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Literature Review of the Research Role of Marketing Intelligence (2017-2021)

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Abstract: The characteristics possessed by organizations that adopt strategic thinking enable them to influence and lead their competitors, even those beyond their direct control, through the use of marketing intelligence tools. Competing organizations tend to avoid market leaders, as they are unable to keep pace with their strategies and innovations. The aim of the present study is to explore how to deviate from conventional approaches by examining the role of strategic thinking in marketing intelligence, where organizations utilize innovative and unique products as a competitive weapon. Such organizations, particularly small ones with limited resources, cannot withstand competition against market leaders because they lack the means to confront them effectively. However, some organizations can challenge large and leading corporations by learning from their experiences and practices without exposing themselves to significant risk. This can be achieved through knowledge acquisition, environmental analysis, and the adoption of diverse strategies for market entry and intelligent marketing interactions.

The study reviewed twenty (20) previous studies addressing the two research variables across various sectors, most of which demonstrated a relationship between strategic thinking through its dimensions (systemic thinking, timely decision-making, and smart opportunities) and marketing intelligence dimensions (competitor intelligence, product intelligence, market understanding, and customer understanding). For example, Lou (2021) examined the nature of competing firms, resulting in mergers and acquisitions, while the studies by Dixit et al. (2021), Harre, Simeone, & Nielsen (2021), Sandelands & Singh (2017), and Shagerdi et al. (2021) revealed partial effects of strategic thinking dimensions on achieving competitive advantage and product intelligence as well as market understanding. Fundamentally, these two variables stem from the perspective of strategic complexity and environmental awareness surrounding organizations. The study concluded that there is a significant role for strategic thinking in enhancing marketing intelligence within today's information-rich and virtual environment, recommending greater focus on these contemporary variables.

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Introduction

Before delving into the concept of strategic thinking, it is important to recall that *strategy* refers to the planning and coordination of efforts to achieve a specific goal and the long-term commitment of resources to attain a defined purpose within a competitive environment. From the overall corporate strategy, sub-strategies are derived at the level of business units that align with and support the main strategy, based on *situational analysis*. This analysis involves examining internal factors to identify strengths and weaknesses within the company's functional units, as well as assessing external environmental factors including consumers, government, competition, and technology to determine the opportunities and threats surrounding the organization.

It is worth noting that one of the essential components of strategic management is formulating the organization's *vision*, *mission*, and *objectives* by addressing the following key questions:

- **What:** What is the specific objective the organization seeks to achieve, and how can it plan to accomplish it?
- **Where:** Which areas or industries does the organization aim to operate in, and which markets or products should it focus on?
- **How:** This refers to the manner in which resources and activities are organized for each market–product combination to address the opportunities and threats present in the environment and to achieve competitive advantage (Al-Bakri, 2008, p. 25). In order to build an integrated vision and maintain organized thinking, an organization must possess the necessary information that clarifies its vision and what it seeks to achieve within this highly competitive environment this is the role of marketing intelligence.

Creating a competitive advantage is not an easy task; it requires extensive studies involving all key stakeholders within the organization, as well as efforts to sustain that advantage. Ensuring its continuity, however, faces challenges arising from environmental changes, which occur at various operational, tactical, and strategic levels. Some of these factors can be controlled, while others such as systemic changes cannot be managed (Hemila & Kouachi, 2021, p. 612).

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the effect and relationship between the dimensions of *strategic thinking* and *marketing intelligence*, and to explore how strategic thinking can be leveraged to build a competitive advantage through marketing intelligence by addressing the study's main problem, which is represented by:

1. **The extent to which strategic thinking contributes to marketing intelligence based on the relationship and impact:**

Academic researchers may gain a better understanding of problem formulation and resolution in general and provide practitioners with insights into where alternative approaches can be effectively applied.

Significance of the Study:

The importance of this study lies in the fact that both variables strategic thinking and marketing intelligence are characterized by their continuous renewal and proactive nature in analyzing the organization's environment, both internal and external. They play a crucial role in developing preventive and corrective solutions to the challenges that organizations may encounter within their dynamic environments. To the best of the researcher's knowledge and within the scope of her review, no previous studies have simultaneously addressed and integrated these two variables. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the questions arising from this research problem.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to shed light on the role of *strategic thinking* in *marketing intelligence* and to explore the modern concepts related to both research variables.

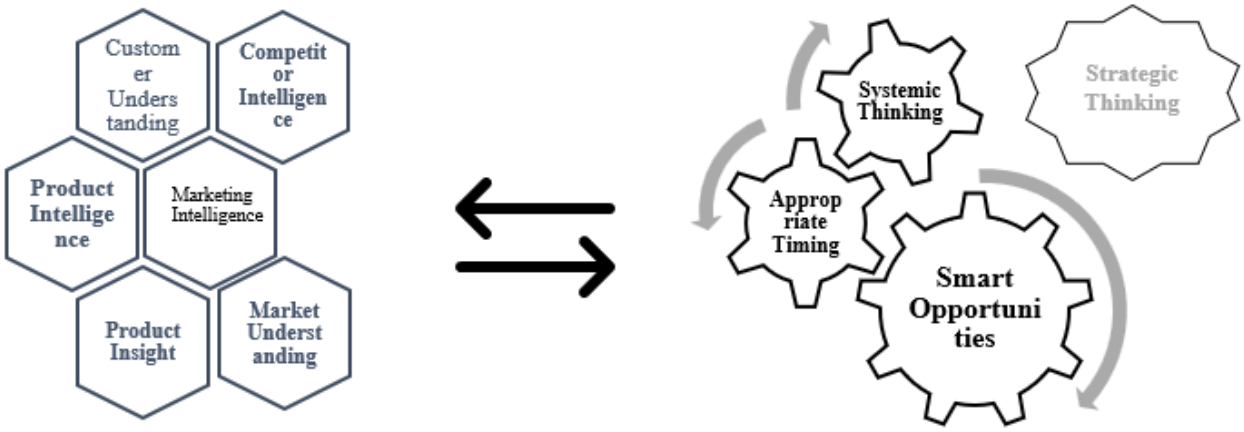
Research Hypothesis

What is the role of strategic thinking in marketing intelligence?

Research Methodology

Based on the foregoing, the study adopts a *descriptive-analytical approach* through a comprehensive review of previous literature addressing the study variables. It presents and analyzes the most significant findings and recommendations proposed by these studies.

Proposed Model of the Study



Previous Studies

Dixit et al. (2021) engaged in a study to uncover the sources of strategic thinking and its connection with competitive advantage. The researchers tested the mediating effect of strategic thinking between antecedents and competitive advantage on the basis of a quantitative research design using a questionnaire with 51 items filled by 220 professionals working in various industries in India. The Smart PLS software was used to process data and the results revealed the direct impact of creativity, corporate culture and knowledge management on strategic thinking. The research performed found a statistically significant correlation between competitive advantage and strategic thinking. It advised the adoption of strategic thinking practices through decision-making processes to promote competitive advantage. Furthermore, the impact of corporate culture, creativity, and knowledge management on strategic thinking makes their importance apparent. The research paper ended with the identification of the influence of antecedents of strategic thinking on competitive advantage, hence co-determining the contributory effect of other factors in combination with strategic thinking to produce competitive advantage.

The study by **Sandelands and Singh (2017)** aimed to test a potential method for measuring individuals' ability for strategic thinking (cognitive profiling of the process) through a multi-method approach based on a deductive research design. The results were obtained through the synthesis of existing studies of constructs that represent strategic thinking and visualizing the relationships between the data collected through CPP assessment, background questionnaires, and in-depth interviews. The study employed a multimethod quantitative design and data were gathered using various quantitative scales. A standardized scale was used to analyze interviews and structured questionnaires in order to allow an objective comparison with the CPP assessment itself. The findings prove that the CPP assessment is a valid measure of and can isolate the key cognitive elements that are behind the individuals strategic thinking ability. However, the results

were found to be more enlightening to those who had managerial or executive experience as opposed to students. As a result, the researchers included the situational advantages of the organisational environment in the measurement plan and did their best to maintain objectivity in the face of a small sample of the executive. This research produced valuable positions in organisations interested in hiring or advancing their workforce, and individuals who wished to better understand strategic thinking or to measure their strategic thinking abilities.

The research study by Shagerdi et al. (2021) focused on how strategic thinking impacts the product innovation of manufacturing firms located in the Tous Industrial City of Mashhad, Iran, and the mediating impact of competitive intensity. The design of the study was that of applied research, where data were obtained using a descriptive survey methodology and both bibliographic and empirical field research methodologies were employed to obtain the necessary information in a systematic fashion.

The main study tool was a questionnaire consisting of 33 items with a five-point Likert scale. The coefficients of Cronbach alpha were calculated to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire and the obtained values were found satisfactory concerning each variable. The sample of the study was a statistical sample of 250 managers working in manufacturing companies located in the town of Tous Industrial City of Mashhad. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) of the data was performed with the SMART PLS software. It was found that the innovating of the products were influenced by all dimensions of the strategic thinking, except goal orientation. In addition, the mediating hypothesized effect of competitive intensity on the correlations between concerned focus and timely thinking and product innovation was not supported. However, other aspects of strategic thinking were also found to influence product innovation when the moderating impact of competitive intensity is considered.

Harre, Simeone, and Nielsen (2021) The authors posit that a shift in company to service offering rather than product-based model requires radical adjustment that can significantly affect the processes, structure and technologies of the company. Strategic thinking can help managers and employees plan and handle such a change. Their article provides empirical observations on how an IT organization in Denmark (which is moving towards service orientation) enabled a chain of design workshops to stimulate strategic thinking throughout the organization. The purpose of these workshops was to get them to think between different perspectives and across different time frames to mediate relationships that enabled a range of perceptions to come up.

Shahlaee Bagheri, Mazloomi Soveini, and Ghorbani (2020) With the intention of exploring the impact of strategic thinking skills on the success of the strategic formulation process in the collective sports federation in Iran, a total of fifty-seven questionnaires have been placed in the hands of managers of collective sports federation to gather the required information. The Strategic Thinking Skills Questionnaire and Strategy Formulation Effectiveness Questionnaire were modified according to Moghimi and Ramzan (2015). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS) were used to analyse the data. It was found that the level of strategic thinking of managers played an important role in the success of the strategic formulation process in the sports federations. The findings reveal that the strategic thinking ability of managers in these federations should be improved to enable them come up with effective strategies.

Victor, Andy, and Okon (2021) In the current study, we investigated the relationship between strategic thinking and the resilience of deposit-money banks in South-South Nigeria. Primary data were gathered using a self-administered questionnaire using a cross-sectional survey design. The sample size included five first-tier South-South based and operating banks in Nigeria.

The focus of the investigation was the regional offices that were located at Port Harcourt. The bank respondents were chosen by selecting 6 regional managers each with the banks making a total sample of thirty respondents. Census type of sampling strategy was used because of the small

size of the target population. The instrument reliability was determined through Cronbach alpha and all items had coefficient greater than 0.70. Hypotheses were tested using the Spearman rank correlation coefficient and analyses done using SPSS version 23.0. Statistical tests were performed with an interval confidence of 95 and a level of significance of 0.05. These empirical results showed that, there was statistically significant relationship between strategic thinking and resilience of deposit money banks in the South-South region of Nigeria. The paper recommends the development of strategic thinking skills among managers and employees of deposit money banks using formalized exercises including brainstorming, scenario planning, repertoire development, and dialogue-interventions that are found to be key mechanisms of successful adaptation to rapid change and ensured sustainability.

Al-Kar'awi (2021) aimed to examine the prevailing strategic thinking within the organization under study the Holy Karbala Provincial Council and to identify its effect on proactive leadership. The dimensions of strategic thinking included *creative thinking*, *vision-driven thinking*, and *stakeholder-oriented thinking*. The study tested and measured the individual effects of these dimensions on proactive leadership and its three components: *business acumen*, *employee engagement*, and *responsibility*. To test the research hypotheses, the study was applied to a sample of administrative leaders working in the Holy Karbala Provincial Council. Data were collected using a specially designed questionnaire, and quantitative analysis was performed using **SPSS version 25** for statistical processing. The analysis led to continuous results and insights into the relationship between strategic thinking and proactive leadership.

The research problem focused on testing and measuring the impact of strategic thinking on proactive leadership. To achieve the study's objectives, hypotheses regarding correlation and effect were formulated. The study reached several important conclusions:

A) There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the dimensions of strategic thinking.

B) There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the dimensions of proactive leadership.

Key research terms: Strategic thinking, proactive leadership.

Ibrahim and Mustafa (2020) aimed to understand the role of strategic thinking in improving productivity efficiency from the perspective of managerial leadership at Maysan Oil Company. The study problem was formulated as the following question: Is there a relationship and effect between strategic thinking and the improvement of productivity efficiency at Maysan Oil Company? The researchers used a questionnaire as the main data collection tool. Responses from the sample of 66 participants were analyzed using central tendency measures, as well as correlation and regression analyses. One of the study's key findings was the presence of a relationship and significant effect between strategic thinking and productivity efficiency improvement from the managerial perspective. The study also recommended general measures regarding product quality.

Strategic thinking is considered a modern skill that relies on direct interaction between the customer and the company, which necessitates the adoption of a clear strategy providing a comprehensive vision for an ideal future. During her research, the researcher found that strategic thinking remains a highly relevant and active area of study. For instance, **Smriti et al. (2021)** The relevance of strategic thinking to the realisation of sustainability in organisations that operate in a competitive environment was emphasised. However, understanding of its constituent parts is limited. The current theoretical frameworks that are related to strategic thinking are insufficient to meet the complexity of organizations and therefore, limit its use to professional demands. In this study, a systematic review of 125 scientific papers that were published between 1978 and 2016 related to strategic thinking was performed. The themes discovered in the literature were analyzed

on the basis of two models proposed in the current paper: the constituents of strategic thinking and the process of strategic thinking. Based on the results of this discussion, the paper suggests a number of directions in future academic research.

Thus, it is possible to document the successful selection and values for the variable *strategic thinking* and to examine how design thinking practices align with other approaches that companies may adopt for framing and solving problems scientifically, including critical thinking and systemic thinking. This is achieved by exploring the underlying core capabilities behind strategic thinking. However, due to the researcher's limited access, a complete copy of **Smriti et al. (2021)** could not be obtained, despite its inclusion of a wide range of studies.

AlQershi (2020) The current study synthesized several research hypotheses related to Strategic Thinking (ST), Strategic Planning (SP) and Strategic Innovation (SI) with regard to Human Capital (HC). A survey methodology was used to gather data on 235 small and medium-sized manufacturing businesses that function in Yemen. Results showed that ST, SP, and SI have a statistically significant effect on HC. Also, the mediation condition of HC in the nexus between ST, SP and SI with the performance outcomes of SMEs was investigated. The results show that human capital is a mediating variable between structural transformation, strategic planning, strategic innovation and company performance. The research is also instructive to managers of small and medium-sized companies, academics, and policy makers who want to understand how structural change, strategic planning, strategic innovation, and human capital affect the performance of SMEs. It also pushes SMEs to develop structural transformation, strategic planning, strategic innovation and human capital in order to improve performance, because the study does not only clarify the relationship between human capital performance and SMEs, but also generalizes the impacts of structural transformation, strategic planning, and strategic innovation in the framework of Yemen and the Middle East as a whole.

Additionally, **Hajar (2020)** emphasized the importance of highlighting a critical and contemporary topic in organizational management: the necessity of providing the capabilities and skills required to perform strategic management tasks while considering the past, present, and future, The study addressed the research problem by posing the central question: *What is the role of strategic thinking in improving organizational performance?* It explored the nature of both strategic thinking and organizational performance through scientific, intellectual, and forward-looking perspectives, highlighting that strategic thinking is a key driver in enhancing organizational performance. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach in addition to a field study method, using a questionnaire as the main data collection tool. Statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data using **SPSS**, resulting in multiple intellectual and practical conclusions that accurately reflect the realities of the variables discussed in the business environment. A key finding emphasized the importance of strengthening strategic thinking due to its significant role in improving organizational performance, achieving differentiation, and sustaining longevity.

Amish and Nasri (2020) examined the impact of strategic thinking on crisis management in various Algerian universities. They used a questionnaire distributed to a simple random sample of 108 individuals from different universities and analyzed the data with **SPSS**. Their study found that factors such as *timely thinking* and *hypothesis development* significantly influenced crisis management in Algerian universities, whereas *systemic thinking*, *strategic goal orientation*, and *smart opportunities* did not. They recommended prioritizing timely thinking and creative hypothesis formulation as key elements of crisis management in these universities.

The researcher adopted this variable due to recommendations and gaps identified in previous studies. For example, **Lou (2021)** The authors argue that the available studies of strategic disaster management programs conceptualize strategic decisions as the product of procedural models of rationality, thus often overlooking the importance of the intuitive component. As a result, modern

research bases its inquiry on dual-process theory to question the Strategic Decision-Making Processes (SDMP) of Top Management Teams (TMT) in cognitive perspective. However, there are weaknesses associated with the TMT SDMP structure, which explains the relevance of contingency theory. Having compared the dual-process theory with contingency theory, the proposed study is a two-level contextual model of SDMP, which explains development and implementation of TMT SDMP, along with providing a more in-depth understanding of the role of senior-level in organizational performance.

The context of the research is mergers and acquisitions (M&A) because of their rarity and complexity in a strategy.

Conceptual framework was tested by means of a dataset of 109 mergers and acquisitions. Primary cross-sectional data were gathered based on British companies that made acquisition decisions over the 2014-2018 period, and gathered data were later analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that top-level management team decision-making on strategic matters is bifaceted and constituted by the procedures rationality and collective intuition. The current study also indicates that most of the social and psychological traits of top-management teams, i.e., cohesion and behavioral integration and transactive memory systems, only have influence on the formation of the strategic decision-making process (SDMP) in the situations where organizational structure and board strategic intervention are relevant. Likewise, the effect of SDMP on the performance of M&As is strongly dependent on decision-making situations, namely, the dynamism in the environment and the strategic significance of decisions. Considering these results, this study outlines crucial implications of the academic analysis as well as the practical implementation of SDMP and M and A activity.

Ramos et al. (2017) Analyzed the impact of technology in changing the way activities are performed in the digital world and the way consumers seek and obtain information and purchase goods and services. At the same time, advancement in technology has triggered a significant increase in the volumes of information, the emergence of new sources of data, and the development of new tools to support customer-oriented activities. In such circumstances, it is reasonable to believe that technology could benefit communication and information spread by creating digital marketing platforms. These platforms have automated processes based on the stored data on the travel and hotel data warehouses and conduct a data analysis which involves data mining methods hence providing economic value to these organizations. The article suggests a systematic approach to building an automation machine in marketing intelligence in order to support the management of a combined marketing approach in the channels of hospitality and tourism organizations in the internet.

Since the study by Ramos et al. was purely theoretical, we found **Al-Naqshbandi (2021)** to support our hypothesis by examining the practical components of marketing intelligence customer information, product information, competitor information, and market information across several five-star hotels in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. A total of 63 questionnaires were distributed, with 55 valid for statistical analysis. The researcher's validated and reliable questionnaire was used as the main data collection tool for the field study. The data were analyzed using **SPSS** statistical software.

A number of statistical tools were used to test the hypotheses, including frequency, distribution, percentages, arithmetic observation, and standard deviation. The study reached several conclusions and recommendations. Importantly, the responses of the study sample regarding the components of marketing intelligence varied depending on their perspectives and their observations of marketing practices in the hotels under investigation. It is essential to assess hotels' marketing intelligence components from a comprehensive and integrated perspective rather than a narrow viewpoint in order to achieve success for these hotels.

Al-Weshah (2017) examined the role of marketing intelligence (MI) in customer retention and relationship building in Jordanian banks. Specifically, the study measured the impact of MI on maintaining and building relationships with both existing and new customers. A quantitative research design was employed, using descriptive and inferential methods. A self-administered questionnaire was developed as the main data collection tool. The questionnaire was distributed to a convenient sample of 110 managers working in marketing, customer relations, information systems, and customer service departments at Jordanian banks. The study concluded that MI has a significant positive impact on retaining and building relationships with both current and new customers. However, MI practices in Jordanian banks tend to prioritize acquiring new customers over retaining existing ones. Additionally, the banks have the potential to enhance their marketing intelligence systems to achieve relationship-based competitive advantages. The study provides valuable lessons for practitioners and executives in the banking industry regarding the application of MI for customer retention and relationship building.

Lies (2019) Examined the wide scope and field of digital use which defines the digital marketing environment and presented the modern concept of marketing information in the light of marketing technology. The paper also outlined methods of marketing intelligence, such as social engineering. The list of reviews included digital information technology and big data marketing, as well as Marketing 5.0, also known as digital trust marketing. The variety and mutual dependence of digital and social technologies considered reflects that big data and marketing intelligence have already become a marketing reality. It is clear that marketing is experiencing a methodological, technological and cultural revolution which augments and increases the out bound marketing methods using the inbound marketing tool.

Hussein (2020) This paper has discussed how the marketing intelligence system implemented by the college has affected the success of its marketing information management as well as its ability to establish a unique strategic presence in the Baghdad privately educated market.

To answer these goals, a model was developed to evaluate nature of the relationship and the influence of marketing intelligence (MI) system as the independent variable and competitive stance strategies of the concerned faculty as dependent variables. The Hypothesis was developed and analyzed through SPSS version 22.

Latifa (2018) aimed to highlight the importance of economic intelligence as an integrated system with multiple mechanisms, including marketing intelligence. The marketing intelligence system proposed by **Crowley** includes customer understanding, market understanding, product intelligence, and competitor intelligence. Each component requires precise answers and intelligent handling using the latest methods to prepare a balanced scorecard that facilitates decision-making. This aligns with the use of e-marketing and its effective mix. The study found a relationship between marketing intelligence and e-marketing, as both contribute to the rapid dissemination of products through digital channels to various customers using engaging and attractive promotional methods, thereby fostering innovation. This was evidenced through the application of the marketing intelligence system in developing the electronic marketing mix at Algeria Post.

In her study, **Hamila and Kwashi (2021)** investigated marketing intelligence as an approach to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. An analytical framework was proposed to integrate marketing and intelligence approaches across four main axes: product, competitor, market, and customer. Accordingly, a survey study was conducted by analyzing 32 questionnaires using **SPSS** across several pharmaceutical and semi-pharmaceutical institutions in Tebessa. One key finding was a shift in healthcare marketing principles, moving focus from the customer to the product, market, and competitor. A major recommendation was that healthcare marketing intelligence places the customer as a last priority, emphasizing that customer behavior should be corrected according to a more comprehensive vision to educate them on the importance of healthcare quality.

Keywords: Marketing intelligence, sustainability, competitive advantage, pharmaceutical and semi-pharmaceutical sector.

Nasour et al. (2018) The paper has explored the actuality of marketing intelligence such as an intelligence on customers, intelligence on competitors and inter-departmental marketing information flow in the private banks located along the coast of Syria. The study followed descriptive design and a questionnaire was designed to collect primary data on a sample of 50 managers working in private banks in the Syrian coast.

The results were later compared using the statistical program SPSS. The major results of the study show that in the banks under research, the customer intelligence, which is a significant element of marketing intelligence, had a relative importance of 75.81, and the competitor intelligence, which is also a significant element of marketing intelligence, had an importance level of 73.846. The research produced a number of recommendations which included: Banks must institutionalize marketing intelligence initiatives, complete empirical studies to obtain customer data, and maintain existing extensive competitor studies to keep in touch with competitor's strategies and movements.

From the previous studies reviewed above, it is evident that the information revolution in business management provides methods and tools to ensure timely access to marketing information, as well as its processing and management. This enables organizations to study their internal and external environments, particularly competitors, understand their customers and their needs, and meet these needs effectively and promptly. Marketing intelligence plays a critical role in this process. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the role of marketing intelligence in supporting organizational excellence, recognizing it as a modern marketing practice specialized in studying and analyzing the forces affecting organizational activity to extract actionable information.

In light of the above presentation and discussion of previous studies, the following conclusion can be drawn:

Conclusion:

During the process of this review, the researcher benefited from previous research. Although not all studies were examined, **20 prior studies** directly or indirectly related to the current research topic (*the role of strategic thinking in marketing intelligence*) were reviewed to identify key findings and general indicators. These studies, as well as the method and sequence of paragraphs used to present and analyze them, guided the derivation of the conclusions. The time frame for completing the intellectual effort of the reviewed research covers the past ten years. Reviewing the timeline of the 20 studies from **2017 to 2021** indicates the contemporary nature of the variables involved in the previous research effort utilized in the current review.

1. The previous studies were applied to various research populations as follows: universities (1 study), banks (1 study), productive and service organizations (16 studies), and hospitality and hotel organizations (2 studies).
2. Most of the reviewed studies used questionnaires as the primary tool for collecting primary data (14 studies), while two studies employed case studies along with secondary sources from books, scientific research, organizational records, and archives. Most of these studies analyzed questionnaire data using statistical software such as **SPSS**, **SPL**, and **AMOS**.
3. In the current review paper, the independent variable is *strategic thinking*. Most previous studies in the field of business strategies found positive relationships and significant effects of strategic thinking on a range of marketing intelligence variables. Most of these studies were conducted recently, between **2017 and 2021**.

4. The reviewed studies were conducted across more than 15 countries, with a focus on: United Kingdom (1), Denmark (1), India (1), Germany (1), Uganda (1), Portugal (1), Nigeria (1), Iran (3), Algeria (4), Iraq (4), Jordan (1), Syria (1), and Yemen (1).
5. The current review linked the two variables: strategic thinking and marketing intelligence. To the researcher's knowledge, no prior administrative research has combined these two variables. Based on this, the present review paper, with full humility, constitutes an intellectual contribution to theoretically enrich the existing literature by highlighting the role of strategic thinking in marketing intelligence, aiming to strengthen economic and knowledge structures and achieve scientific enrichment.

Future Recommendations:

1. Investigate the role of business strategies in enhancing marketing intelligence.
2. Examine the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on promoting strategic thinking through the H2H (Human-to-Human) approach.
3. Explore the effect of marketing intelligence on customer perceived value.

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