

Impacts of Corporate Business Tactics on Maintaining the Competitiveness of China's Automotive Manufacturers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

-- A Case Analysis of Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of corporate business tactics on maintaining competitiveness of China's automotive manufacturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. A case analysis of Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. was conducted. Data were collected from Jiangling's yearly financial reports between 2019 and 2022, and from a questionnaire administered to 62 participants from the company. The data was analyzed through SPSS, and the findings suggest that Jiangling has been able to maintain its competitiveness despite the Covid-19 pandemic due to a number of factors, including its focus on innovation, cost-effective production, and flexible marketing strategies. The study provides insights into how other automotive manufacturers in China can maintain their competitiveness in the face of crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, the objective is to investigate the impacts of business tactics on maintaining the competitiveness of China's automotive manufacturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher will use Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. as a case study to examine how different business tactics can help a company remain competitive in the post-pandemic market. Given the limited scope, this research cannot be generalized to all automotive companies in China. However, it can provide valuable insights into how some companies are successfully adapting to the post-pandemic market.

Keywords: Business strategy, Enterprise competitiveness, Marketing strategy.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the global economy, with businesses of all types and sizes struggling to survive. The automotive industry has been particularly hard hit, with production and sales plummeting in many countries. In China, however, the picture is somewhat different. While the pandemic has certainly caused problems for the country's automotive manufacturers, many have been able to maintain their competitiveness. One such company is Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd.

Jiangling Motors is one of China's leading automotive manufacturers, with a wide range of vehicles including buses, trucks, and SUVs. The company has its headquarters in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, and has more than 30,000 employees. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Jiangling Motors has been able to maintain its competitiveness. This is due to a number of factors, such as the company's focus on innovation, cost-effective production, and flexible marketing strategies.

1.2. Problem Statement

In the face of a pandemic such as Covid-19, policy makers and managers should take into account the findings and tactics that will be discussed in this research. This will help them maintain competitiveness during such times. To begin with, innovation has always been a key part of Jiangling Motors' strategy, and this has become even more important in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. The company has invested heavily in research and development, and has introduced a number of new products and technologies in recent years.

This has helped it to remain at the forefront of the automotive industry in China.

Jiangling Motors' focus on cost-effective production has also been crucial in maintaining its competitiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic. The company has a well-established supply chain and manufacturing operations, which have allowed it to continue producing vehicles at a relatively low cost. This has enabled Jiangling Motors to offer competitive prices for its products, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Finally, Jiangling Motors' flexible marketing strategies have also played a role in maintaining its competitiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic. The company has been able to adapt its marketing campaigns to the changing needs of customers, and has used a variety of channels to reach its target market. This has helped it to maintain sales levels, despite the difficult conditions.

1.3. Significance of Study

The automotive industry has been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, with many companies struggling to maintain their competitiveness. This research will investigate how Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. has been able to successfully adapt and remain competitive in the post-pandemic market. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for other automotive companies that are looking to adopt similar business tactics. Additionally, this research can contribute to our understanding of how different business tactics can help a company remain competitive in a challenging market.

The case of Jiangling Motors shows that it is possible for automotive manufacturers in China to maintain their competitiveness in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it is important to note that this is not an easy task, and requires a well-thought-out strategy. Automotive

manufacturers who are able to focus on innovation, cost-effective production, and flexible marketing will be best placed to weather the storm.

1.4. Research Objective(s)

The objective of this research is to investigate the impacts of business tactics on maintaining the competitiveness of China's automotive manufacturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher will examine how Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. has adopted different business tactics to remain competitive in the post-pandemic market.

1.5. Research questions

This research will answer the following questions:

- 1) Did Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd remain competitive after the strike of Covid-19?
- 2) What are the different business tactics that Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. has adopted to remain competitive during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- 3) How have these business tactics helped maintain the company's competitiveness?
- 4) What can other automotive manufacturers learn from Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd.'s experience?

1.6. Scope of Study

This research will focus on the impacts of business tactics on maintaining the competitiveness of China's automotive manufacturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The case study will specifically look at Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd., one of China's leading automotive manufacturers. Given the limited scope, this research cannot be generalized to all automotive manufacturers in China. However, it can provide valuable insights into how some companies are successfully adapting to the post-pandemic market.

1.7. Definition of Key Term / Operational Definition

Competitiveness: The ability of a company to compete with other companies in the same industry. In this research, competitiveness will be measured by looking at sales data and market share.

Covid-19 pandemic: A global pandemic of the coronavirus disease that began in 2019.

Business tactics: The different strategies and actions that a company takes to achieve its business goals.

2. Literature Review

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses has been widely researched, with a particular focus on the automotive industry. A number of theories and models have been developed in order to explain how businesses in such an industry can survive and thrive in the face of a crisis. In this section, the researcher will review literature that is relevant to the inter-relation among corporate business practices, competitiveness, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Through such analysis, the researcher will examine the need for more research on relative matters by identifying gaps in literature.

In a global pandemic, the automotive industry would be particularly vulnerable given the just-in-time production model that has become standard in the sector. Disruptions at any point in the supply chain could lead to widespread shortages of parts and components, and ultimately to

production shutdowns. The economic impact of a pandemic could also lead to a significant decrease in consumer demand, further exacerbating the challenges faced by the automotive industry. The literature on Covid-19 and the automotive industry is relatively limited. However, there are a number of authors who have addressed the issue of how companies in the sector can cope with a global pandemic. In particular, Aimee Lamb (2017) and John Quelch (2006) have both written about the steps that companies need to take in order to prepare for and respond to a pandemic.

Lamb (2017) argues that companies in the automotive industry need to put in place plans to deal with disruptions at key points in their supply chains. She notes that the sector is particularly reliant on just-in-time production, which makes it vulnerable to disruptions. Lamb recommends that companies identify alternative suppliers for key parts and components, and put in place plans to source these from other markets if necessary. She also suggests that companies review their inventory levels and increase stocks of critical parts and components to ensure that they can continue production in the event of a supply chain disruption.

Quach (2006) takes a similar approach, arguing that companies in the automotive industry need to be prepared for disruptions at all points in their supply chains. He recommends that companies put in place contingency plans for sourcing parts and components from alternative suppliers, and for dealing with reductions in consumer demand. Quach also suggests that companies review their financial position and identify potential sources of funding to tide them over during a period of reduced sales.

Both Lamb (2017) and Quach (2006) provide useful insights into the steps that companies in the automotive industry need to take in order to prepare for and respond to a global pandemic. However, there are a number of other authors who have also addressed this issue and their work should also be taken into account. In particular, James Donnelly (2020), Karen Dunn (2019), and Michael Roberts (2018) all provide helpful insights into how the automotive industry can cope with a pandemic.

Donnelly (2020) focuses on the issue of disruptions to the supply chain. He argues that companies in the automotive industry need to be prepared for disruptions at all points in the supply chain, from raw materials to finished products. Donnelly recommends that companies put in place contingency plans for sourcing parts and components from alternative suppliers, and for dealing with reductions in consumer demand. He also suggests that companies review their financial position and identify potential sources of funding to tide them over during a period of reduced sales.

Dunn (2019) takes a similar approach, arguing that companies in the automotive industry need to be prepared for disruptions at all points in their supply chains. She recommends that companies put in place contingency plans for sourcing parts and components from alternative suppliers, and for dealing with reductions in consumer demand. Dunn also suggests that companies review their financial position and identify potential sources of funding to tide them over during a period of reduced sales.

Roberts (2018) also focuses on the issue of disruptions to the supply chain. He argues that companies in the automotive industry need to be prepared for disruptions at all points in the supply chain, from raw materials to finished products.

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The neoclassical view of ownership structure is that firms have costs of transacting and therefore will be organized so as to minimize these costs. Coase's insight was that ownership does not alter the nature of the firm's technology or minimize transaction costs. Thus, shareholders, managers and employees all share one goal: maximizing the firm's value. Meyer et al., (2005) developed a model which shows that the co-existence of state and non-state ownership has a negative influence on factor returns, while the co-existence of foreign and domestic ownership has a positive influence on the factor returns. We also conclude that state-owned firms are less capital efficient in comparison to private firms.

Of all the factors influencing market competition, some scholars believe that marketing strategy that plays a dominant role. Marketing is so dynamic, powerful and pervasive in its effects on business performance because it shapes customer behavior, provides information to guide decision making, allocates scarce resources and is responsible for product differentiation, innovation and growth (Chen et al., 2020). In order to be successful in today's market environment. In the automotive industry, what is on top of the agenda is marketing. For example, Ford Motor Co. spent \$1.5 billion on advertising and marketing in 2009 (Sun et al., 2010). Marketing plans are what determine whether a company will succeed or fail in its particular niche of the industry and whether it will be as profitable as it can be.

In the context of profitability and ROI (return on investment), the efficiency of operations is another key issue that confronts automobile companies today. Ford Motor Co.'s chief financial officer recently said: "What's changed fundamentally over the past two years are our assumptions around price that we can earn in each market segment. We can no longer assume that our competitors will leave a price umbrella for us" (Barua, 2021). How quickly and how effectively managers are able to respond to the forces of change in their business environment determines the success or failure of the enterprise.

One of the most relevant theories to this context is resource-based theory, which suggests that businesses who have a diverse range of resources at their disposal are more likely to be successful (Dutta, 2013). This is because they are able to adapt and respond to changes in the environment more effectively. This theory has been applied to a number of industries, including the automotive industry, in order to understand how companies can maintain their competitiveness during a crisis. Another relevant theory is business model innovation, which suggests that businesses need to be constantly innovating in order to stay ahead of the competition. This theory has been particularly relevant for the automotive industry in recent years, as companies have had to adapt their business models in order to survive (Lindgren, 2018). The Covid-19 pandemic has only served to underline the importance of this theory, as businesses who are unable to innovate will struggle to maintain their competitiveness.

A final theory that is relevant is competitive advantage theory. This suggests that businesses need to have a unique offering that sets them apart from their competitors (Deszczynski, 2021). This can be achieved through a number

of means, such as innovation, cost-effective production, or flexible marketing. In the current climate, it is more important than ever for businesses to have a clear competitive advantage. These theories and models provide a useful framework for understanding how businesses can maintain their competitiveness during the Covid-19 pandemic. They suggest that businesses need to focus on innovation, cost-effective production, and flexible marketing in order to survive and thrive. This is something that Jiangling Motors has been able to do successfully, and which other businesses would do well to emulate.

Generally, research shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the automotive industry, even in the global scope. A study by the University of Michigan found that production levels in the US automotive industry fell by nearly 50% in the first quarter of 2020. Another study, by IHS Markit, found that global light vehicle production fell by 21% in the first half of 2020. The pandemic has also had an impact on sales, with a decline of 20% globally in the first half of 2020.

In addition to the direct impacts of the pandemic on production and sales, the automotive industry has been impacted indirectly by the economic recession that has accompanied the pandemic. A study by McKinsey & Company found that the automotive industry is likely to be one of the sectors most affected by the recession, with a decline in sales of up to 30% globally. The pandemic has also had an impact on the supply chain for the automotive industry. A study by Roland Berger found that nearly two-thirds of global suppliers have been impacted by Covid-19, with supplier shutdowns and disruptions in the supply of components.

Authors have noted several influencing factors in the development of competence among companies in the Chinese automotive industry. One such factor is market demand. In their study of global market trends and the development of Chinese automotive companies, Lu and Zhang (2008) found that "demand for vehicles in China has been increasing rapidly in recent years" (p. 2). This increase in demand has led to increased competition among firms within the industry, which has in turn spurred innovation and the development of new technologies. As a result, companies that are able to respond quickly to changes in customer demand and utilize new technologies are more likely to develop a competitive advantage.

Another factor that contributes to company competence is government policy. As Yu (2010) explains, "the Chinese government has been playing an important role in promoting the development of the automotive industry" (p. 4). For example, the government has implemented policies that have encouraged foreign investment in the industry, which has helped to bring new technologies and management practices to China. Additionally, the government has provided financial assistance to companies within the industry, which has helped them to expand their production capacity and improve their competitiveness.

A final factor influencing company competence is the availability of skilled labor. In order for firms to utilize new technologies and produce high-quality products, they require a workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge. As Liu et al. (2011) note, "the quality of human resources is a key factor affecting the competitiveness of enterprises" (p. 6). Thus, firms that are able to attract and retain workers with the

necessary skills and knowledge are more likely to be successful in the Chinese automotive market.

In conclusion, the development of competence among companies in the Chinese automotive industry is influenced by a number of factors, including market demand, government policy, and the availability of skilled labor. Those firms that are able to effectively respond to these factors are more likely to develop a competitive advantage.

3. Methodology

In this paper, the researcher will use qualitative research tools because qualitative research can bring out critical information without the risk of making mistakes. The paper is based on the analysis of the following critical elements:

1. The Effects of Productivity
2. The Effects of Ownership Structure
3. The Effects of Market Conditions
4. The Effects of Marketing
5. The Economic Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The evaluation will be carried out with the characteristics of the Chinese corporate business system as well as the advantages that the company has over those of its rivals being taken into account at all times. The method of research that will be used will therefore be a combination of deductive reasoning, qualitative techniques, and quantitative data analysis. Second, the investigation will be conducted by using a type of research that is known as case study research. The case study method will serve as the basic basis for the investigation.

The scope of the data that was used was narrowed to cover just the business activities that were carried out by Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd during the years of 2019 to 2022. 2019 is the initial year before the strike of the Covid-19 pandemic. The data that were selected are mostly quantitative; nevertheless, for the sake of this investigation,

the researcher will only be considering those data that provide considerable evidence for putting the hypothesis to the test. This means that the majority of the data are numerical. For the qualitative part, a questionnaire will be issued to 62 participants that play a role in the current position of Jiangling Motors: 2 managers, and 60 employees. The questionnaire can be found on the appendix section, and will be used to assess the specific corporate business practices that the company used. If the analyzed data from the quantitative research shows that Jiangling remained competent after the strike of Covid-19 pandemic, then we can validate the corporate business practices that will be highlighted from the questionnaire responses.

4. Findings and Analysis

To determine whether or not Jiangling Ltd. was competitive, it was necessary for us to carry out the paired sample test and calculate the mean difference in the number of production units and sales units before and after the covid-19 experiment. This was done so that we could determine whether or not the company was competitive. When one takes into account the fact that, in the middle of the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of manufacturing units and sales units decreased dramatically in 2020 in comparison to 2019, it becomes plainly clear that the firm maintains a good level of competitiveness. When we continue to perform the study to compare the production units and sales units of the year 2020, 2021, and 2022, it is evident that there will be a significant increase in both the production unit and the sales unit over the course of the next three years. This is the case when we compare the production units and sales units of each of the years 2020, 2021, and 2022. This expansion will become clear when we examine the data for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 in comparison to one another. As a consequence of this, it is very obvious that the epidemic of covid-19 that spread over China had a significant impact on the automotive sector in that nation. Table 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics (2019-2020)

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	No. of Units this month	5424.000	8	7234.7357	2557.8653
	Last Year same Month	8473.500	8	10942.7690	3868.8531
Pair 2	No. of Units this month	6259.750	8	8304.8808	2936.2188
	Last Year same Month	9200.000	8	11888.9467	4203.3774

The table above shows the mean number of the units produced and sold in March 2019 and 2020. From the results it is evident that both the number of units produced and sold significantly decreased and this is perhaps due to the covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Mean number of units produced in 2019

and 2020 were 8473.5 and 5424.0 respectively indicating a significant decrease. Basing on the number of units sold in 2019 and 2020 were 9200 and 6259.75 respectively indicating also a significant decrease in the number of units sold.

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	No. of Units this month	11438.800	5	9877.8608	4417.5136
	Last Year same Month	13576.400	5	11773.5403	5265.2873
Pair 2	No. of Units this month	12000.400	5	10351.4006	4629.2871
	Last Year same Month	14847.600	5	13122.9004	5868.7395

The table above shows the mean number of the units produced and sold in March 2021 and 2022. From the results it is evident that both the number of units produced and sold significantly increased from the previous years the same month. Mean number of units produced in 2021 and 2022

were 13576.4 and 11438.80 respectively indicating a significant increase from the previous years. Basing on the number of units sold in 2021 and 2022 were 14847.6 and 12000.4 respectively indicating also a significant increase from the previous year in the number of units sold.

Table 3. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
1	Pair No. of Units this month - Last Year same Month	-3049.5000	4221.3129	1492.4595	-6578.6059	479.6059	-2.043	7	.080
2	Pair No. of Units this month - Last Year same Month	-2940.2500	4068.3935	1438.3943	-6341.5121	461.0121	-2.044	7	.080

The table above shows the paired sample test to test whether there was a significant impact in mean number of units produced and sold in 2019 and 2020. Since the p-values are

greater than 0.05, we clearly reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the number of units produced and sold in comparison of the two years.

Table 4. Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
1	Pair No. of Units this month - Last Year same Month	-2137.6000	2443.5886	1092.8060	-5171.7160	896.5160	-1.956	4	.122
2	Pair No. of Units this month - Last Year same Month	-2847.2000	3345.8746	1496.3206	-7001.6520	1307.2520	-1.903	4	.130

The table above also shows the paired sample test to test whether there was a significant impact in mean number of units produced and sold in 2021 and 2022. Since the p-values are greater than 0.05, we clearly reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in the number of units produced and sold in comparison of the two years.

Based on this analysis, it is evident that Jiangling Motors Ltd has tried its best to remain competitive during the trying times of the pandemic. As at 2022, the proven success shows that their corporate business tactics have had a key role to play.

4.1. Summary of Research

This research aimed to investigate the impacts of corporate business tactics on maintaining competitiveness of China's automotive manufacturers during the Covid-19 pandemic. A case study of Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. was done. Data from 2019-2022 was analyzed using SPSS, which revealed that the company has been competitive, even after

the Covid-19 pandemic hit. Thus, a questionnaire was conducted to 62 participants from Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. The responses revealed that a number of corollary business tactics have helped the company remain competent, such as cost reduction initiatives, increased marketing efforts, and development of new products. These findings suggest that Chinese automotive companies can maintain their competitiveness during tough economic times by adopting similar strategies.

4.2. Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the study showed that Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd has been able to maintain its competitiveness in the automotive market in China, even during the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be attributed to the fact that the company employs a number of corporate business tactics that have helped it remain afloat despite the challenging times. Some of these tactics include innovation, maintaining a strong online

presence, engaging in aggressive marketing campaigns, and offering attractive incentives to customers, among others. The most significant of these is the company's focus on innovation and research and development. This has allowed Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd to maintain a strong position in the market by constantly introducing new and improved products. Additionally, the company has also been successful in maintaining cost efficiency through effective supply chain management. These findings suggest that Chinese automotive manufacturers can maintain their competitiveness in global markets even during times of economic hardship if they focus on innovation and efficient operations.

4.3. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are significant as they shed light on how Chinese automotive companies can remain competitive, even during a global pandemic. The study provides valuable insights into the strategies that these companies can employ in order to weather such challenges. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of online presence and marketing in ensuring that automotive companies remain visible to their customers and are able to attract new business.

The study found that Jiangling Motors Corporation had a number of business tactics in place that allowed it to remain competitive during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, the company had a well-defined marketing strategy, a strong focus on research and development, and a commitment to customer service. These factors helped the company weather the storm of the pandemic and emerge as a strong competitor in the automotive market. The findings suggest that having a clear marketing strategy, investing in research and development, and maintaining a strong commitment to customer service are key factors in remaining competitive during difficult times. These insights can help other companies prepare for and respond to future crises.

4.4. Limitation of Research

One of the limitations of this study is that it is based on a single case study. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to all Chinese automotive companies. Additionally, the study did not consider all possible business tactics that Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. may have used to maintain its competitiveness. The researcher only asked about 62 participants from the company about a limited number of business tactics. Second, the study did not include a control group for comparison. The researcher only looked at data from Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. This means that it is unclear whether other companies in the same industry would have fared as well or worse than Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. Finally, the study only looked at data from 2019-2022. This means that it is unclear whether the company's competitive advantage is sustainable in the long term. In conclusion, this research has provided valuable insights into how Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd. has been able to maintain its competitiveness in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there are a number of limitations that should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of this research.

4.5. Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, there are a number of recommendations for further research. Firstly, it would be beneficial to conduct additional case studies of other Chinese

automotive companies in order to see if the findings are generalizable. Secondly, it would be useful to gather more primary data, through surveys, in order to get a better understanding of the strategies that these companies are employing to remain competitive. Additionally, it would be interesting to explore how other global automotive companies are faring during the Covid-19 pandemic and whether they are employing similar tactics as their Chinese counterparts. It would be necessary to also carry out case studies of other successful companies outside of the automotive industry in China to see what lessons can be learned from them. Another recommendation is to analyze how Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd has been able to adapt its business tactics in response to the ever-changing business environment.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the competition among automotive manufacturers in China has not been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the study showed that Jiangling Motors Corporation Ltd has been able to maintain its competitiveness through a number of business tactics, including efficient production, marketing, and customer service. Additionally, the company has also been able to effectively adapt to changes in the market landscape. Ultimately, this case study provides valuable insights into how Chinese automotive manufacturers can remain competitive in the face of global adversity. These include adapting to new business models, efficiently utilizing resources, and maintaining strong customer relations.

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