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Business Competitiveness Strategies of Tax Consulting Firm amidst Covid-19 Pandemic (Case Study at PT XYZ)

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the competitive strategies of companies in facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic with a case study on a tax consulting firm in Jakarta ("PT XYZ"). PT XYZ was selected because, during the pandemic, it employs even more employees, with the current number of permanent employees above a hundred. We use qualitative methods in conducting this study with data collection through in-depth interviews and analysis techniques using SWOT analysis. This study indicates that it is becoming increasingly critical for organizations to implement a competitiveness plan to deal with the challenges of the coming years. Digital marketing development should be prioritized in competitive plans to ensure survival and ultimate success, especially for PT XYZ and other tax consulting firms in a similar circumstance. This study contributes to establishing a foundation for organizations to become more resilient by transforming threats they face into opportunities for growth.

Keywords: business competitiveness; tax consulting firm; Covid-19

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has begun to spread from Wuhan, China, to the rest of the world since the end of 2019. Given the Covid-19 pandemic affecting world countries globally, various countries' response to this pandemic also varies. However, most of the responses combined direct acceleration of fiscal spending and liquidity support for many businesses or institutions affected by Covid-19 (Jose et al., 2021). Not only governments that are required to maintain their existence in the face of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, but the business environment also faces similar challenges and demands. The pandemic has forced everyone, including citizens, businesses, and governments, to make decisions under

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uncertainty and ignorance. It has resulted in millions of people losing their jobs or in short-term work arrangements, millions more experiencing economic hardship, and many businesses that are severely hurt and threatened with bankruptcy. In the face of pandemics and lockdown, national governments worldwide have delivered billions of euros of economic stimulus packages to support businesses and workers to exclude fiscal rulebooks (Alm et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, as reported by the IMF (2021), the government spending package until the end of 2020 for non-health is IDR 252.2 trillion to support the tourism sector and low-income households, increase benefits, and social safety nets. The government's economic stimulus, which impacted forgone revenue, amounted to IDR 96.3 trillion in the form of a fiscal package such as tax cuts, exemptions from income tax for employees in many sectors, and the reduction in Corporate Income Tax (PPh) rates. In addition, the government accelerates spending through refunding Value Added Tax (VAT) and suspends revenues by postponing corporate tax payments from April-September 2020. Meanwhile, government liquidity support is around 0.6% of GDP or equivalent to IDR 150 trillion.

The limited availability of the state budget is a prominent obstacle for the state in providing an alert response in handling Covid-19. These limitations make the government's efforts to protect people's health and economy also limited so that they often have to rely on state debt and higher taxes (Alm et al., 2021). In the case of Indonesia, because taxes account for a large proportion of government revenue, the role of taxes is very large as the main source of state funding to finance the economic response to Covid-19 (Utami & Ilyas, 2021). In this case, taxpayers play a big role in ensuring adequate government funding from taxation sources.

However, pandemic situations often have severe negative effects on a country's tax compliance culture (OECD, 2020). Therefore, the OECD suggests that tax consultants act as "tax intermediaries" between taxpayers and tax authorities. This complex situation can lead to a more constructive relationship between the three parties (Schöbel, 2010). The balanced and increasing tripartite relationship between taxpayers, tax authorities, and tax intermediaries is a key feature of an open and supportive tax environment (OECD, 2008).

Tax consultants have an important role in managing the tax compliance process and creating a true compliance culture (Walpole & Salter, 2014). Therefore, they are indispensable in the tax system (Aniyie, 2019). Their role in tax compliance is as a 'gatekeeper' that protects the state and taxpayers from fictitious and detrimental claims (Perkins, 2010). According to Tan (1999), tax consultants play a dual role, namely that they can enforce the law, but on the other hand, they can exploit the ambiguity of tax provisions. The tax consultants should be conversant with the "sandwich" scenario. They have to manage a critical situation with the taxpayer as a client while also dealing with the tax authorities. Each promise made to a client may generate tax authorities' concerns about how to account for as well as the tax implications (Saptono & Khozen, 2021b).

By considering the adaptability of tax consulting firms, this study aims to examine the firm's competitiveness strategy in facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic with a case study on a tax consulting company in Jakarta (from now on referred to as "PT XYZ" or "the firm"). PT XYZ was chosen because it has been established for more than ten

years, with the number of permanent employees slightly exceeding 100 people, but the ranking by World Tax (itrworldtax.com) is not included in tier 1-4. This fact makes PT XYZ interesting for further research on how they adapt to challenges that Alm et al. (2021) term "has caught citizens, businesses, and governments unprepared." This study will also map PT XYZ's strategy to stay competitive, which may be part of a lesson for the business world.

Literature Review

SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is an instrument used to evaluate the enterprises' strengths (S), weakness (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T). The company's strengths and weaknesses show internal characteristics and can be controlled. In contrast, opportunities and threats are determined by external factors that do not have direct control but can react to their own benefits (Egelhoff, 2008). The literature demonstrates that SWOT analysis serves a variety of reasons for businesses, including increasing organizational capacity (Quincy et al., 2012) and even mergers and acquisitions (Mariani, 2017).

SWOT analysis is a methodology that companies can use to identify and avoid their weaknesses, understand their strengths, plan to use them to take advantage of opportunities, and defend or avoid known threats (Ling & Gui, 2009). SWOT examines the factors in the SWOT group and draws a strategy based on the findings (Lee & Chung, 2018). Therefore, the SWOT method for this study is useful in determining the SWOT factors that offer potential strategic insights to assist their business growth strategies.

Competitive Advantage

With the economic situation in decline resulting from the unresolved Covid-19 pandemic, competition among tax consulting firms is fierce in getting or keeping clients. To be successful, any consulting firms need to have an effective competitive position to achieve a competitive advantage (Ling & Gui, 2009). A company can claim a competitive advantage when it has the edge over its competitors (Langford & Male, 2001). With increasingly fierce competition, each company will try to maintain its business by focusing on competitive advantages.

A company is said to have a competitive advantage if it can control its internal subsystems, take advantage of opportunities, and reduce or avoid threats from its external environment (Ling & Gui, 2009). According to Liu and Hsin-Feng (2020), organizational agility (OA) is critical in achieving a competitive advantage and improved performance. OA is a suitable capability for responding to the impact of unpredictability in fast-paced contexts. Empirical studies show that an organization's green culture also plays a big role in its competitive advantage (Chao-Hung, 2019). A critical component of competitive advantage is the ability of the business to produce a competitive advantage, one of the primary determinants of which is outstanding customer service (Desfitrina et al., 2019).

Methods

We used a qualitative approach using primary data from in-depth interviews in reviewing the PT XYZ business strategy case study. The data collection instrument was a specially designed questionnaire mainly consisting of open-ended questions to analyze the

company's SWOT. The purpose of the SWOT analysis in this paper is to analyze PT XYZ's strategic decision-making during the pandemic. The research framework for internal and external environmental analysis was adapted from Hashaw (2019). Open-ended questions make it possible to explore informants' perspectives and feelings about a complex phenomenon (Brounéus, 2011).

Interviews were conducted purposively, namely with managers in the consulting division (Informant-1), compliance division (Informant-2), Transfer Pricing Documentation division (Informant-3), financial division (Informant-4), human capital division (Informant-5), KnDC division (Informant-6), and a media consultant hired by PT XYZ (Informant-7). Taking into account the amount of useful information obtained from each, the scope of the study, the quality of the data, the nature of the topic, and the qualitative methods and research design used (Morse, 2000), we agree with Dworkin's (2012) statement that at least 5 participants are required to measure samples in qualitative research are considered adequate.

The data analysis in this study consists of several activities. After collecting data and information from the field, we organize the data into several categories, turn it into stories or descriptions, and write them into text. Regarding the amount of field study data we obtained, we reproduced it manually into several patterns and categories along with codes and themes, then interpreted them by triangulating with a literature review. The results of one interview were compared with the results of other interviews, then the results of the interview were also compared with the documentation data. We use these techniques to ensure that every conclusion in this study is justified and has a high level of validity.

Findings

A SWOT analysis covering all the bases can be very important for making business decisions of smaller consulting firm (Hashaw, 2019). The SWOT method aims to identify favorable and unfavorable factors and conditions, recognize challenges and obstacles faced, solve current problems in a targeted way, and formulate strategic plans to obtain scientific decisions (Wang & Wang, 2020). Regarding SWOT, the first two factors represent the internal environment while the other two factors represent the external environment. According to Egelhoff (2008), we have control over the first two areas and have almost no control over the other two.

Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors so that the Company can control these factors. On the other hand, opportunities and threats are external factors, so they have no control over them. According to Hashaw (2019), internal factors that need to be considered for consulting companies are human resources, physical resources, finance, activities and processes, and past experiences. As for external factors, companies need to mark: future trends, economic development, legislation, and events that occur locally, nationally, and internationally.

PT XYZ, the focus of our current case study, is a tax consulting firm based in Jakarta. The founders decided to form a legal entity under Perseroan Terbatas (PT) based on insight from legal partners so that their position and role were clear under applicable laws. The core of the firm's business is to provide consulting and advisory services in taxation and accounting. To date, the services provided by the firm include tax compliance services; tax

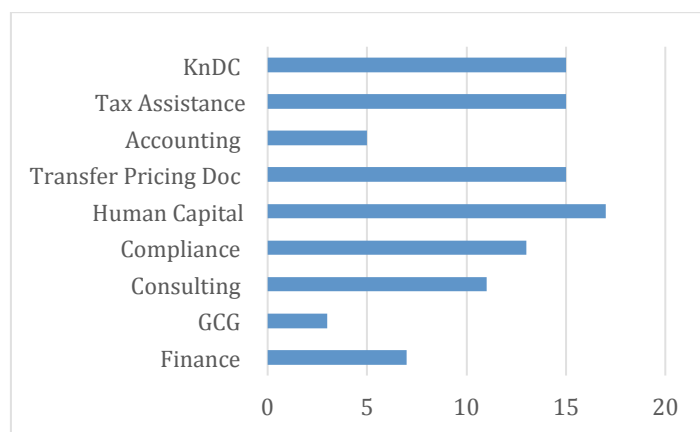
diagnostic review; tax consultancy service; transfer pricing documentation and strategy; tax assistance services, consisting of tax audit assistance, objection assistance, appeal assistance, and judicial review; tax accounting services; Good Corporate Governance (GCG); risk management services; legal services; and tax training and seminars.

Internal Factor Analysis

1. Human resources

Human resources are non-financial or non-material assets that are useful in undertaking the enterprise so that their existence is recognized. Creating a company's competitive advantage requires individual resources working together to develop integrated organizational capabilities (Kurniawan et al., 2018). In a tax consulting firm, human resources are the backbone of the company's business sustainability. Based on the firm's internal data, the number of human resources in PT XYZ at the beginning of the second quarter of 2021 was 101 employees. They are spread across nine divisions in the Company, namely the Knowledge and Development Center (KnDC) division, Tax Assistance, Accounting, Transfer Pricing Documentation (TP Doc), Human Capital (HC), Compliance, Consulting, Good Corporate Governance (GCG), and Finance.

Figure 1. Human resources at PT XYZ as per division



Since PT XYZ is a knowledge-based firm, a definite employee development program is a career-supporting investment in that field. One of the firm's development programs is to enroll employees in the Tax Consultant certification program by the Indonesian Tax Consultants Association (IKPI). Under the program, PT XYZ bears the cost and provides adequate training for employees who will take the test.

PT XYZ bears the full cost of the employee tax consultant certification, starting from registering for the first exam to repeating it twice, the cost of taking the certificate after the employee passes the exam, arranging consulting permits, to routine membership fees. The costs borne by PT XYZ are included in their fixed cost components. Tax consultant certification levels are divided into three levels: brevet A, brevet B, and brevet C, which must be followed in stages. For exam participants who are at the first opportunity, subjects being tested that do not pass can still remedy these subjects up to three remedial. Table 1 lists the fees for one exam and the cost per subject if the applicant does not pass.

Table 1. Registration fee (in IDR) for tax certification under IKPI

Brevet	Fee	Fee/Subject	Subjects
A	2,500,000	500,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PBB P3 ▪ KUP, PPSP, PP ▪ Individual Income Tax & Its Tax Return ▪ Withholding Tax (Article 21, 22, 23 and 4 par. 2) ▪ VAT & Its Tax Return ▪ Professional Code of Ethics
B	3,500,000	800,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tax Accounting ▪ KUP, PPSP, PP ▪ Corporate Income Tax & Its Tax Return ▪ Withholding Tax (Article 21, 22, 23 and 4 par. 2) ▪ VAT & Its Tax Return
C	5,500,000	1,600,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tax Accounting ▪ International Tax ▪ Corporate Income Tax & Its Tax Return ▪ Withholding Tax (Article 21, 22, 23 and 4 par. 2)

Source: Adapted from <https://kp3skp.or.id/>

In addition, there is a unique policy that PT XYZ has taken to stimulate performance while retaining employees, namely by giving Hajj or Umrah packages to those who at least meet the following criteria: dedicated and married. Of course, the assessment indicators of these criteria are subjective following the assessment of who should stay and who is okay with leaving. But whatever is behind it, the strategy is successful enough to retain personnel with shining careers and, of course, those who are predicted to remain loyal.

2. Physical resources

Currently, PT XYZ is located at Jakarta, Indonesia. Its location, which is not directly adjacent to office centers such as Sudirman and Kuningan, but is quite accessible (through KRL lines, toll gates, and is relatively close to Halim Perdanakusuma airport), becomes an advantage in and of itself, particularly for daily access by employees. However, one floor in the building that PT XYZ fully leases incurs a significant burden of its own. Its inventory of physical resources consists of various types of laptops used by each employee, photocopiers and printers, televisions in almost every corner, a special room full of tax reference books, documents obtained from clients or tax authorities, and camera equipment to take video during company webinars. In addition, it also provides a special room for relaxing and exercising for employees and their equipment.

3. Finance

Addressable indicators for analyzing company finances include grants, funding institutions, and other sources of income (Hashaw, 2019). The main source of PT XYZ's finance comes from payments obtained from rendering services to clients. The firm has no source of income from grants or funding institutions. However, it has another source of income from providing training in taxation and selling books written by the experts in the firm. In addition, the firm is seeking additional revenue from programs on Youtube. Uber's failure

in the Asian market appears to have taught the firm a valuable lesson. Instead of relying too heavily on large funding, it is better to optimize available local resources (Khozen et al., 2021). Earning money from optimizing the YouTube program is possible through AdSense or endorsement of sponsored products (Saptono et al., 2021).

4. Activities and process

Competition for customers can be done in various ways, one of which is through price wars. Competing by being a low-cost player can be the enterprises' path of success, although consumers are always divided between those who buy based on price or those who consider more on value (Kumar, 2006). Introducing products with low prices and higher quality is an important factor in attracting customer attention, besides the uniqueness of the products or services provided (Kurniawan et al., 2018). These factors are some reasons for some customers to have high brand loyalty for a product or service. Providing products or services at lower rates is also among PT XYZ's strategies in winning the market, as disclosed by the following informants:

"Our service rates are cheaper than those of other consultants (for similar services). Sometimes we haven't raised the rates for years, so that these clients stay with us. With this strategy, they are still loyal to us. " (Informant-1)

5. Past experiences

In knowledge-based business competition, large potential customers will be more interested in using their mature and experienced services to deal with their problems. According to Covey et al. (2012), it would be easier for people to trust those who come across as knowledgeable, skilled, successful, and deeply involved in continuous improvement than someone who is underachieving, irrelevant, or inexperienced. In the case of PT XYZ, it has several experienced experts in their respective areas of interest. However, it is undeniable that the number of fresh-graduate employees is too dominating. The advantage of the new graduate workforce is that it tends to have a lower bargaining position regarding remuneration. In addition, these new graduates do not have enough benchmarks to compare the facilities that employees receive at other companies. It is just that the drawback of the dominance of fresh graduate employees is the need for a large development investment which also takes a lot of time and money.

The firm needs to consider the externalities of investment decisions for fresh graduate employees. Learning the patterns that make employees leave can be an important lesson in anticipating employee departures. In this case, Klotz and Bolino (2019) suggest that companies need to examine what these employees do after leaving. The HC Division can do this by tracking where their former employees go. Suppose most of them return to campus to pursue a bachelor's degree. In that case, there may be opportunities for employers to increase retention by offering education at a discount or even free. If some employees leave to become stay-at-home parents, perhaps a broader working from home (WFH) program will provide employees with a healthier work-life balance. But, suppose there is a trend for employees who quit their job to switch to a competitor. In that case, according to Koltz and Boleno, there are cultural issues, development programs, compensation, and company benefits that must be fixed so that the firm does not lose more talented employees to competitors.

External Factor Analysis

1. Future trends

Every day, new discoveries continued to emerge. Technology that makes human affairs easier is developing rapidly. In such conditions, these technologies have supported productivity a lot. This development is an opportunity for enterprises to continue developing innovations to adapt to the needs and demands of the times. In consulting services, adaptation to technological developments is necessary to make it easier for them to connect with clients and the wider community in knowledge sharing. Social media can ease access between service providers and clients (or prospective clients). Companies in marketing their products or businesses can direct choices on social media as one of the media that can be selected to get feedback from them (Halimatussakdiah & Yuniasih, 2020). Besides, the widespread use of technology for taxpayer data analysis carried out by tax authorities and tax reform to facilitate procedures for implementing tax obligations has become an important element for compliance trends. Although some procedures have been simplified, this has not reduced the consultant's business opportunities. There will still be enough space for consultants to provide taxpayers with their services as long as the tax provision is complex. It is not a matter of hoping that tax regulations remain complex, as they have been since time immemorial.

2. Economic development

The Covid-19 pandemic has spread globally in various parts of the world. Not only did it create a public health crisis, but the Covid-19 pandemic also significantly disrupted global economic activity (Saptono & Khozen, 2021a). According to Bappenas (2021) report, the global economic recovery is generally running better than market predictions, as reflected in the improving growth in the fourth quarter of 2020 in various countries. Vietnam and China were countries with positive economic growth in the fourth quarter of 2020. Indonesia itself is still experiencing an economic contraction, although not as deep as the previous quarter. The Covid-19 pandemic has also reduced people's income with increased unemployment. The decline in the level of profitability that clients may face may also impact tax consulting firms in a worse condition, such as customers switching to competitors.

3. Event: Covid-19 pandemic

With the Covid-19 pandemic situation still happening, companies need to balance fixed cost and variable cost components and carry out good cash flow management. In this case, an in-depth analysis is needed, especially in terms of revenue, as disclosed by the informant below. Management of the variable cost component of PT XYZ does not help its efficiency.

"For the sustainability of our firm, what is certain is that the analysis needs to consider many factors, especially when talking about revenue, yes, there will be (analysis) on clients' ability to pay. There are new ones, and some are extended (contracts)." (Informant-4)

In addition to the financial impact, the death rate of Company personnel caused by Covid-19 will also have a major impact on PT XYZ's sustainability. As a company with a firm knowledge-based model, the loss of human resources, especially the key personnel, can shake up the firm's business. PT XYZ's business model is not a rigid routine that everyone

can do. Special knowledge, experience, and expertise are required to be able to enter and compete in this business. Therefore, companies need to be more vigilant about the impacts caused by the pandemic (Saptono & Khozen, 2021a).

4. Competitors

Competitors are always a frightening specter for most people, even though competitors are actually needed so that the available products and services become more competitive. Concerning PT XYZ's existence, competitors' capacity and quality of services are many that the firm can no longer match. Compared to the competitors' publication on tax matter, which undoubtedly assists brand awareness, PT XYZ is still in the pioneering stage. Likewise, most of them are very competitive in terms of service rate. Some even have unique products or services that PT XYZ cannot yet provide; this shows how much homework the firm has. When the firm has not finished with competitors who may already exist much earlier, on the other hand, there is a possibility that competitors may emerge from former employees of the firm. It is even more appropriate for PT XYZ to be aware of, especially if those concerned have the potential to bring along the clients they have been working with so far. This bad experience also occurred in many other consulting firms whose clients went when company personnel left. The next challenge arises from the competition with the government, which is also actively developing digital tax education programs. Here, the Creative Team of PT XYZ is called into question. However, of all the possibilities of competition regarding this program, one thing that should be well noted is the element of plagiarism or piracy. In this case, problems that may arise with other parties related to copyright need serious attention because it will greatly affect the integrity of PT XYZ.

5. Legislation

So far, the tax consulting firm's core business has still benefited from government regulations. The self-assessment system adopted in Indonesia along with all the instruments of supervision, inspection, and investigation of taxpayers has developed a profession and business model known as a tax consultant. A tax consultant certification is required to get a tax consultant certification, a competency test for the level of the tax consultant profession. The certificate is a prerequisite for obtaining a license to practice as a tax consultant. The prerequisite is under the Minister of Finance Regulation (PMK) Number 111/PMK.03/2014 concerning Tax Consultants. Informants also shared the advantages of this state-recognized tax consultancy regulation:

"Actually, tax is a definite thing, right? As long as the state still regulates, the business is still very potential. Because people, even though it is a pandemic, still have to pay taxes, even though there are incentives (taxes). " (Informant-2)

However, in connection with the government's plan to draft new regulations related to tax consultants, PT XYZ needs to be prepared to adapt to the planned new rules. Based on PPPK (Pusat Pembinaan Profesi Keuangan) Announcement Number PENG-5/PPPK/2021 dated April 16, 2021, the government is waiting for the public input and response on the draft Regulation of the Minister of Finance (RPMK) until May 8, 2021. If it is promulgated, the draft policy will replace the Minister of Finance Regulation Number 111/PMK.03/2014 and Regulation of the Director-General of Taxes Number PER13/PJ/2015 concerning Implementation Guidelines for Tax Consultant Provisions. Based on our analysis, apart from the transfer of authority from the DGT to PPPK, there are at least three other policy changes in the new draft. First, there are more stringent requirements to become a tax consultant. Among the additional requirements are: (i) work

experience in taxation for at least one year; (ii) has never been subject to tax consultant license revocation; and (iii) have never been sentenced to imprisonment in the field of taxation based on a court decision. Second, regulating the form of a tax consultant business entity. The RPMK draft on tax consultants requires consulting services through a Tax Consultant Office with a minister of finance license. Third, RPMK also adds arrangements regarding the annual reporting obligations that the tax consulting office must submit.

Strategies to Strengthen Competitiveness

In the hierarchy of consulting objectives developed by Turner (1982), more than just giving advice, consulting firms need to improve the firm's effectiveness permanently. Consultants need to contribute to top management's most important task: safeguarding the organization's future in a changing world. Based on the SWOT analysis, the business model for PT XYZ's strategic opportunities is presented in Table 2. The model is obtained from the integration of the SWOT analysis that has been carried out. From the detailed analysis of PT XYZ's SWOT, data mining produces a priority plan that the firm can follow up to support the development strategy and achieve its vision and mission amid the challenges growing.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of a Tax Consulting Firm (PT XYZ)

Strategic Analysis	Internal Factors	Strength (S)	Weakness (W)
		1. Personal branding of the key figure 2. Rate competitiveness of products or services 3. Development of digital marketing 4. Pro Bono program 5. Employees development program	1. The firm's rank 2. One-man-show management 3. Basic tax knowledge in the Creative Team 4. The majority of employees are fresh-graduates 5. Employees turn-over pattern
External Factors	Opportunity (O)	SO Strategies	WO Strategies
		1. Designing a digital development roadmap (SO1) 2. Call to action for each free program (SO2) 3. Loyalty contract for investment in employee development (SO3)	1. Expanding the space for optimization of knowledge sharing by management (WO1) 2. More massive products/services advertisements (WO2) 3. Aware of employee development patterns (WO3)
	Threat (T)	ST Strategies	WT Strategies
		1. From personal branding to people or company branding (ST1) 2. Collaborate with campuses, institutions, corporations, or the government for tax inclusion programs (ST2)	1. Considering new international affiliation (WT1) 2. Assignment of the tax consultants to supervise the Creative Team (WT2) 3. Investments for the next partners or leaders (WT3) 4. Additional incentives to stimulate employees to support the digital publications (WT4)

Notes: SO: strength-opportunity; WO: weakness-opportunity; ST: strength-threat; and WT: weakness-threat.

Source: Authors' work (2021)

1. Digital development roadmap (SO1)

The number of tax consultants in Indonesia has grown rapidly due to the expansion of internet access and penetration of mobile phones, particularly smartphones. The digital era that has developed so rapidly has become a momentum for consulting firms to develop software and mobile apps that allow to interact with more users. DGT, as the tax authority itself, has also initiated this. According to the former Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, consultants must also take advantage of technology in connection with current technological developments (Kominfo, 2019). Consultants must have a consulting system and have better capabilities. The firm needs to capture every momentum and prepare for even greater expansion. According to the informant (Informant-1), the use of webinar programs on Youtube and Zoom has increased enthusiasm among potential clients to approach the firm about the prospect of cooperation. However, PT XYZ should define a clear strategy for its digitalization development to capture the moment more effectively.

2. Call to Action for every free program (SO2)

PT XYZ has routinely provided tax education to the general public weekly without charging any penny. Previously, training organized by the firm requires payment in the range of IDR 2-5 million per participant. The free education program that raises the latest national tax issues has attracted the public's attention. This program (usually held through the Zoom application) often exceeds the quota of 500 people that can be accommodated in Zoom. When the Zoom application can accommodate up to 1000 people, according to internal information we obtained for the webinar on Wednesday (13/01/2021), 896 participants participated (Informant-6). When a program is run directly by the firm's CEO, it is truly worth the same as the participants' investment costs of a paid program. To date, not many tax experts are willing to take the time to share their knowledge for more than three hours each week.

However, for the program's sustainability, the event should be more informed to a wider audience. PT XYZ now has a stronger possibility of being more well-known to potential clients due to its expanded reach. Therefore, it should start acquiring these benefits by changing the existing strategy. At this stage, the firm can still make the event free but with conditions. For example, prospective participants get a free invitation to Zoom if they meet the requirements, such as sharing information about the event to several Whatsapp groups or other social media such as Instagram or Facebook. The "upload proof of share" feature should be included in the registration form (which the company now utilizes as a google form).

Furthermore, the Company officer in charge in that section ensures that several required things are met. This kind of strategy is also recommended by the informants below. In addition, the firm can also follow up on the program for future development by opening a limited coaching clinic after the event for participants to consult more deeply about the cases at hand. To take part in that limited session, the concerned participant must purchase a ticket that the firm has prepared.

"My suggestion is not to send the webinar material directly to the participant's email, because this is a free event, so there must be a call to action (CTA) as a

branding/marketing step. For example, distributed in the WA group or downloaded on the company website to encourage participants to join/stay in the WA group or visit the website. " (Informant-7)

3. Loyalty contract for the investment on employee development (SO3)

The firm's existence as a tax consultant cannot be separated from the recognition given by professional institutions in that field. PT XYZ at least needs to pay for routine development costs and employee participation in the institution that oversees the consultant profession, as shown in the interview below. In this case, the Indonesian Tax Consultant Association (IKPI) participation in the tax sector and the Indonesian Accountants Association (IAI) in the accounting sector.

"The USKP costs have already been included in the overhead costs (of the firm), so it has been budgeted for. How much is it every year? Just multiply it; for example, the registration fee is Rp. 3 million, multiplied by the employee who participated. Likewise, with routine PPL employees as IKPI members. " (Informant-4)

The informant also said that the routine costs of developing the firm's employees are included in the top five component costs incurred by the firm. This information is not surprising given that the firm's most essential investment is in Human Resources development because the firm's business model is indeed the driving force for the employees themselves. With these considerations, PT XYZ will be greatly disadvantaged if the investment that has been issued simply disappears when that employee resigns, for example. Therefore, the firm should consider that a written agreement is necessary for every employee development investment, which contains a policy for returning the investment cost if it turns out that the employee has resigned within a certain period after the benefit is received. In this regard, the firm should first calculate a break event point for each development investment issued.

4. Expanding the space for optimization of knowledge sharing by management (WO1)

This strategy can be a great start to reducing the firm's dependence on the CEO. There needs to be an urgent effort to bring up new figures from the management of PT XYZ to become a sustainable tax consulting firm. This optimization space can be done by providing management with monthly or bi-monthly knowledge-sharing schedules according to their respective capacities. Encouraging them to dare to appear in front of journalists to carry out a press release on a certain taxation issue is not an extreme idea either to be undertaken.

5. More massive products or services advertisements (WO2)

Although PT XYZ already has several media channels to interact with the public, advertisements in the form of products or services provided by PT XYZ are still limited. According to Egelhoff (2008, p. 29), "Help me buy your product" is what customers really say. "You haven't shown me its value." Furthermore, Egelhoff advised never to show or talk about a feature unless it is really useful for the customer. From this, it can be seen that those facing problems (taxation) in their business certainly need adequate tax consultant information who can help solve the problems they face. However, PT XYZ often does not realize the importance of the availability of information on PT XYZ products and services for prospective clients. On the other hand, PT XYZ has taken counterproductive measures such as the information below to retain customers. Meanwhile, out there may be waiting in line for several prospective clients waiting to be proposed.

"We lowered the rate for retaining old clients, but not immediately for 12 months, usually six months first. With the hope that after six months and conditions have improved so we (can re-negotiate) the price"(Informant-1)

6. Aware of employee development patterns (WO3)

Based on the internal data that we processed during the interview, the average employees leaving for 2015-2019 were 8%, 11%, 3%, 6%, and 8%, respectively. According to research participants (Informant-5), most employees left to become civil servants, some moved to corporations or competitors, and only very few moved to open their own businesses. If we refer to Klotz and Bolino (2019), this shows that cultural issues, development programs, compensation, and company benefits need to be fixed. A company that values its employees' advancement shouldn't ignore the possibility of the competitor-supply-academy pattern, which suggests that PT XYZ's employees are being groomed for future employment opportunities elsewhere. The large proportion of fresh graduate employees at PT XYZ allows this pattern to occur.

7. From personal branding to people or company branding (ST1)

PT XYZ's branding for the public is centered on its CEO. The characterization became massive through PT XYZ's media, such as the website, YouTube channel, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts. The CEO recently began to provide press releases on developing tax issues regularly. However, for the long-term goal, PT XYZ needs an immediate start to introduce other figures from the internal firm to show the public that the people in the firm do have qualified knowledge evenly. Increasing and orbiting PT XYZ personnel who already have a certificate of brevet C or who have completed postgraduate education are among the pilot paths that need to undertake. With more PT XYZ personnel on display, it will be easier to brand PT XYZ itself. Additionally, popularity and preferences might provide economic value to the firm by satisfying the condition for advertisers to entrust their brands (Saptono et al., 2021).

8. Collaborate with related institutions for tax inclusion programs (ST2)

Collaboration with academicians on campus, student associations, government agencies, local governments, the private sector, and other related institutions in the context of tax inclusion is a good measure that the firm could undertake to maximize influence and control existing threats. Such collaborations can be realized by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the firm and those potential partners. The MoU was made within the scope of the firm's business, which is still closely related to education, research, community service, and improving the quality of human resources (HR) based on the principle of partnership. With this collaboration, the firm and partners carry out several activities such as apprenticeship programs, staff recruitment, seminar and training programs for students or the general public, workshop programs for lecturers, tax curriculum development programs, research programs, or joint research. Instead of taxation area, the firm could to build wider collaboration in the field of more service and training contracts, patenting, collaborative research and development, networking events, industrial collaboration for education, incubation or entrepreneurship education, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) support, and Science Parks (Moelioldihardjo et al., 2012). Collaboration between the firm and various agencies could reflect the integrity of the firm. From a prospective client's perspective, such collaboration can add to the firm's bargaining value.

9. Considering new international affiliation (WT1)

PT XYZ is currently affiliated with being a member of an independent global accounting firm. Even though the informant from the finance division was not willing to provide data on the amount of the affiliate fee, other informants pointed out the fact that the firm received no significant profit for the affiliation (Informant-1). Especially in connection with the addition of clients, the firm has not had any permanent clients from its international affiliates. Under these conditions, the firm should consider a new affiliate that is more profitable for the firm's future business.

10. Assignment of the tax consultants to supervise the Creative Team (WT2)

Suppose the collaboration between teams is still difficult to achieve. In that case, PT XYZ can put some tax consultants personnel into the firm's Creative Team to periodically coordinate the tax publications, especially those in graphic design. Another option is to schedule special assignments for the entire team or division for the firm's routine publications. For example, two employees from each division were designated as delegates, and they both formulated the publication in the week that was selected to then work with the Creative Team for the design. For convenience, suppose first-week publication: consulting division; second-week publication: compliance division; third-week publication: tax assistance division; and the fourth-week publication: the TP Doc division. If considering the diversity of the topics, this second option looks better than the first option.

11. Investments for the next partners or leaders (WT3)

In the era of increasing global competition, the tax consulting firm's sustainability will be greatly influenced by the competence of its human resources. Centralization of authority or knowledge is not a good thing for the firm's future sustainability; it is as admitted by the following informants:

"As we all realize, this centralization in leadership is very unhealthy for the sustainability of our business. Because it was from the beginning, to what I know, he establish the firm under his own stance. Compared to other consultants who usually have partners from the start, so building together is better. We were from the beginning ourselves, and while looking for a partner, we changed it several times, but it didn't work because in the end, the new partner didn't feel like building from scratch so it didn't perform as expected." (Informant-3)

With such a situation, PT XYZ needs to consider making efforts such as the regeneration of existing employees who are considered loyal. To arrive at this stage, there needs to be a pilot effort so that the competence of the human resources is more evenly distributed. Management should start to be more open to starting this step. Investments in development with a projection of the sacrifice of a new partner are unlikely to be cheap. Therefore, PT XYZ can better ensure the commitment of those who are projected to sign the loyalty contract as the strategy in the previous section.

12. Additional incentives to stimulate employees to support the digital publications (WT4)

A fairly familiar phrase goes, "People tend to incentives." In essence, people also work for incentives, whether in the form of remuneration, devotion, recognition, privileges, or simply channeling interests and talents. From this it appears that providing the incentives needed by employees is a must. At this level, we are then familiar with the concept of reward and punishment. However, it does not mean that everything will succeed with a reward or fail if the punishment is not enforced. Kohn (1993) suggests six reasons why rewards often fail: salary is not a motivator, rewards are punishing, rewards for breaking

relationships, rewards for ignoring reasons, rewards for preventing risk-taking, and rewards for destroying interest.

"If rewards don't work, then what does?" was a question that Kohn asked in an article on the same subject that appeared in the October 17, 1993 issue of *The New York Times* (Levine, 1994). Kohn's answer to this question is as quoted below:

"I recommend that employers pay workers well and fairly--and then do everything possible to help them forget about money. A preoccupation with money distracts everyone--employers and employees--from the issues that really matter. These issues are represented by the 'three Cs' of quality: choice, collaboration, and content. Choice means workers should participate in making decisions about what they do. Collaboration means they should be able to work together in effective teams. Content refers to the job's tasks. to do a good job, people need a good job to do." (Kohn in Levine, 1994, p. 78)

Conclusion

In summary, this study underlines the competitive strategy that is becoming increasingly necessary for companies to face the days ahead with evolving challenges. After conducting a SWOT analysis of PT XYZ by referring to internal data not available to the public and in-depth interviews with several PT XYZ informants, several strategies were synthesized with considerations of strength-opportunity (SO) and weakness-opportunity (WO), strength-threat (ST), and weakness-threat (WT). The SO strategy includes preparing a digital development roadmap, free programs made with conditions (call to action), and the need for a loyalty contract for the investment issued by PT XYZ in employee development.

The WO strategy includes providing space for knowledge sharing optimization by consultant management, creating more massive product or service advertisements, and preventive steps to avoid forming employee development with a competitor-supply academy pattern. The ST strategy includes two things: shifting the personal branding pattern to focus on people or company branding. Meanwhile, the WT strategy can be pursued by considering the possibility of a new international affiliation, assigning a tax team to the Creative Team, investing in the next partners or leaders program, and considering providing incentives for employees to support digital publications in the context of branding the name of PT XYZ. PT XYZ and similar companies with similar experiences can prioritize focusing on a digital development strategy reflected in the SO1, SO2, WO1, WO2, ST1, and WT2 strategies in the pandemic time. However, alternative techniques are equally critical to consider as the scenario and conditions evolve.

What is essentially important of this work is that the alternatives discussed in the preceding sections are possibly applicable to various scenarios, not only those involving a pandemic or other crisis. Those are not meant to be useless once the pandemic has over; instead, it is intended to offer a proper foothold on a scale as vast as that of a pandemic. Because we are powerless to influence external elements as with risks and threats, it is necessary to conduct ongoing assessments of the suitability of each business in light of changing situations. By translating the challenges that companies confront into opportunities for growth, this study lays the groundwork for them to become more resilient in the future. However, it is not without constraints. Among the most important points we raise is that the case study

approach is not necessarily generalizable to all other circumstances. Future research could adjust for this issue by examining a broader spectrum through the use of representative data.

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