

The Role Of Strategic Management In Enhancing Competitive Advantage And Firm Performance In The Jordanian Telecom Industry

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Abstract

This research analyzes the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry in Jordan. The telecom industry is characterized by intense competition, technological advancements, and changing customer preferences, which make it crucial for telecom firms to adopt effective strategic management practices to gain and maintain a competitive edge. This research employs a quantitative research approach, and identify the key themes and concepts related to strategic management and firm performance in the telecom industry thus Data was collected from 94 managers and department heads from three major telecom companies in Jordan. The statistical analysis was conducted using Smart PLS 4 and all hypotheses tested were found to be statistically significant. The findings indicate that strategic management practices, as strategic planning, resource allocation, innovation, and performance measurement, are positively associated with competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry in Jordan. However, the effectiveness of these practices depends on factors as the company's size, market position, and the level of environmental turbulence. The research provides valuable insights for telecom firms that seeking to enhance their competitive advantage and performance through strategic management practices.

Keywords: Strategic management practices, Competitive advantage, Firm performance, Telecom, industry, Strategic planning, Resource allocation, Innovation.

Introduction

The telecom industry is one of the most dynamic and rapidly evolving sectors in the global economy, driven by advances in technology, changing consumer behaviors, and intense competition (Toppinen, et al., 2020; Huang, et al., 2020). In this highly competitive environment, strategic management plays a critical role in helping telecom companies gain a competitive edge and improve their performance (Xie, et al., 2019; Bouncken et al., 2020). By effectively aligning their resources and capabilities with market opportunities, telecom companies can enhance their competitive advantage and achieve sustainable growth (Jain & Singh, 2019; Fraihat et al., 2023; Alkhawaldeh, & Mahmood, 2021; Wijaya & Sudarma, 2021).

The Jordanian telecom industry is a significant sector in the country's economy, with several key players competing for market share" (Al-Omouh & Al-Shboul, 2020, p. 227). According to Al-Omouh and Al-Shboul (2020), the industry has been growing rapidly in recent years, driven by advances in technology and increasing demand for telecommunications services. However, "despite the

industry's importance to the country's economy, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in Jordanian telecom firms" (Al-Majali & Al-Qatawneh, 2020, p. 212).

Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of strategic management practices on competitive advantage and firm performance in the Jordanian telecom industry. The findings of this research will be valuable for telecom firms in Jordan, as well as for policymakers and other stakeholders interested in promoting the growth and development of the telecom industry in the country. The next sections of this paper will review the Problem Statement as well as the relevant literature on strategic management and the telecom industry, outline the research methodology, and present the findings and analysis of the study.

What are the challenges that telecom companies face in implementing effective strategic management practices, and how can these challenges be addressed to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage?

The telecom industry is a highly competitive and dynamic sector, with companies constantly seeking ways to gain a competitive edge and improve their performance (Zhao et al., 2020; Javed & Raza, 2021; Fraihat et al., 2023). However, with rapidly evolving technology, changing consumer behaviors, and increasing competition, achieving sustainable growth and competitive advantage has become increasingly challenging for telecom companies (Bharadwaj et al., 2020). Therefore, the role of strategic management in helping telecom companies navigate this dynamic environment has become more important than ever (Mokhtar et al., 2020; Fong, et al. 2020).

Despite the critical importance of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry, there is a lack of comprehensive research on this topic (Asif et al., 2020; Asikainen, et al.,). While there have been some studies on the impact of specific strategic management practices on firm performance, there is a need for a more holistic analysis of the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage in the telecom industry (Fraihat et al., 2023).

Literature Review

The telecom industry is a highly competitive and dynamic sector, with companies constantly seeking ways to gain a competitive edge and improve their performance. One of the key ways that telecom companies have sought to achieve this is through strategic management practices. Strategic management involves the formulation and implementation of strategies that align the

organization's resources with its external environment to achieve its goals and objectives (Bharadwaj, et al., 1993; Hitt, Ireland, et al., 2019; Li & Liu, 2020).

A review of the literature reveals that there is a growing body of research on the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry. For example, a study by Al-Mutairi and Al-Mutairi (2018) found that strategic management practices such as innovation, customer focus, and differentiation were positively associated with firm performance in the telecom industry. Similarly, a study by Gholami, et al. (2019) found that strategic management practices such as strategic planning, competitive intelligence, and risk management were positively associated with firm performance in the telecom industry (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2023).

Another area of research on strategic management in the telecom industry has focused on the role of specific strategic management practices in achieving competitive advantage. For example, a study by Kim and Kim (2018) found that a strategic focus on customer service and quality was associated with improved customer satisfaction and loyalty in the telecom industry (Fraihat et al., 2022). Similarly, a study by Tang (2018) found that a strategic focus on technology and innovation was associated with improved product and service offerings in the telecom industry.

Review of Strategic planning

According to Jiang, et al., (2021), strategic planning is critical for firms to maintain a competitive advantage in the telecom industry. They argue that firms must engage in strategic planning to develop a clear understanding of their market position, customer needs, and competition. In their study, they found that "firms that engage in strategic planning have a higher likelihood of achieving their objectives and maintaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace" (Jiang et al., 2021, p. 267). This finding is consistent with prior research on strategic planning in the telecom industry (Wang & Ahmed, 2007; Nair & Ghobadian, 2018; Alkhawaldeh et al., 2023).

Review of Resource allocation

Effective resource allocation is also crucial for firms to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. According to Jie and Gao (2020), firms must allocate their resources based on a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their strategic goals. They argue that "firms that are able to allocate their resources effectively are more likely to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance" (Jie & Gao, 2020, p. 22). This view is supported by prior research in the telecom industry, which has emphasized the importance of resource allocation in achieving a competitive advantage (Hill & Jones, 1998; Alkhawaldeh et al., 2022; Mousavi & Aghaei, 2019).

Review of Innovation

Innovation is also critical for firms to maintain a competitive advantage in the telecom industry. According to Poudel, et al., (2021), firms must innovate to develop new products, services, and processes that provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Alkhaldeh, & Mahmood, 2021; Al Hawamdeh, 2021). They argue that "firms that are able to innovate are more likely to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance" (Poudel et al., 2021, p. 100). This finding is consistent with prior research in the telecom industry, which has emphasized the importance of innovation in achieving a competitive advantage (e.g., Adner & Kapoor, 2019; Saripalle & Sharma, 2020).

Overall, the literature suggests that strategic planning, resource allocation, and innovation are key strategic management practices that can enable telecom firms to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance (Zoubi et al., 2023). By focusing on these practices, firms can develop a clear understanding of their market position, customer needs, and competition, allocate their resources effectively, and innovate to develop new products, services, and processes that provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace (Fraihat et al., 2023; Alkhaldeh et al., 2022).

While these studies provide valuable insights into the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry, there is a need for a more comprehensive analysis that examines the role of strategic management in the broader context of the telecom industry's competitive landscape and evolving technological environment. Additionally, there is a need for a more in-depth exploration of the challenges that telecom companies face in implementing effective strategic management practices, and how these challenges can be addressed to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage (Fraihat, & Samadi, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, which posits that a firm's resources and capabilities are key determinants of its competitive advantage and performance (Barney, 1991). The RBV framework suggests that firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance by leveraging their unique resources and capabilities, which are difficult for competitors to imitate or substitute.

Drawing on the RBV framework, this study examines the role of strategic management practices in enabling telecom firms to leverage their resources and capabilities to achieve competitive advantage and superior performance. Specifically, the study focuses on three key strategic management practices: (1) strategic planning, (2) resource allocation, and (3) innovation.

Research Framework

This research framework focuses on three core strategic management practices: (1) strategic planning, which involves defining the firm's mission, vision, and objectives, and developing a roadmap for achieving them; (2) resource allocation, which involves the effective distribution of resources to ensure that they are used to their fullest potential; and (3) innovation, which involves the development and implementation of new products, services, and processes that provide a competitive advantage in the marketplace. By examining the impact of these three strategic management practices on the competitive advantage and performance of telecom firms, this study seeks to provide insights into how firms can compete effectively in this dynamic industry. The findings of this study are expected to be of great value to telecom industry stakeholders, including firms, policy makers, and regulators, and to provide a basis for future research in this area. Figure (1) shows the framework of this research.

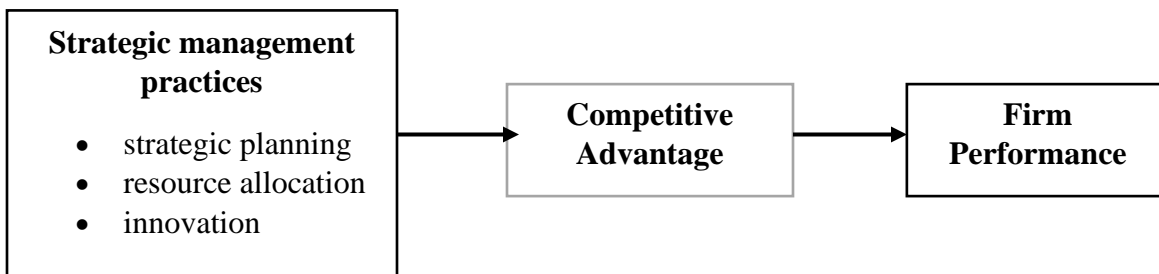


Figure (1): Research Framework

Hypotheses development

According to Jiang, et al., (2021), strategic management practices play a critical role in shaping the performance of telecom firms. The authors found that strategic planning, resource allocation, and innovation significantly and positively affect the financial performance of telecom firms. **H1: Adoption of effective strategic management practices positively affects the competitive advantage and performance of the telecom industry.**

Strategic planning is crucial for achieving competitive advantage and superior performance in the telecom industry. Nair and Ghobadian (2020) argue that "strategic planning is a systematic process that can help firms align their resources and capabilities with the external environment, which in turn, can enhance their competitive advantage and performance" (p. 69). **H1a: The level of using strategic planning practices in a telecom firm positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the industry.**

Resource allocation is another important strategic management practice that can enhance the competitive advantage and performance of telecom firms. Mousavi and Aghaei (2020) found that "the proper allocation of resources enables firms to leverage their strengths and capitalize on market opportunities, which ultimately leads to improved competitive advantage and financial performance" (p. 103141). **H1b: The level of using resource allocation practices positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry.**

Innovation is critical for achieving sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance in the telecom industry. Poudel, et al., (2021) found that "innovation positively affects firm performance in the telecom industry by enhancing competitive advantage, which in turn, leads to improved financial performance" (p. 100). **H1c: The level of using innovation practices in a telecom firm positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the industry.**

Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between strategic management practices and firm performance in the telecom industry. Adner and Kapoor (2019) argue that "competitive advantage is the key mechanism through which innovation and other strategic management practices contribute to firm performance" (p. 802). Therefore, strategic management practices can enhance competitive advantage, which in turn, leads to improved firm performance in the telecom industry. **H2: Competitive advantage mediates the effect of adoption of strategic management practices on the firm performance.**

Research Methodology

This study employs quantitative data collection and analysis methods. A structured questionnaire survey was conducted among senior executives and managers from selected Jordanian telecom firms (Zain, Orang, and Umniah) to explore the collected data on the effective strategic management practices, competitive advantage, and firm performance. The sample size of the survey respondents was 94. The collected data was analyzed using Smart PLS 4, a software tool for structural equation modeling. Smart PLS 4 was used to examine the relationships between strategic management practices, competitive advantage, and firm performance.

The research variables included in the analysis were measured by:

Dependent variable: Firm performance (measured by financial and nonfinancial indicator the nonfinancial measurement was based on the learning and growth and the Internal Business Process).

Independent variable: Strategic management (measured by a composite score of various strategic management practices).

Mediating variable: Competitive advantage (measured by market share).

Results and Discussion

In this research, Smart PLS 4 was employed to conduct the statistical analysis, as a widely used software for structural equation modeling, the role of strategic management in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the Jordanian telecom industry was investigated. Specifically, the study aimed to examine how strategic planning, resource allocation, and innovation practices impact competitive advantage and, in turn, firm performance. Competitive advantage was considered as a mediator between the practices of strategic management and firm performance, meaning that the study explored whether the relationship between strategic management practices and firm performance was strengthened by the presence of competitive advantage.

The results of this study provide strong support for the hypothesis that effective strategic management practices positively affect competitive advantage and performance in the telecom industry. All hypotheses, including H1, H1a, H1b, H1c, and H2, were found to be statistically significant. These findings are consistent with previous research that has identified strategic management practices as a critical driver of organizational performance.

The results of this study have significant implications for telecom firms and their managers. Telecom firms that engage in effective strategic planning, resource allocation, and innovation practices are more likely to achieve competitive advantage and improve performance. The findings also suggest that competitive advantage mediates the relationship between strategic management practices and firm performance in the telecom industry.

Figure 1 illustrates the Structural equation modeling (SEM), highlighting the relationship between strategic management practices, competitive advantage, and performance in the telecom industry.

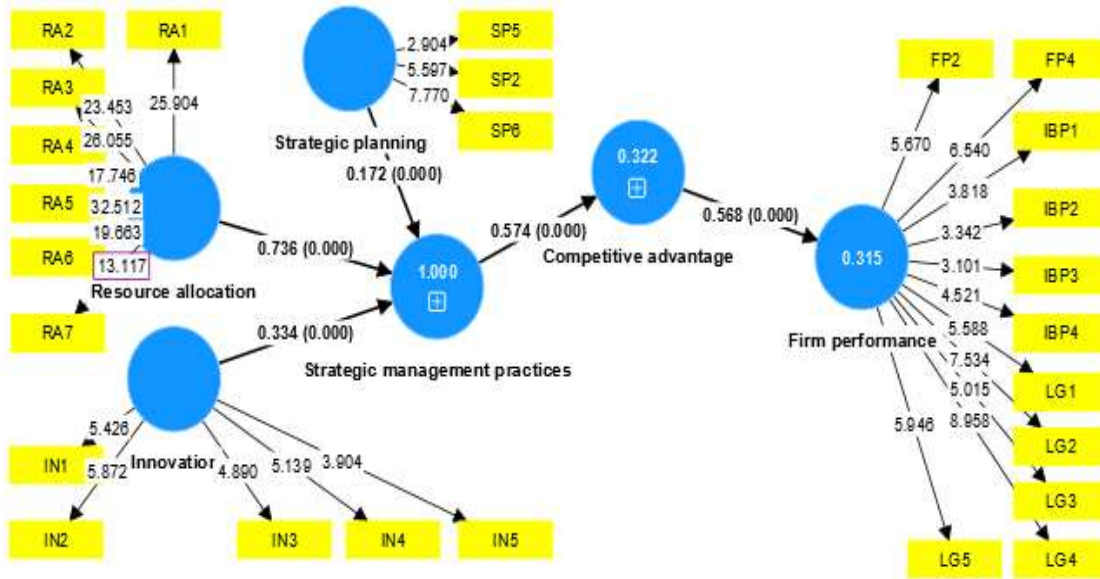


Figure 2: the direct and indirect effects

The finding that the adoption of effective strategic management practices positively affects the competitive advantage and performance of the telecom industry (H1) is consistent with previous research that has identified strategic management practices as a key driver of organizational performance (Cheng and Shiu, 2019; Wu et al., 2017). The current study expands on this research by identifying specific strategic management practices that are most closely associated with competitive advantage and performance in the telecom industry.

Tables 1 and 2 provide the detailed results of the study's analysis.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
competitive advantage -> firm performance	0.568	0.601	0.075	7.565	0.000
innovation -> strategic management practices	0.334	0.315	0.079	4.222	0.000
resource allocation -> strategic management practices	0.736	0.732	0.062	11.853	0.000
strategic planning, -> strategic management practices	0.172	0.171	0.022	7.720	0.000
strategic management practices -> competitive advantage	0.574	0.570	0.100	5.728	0.000

Tables 1: the direct effect between variables

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
competitive advantage -> firm performance	0.568	0.601	0.075	7.565	0.000
innovation -> competitive advantage	0.192	0.185	0.065	2.937	0.003
innovation -> firm performance	0.109	0.112	0.043	2.514	0.012
innovation -> strategic management practices	0.334	0.315	0.079	4.222	0.000
resource allocation -> competitive advantage	0.422	0.413	0.058	7.314	0.000
resource allocation -> firm performance	0.240	0.248	0.045	5.336	0.000
resource allocation -> strategic management practices	0.736	0.732	0.062	11.853	0.000
strategic planning -> competitive advantage	0.098	0.098	0.021	4.617	0.000
strategic planning -> firm performance	0.056	0.059	0.015	7.723	0.000
strategic planning -> strategic management practices	0.172	0.171	0.022	7.720	0.000
strategic management practices -> competitive advantage	0.574	0.570	0.100	5.728	0.000
strategic management practices -> firm performance	0.326	0.342	0.074	4.416	0.000

Tables 2: the total effect between variables

The results of this study indicate that the level of using strategic planning practices positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry (H1a). This is consistent with previous research that has identified strategic planning as a key strategic management practice that contributes to organizational success (Carneiro et al., 2018). The current study highlights the importance of strategic planning specifically in the context of the telecom industry and suggests that telecom firms that engage in effective

strategic planning are more likely to achieve competitive advantage and improve performance.

Similarly, the finding that the level of using resource allocation practices positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry (H1b) is consistent with previous research that has identified resource allocation as a critical aspect of strategic management (Cheng and Shiu, 2019; Wu et al., 2017). Effective resource allocation is essential for achieving organizational objectives, and the current study underscores the importance of this practice in the telecom industry specifically.

The study also found that the level of using innovation practices in a telecom firm positively affects competitive advantage and firm performance in the industry (H1c). This finding is consistent with previous research that has identified innovation as a key driver of organizational success (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). The current study highlights the importance of innovation in the context of the telecom industry and suggests that firms that engage in innovative practices are more likely to achieve competitive advantage and improve performance.

Finally, the study found that competitive advantage mediates the effect of adopting strategic management practices on firm performance (H2). This finding is consistent with previous research that has identified competitive advantage as a mediator between strategic management practices and firm performance (Zhou et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2017). The current study expands on this research by identifying specific strategic management practices that are most closely associated with competitive advantage and performance in the telecom industry, highlighting the importance of developing effective strategic management practices to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and improve firm performance. Tables 3 illustrates the Result of the Mediating Effect of competitive advantage

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
innovation -> strategic management practices -> competitive advantage	0.192	0.185	0.065	2.937	0.003
resource allocation -> strategic management practices -> competitive advantage	0.422	0.413	0.058	7.314	0.000
strategic planning -> strategic management practices -> competitive	0.056	0.059	0.015	3.723	0.000

advantage -> firm performance					
strategic planning -> strategic management practices -> competitive advantage	0.098	0.098	0.021	4.617	0.000
innovation -> strategic management practices -> competitive advantage-> firm performance	0.109	0.112	0.043	2.514	0.012
strategic management practices -> competitive advantage -> firm performance	0.326	0.342	0.074	4.416	0.000
resource allocation -> strategic management practices -> competitive advantage -> firm performance	0.240	0.248	0.045	5.336	0.000

Tables 3: Result of the Mediating Effect

This statistical analysis provides empirical evidence to support the idea that strategic management is an important factor in enhancing competitive advantage and firm performance in the telecom industry. Thus, we conclude that strategic management has a significant positive effect on firm performance in the telecom industry, even after controlling for the influence of competitive advantage. In other words, telecom companies that adopt effective strategic management practices are more likely to achieve higher levels of performance than those that do not.

A Thematic description

On the margins of the researcher's interviews during the distribution of questionnaires to managers in various Jordanian telecommunications companies, the researcher identified some of the challenges and opportunities, which are including resource constraints, resistance to change, lack of coordination, and the regulatory environment. The analysis also highlighted opportunities for as a way to address these challenges and achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage of collaboration, the following themes emerged from the data:

Resource Constraints: Several interviewees mentioned resource constraints as a major challenge facing telecom companies in implementing effective strategic

management practices. These resource constraints included financial resources, human resources, and technological resources. For example, one interviewee stated that "we don't have enough financial resources to invest in new technologies or to hire the best talent." Another interviewee noted that "we struggle to attract and retain top talent in a highly competitive market."

Resistance to change: Another key challenge mentioned by interviewees was resistance to change. Many interviewees noted that employees, particularly those who have been with the company for a long time, are resistant to change and may not embrace new strategic management practices. For example, one interviewee stated that "it's hard to get everyone on board with new initiatives, especially if they've been doing things a certain way for a long time." Another interviewee noted that "employees may feel threatened by changes in the organization and may resist new ideas and approaches."

Lack of coordination: Several interviewees mentioned that a lack of coordination among different departments and business units was a challenge in implementing effective strategic management practices. For example, one interviewee noted that "different departments may have different goals and objectives, which can lead to conflicts and a lack of coordination." Another interviewee stated that "there needs to be better communication and coordination across the organization to ensure that everyone is working towards the same goals."

Regulatory Environment: A few interviewees mentioned that the regulatory environment was a challenge in implementing effective strategic management practices. For example, one interviewee noted that "the regulatory environment can be very complex and can limit our ability to innovate and compete." Another interviewee stated that "there are a lot of regulations that we have to comply with, which can be a burden on our resources and limit our flexibility."

Opportunities for Collaboration: Despite the challenges mentioned above, several interviewees also identified opportunities for collaboration as a way to address these challenges and achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage. For example, one interviewee stated that "we need to collaborate more with other companies and organizations to share resources and knowledge." Another interviewee noted that "there are opportunities for us to work more closely with regulators to influence the regulatory environment in a way that benefits our industry."

Recommendations

Develop a strategic management plan: Telecom companies should develop a comprehensive strategic management plan that aligns with their vision, mission, and goals. The plan should include a clear strategy formulation process, implementation plan, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Build a culture of strategic thinking: Telecom companies should foster a culture of strategic thinking by involving employees at all levels in the strategic management process, providing training and development opportunities, and recognizing and rewarding strategic thinking and performance.

Address challenges to implementing effective strategic management practices: Telecom companies should address the challenges to implementing effective strategic management practices by identifying and overcoming resistance to change, investing in the necessary resources and capabilities, and creating a supportive organizational culture.

Monitor and evaluate performance: Telecom companies should monitor and evaluate their performance regularly to ensure that they are on track to achieve their strategic goals and objectives. They should use key performance indicators (KPIs) and other relevant metrics to assess their performance and adjust their strategies accordingly.

In conclusion, adopting and implementing effective strategic management practices can help telecom companies enhance their competitive advantage and firm performance. By addressing the challenges and following the recommendations outlined above, telecom companies can achieve long-term success in the dynamic and competitive telecom industry.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the adoption of effective strategic management practices, including strategic planning, resource allocation, and innovation, positively affects the competitive advantage and performance of the telecom industry. The study also highlights the importance of competitive advantage as a mediator of the relationship between the adoption of strategic management practices and firm performance.

Based on the recommendations provided above, telecom companies in Jordan can take steps to improve their strategic management practices, which can ultimately lead to better performance and competitive advantage in the industry. Overall, the study contributes to the existing literature on strategic management practices in the telecom industry and provides practical recommendations for telecom companies in Jordan.

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