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## **The impact of strategic foresight on achieving competitive advantage: A field study in a number of private colleges**

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**Abstract**---The aim of the study is to measure the impact of strategic foresight in achieving competitive advantage. The problem of the theoretical study arose from the lack of employing strategic foresight tools in the private colleges investigated to reach the competitive advantage. The study relied on the comprehensive inventory method using a questionnaire. A group of private colleges was selected as a study community for its importance in providing educational services. As for the study sample, it was a sample of (114) senior and middle administrative leaders in the colleges under study. A number of statistical programs were used depending on the statistical program (smartpls v.3.3.9). Some of them are related to descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, and some are related to inferential statistics by testing several hypotheses to reveal the influence relationship between the independent variables (strategic foresight) and the dependent (competitive advantage). Positively in increasing the chances of the researched private colleges to achieve competitive advantage.

**Keywords**---strategic foresight, competitive advantage

**Introduction**

Competitiveness is one of the most prominent features of the modern era, which makes it imperative for institutions to pay attention to the issue of competitiveness and take advantage of its concept in order to be able to achieve development and growth, even if its application has been magnified at the present

time. Competitive advantages and maintain them to improve their market position and ability to face current and prospective competitors. Hence, the colleges, in light of the highly competitive environment, seek to gain a competitive advantage over other scientific and research institutions and in order for the colleges to prepare to cope with the challenges of global competition dictated by this era and witnessed by the entire world. This necessitates thinking of devising concrete strategies to overcome the threats posed by the changing and ambiguous challenges.

### **Research problem**

In light of the fierce competition between faculties, the process of foreseeing the future has become a working method and a basic requirement to provide planners with various future methods to transfer faculties from their past and present frameworks to accurately anticipate the image of the possible or desired future to achieve this future and prepare for it and its requirements and challenges. Thus, achieving competitive advantage, and therefore the research problem emerges in the following main question: What is the effect of strategic foresight in achieving competitive advantage. From this main question, a number of sub-questions emerge:

- 1- Does identifying and collecting information on the future leadership trends of the studied private colleges contribute to achieving competitive advantage?
- 2- Do the surveyed private colleges have a clear strategic vision to achieve competitive advantage?
- 3- Do the surveyed private colleges have multiple scenarios in order to achieve competitive advantage.

### **Research Importance**

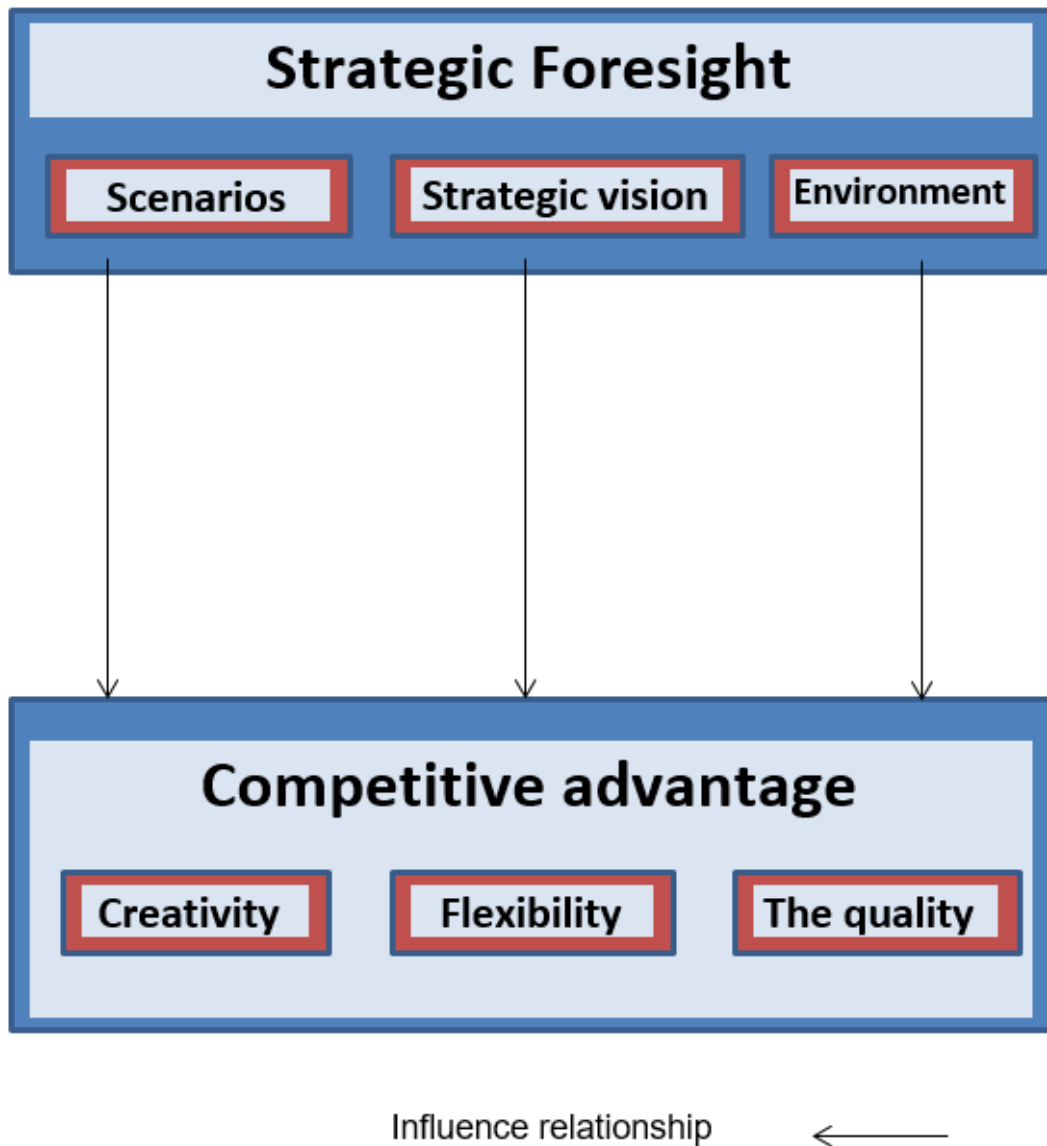
The importance of the research lies in the statement of the role that strategic foresight plays in achieving competitive advantage, in addition to the possibility of benefiting for the leaders of colleges and other similar sectors from the results and recommendations of the research, as they are based on a theoretical field study, for the benefit of society as a whole.

### **Research Aims**

The main objective of the research is to study the impact of strategic foresight in achieving competitive advantage in colleges, in addition to some sub-objectives, which are:

- 1- Theoretical rooting of the research variables represented in (strategic foresight, competitive advantage).
- 2- Identifying the attitudes and opinions of the employees in the colleges towards the subject of the research through the field study.
- 3- Suggesting some recommendations that would support the strategic foresight methodology in achieving competitive advantage.

### Hypothetical Research Scheme



### Research Assumes

There is no significant effect of strategic foresight in achieving competitive advantage. Some sub-branches emerge from this main hypothesis, namely:

- 1- There is no significant effect of environmental monitoring in achieving competitive advantage.
- 2- There is no significant effect of the strategic vision in achieving competitive advantage.

- 3- There is no significant effect of the scenarios in achieving competitive advantage.

## **Strategic Foresight**

### **The concept of strategic foresight**

thinking about the future remained frozen for a long time and he looked at those who were talking about The future is like dreamers, but World War II and the great changes that occurred made the world change at an unprecedented pace in human history, and this change included all aspects of life, and writers and scientists began to think more seriously about what if it happened in the future, how to plan for it, and what are the requirements or tools What we need to study the future and what are the methodologies to be ready to confront it and to identify alternatives and choose the best ones based on the strength of these trends, influence them and direct them for the better (Al-Khudri, Saeed, 2)

Strategic foresight is defined as: a set of human procedures and practices in a context directed towards creative evaluation and restructuring of potential sources in future resources and productive results. (David Sarpong, 18, 2014) Strategic foresight is a systematic, organized way of looking beyond expectation to deal with uncertainty and complexity and is critical to effective emerging strategic planning in volatile and fast-moving environments. (CEPA, 2021, 2)

### **The importance of strategic foresight**

Pointed out (Heger & Rohrbeck, 2012: 819) In the past decades, a lot of knowledge was generated and foresight activities were conducted. Scientists began studying national foresight programs in the sixties of the last century, and they aimed to identify future technologies that would bring the following benefits:

1. Contribute to explaining the uncertainty in the decision-making process.
2. Flexibility against external change.
3. Determining alternative paths in strategic planning and finding directions and future scenarios.

Foresight is important in working to increase pressure for innovation and a greater need for strategic direction, as institutions must deal with developments in the organization's environment at early stages and provide the necessary guidance for making informed strategic decisions in particular. (passing, 2017:7). Strategic foresight has emerged as a required skill for successful organisation. As an organizational competence, strategic foresight helps prepare the organization for the future by expanding the boundaries of perception in strategy formulation, evaluation, and implementation and recognizing the relationships and linkages between strategy and the future, along with the importance of foresight to create and capture value, strategic foresight is often presented as a managerial competence (2), 2018.

## **Strategic Foresight Objectives**

(Mention Andersen & Rasmussen, 2014,7) There are five objectives of strategic foresight, which are:

- 1- Foresight is used to determine research priorities based on future technological possibilities and future societal challenges.
- 2- Creating awareness regarding the great future challenges facing society and serving as a window displaying the results of the research - and the possibilities of research and new technology.
- 3- Reorientation of local, regional or sectoral research and innovation systems.
- 4- Develop new networks and cooperation across scientific and industrial sectors or in relation to societal challenges
- 5- Involve new actors in the debate on research, technology and innovation policy. Here more emphasis is placed on the foresight process itself rather than on the outcome of the process.

## **Dimensions of strategic foresight**

- 1- Environmental Monitoring: Before the organization formulates the strategy, it must monitor the environment to know the potential opportunities and threats in its external environment and monitor the strengths and weaknesses in its internal environment. Environmental monitoring is monitoring, evaluating and collecting information from the external and internal environments of key individuals in the organization. The organization uses this tool to avoid strategic surprises and ensure the organization's long-term sustainability. (Wheelen & Hunger, 2008, 73)
- 2- Strategic vision: The vision of the enterprise is a key success factor for a clear direction towards the future. A vision should be put in place at the beginning of every foresight process, but it should still be adaptive and responsive. Findings from the environment and the internal make-up of the organization should provide input to the vision. Strategic foresight helps identify these inputs, which are critical to vision. Therefore, the process of strategic foresight is a permanent process and thus may adjust the vision according to the strategic decisions taken as a result of this process (By Stefanie Baumgartner,2021,10).
- 3- Scenarios: It is used as a tool for administrative development, and this can be done through the establishment of a workshop to identify the common concepts of the management team and through brainstorming mechanisms as a framework for research. As a means of communication during the change management process in organizations Michel Godet, 2010:32).

## **Competitive advantage**

### **The concept of competitive advantage**

The concept of competitive advantage was presented with multiple names, most notably competitiveness, competitive superiority, and it refers to how the

organization can distinguish itself over its competitors and achieve superiority, and that the organizations' awareness and discovery of new ways to compete in the market position enhances the development of competitive advantage that lies at the heart of the strategy Competitiveness, and that its development requires choosing the appropriate strategy, and then achieving success and desired goals. (Fouad Al-Qadi, 18, 2012)

The concept of competitive advantage emerged clearly in the early eighties when (Porter) introduced the concept of competitive strategies among business organizations and pointed out that the most important and determining factor for the success of business organizations is their competitive position, as he defined them as "the new ways that the organization discovers in the industrial sector).Porter, 1995:48)

Competitive advantage is the area in which an organization has a higher ability than its competitors to exploit external opportunities or reduce the impact of competitive threats. The competitive advantage stems from the organization's ability to exploit its material or human resources, it may relate to quality, technology, the ability to reduce cost (Thabit Idris, Gamal El-Din Al-Mursi, 15, 2002).

### **The importance of competitive advantage**

The organization's ability to create value for its customers through a smart and effective competitive strategy that emphasizes its distinction and difference from its competitors and enables it to confront them and increase its market share and achieve profits that guarantee its survival and continuity. Competitive advantage derives its importance from being the most important requirements to be provided during the next stage in preparation for a later stage, and the competitive advantage is achieved if the product is different from others and the differentiation strategy is used, and success is achieved by making profits for the ability to protect differentiation from imitation in order for this success to continue. (Osama Ahmed, Manal Saeed, 670, 2015).

### **Competitive Advantage Objectives**

Competitive advantage is described as a goal that the organization seeks to achieve in a way that distinguishes it from other institutions and is difficult to imitate either in the way of providing the service or in the form of the product or in terms of price or all of that together, and the ability of the organization to choose the way in which it achieves its competitive advantage, which stems from its analysis of its internal and external environment Identifying and strengthening strengths and weaknesses and addressing them in order to enter the competition (Ali Al-Khalidi, 34, 2013) as well as those features that the organization possesses based on its extensive experience, which seeks to outperform other competitors in terms of resources, prices and services, as well as owning a qualified human resource And the skills or knowledge that help it achieve distinction and uniqueness from other competitors (Rehab Sayed, 32, 2016).

### **Dimensions of competitive advantage**

- 1- Quality: It is the ability of the organization to provide distinct and unique products or services that receive high quality consumer satisfaction, after sales service. Effective expansion and promotional policies that enable it to increase the market share of the organization, it is the organization's ability to provide quality products and high performance that creates added value for customers (Kamel Al-Hawajrah, 774, 2013)
- 2- Flexibility: It is the rapid response to changes that may occur in the design of products and in accordance with the renewable needs of customers and therefore is a basis for achieving the competitive advantage of the institution. Flexibility here lies in the ability of the institution to change the performance of operations through different methods as well as changing the method and time of performing those operations, different sizes of products or flexibility of delivery It refers to the ability of operations To change the delivery times of products (Mohammed Assaf, 31, 2015)
- 3- Creativity: The extent to which the competitive advantage is achieved is related to the level of creativity achieved in its creation and application in the practical reality of the organization. This means that the achievement of the competitive advantage cannot be and continue without there being an intellectual creativity compatible with the capabilities available in the application and differentiation from others, and without that the competitive advantage is meaningless because it will be copies of similar ideas that have been imitated by others and thus this competitive advantage ends. Thamer Al Bakri, Khaled Hamdan, 10, 2013).

### **Field Research Framework**

#### **Evaluate the quality and conformity of the scale used in the research**

##### **A- Evaluating the quality and conformity of the strategic foresight variable questions**

Figure 1 shows The external saturations and the Facronbach coefficient for the questions of the strategic outlook variable, which consists of three basic dimensions and consists of (15) paragraphs, as the model will be tested within the following indicators:

-Table No. (1) shows the values of (CR) for the strategic foresight variable, all of which are within the acceptable limits as it ranged between (0.862-0.916), which is a good indicator and indicates the stability of the scale, as the results showed a high stability of the dimensions of the strategic foresight variable scale.

-Through the value of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient, as their results ranged between (0.798 - 0.884), it is clear that it is greater than (0.70), and this indicates that the validity and reliability coefficient of the measurement tool has a high degree of stability.

-It is shown by the external saturation values (OL) of the scale questions for the variable (strategic foresight) are close to greater than the acceptable minimums of (0.70), as the external saturation values ranged between (0.655- 0.873), which indicates that the data of the strategic foresight variable are characterized by stability and reliability and are suitable for conducting analyzes The subsequent statistic, all of them exceeded the significant values of saturation, which is a good

indicator. It is worth noting here that some questions had ramifications less than (0.70) and because they were significant, and when they were deleted, the researcher found that they did not affect the validity of the model, and based on this result, it was kept within the model.

-Table No. (1) shows the values of the extracted mean variance (AVE) for the strategic foresight variable, as it is clear that all of them are acceptable, as they ranged between (0.557-0.685), which is greater than the value (0.50), as they all indicate the convergent validity of the dimensions, which is a good indicator.

-It is clear from Table No. (1) that all parameter estimates were significant for the questions of the strategic foresight variable, as the value of (The calculated T-Value, which ranges between (7.93140.257), which is greater than its tabular value, which is (1.984), as it is also evident from the (P-Value) value of (0.000) in all questions that it is less than (0.05), as it refers to All the questions were moral.

table number(1) Statistical indicators for a variable of the strategic foresight variable								
Average Extracted Contrast(AVE)	compo und stabilit y CR	Alfakron bach	P Values	T	standard error	satura tes	questions	Dimensions
0.600	0.882	0.833	0.000	11,333	0.063	0.714	Q1	EM
			0.000	21,288	0.038	0.801	Q2	
			0.000	18,406	0.042	0.779	Q3	
			0.000	15.426	0.050	0.765	Q4	
			0.000	22.729	0.036	0.809	Q5	
0.557	0.862	0.798	0.000	19.104	0.041	0.782	W1	SV
			0.000	23,195	0.035	0.803	W2	
			0.000	22.931	0.035	0.808	W3	
			0.000	9,840	0.068	0.667	W4	
			0.000	7.931	0.083	0.655	W5	
0.685	0.916	0.884	0.000	15.001	0.051	0.760	R1	S
			0.000	33.303	0.026	0.859	R2	
			0.000	40,257	0.022	0.873	R3	
			0.000	17,302	0.047	0.811	R4	
			0.000	25.186	0.033	0.830	R5	

Source: program SmartPls V.3.3.3.9

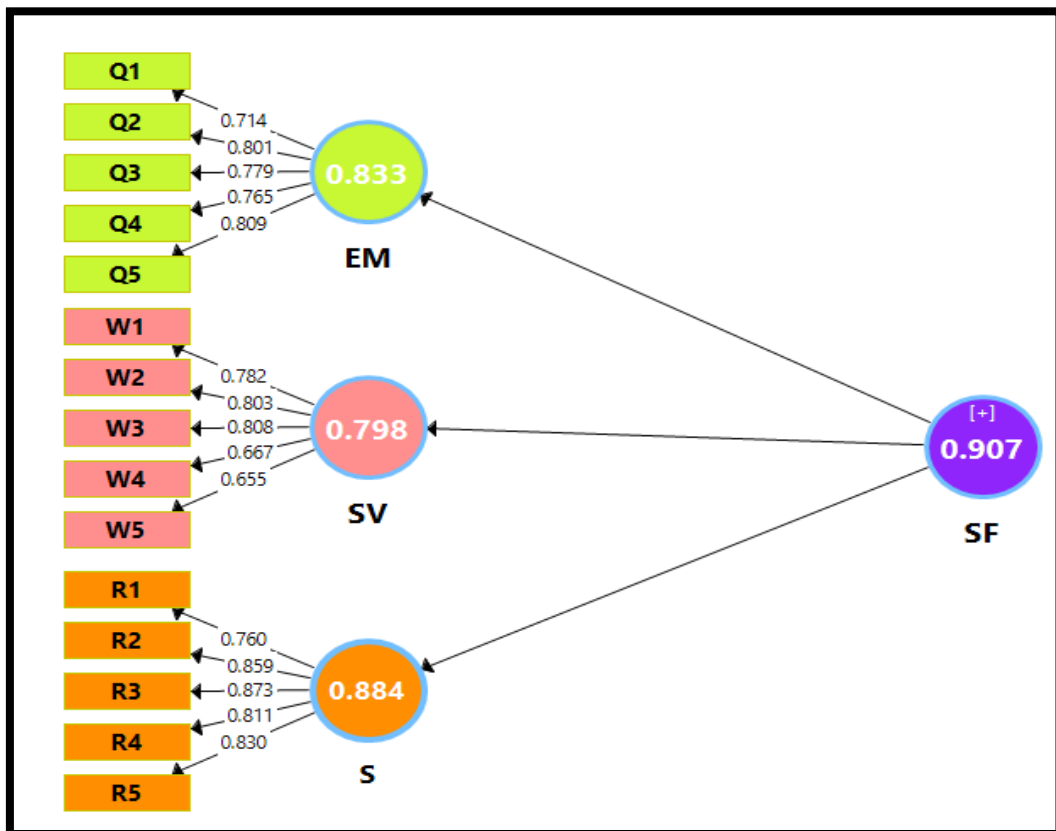


Figure (1) The complete model of the strategic foresight variable  
Source: programSmartPls V.3.3.3.9

### B - Evaluation of the quality and conformity of the questions of the variable competitive advantage

Figure (2) shows the external saturations and the Facronbach coefficient for the competitive advantage variable questions, which consists of three basic dimensions and consists of (15) Paragraph, as the model will be tested within the following indicators:

-Table No. (2) shows the composite stability values (CR) for the competitive advantage variable, which was collected within the acceptable limits as it ranged between (0.921-0.929), is a good indicator, as the results showed a high stability of the research scale questions for the competitive advantage variable.

-The results showed that the value of the Alpha Cronbach coefficient ranged between (0.893-0.904), and it is clear that it is greater than (0.70), and this indicates that the validity and reliability coefficient of the measurement tool has a high degree of acceptance and stability.

-It appears through the values of the external saturations of the scale questions for the variable (competitive advantage), as its values ranged between (0.739-0.899), which indicates that the questions of the competitive advantage variable are characterized by stability and reliability and are suitable for conducting subsequent statistical analyzes.

-Table No. (2) shows the values of the extracted mean variance (AVE) for the competitive advantage variable, as it is clear that all of them are acceptable, as it ranged between (0.702-0.724), which is greater than the value (0.50), as they all indicate the convergent validity of the dimensions, which is a good indicator.

-It is clear from Table No. (2) that all parameter estimates were significant for the competitive advantage variable questions, as the value of (The calculated T-Value, which ranged between (12.597-40.149), which is greater than its tabular value, which amounted to (1.984), as well as the P-Value, whose values are (0.000), which is less than (0.05), and indicates that all questions were significant, which is Good pointer.

Table number (2) Statistical indicators of the competitive advantage variable								
Average Extracted Contrast (AVE)	compound stability CR	Alfakron bach	P Values	T	standard error	saturates	questions	Dimensions
0.724	0.929	0.904	0.000	26.222	0.033	0.856	C1	QU
			0.000	29,310	0.029	0.863	C2	
			0.000	38.852	0.023	0.895	C3	
			0.000	17,509	0.045	0.786	C4	
			0.000	26,986	0.031	0.849	C5	
0.707	0.923	0.895	0.000	17.923	0.043	0.763	G1	FL
			0.000	24,684	0.034	0.848	G2	
			0.000	40.149	0.022	0.899	G3	
			0.000	27.962	0.031	0.864	G4	
			0.000	21.312	0.039	0.824	G5	
0.702	0.921	0.893	0.000	28.148	0.030	0.853	H1	CR
			0.000	12,597	0.059	0.739	H2	
			0.000	39,857	0.022	0.876	H3	
			0.000	34.050	0.026	0.893	H4	
			0.000	18.125	0.045	0.818	H5	

Source: program SmartPls V.3.3.3.9

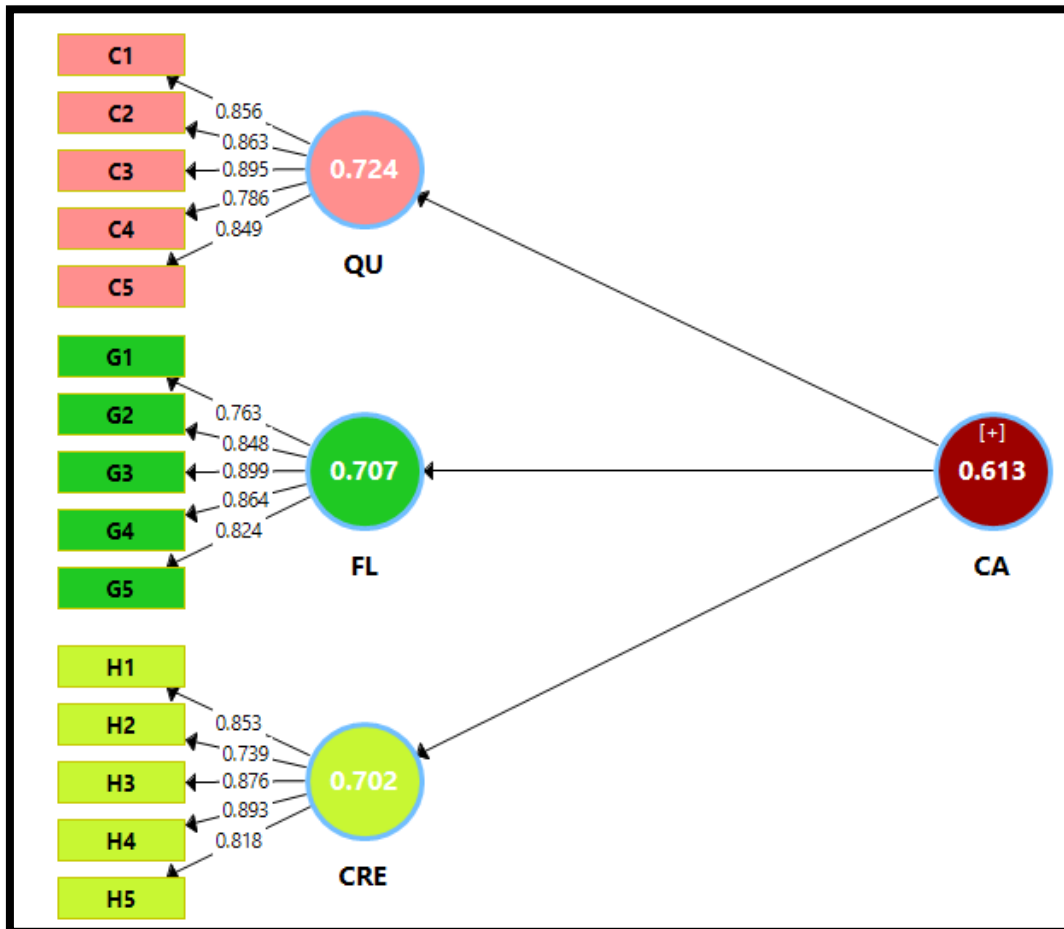


Figure (2) The complete model of the competitive advantage variable  
Source: program SmartPls V.3.3.3.9

### Research hypothesis testing

This part of the analysis deals with testing the previously identified impact hypotheses. It will depend on the calculated ( $t$ ) value, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), corrected determination factor ( $R^2$ ), marginal slope coefficient ( $\beta$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ) (Effect Size), ( $Q^2$ ), which indicates the accuracy and ability predictive model, as follows:

**First: Test hypotheses between strategic foresight in competitive advantage Test (first major hypothesis)** which states that: \_ (there is no significant effect between the strategic foresight variable in the competitive advantage variable) Table No. (3) and Figure (3) show the statistical indicators for testing hypotheses between the strategic foresight variable in the competitive advantage variable. -achieved value ( $t$ ) calculated for the estimated model (25.708). It is greater than the tabular value ( $t$ ) of (1.984) at the level of significance (0.05), and this indicates the significance of the marginal tendency of the strategic foresight variable and in light of this result (there is a significant effect between the strategic foresight

variable in the competitive advantage variable) at the level of significance (5%), i.e. with a degree of confidence (95%), which indicates that the strategic foresight variable has an effective and essential impact on the competitive advantage.

-The results indicated that the value of the marginal slope coefficient of the variable **Strategic Foresight**It reached (0.792), and this indicates that increasing the strategic foresight variable by one unit will lead to an increase in (competitive advantage) by (79%).

-The results show that the effect size (f2)The strategic outlook variable was significant, as it recorded a value of (1.682), which is greater than (0.35).

-It is indicated by the value of the corrected determination coefficientAdj (²R) of (0.627) that the strategic foresight variable is able to explain (62%) of the changes that occur in (competitive advantage), while the remaining percentage (38%) is dependent on other variables not included in the research model.

-The results showed that the predictive relationship index (Q2) For the strategic outlook variable, its value is (0.359), which is greater than zero, and accordingly, the model has a predictive relevance.

Table No. (3) Statistical indicators between strategic foresight in competitive advantage								
Q²	Adj (R2)	(R2)	VI	effect size f2	P Values	T	β	Strategic Foresight
0.359	0.627	0.624	1	1.682	0.000	25,708	0.792	

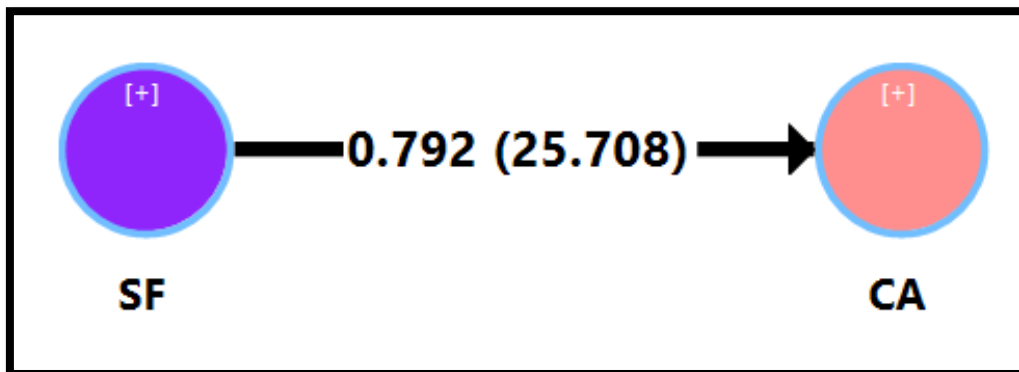


Figure (3) The effect of strategic foresight on competitive advantage

**Second: Test hypotheses between the two dimensions of strategic foresight in competitive advantage**

Table No. (4) and Figure (4) show the statistical indicators among the dimensions of strategic foresight in competitive advantage, as follows:

-shows test values (t) for the dimensions of strategic foresight The two dimensions (environmental monitoring, scenarios) were influential, as the test value reached (6.046, 3.592) respectively, which is greater than the value of (t) the tabular value of (1.984), and this indicates the significance of the marginal slope of the two dimensions (environmental monitoring, scenarios) ) That is, there is a significant effect of a dimension Environmental monitoring and post-scenariosIn the competitive advantage, as for the other dimensions represented (strategic vision),

it can be seen through the values of (The calculated t of (1.876) is smaller than the tabular value of (t) of (1.984). This indicates that the marginal slope of the (strategic vision) has not been found to be significant.

-It is evident from the value of the marginal slope coefficient of the environmental monitoring dimension of (0.502) that an increase in the environmental monitoring dimension by one unit will lead to an increase in (competitive advantage) by (50%).

-It appears through the value of the marginal slope coefficient of the scenario dimension of (0.275) that an increase in the dimension of the scenarios by one unit will lead to an increase in (competitive advantage) by (27%).

-It is indicated by the value of the corrected determination coefficient Adjusted ( $R^2$ ) of (0.629) that the dimensions of strategic foresight is able to explain 62% of the changes that occur in (competitive advantage), while the remaining percentage (38%) is dependent on other variables not included in the research model.

-The results show that the effect size ( $f^2$ ) For the environmental monitoring dimension, it was at a medium level, as it recorded its value (0.284) (influential) and it was within the period (0.15 - 0.35), but after the scenarios, it achieved its value of the size of the effect (0.099) and at a small level (influential), as it occurred within the period (0.02 - 0.14). ), after the strategic vision, it achieved its effect value (0.028) and at a small (non-influential) level, as it fell within the period (0.02 - 0.14).

-The results showed that the predictive relationship index ( $Q^2$ ) reached a value of (0.365), which is greater than zero and therefore the model has a predictive link.

-The results showed that the inflation factor of the variance is (VIF)) has achieved its value of (2.458, 1.456, 2.104), respectively, which is less than (5) and indicates the absence of the problem of multi-linearity between dimensions.

Table No. (4) Statistical indicators between the dimensions of strategic foresight together in competitive advantage

$Q^2$	Adj $d$ ( $R^2$ )	( $R^2$ )	VI	effect size $f^2$	the decision	P Values	T	$\beta$	Dimensions of strategic foresight
0.365	0.629	0.639	2.458	0.284	impressive	0.000	6.046	0.502	environmental monitoring
			1.456	0.028	ineffective	0.075	1.876	0.122	strategic vision
			2.104	0.099	impressive	0.000	3.592	0.275	Scenarios

Source: program SmartPls V.3.3.3.9

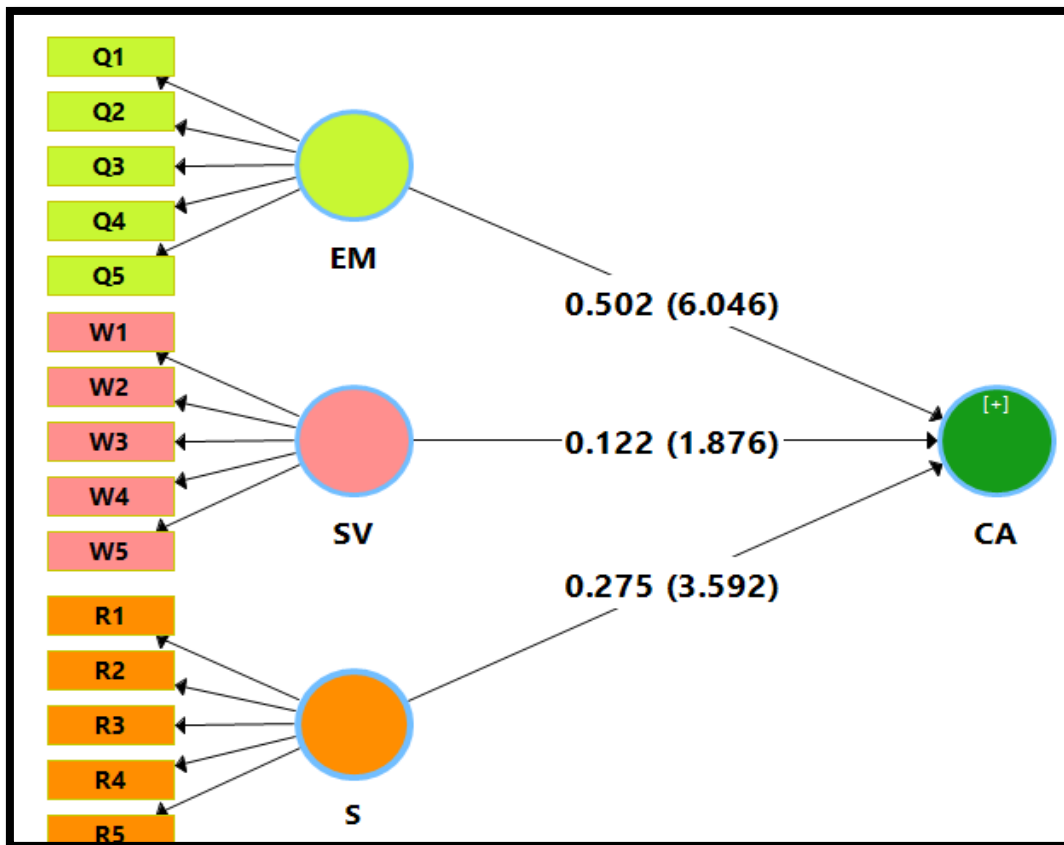


Figure (4) The impact of strategic foresight dimensions on competitive advantage

### Conclusions

- 1- The results showed that the colleges identify and collect information related to the environmental variables that affect the institution and use it in determining the future course of action.
- 2- The results indicated that all private colleges have an actual interest in the strategic vision process, as they all have a future direction.
- 3- Faculties are interested in developing scenarios that are possible or likely to occur, as they strive to develop scenarios and paths that can lead to this future situation.
- 4- The results indicated that the colleges encourage the establishment of discussion seminars among employees to invest their intellectual energies in the fields of knowledge.

## Recommendations

- 1- The necessity of creating an administrative formation (division, unit) concerned with information on the external environment to be supportive of strategic foresight operations.
- 2- The researcher recommends that all employees in private colleges (faculty leaders, teachers, employees) should be familiarized with the strategic vision of the college, from which the vision of the college and the vision of the scientific departments are produced to be a reference to guide the workers in the course of their work.
- 3- It is necessary to develop a number of scenarios (alternative plans) in the face of potential environmental changes that help colleges to cope with crises.

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