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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR NISSAN MOTOR CO. LTD: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES IN A COMPETITIVE AUTOMOTIVE LANDSCAPE

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Abstract. This study presents a comprehensive analysis of Nissan Motor Co. Ltd.'s strategic management plan amidst the evolving challenges of the automotive industry. The primary focus centers on the need for Nissan to navigate a competitive landscape characterized by technological disruption, shifting consumer preferences toward electric vehicles (EVs), and stringent environmental regulations. Employing a synergistic approach, the research integrates two analytical frameworks: SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis and PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal) analysis. The methodology involves extensive qualitative and quantitative research, leveraging industry reports, corporate documents, and academic literature to contextualize Nissan's strategic position. The investigation delineates Nissan's internal and external environments, demonstrating how external factors such as political instability and economic fluctuations – exemplified by recent supply chain disruptions and impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic – affect its operational efficacy. Concurrently, the analysis reveals internal challenges relative to corporate governance and historical management controversies that have influenced stakeholder trust. Through SWOT analysis, the study identifies Nissan's robust brand equity and commitment to innovation as significant strengths, while financial vulnerabilities and operational disruptions emerge as pressing weaknesses. Informed by the findings, this essay articulates actionable strategic recommendations designed to fortify Nissan's market position and enhance its competitive advantage. Key recommendations propose strengthened investments in research and development (R&D) focused on electric mobility, eco-friendly technologies, and initiatives aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of cultivating stakeholder relationships and ethical corporate governance as essential elements in rebuilding public trust and enhancing reputation. Fundamentally, this investigation underscores the dual necessity of responding to external market dynamics while redefining internal operational frameworks to sustain long-term growth in an increasingly competitive automotive environment. By aligning its strategic objectives with evolving consumer trends and ecological mandates, Nissan can reposition itself as a leader in the global automotive sector, embodying both economic viability and social responsibility in its journey forward.

Keywords: Nissan Motor Co. Ltd, strategic management, PESTEL analysis, SWOT analysis, electric vehicles, market position, management style, innovation, sustainability.

JEL Classification: L62, M10, O32, O33

Introduction

As one of the prominent global players in the automotive industry, Nissan Motor Co. Ltd faces a spectrum of challenges and opportunities amid a rapidly transforming landscape. The automotive sector is experiencing disruptive changes driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer preferences, and increasing regulatory scrutiny on environmental compliance. This dynamic environment demands a strategic management plan that encompasses not only the existing operational capabilities of Nissan but also a forward-looking approach that aligns with emerging market trends, particularly in electric mobility and sustainable practices.

Central to Nissan's enduring success is its ability to navigate external factors categorized under the PESTEL framework – Political, Economic,

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Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal influences. Political uncertainties, such as fluctuating trade regulations and government tariffs, can directly impact Nissan's cost structures and operational efficiency, particularly regarding vehicle exports and imports of raw materials. Economically, the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled vulnerabilities within the global automotive supply chain while simultaneously emphasizing the necessity for agility and resilience in business operations. Social factors, including the growing consumer demand for electric and hybrid vehicles driven by an increasing awareness of climate change, necessitate that Nissan adapt its product offerings effectively to meet evolving consumer expectations.

Technological advancements, exemplified by the burgeoning growth of electric vehicles (EVs), represent both a significant opportunity and a challenge for Nissan. As global sales of EVs continue to proliferate, Nissan must leverage its research and development capabilities to innovate and enhance its electrification strategies. Environmental pressures necessitate that the company uphold stringent emission standards and invest comprehensively in eco-friendly technologies to contribute to the overarching goal of carbon neutrality by 2050.

In light of these considerations and often-fractured public perception following controversies surrounding its leadership, Nissan's strategic management plan must also focus on restoring stakeholder trust and enhancing corporate governance. This includes addressing internal weaknesses, such as recent financial setbacks and supply chain disruptions, while harnessing strengths – namely, Nissan's robust brand equity and commitment to innovation.

This essay proposes a detailed strategic management plan using SWOT analysis to provide actionable recommendations that address Nissan's challenges and leverage its strengths. By fortifying the company's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and ethical practices, this strategic roadmap aims to position Nissan for sustained growth and competitive advantage in the evolving automotive landscape. Through the successful execution of this plan, Nissan can aspire to reclaim its standing as a leader in the global automotive arena, driving progress towards a future that embraces both economic viability and social responsibility.

External Environment Analysis (PESTEL)

Political:

A shift in political landscape can lead to changes in regulations, affecting Nissan's ability to import or export, engage in research and development, and manufacture vehicles. According to Dabla-Norris E. and Duval R. (2016), changes in trade regulations can affect the free flow of products across borders.

For instance, higher import duties or stringent non-tariff barriers might restrict Nissan's exports, decreasing revenue and impacting it is competitive advantage.

Protectionist measures such as imposing tariffs create additional costs for Nissan. According to Kee & Nicita (2018), tariffs on imported steel and aluminum under Trump administration had negative impacts on the auto industry worldwide. Government policies on environmental protection, and carbon emissions can affect Nissan's manufacturing process. As per D'Amato et al. (2017), the introduction of stricter emission regulations in Europe forced many automakers, including Nissan, to invest more in the development of ecofriendly vehicles. Political instability in a particular region can disrupt Nissan's operations. For example, the Brexit uncertainty created logistical and operational problems for Nissan due to the potential imposition of tariffs and border checks (Protts, 2017).

Economical:

According to Fiscal Year 2020 first-quarter financial results, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a substantial decline in global total automotive industry volume and Nissan's sales results. The first quarter saw a precipitous drop of 44.5% to 12.49 million cars in the global industry volume. Nissan's global sales plummeted by 47.7% to 643,000 vehicles compared to the previous year. The pandemic led to unprecedented disruptions, including a significant decline in production and sales across major markets, including Japan, China, North America, and Europe.

One of the most important economic factor which influence on Nissan are exchange rates. For example, the recent depreciation pressure on the Chinese yuan against the US dollar has raised concerns about its impact on businesses operating in global automotive markets, including Nissan (Reuters, September 19, 2023). The yuan has experienced a decline of more than

5% against the US dollar year-to-date, making it one of the worst performing Asian currencies in 2023 (Reuters, September 19, 2023). This depreciation can affect Nissan's business in China, as it may lead to higher costs for importing components and materials from other countries, including those priced in US dollars (Reuters, September 19, 2023).

Social factors:

Changing consumer preferences and the aging population have impact on Nissan's business operations and automobile industry. As society becomes more aware of environmental issues, there is a growing demand for electric and hybrid vehicles (AutoTech Insider, 2021). Nissan has focused on developing electric car models, such as the widely successful Nissan Leaf, to cater to this evolving worldwide consumer preference (Nissan, 2020). The aging population has caused a significant demographic shift in the worldwide automotive industry, leading to a greater emphasis on safety, comfort, and convenience for older drivers. In response to this shift, the automotive industry including Nissan has been focused on developing new technologies and designs that cater to the needs of older drivers, including integrating features like blind-spot detection, lane departure warning systems, and automatic emergency braking and push to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, with advancements in adaptive equipment and modified vehicles to accommodate those with limited mobility (AutoTech Insider, 2021). Another important factor is urbanization. For example: the growing urban population is estimated to drive the motor vehicle market size at a CAGR of 6.3% between 2022 and 2027 (Technavio, 2023).

Technological:

The global shift in the auto industry toward electric vehicles has also impacted Nissan. According to Statista, the steady annual growth rate (CAGR 2024-2028) of 9.82% further underscores the increasing demand and adoption of EVs in the global market. This growth is expected to lead to a projected market volume of US$906.7bn by 2028, with unit sales of EVs anticipated to reach 17.07m vehicles (Open Market Insights, 2025). Following a global trend, Nissan is investing 2 trillion yen over the next five years to accelerate electrification plans. This ambitious investment will pave the way for the launch of 23 exciting new electrified models, including 15 new electric vehicles (EVs), with a goal of achieving 50% electrification by fiscal year 2030 (Nissan, 2021).

According to research paper (Chai, T.Y. and Nizam, I., 2021), the introduction of artificial intelligence has a huge impact on the automotive industry and is another global factor. For example, the introduction of an artificial intelligence assessment system at the Nissan Oppama plant allows the quality of various parts of the car to be checked with an exceptional degree of accuracy, to be exact with an impressive accuracy of 99.995 percent (Nissan, 2022. AI technology).

Environmental:

The external environmental factor of emission and pollution targets has a significant impact on NISSAN and the automobile industry as a whole, particularly in relation to Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. CAFE standards have been enacted by Congress to reduce energy consumption by increasing the fuel economy of cars and light trucks, with the goal of improving energy security, saving consumers money at the pump, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2014). For example, Nissan has been working on improving the efficiency of their engines and continuously searching for ways to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. They have implemented technologies such as continuously variable transmissions (CVT) and improved engine designs to increase fuel efficiency while maintaining performance (Nissan Motor Corporation, 2014). Nissan has been working on improving engines, such as giving cylinder interiors mirror-like smoothness to reduce friction and improve combustion efficiency through exhaust gas recirculation (Nissan Motor Corporation, 2014). These efforts align with the CAFE standards and demonstrate Nissan's commitment to meeting emission and pollution targets.

Legal:

Current Laws and Regulations: Nissan must remain compliant with laws and regulations to maintain market position. This includes factors: safety standards, emissions regulations, labor laws, and intellectual property regulations. Nissan must ensure that vehicles meet the necessary safety regulations set by the governments of the countries it operates in. For example, in the United States, Nissan must comply with the

safety standards set by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). This includes requirements for airbags, seat belts, crash test ratings, and other safety features (NHTSA, 2023). Nissan must comply with the emissions regulations set by different countries to ensure that its vehicles do not contribute excessively to pollution. For example, in Europe, Nissan needs to meet the Euro 6 emissions standards that limit the amount of carbon dioxide and other pollutants emitted by vehicles (European Union Emissions regulations, 2024). Laws relating to minimum wage, working hours, employee benefits, and workplace safety must be strictly followed. Violations of labor laws can result in legal consequences and damage the company's reputation in the market (Watts, 2022). Nissan must protect own intellectual property. For instance, trademark and copyright laws protect Nissan's brand and prevent unauthorized use of logos and designs. Patent laws safeguard the company's innovative technologies and prevent others from copying or using them without permission (Morales, 2023).

SWOT analysis:

According to Statista Nissan Market Data&Analysis (2023), **Nissan's strength** lies in its significant global market share 5.50%, which is the result of its strategic alliances and partnerships with other companies. Nissan servings customers in more than 160 countries through approximately 10,000 dealers (Nissan Sustainability report, 2006). For example, the RenaultNissan-Mitsubishi alliance allowed Nissan to expand its market presence and penetrate various regions (Latin America, India, Europe) of the world. Nissan has also demonstrated resilience in increasing customer loyalty thanks to its reputation for providing reliable and long-lasting vehicles. According to Repairpal.com (2023), Nissan has a reliability rating of 4.0 out of 5.0, ranking 9th out of 32 car brands. This has also led to the creation of a strong brand image, which further strengthens its position in the market. The company has a strong brand image and a loyal customer base, supported by a diverse workforce that brings innovative ideas and perspectives to the organization. According to Scholz, J. & Smith, A. (2019), an organization's brand image and customer loyalty are critical factors in sustaining a competitive advantage in the automotive industry. Nissan has consistently invested in R&D, leading to a high number of patents and trademarks, which have enabled the company to develop innovative products and technologies (Daiko, Dernis, Dosso, Gkotsis, Squicciarini, Vezzani, 2017). One of Nissan's key R&D initiatives is its investment in China, where the company has established a new passenger vehicle R&D center in Guangzhou City (Nissan, 2003. R&D Investment). This center focus on localizing models for the Chinese market and leveraging Nissan's global R&D technologies to maintain quality while reducing costs (Nissan, 2003. R&D Investment).

Despite these strengths, Nissan also faces **internal weaknesses** that hinder its performance in the market. The company has experienced financial challenges in recent years, resulting in a weakened financial position and reduced investment capacity for innovation and expansion (Financial Information as of March 31, Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. 2023). The company's stock plummeted following a disappointing Q3 2023 earnings report, as it continues to face supply chain disruptions, the global semiconductor shortage, and increasing competition. This "storm" of challenges has resulted in a 35% drop in vehicle sales in China, exacerbating Nissan's financial woes (Lampinen, 2024).

Nissan operates in a highly competitive and dynamic industry, facing various **opportunities and threats**. The company has the opportunity to increase its market share by capitalizing on emerging worldwide trends such as electric vehicles and autonomous driving technology. As an example, one may consider a great success of Nissan with its electric flagman LEAF. With over 500,000 units sold worldwide, the LEAF has prevented more than 3 billion kg of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere, a testament to its contribution to a cleaner and healthier planet (Quatro Rodas, 2021). Renault-Nissan has outlined an ambitious vision for the future, announcing their goal to sell 5 million electric vehicles annually by the year 2030 (Critical Reports, 2021). But these opportunities are coupled with threats: intense competition and regulatory changes that could impact the company's growth prospects (Pereira, Pinto, Costa, Dias, Gonçalves, 2021). For example, as a result of intense competition, Japanese automakers are rapidly losing the Chinese market to their Chinese competitors: Japan's top six automakers,

including Nissan, lost 19.9% of their Chinese market. The everchanging Chinese automotive market necessitates that all participants swiftly respond to the evolving tastes of their clientele, said Eric

Han, a senior manager at Suolei, an advisory firm in Shanghai (REN, D., 2023). He commented that Japanese automakers are falling behind their Chinese competitors in the production of electric vehicles, which are currently experiencing increased demand. Several strategic implications based on the findings of the SWOT analysis. The company can leverage its strong brand image and loyal customer base to overcome financial challenges and invest in innovative technologies and sustainable practices to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the automotive market. As an example, Nissan may significantly benefit on expanding of its successful electric flagman LEAF. The company has to concentrate on creating of exclusive post-sell services and finally realize its ambitious plan to sell 5 million units of this car.

In recent years, Nissan has faced many challenges that have significantly impacted the company's performance and reputation. With falling sales, the Covid-19 crisis, leadership turmoil and a tarnished image from the Carlos Ghosn scandal, the company must rethink its strategy and make difficult decisions about its future direction (Nissan, Long-term vision, 2021). Firstly, it is fundamentally important for a company not to make mistakes with the personnel of its top management – there is no more room for mistakes. In addition, Nissan should focus on its proven track record of successful innovation, especially in the area of electric vehicles. As if to reinforce this recommendation, Nissan has announced a new strategic direction that includes significant investment in electrified mobility, a focus on innovation and a commitment to sustainability. The company plans to invest 2 trillion yen over the next five years to accelerate the development of electrified mobility with a variety of choices and experiences. This includes the introduction of 27 new electrified models, with the goal of achieving 55% electrification share of the Nissan and INFINITI brands globally by fiscal year 2030. This demonstrates a commitment to differentiation through innovation and a commitment to meeting diverse customer needs by offering a wide range of electrified vehicles. In terms of long-term direction, Nissan must continue to prioritize electrified mobility and focus on innovation to differentiate itself in the market. The company should also expand its sustainability efforts and consider partnerships and collaborations to drive growth and achieve its longterm vision of carbon neutrality. This will help Nissan stay ahead of the competition and meet growing consumer needs as the auto industry continues to shift toward electrification. Nissan must also continue to invest in research and development to bring exciting new electrified vehicles to market. This will allow the company to remain at the forefront of innovation and maintain a competitive advantage in the rapidly evolving automotive industry. The company must prioritize infrastructure and technology development to support widespread adoption of electric vehicles, such as charging stations and advances in battery technology. The company's reputation has been damaged in recent years, and it will take time and effort to restore it. This will require a focus on transparency, ethics, and a commitment to quality and customer satisfaction. By demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical business practices and prioritizing customer needs, Nissan can restore its reputation and regain consumer trust.

In the past, Nissan has had managers with varying management styles.

According to Millikin, J.P. and Fu, D. (2005), under the leadership of Carlos Ghosn, the company experienced a period of significant growth and expansion. Ghosn's management style was characterized by his strong, decisive leadership and his ability to quickly make tough decisions to turn the company around in times of crisis (IvyPanda, 2023). One such decision was his bold move to close five of Nissan's 47 plants worldwide, reducing its manufacturing capacity by 20%. This was a controversial decision at the time, but it ultimately allowed the company to focus on improving the efficiency and quality of its remaining operations (Yukl, 2025). As a result, Nissan was able to streamline its production processes, reduce costs, and improve its overall performance. But his tenure also had its challenges, he faced legal issues and accusations of financial misconduct (according to McCurry, J. And agencies, 2018). In contrast, the current CEO of NISSAN, Makoto Uchida, has emphasized the importance of a collaborative and inclusive management style (ESG data

book Nissan Motor Corporation, 2023). He has focused on rebuilding trust within the company and promoting a culture of transparency and teamwork. This shift towards a more inclusive management style reflects a growing awareness of the importance of diversity in the workforce, and its potential benefits for the company's success. According to Interview with Uchida M. (2020) emphasizes the importance of profitability in the rapidly expanding market for electric vehicles (EVs). He envisions a significant increase in the electrified vehicle ratio in various regions by 2023 and acknowledges the role of the Alliancein lowering the high costs associated with EVs.

One way that practising managers can address key strategic issues is by improving diversity in the workforce. Research by McKinsey Dixon-Fyle S., Dolan K., Hunt D.V. and Prince S. (2020) has consistently shown that diverse teams are more innovative, make better decisions, and are more profitable. By hiring, retaining, and promoting a diverse workforce, NISSAN can benefit from a range of perspectives and experiences. That can help drive the company forward. A diverse workforce can also better represent the diverse customer base of Nissan, allowing the company to better understand and cater to the needs of customers. To achieve this, practising managers can implement strategies such as targeted recruitment efforts, mentorship programmes for underrepresented groups, and diversity training for all employees. These initiatives can help create a more inclusive and equitable work environment, where individuals from diverse backgrounds feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives. In terms of leadership style and organizational structure, there are several approaches that can be useful for the implementation of future strategies at Nissan. According to Chaturvedi, V. (2013) transformational leadership, for example, can inspire and motivate employees to embrace change and work towards the company's vision. This leadership style emphasizes communication, collaboration, and a focus on long-term goals, aligning with NISSAN's current emphasis on inclusivity and teamwork. For instance, a flat organizational structure can promote agility and innovation within the company. By decentralizing decision-making and empowering employees at all levels, Nissan can capitalize on the diverse talents and expertise of its workforce. This approach can foster a more entrepreneurial spirit and encourage employees to take ownership of their work, leading to greater creativity and responsiveness to market changes.

Conclusion

Nissan Motor Co. Ltd operates in a highly complex and dynamic automotive industry. They are facing various challenges and opportunities in the external and internal environment. To navigate these factors effectively, the company must develop a strategic management plan tailored to its unique circumstances. This plan should take into consideration the impact of trade policies, tariffs, political instability, and economic factors on its operations.

Nissan must capitalize on changing consumer preferences and demographic trends, particularly in the demand for electric and hybrid vehicles. The company also needs to remain compliant with laws and regulations, protect its intellectual property, and leverage its alliances and partnerships for sustained growth. Nissan must address internal weaknesses, such as financial challenges, value creation processes, and post-sales services, while capitalizing on its strengths, such as its strong brand image and loyal customer base. It is paramount for Nissan to prioritize electric vehicle technology, innovation, and sustainability in its longterm strategic direction. The company should also focus on rebuilding its reputation through ethical business practices, quality products, and customer satisfaction, while embracing a collaborative and inclusive management style. By doing so, Nissan can overcome its challenges and maintain a competitive edge in the automotive industry.

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