

INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries businesses have strived to develop distinctive competencies to obtain a competitive advantage and to sustain growth that cannot be matched by competitors. This advantage is measured by an organisation's ability to generate and maintain sustainable levels of growth and profitability above the industrial average. Today, companies are competing on the basis of what they know, how fast they learn it, and how well they use what they learn compared to the past, where access to physical resources such as capital, labour and materials was critical. It is what Herring (2003) calls knowledge-based competition. At the heart of this knowledge-based competition, lies (as the term suggest) knowledge and, even more important, intelligence.

A discipline called Competitive Intelligence (CI) started coming into prominence since about 1980 (in Europe and the United States) which focuses on a process to turn information and knowledge into actionable intelligence (Kahaner 1996). It requires a dedicated focus and resources but when successfully implemented can show huge return on investment, which companies such as Kodak, 3M, AT&T, Wal-Mart and others have demonstrated. In a survey that was done by Consulting Group Frost and Sullivan, it was found that 78 percent of the successful companies (for example companies experiencing consistent growth in revenues); CI function was a critical element of their business and marketing strategy (Kimetz & Bridge 1999).

CI is aimed at enabling managers to make more informed decisions (Corporate Strategy Board 2002). Gilad (1995) states that, "Intelligence is not reactive competitor-tracking and certainly not a mindless collection of competitors' marketing data. It is a much more ambitious undertaking of creating a fully devoted guardian of the enterprise overall competitiveness". Johnson (2003), a recognised thought leader in the field of CI, states that: "the understanding of the role of the competitive intelligence has led to the demise of many CI units because of their failure to add value to the decision-making process. They are left with little to point towards as Return-On-Investment (ROI) during budget cycles.

In today's fast-paced, high technology business environment, technological advances, competitor actions and inactions, customer and supplier intentions and behaviours, legislative activity and a host of other activities are among elements that compete for a manager's attention on a daily basis. A manager's ability to master all of the possible consequences of these activities will directly affect the development, growth and quality of a firm's business and its ability to sustain its growth. The key to any successful strategy is the ability to identify, develop and sustain a competitive advantage with reference to competitors.

Furthermore, Fleisher & Bensoussan, (2003) argue that CI is all about 'managing the entire competitive battlefield.' Any organisation they argue needs knowledge about itself, the competition, and the battlefield, and be able to analyse

and use this information in decision-making process to enhance and sustain its growth. The practice of CI has become more critical as competition intensifies in the operating environment because of hi-tech developments, innovation, distribution improvements, the internet, and consumer sophistication among others.

CI has a long history, even though its use in the realms of commerce and business are more recent. Its origins date back to Confucius in China, and Moses in the West. For example, in the Torah (Numbers 13:1-33), Moses is reported to have sent an expedition of Joshua the son of Nun, Caleb the son of Jephunneh and other ten men to scout out the promised land (Canaan) after the Jewish people had fled Egypt around 1500 B.C. Giffith (1967) in Prescott (1999) notes that the renowned Chinese military leader Sun-Tzu wrote a lengthy treatise on the value of military intelligence a millennium later. According to him, Intelligence and competitiveness have a long association in warfare, and are gaining one in business. Below are summaries of the chapters in this book.

Chapter 1 is based on a qualitative-exploratory literature review of the positioning of the competitive intelligence function with organisations. The primary concern of the author was to explore the positioning of the competitive intelligence function within organisations so as to establish the best positioning. To ensure reliability of the literary exploration, only peer-reviewed journal articles were used. The findings of this chapter will make it possible to generalise about the best position of the competitive intelligence function and to develop some valuable propositions for future studies. The findings showed that there is no single criterion on which to base the positioning of the competitive intelligence function within organisations. This chapter will go a long way in assisting business managers to understand and improve their positioning of the competitive intelligence function.

Chapter 2 examines the relationship that exists between competitive intelligence and firm competitiveness through literature review. The review was done under the background of intense competition being experienced by firms globally. Literature review of published electronic journal articles was the basis of the examination. Two critical issues were found and these were: there are varying perceptions of the relationship that exists between competitive intelligence and firm competitiveness; and that there is no universally accepted model of best practice for adoption and adaptation. These findings will assist business managers improve their CI outlook by understanding how CI is related to firm competitiveness and will be of great value to academics.

Chapter 3 provides an overview, from literature, about how competitive intelligence can be an enabler towards a firm's competitiveness. This overview is done under the background of intense global competition that firms are currently experiencing. Qualitative content analysis was used as a data collection method on all identified journal articles on competitive intelligence and firm competitiveness. To identify relevant literature, academic databases and search engines were used. Moreover, a review of references in related studies led to more relevant sources, the references of which were further reviewed and analysed. To ensure reliability and trustworthiness, peer-reviewed journal articles and triangulation were used.

Competitive intelligence was found to be an important enabler of firm competitiveness.

Chapter 4 explores how competitive intelligence has been an important contributor of growth in banks in Zimbabwe and how the banks are making use of competitive intelligence for such growth. The chapter adopted a descriptive cross-sectional approach to gather data. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. Purposive and stratified sampling methods were used. Most Zimbabwean banks have undertaken competitive intelligence in one way or another for strategic planning and better understanding of the competitive business environment and competitors. The understanding of competitive intelligence will assist the entire banking sector and will be of great academic value.

Chapter 5 provides a conceptual framework and analysis of the role of competitive intelligence in Zimbabwe's banking sector. The chapter adopted a literature and conceptual research approach. Literature review has shown the concept of competitive intelligence to be multidimensional, with a multitude of varying definitions, as well as multifaceted and fuzzy. The concept of competitive intelligence has been presented variously as a process, a function, a product or a mix of all three. Literature review has also shown numerous intelligence concepts that are linked to the concept of competitive intelligence. This chapter will increase the academic understanding and state of the concept of competitive intelligence in Zimbabwe's banking sector as well as assisting the entire banking sector.

Chapter 6 provides a historical overview of competitive intelligence development in South Africa. The chapter adopted a historiography approach. Information was gathered from published peer-reviewed journal articles on competitive intelligence. These sources of data hold the greatest value in the validity and reliability of this chapter. Most historical researches are often associated with historiography as the primary research method. Historiography goes beyond data gathering to analyze and develop theoretical and holistic conclusions about historical events and periods. It includes a critical examination of sources, interpretation of data, and analysis that focuses on the narrative, interpretation, and use of valid and reliable evidence that supports the study conclusions. Although a historian studies history or may teach history, the historiographer writes, analyzes, and interprets history. Historical research was of particular relevance to this chapter on competitive intelligence, a contemporary concept in developing countries, as it enhances an understanding of the present. Any contemporary issue is bound intrinsically with the social and historical milieu of the past. Findings show that competitive intelligence is in its infancy stages twenty years after its introduction in South Africa. This chapter will influence policy formulation, locally and regionally.

The final chapter, chapter 7 provides a great deal of interest in discovering the secrets behind quality/good leadership as this is the backbone for organisational or national success. This chapter traces Hillel the Elder's leadership intelligence from a Talmudic perspective, which saw him rise from being a woodcutter to become the 'Nasi' (President) of Israel. Relevant literature from the

Babylonian Talmud, journal articles and other Jewish books was reviewed in order to bring to light some of the secret traits of Hillel the Elder's leadership intelligence. A number of leadership lessons were discovered and will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter will go a long way in influencing leadership practices in the 21st century given the rampant world corporate failures due to mismanagement, corruption and misappropriation of funds.