentation of Findings	121
4.3.1	Perceived Impact of New Strategic Approaches	123
4.3.2	Benefits of Technology Adoption	125
4.3.3	Effectiveness in Enhancing Raw Material Availability and Supply Chain Integration	127
4.3.4	Perceptions of MTC as an Information Services Provider	128
4.3.5	Perceived Credibility of the MTC	130
4.4	Effectiveness of MTC's Promotions and Market Development Initiatives	132
4.5	Chapter Summary	133
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	137
5.0	Introduction	137
5.1	Discussion of Results	138
5.1.1	Research Objective 1: To Assess the Effectiveness of MTC's Promotions and Market Development Initiatives in Facilitating the Global Expansion of Malaysian Timber Companies	146
5.1.2	Research Objective 2: To Evaluate the Effectiveness of MTC's Advocacy for Technology Adoption among Manufacturers of Timber Products	151
5.1.3	Research Objective 3: To Examine the Effectiveness of MTC's Efforts in Augmenting Raw Material and Supply Chain Integration in Timber Processes	156
5.1.4	Research Objective 4: To Investigate the Effectiveness of MTC as a Provider of Information Services to the Timber Industry in the Country	161

5.1.5	Research Objective 5: To Determine the Credibility of MTC in Promoting and Strengthening the Malaysian Timber Industry, As Perceived by Its Members	167
5.2	Proposed Sustainability Strategies of Malaysian Timber Industry	175
5.3	Contributions of the Study	178
5.3.1	Theoretical Contributions	181
5.3.2	Practical Contributions	182
5.4	Limitation of the Study	183
5.5	Future Directions of Research	183
5.6	Chapter Summary	184
	REFERENCES	187
	APPENDICES	204
	Appendix A	204

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 2.1 Trade Fairs Participated by MTC in 2020	42
Table 2.2 Trade Fairs Participated by MTC in 2021	43
Table 2.3 Events Conducted by MTC in 2020	44
Table 2.4 Events Conducted by MTC in 2021	46
Table 2.5 MTC's Social Media Reach (Likes/Followers) in 2020	55
Table 2.6 MTC's Social Media Reach (Likes/Followers) in 2021	55
Table 2.7 Strategies Underpinning the Research Framework	76
Table 4.1 Summary of Interview Participant Profile	115
Table 4.2 Summary of Findings for New Strategic Approaches	124
Table 4.3 Summary of Findings for Benefits of Technology Adoption	126
Table 4.4 Summary of Findings for Enhancing Raw Material Availability and Supply Chain Integration	128
Table 4.5 Summary of Findings for MTC as an Information Services Provider	129
Table 4.6 Summary of Findings for Perceived Credibility of the MTC	131
Table 5.1 Summary of Findings for New Strategic Approaches	146
Table 5.2 Summary of Findings for Benefits of Technology Adoption	151
Table 5.3 Summary of Findings for Enhancing Raw Material Availability and Supply Chain Integration	156
Table 5.4 Summary of Findings for MTC as an Information Services Provider	162
Table 5.5 Summary of Findings for Perceived Credibility of the MTC	168

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
Figure 1.1	Tools for Strategy Analysis	4
Figure 1.2	Comparison on Top 10 Public Companies in 2009 and 2019	6
Figure 2.1	Management Hierarchy of MTC Organization Chart	39
Figure 2.2	MTC Leadership Team	56
Figure 2.3	Proposed Research Framework	77
Figure 3.1	Outline of Research Design Developed for the Research	84
Figure 5.1	Recommended Framework	175

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CLBG	Company Limited by Guarantee
MTC	Malaysian Timber Council
PEST	Political, Economic, Socio-Cultural and Technological Environment
ROC	Registrar of Companies
RBV	Resource Based View
SWOT	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threat
UVP	Unique Value Proposition
VRIO	Value, rarity, imitability and organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Strategic Management in Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) is an essential study with the potential to determine the future direction and sustainability of the timber sector in the country. Strategic management merits the goals and objectives of an organization to constantly review performance and achievements (Mitra, 2021).

Strategic Management processes help MTC and its leadership team to plan the future direction for the organization as well as its member companies' growth in the timber sector. MTC's vision and mission are aligned to this commitment to develop the timber sector and its value chain in the country.

1.1 Strategic Management

Strategic management is a fundamental aspect of organizational planning and decision-making, encompassing the formulation and implementation of strategies to achieve long-term objectives and sustain competitive advantage (David, 2017). It involves analyzing internal and external factors, setting goals, and devising action plans to guide organizational direction (Hitt et al., 2019). This process often entails a systematic assessment of an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) to inform strategic decision-making (Rothaermel, 2019).

At its core, strategic management involves aligning organizational resources and capabilities with environmental opportunities and threats to create a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney & Hesterly, 2020). Scholars often emphasize the dynamic nature of strategic management, highlighting the need for organizations to continuously adapt and innovate in response to changing market conditions (Barney,

2014). This adaptability is crucial for organizations to remain competitive and thrive in complex and uncertain environments (Thompson et al., 2019).

Moreover, strategic management encompasses various key concepts and frameworks, such as Porter's Five Forces model, which analyzes industry structure and competitive dynamics, and the resource-based view (RBV), which emphasizes the role of internal resources and capabilities in achieving sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Porter, 2008). These frameworks provide valuable insights into strategic decision-making processes and help organizations identify sources of competitive advantage and areas for strategic investment (Hitt et al., 2021).

In summary, strategic management plays a pivotal role in guiding organizational success and competitiveness in today's dynamic business environment. By integrating theoretical insights and practical tools, organizations can effectively navigate challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and achieve long-term growth and sustainability (Wheelen et al., 2020).

1.1.1 Strategic Management as an Effective Tool in Managing Fortune 500 Companies

Strategic management plays a pivotal role in steering the success of Fortune 500 companies, serving as a crucial tool in navigating the complex and dynamic business landscape. It encompasses the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of long-term objectives and initiatives, enabling organizations to effectively align their resources with external opportunities and threats. By adopting a strategic management approach, companies can proactively respond to market changes, enhance competitiveness, and achieve sustainable growth.

According to Barney and Hesterly (2019), strategic management involves the analysis of internal and external factors influencing a company's performance, including its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis). This process allows organizations to capitalize on their core competencies while addressing potential challenges in the business environment. Moreover, strategic management frameworks such as Porter's Five Forces and the VRIO model provide valuable insights into industry dynamics and competitive advantage, guiding companies in making informed decisions about resource allocation and market positioning.

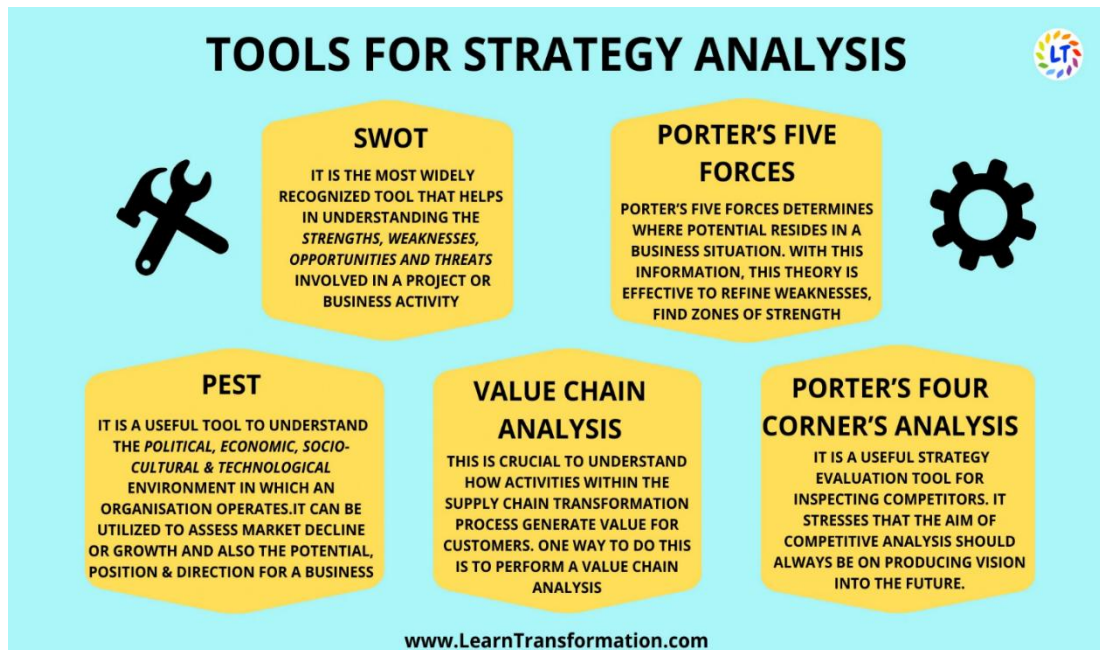
Empirical research by Eisenhardt and Sull (2001) emphasizes the importance of agility and adaptability in strategic management, particularly in fast-paced industries characterized by technological innovation and disruptive change. Fortune 500 companies that demonstrate flexibility in their strategic approach can effectively capitalize on emerging opportunities and mitigate risks associated with market volatility.

Furthermore, strategic management enables Fortune 500 companies to foster a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. By setting clear objectives and performance metrics, organizations can align employee efforts with overarching strategic goals, driving productivity and innovation across all levels of the organization (Kaplan & Norton, 2008).

In summary, strategic management serves as an indispensable tool for Fortune 500 companies seeking to navigate the complexities of the modern business environment. By leveraging strategic frameworks, analyzing market dynamics, and fostering a culture of innovation, organizations can enhance their competitive position, achieve sustainable growth, and deliver long-term value to stakeholders.

1. Tools for Strategy Analysis

Figure 1.1: Tools for Strategy Analysis



Source: www.LearnTransformation.com

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of essential tools for strategy analysis commonly utilized by organizations to assess their competitive position and make informed strategic decisions. These tools offer valuable frameworks for evaluating both internal capabilities and external market dynamics.

a) SWOT Analysis:

SWOT analysis is a fundamental tool used to evaluate an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. By identifying these factors, organizations can develop strategies to capitalize on strengths, mitigate weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate threats (Helms & Nixon, 2010).

b) Porter's Five Forces:

Porter's Five Forces framework, proposed by Michael Porter, assesses the competitive intensity and attractiveness of an industry by analyzing five key factors:

the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, the threat of substitute products or services, and the intensity of competitive rivalry. This analysis helps organizations understand the forces shaping their industry structure and competitive dynamics (Porter, 2008).

c) PEST Analysis:

PEST analysis evaluates the external macro-environmental factors that can impact an organization's business environment. It examines Political, Economic, Socio-cultural, and Technological factors to identify opportunities and threats arising from changes in the broader environment (Johnson et al., 2017).

d) Value Chain Analysis:

Value Chain Analysis, introduced by Michael Porter, is a framework for analyzing the activities involved in delivering a product or service to customers. It helps organizations identify sources of competitive advantage by examining the primary and support activities that add value to the final product or service (Porter, 1985).

e) Porter's Four Corner Analysis:

Porter's Four Corner Analysis is a strategic tool used to assess the strategic position of a company within its industry by analyzing four key elements: the goals and assumptions of competitors, the drivers of industry change, the industry's economic structure, and the competitive positioning of the focal firm. This analysis helps organizations anticipate competitive dynamics and develop effective strategies (Porter, 1996).

In summary, Figure 1.1 highlights the importance of utilizing various strategic analysis tools to gain insights into both internal and external factors influencing organizational performance and competitive advantage.

2. Comparison on Top 10 Public Companies in 2009 and 2019

Figure 1.2: Comparison on Top 10 Public Companies in 2009 and 2019

2009		2019	
Top 10 Public Companies		Top 10 Public Companies	
Company	Market Cap	Company	Market Cap
PetroChina	\$353 Billion	Apple	\$1.3 Trillion
Exxon	\$323 Billion	Microsoft	\$1.2 Trillion
Microsoft	\$270 Billion	Alphabet (Google)	\$922 Billion
ICBC	\$268 Billion	Amazon.com	\$916 Billion
Wal-Mart	\$203 Billion	Facebook	\$585 Billion
China Constr. Bank	\$201 Billion	Alibaba	\$569 Billion
BHP Billiton	\$201 Billion	Berkshire Hathaway	\$553 Billion
HSBC	\$199 Billion	Tencent	\$461 Billion
Petrobras	\$199 Billion	JP Morgan	\$437 Billion
Apple	\$189 Billion	Visa	\$416 Billion
Tech Companies: 2 Total Tech Market Cap: \$459 Billion		Tech Companies: 7 Total Tech Market Cap: \$5.93 Trillion	
Source: think-boundless.com			

Sources: Miller (2020)

Figure 1.2 illustrates a comparison of the top 10 public companies in 2009 and 2019, highlighting significant shifts in the composition and market capitalization of leading firms over the decade.

In 2009, the top 10 companies included PetroChina, Exxon, Microsoft, ICBC, Walmart, China Construction Bank, BHP Billiton, HSBC, Petrobras, and Apple. Notably, only two technology companies, Microsoft and Apple, were present among the top 10, with a combined market capitalization of US\$459 billion.

Conversely, by 2019, the landscape had transformed significantly. The top 10 companies comprised Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet (Google), Amazon.com, Facebook,

Alibaba, Berkshire Hathaway, Tencent, JP Morgan, and Visa. This decade witnessed a remarkable surge in the prominence of technology firms, with seven out of the top 10 companies belonging to the tech sector. The collective market capitalization of these tech giants surged to an impressive US\$5.93 trillion, reflecting the substantial growth and dominance of the technology industry (Miller, 2020).

The comparison between 2009 and 2019 underscores the profound impact of technological innovation and digital disruption on the global economy. It highlights the ascendancy of technology companies and their increasing influence across diverse sectors, reshaping the corporate landscape and redefining traditional notions of market leadership.

Crafting a unique value proposition (UVP) is a fundamental aspect of strategic management for both profit and non-profit organizations, regardless of their geographic location. Scholars and practitioners have extensively studied the importance and implementation of UVPs in various regions across the globe, including the US, Europe, Japan, Korea, China, and the Asia-Pacific region.

In the United States, for instance, companies have focused on developing UVPs that differentiate their offerings from competitors and resonate with target customers. Research by authors such as Porter (1996) emphasizes the significance of creating a unique competitive position to achieve sustainable profitability in the highly competitive US market.

Similarly, European organizations have recognized the importance of UVPs in driving competitiveness and value creation. Studies by European scholars like Prahalad and Hamel (1990) have highlighted the role of distinctive capabilities and unique value propositions in fostering competitive advantage and market leadership in the European context.

In Japan, renowned companies like Toyota have exemplified the strategic significance of UVPs through their commitment to quality, innovation, and customer-centricity. Research by scholars such as Ohmae (1982) underscores the Japanese emphasis on delivering unique value to customers through continuous improvement and product excellence.

In Korea, companies have adopted a similar approach, leveraging UVPs to penetrate global markets and compete effectively. Studies by Korean academics like Kim and Mauborgne (2005) have explored the concept of "blue ocean strategy," emphasizing the creation of uncontested market space and differentiation through innovative value propositions.

China's rapid economic development has seen a proliferation of organizations striving to establish unique value propositions to gain a competitive edge. Research by scholars such as Li and Fung (2017) has examined how Chinese firms navigate domestic and international markets by offering unique value propositions tailored to diverse customer segments.

Across the Asia-Pacific region, organizations have recognized the strategic importance of UVPs in driving growth and sustainability. Research by scholars like Anand and Khanna (2000) has explored how companies in emerging economies capitalize on unique resources and capabilities to develop compelling value propositions and expand their market presence.

In summary, the importance of unique value proposition in strategic management is evident across diverse regions, with organizations worldwide leveraging UVPs to drive competitiveness, profitability, and societal impact.

1.1.2 The Practice of Strategic Management in Malaysia

In Malaysia, the practice of strategic management plays a crucial role in guiding organizations towards achieving their long-term goals and remaining competitive in the dynamic business environment. Strategic management involves the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to align organizational resources with the external environment, thereby enhancing performance and sustainability (David, 2020).

The Malaysian context presents unique challenges and opportunities that influence strategic management practices. Factors such as economic volatility, political stability, technological advancements, cultural diversity, and regulatory frameworks shape the strategic decisions of Malaysian organizations (Kee et al., 2018). Additionally, Malaysia's strategic location in the Asia-Pacific region and its status as a hub for trade and investment further impact strategic choices made by businesses operating in the country (Koh et al., 2019).

One notable aspect of strategic management in Malaysia is the emphasis on government-led initiatives and policies aimed at promoting economic growth and sustainable development. The Malaysian government actively encourages strategic collaborations between public and private sectors to drive innovation, enhance competitiveness, and foster industry growth (Zakaria et al., 2017). For instance, initiatives such as the National Transformation Program and the Malaysia Vision 2020 agenda outline strategic objectives to propel the nation towards becoming a high-income economy driven by innovation and knowledge-based industries (Zulkifli et al., 2016).

Moreover, Malaysian organizations often adopt a combination of traditional strategic management frameworks and localized approaches to address the specific

needs of the domestic market. This includes incorporating elements of Islamic finance, environmental sustainability, and social responsibility into their strategic plans (Ismail et al., 2020). Additionally, the increasing trend of digitalization and Industry 4.0 initiatives has prompted Malaysian companies to integrate technology-driven strategies into their business models to remain competitive in the global market (Ng et al., 2019).

In summary, the practice of strategic management in Malaysia is multifaceted and dynamic, influenced by both internal and external factors. By leveraging strategic management principles tailored to the Malaysian context, organizations can navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage in the local and global arenas.

1.1.3 The Roles and Functions of MTC

The Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) serves a pivotal role in the timber industry landscape, functioning as a central coordinating body for various activities aimed at promoting, developing, and sustaining the sector. The purpose of this study is to comprehensively examine the roles and functions of MTC within the context of the Malaysian timber industry and to elucidate its significance in achieving sustainable development and global competitiveness.

MTC's roles encompass a wide array of functions aimed at advancing the interests of the timber industry stakeholders. These include market promotion, research and development, capacity building, policy advocacy, and facilitating trade relations (Lau, 2014). As a key entity in the industry, MTC plays a crucial role in enhancing market access, promoting sustainable practices, fostering collaboration among industry players, and disseminating industry-related information (MTC, n.d.).

The purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the effectiveness of MTC's strategies and initiatives in driving the growth and competitiveness of the Malaysian timber industry. Through empirical investigation and analysis, this research aims to assess the impact of MTC's interventions on sustainable development practices within the sector. Additionally, the study seeks to examine MTC's role in fostering innovation, technology adoption, and value addition among timber industry players.

Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the extent to which MTC contributes to enhancing market access, supply chain integration, and international trade relations for Malaysian timber products. Lastly, the research endeavors to analyze stakeholders' perceptions of MTC's credibility, transparency, and accountability in its governance and operations.

By elucidating the roles and functions of MTC and delineating the purpose of this study, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of strategic management within the Malaysian timber industry. Moreover, it seeks to underscore the pivotal role of MTC in shaping the industry's trajectory towards sustainable development and global competitiveness.

MTC Vision: To be the lead organization that develops the Malaysian timber industry into a world leader in the manufacture and trade of timber products

MTC Mission: To ensure the sustainability of the Malaysian timber industry by improving its competitiveness, enhancing market access and creating trade opportunities.

MTC Management annually conduct businesses analysis and SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threat) analysis to review internal and external risks and opportunities to their role and to the timber industry as part of its strategic management