

Building a Business and Strategic Intelligence Policy as a Strategy for Promoting Congolese Business Progress and Healthy Economic Development in Eastern DRC

Abstract

The aim of this study was to verify the existence of business and strategic intelligence policies at the level of Congolese companies and at the state level, likely to foster progress and healthy development in the east of the DRC. The study was based on a mixed perspective consisting of objective analysis of quantitative data and interpretative analysis of qualitative data. The results showed that business and strategic intelligence policies have not been established at either company or state level, as this is an area of activity that is not known to the players in companies and public departments, and there are no units or offices in their organizational structures responsible for managing strategic information for competitiveness on the international market. In addition, there is a real need to establish strategic information management units within companies, upstream, and to set up a national strategic information management department or agency to help local companies compete in the marketplace, downstream. This reflects the importance and timeliness of building business and strategic intelligence policies to ensure economic progress and development in the eastern DRC. Business and strategic intelligence provides companies with an appropriate tool for researching, collecting, processing, and disseminating information useful for decision-making among stakeholders, in order to cope with a crisis or competitive situation. The study suggests several key recommendations based on its findings. To the government, it is recommended to establish the national policy of business and strategic intelligence by setting up a national agency of strategic intelligence in favor of local companies; and to companies to establish business intelligence units in their organizational structures in favor of stakeholders to foster advantageous decision-making in the competitive market and achieve progress. Finally, the study suggests that studies be carried out to fully understand the opportunities and impact of business and strategic intelligence in African countries, particularly in the DRC.

Keywords

Business and Strategic Intelligence, Strategic Information, Congolese Companies, Public Departments, Decision-Making, Information Management, Business and Strategic Intelligence Policies, Progress, Healthy Development, Mining and Agriculture Sectors, International Market, Eastern DRC.

Comment [MAH1]: Reduce the keywords to 4-6 according to the abstract

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Statement

Conflicts in the eastern part of the country have delayed its development as its economy has suffered significant damage. Now, the vision is to make the DRC an emerging country by 2030-2060. In the face of the current global economic crisis and the realities of globalization, governments, large corporations, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) and SMIs (Small and Medium Industries) must find tools to be more offensive and defensive in highly competitive national and international markets. The market is becoming increasingly global, and we are witnessing the emergence of a situation of global economic clashes with several players: supranational economic blocs, States,

and companies. While the value creation of companies is increasingly based on conquering markets beyond their borders, the current global reality shows that a production economy has followed a market economy. The information management and protection process must be implemented to make the most of it. In this sense, management consists in organizing the scarcity of information, orienting the meaning of information, influencing work, etc., which constitutes the offensive aspect of the business intelligence approach, while the protection and security of information assets constitute its defensive aspect. In today's logical and pragmatic business world, no one can do without competitive, technological, legislative, and scientific intelligence...

Since competition is particularly fierce in times of crisis, or in a context of international strategic dynamics, it is essential for a company to have information on competitors, suppliers, and the environment, and to know how to preserve its own information assets. Thus, in this highly competitive global space, information has become a strategic resource for public and private actors.

Obtaining information is no longer a difficulty, but the problem lies in its management and protection. These two main aspects make business and strategic intelligence a competitive advantage and an essential strategic tool at the state level and company level, especially in this globalization century of New Information and Communication Technologies, which is a great opportunity for its emergence in the DRC. Indeed, business and strategic intelligence is a system that would ensure the security of companies' information systems, which are subject to accidental threats (natural disasters, human errors, etc.) as well as intrusive threats (espionage, intrusions, sabotage, etc.). In a national business and strategic intelligence approach or system, the State plays a crucial role in gathering strategic information for companies concerning markets, project financing, investments and other information through diplomacy and cooperation. In the DRC, the role of the state is limited to regulating economic sectors, controlling business activities, and collecting public revenue, rather than serving as a clearing house for strategic information and connections for local companies, helping them to become more competitive on the international market.

The question within this study is therefore as follows: Are there business and strategic intelligence policies in the country and in Congolese companies that can promote progress and healthy economic development? To the above research questions, we make the alternative assumptions (H1) that: "There are no business and strategic intelligence policies in the country and in Congolese companies that can promote progress and healthy economic development". Then, the null hypothesis (H0) is that: "there are business and strategic policies in the country and in Congolese companies that promote progress and healthy economic development".

1.2. Objectives

In the study, the objectives include:

- 1) To evaluate the level of knowledge of business and strategic intelligence within public departments and within Congolese companies.
- 2) To verify if there are policies of business and strategic intelligence set-up in the country and in the Congolese companies that would make the competitive to promote their progress and healthy economic development in the eastern regions of the country.
- 3) To know the perception about the positioning of Congolese companies in terms of competitiveness on the markets (local, sub-regional or international).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

As business intelligence system is first and foremost an information management system, the study was founded on two theories: systemic theory and decision theory. Turchany has highlighted that the system refers to a set of elements functioning in a unitary manner and in permanent interaction (...) considering Von Bertalanffy's own opinion that

everything that functions together is a system ([13]: p. 3). Within the framework of a national economic policy, the state institutions that operate or regulate the activities in the economic sector and local companies constitute an organized, structured system, whose elements and sub-elements are interdependent and inter-operate for its balance, adaptability to the environment and efficiency. Thus, increasing competitiveness for business progress and healthy development in the DRC implies the design and development of policies contributing to the implementation of an organized, structured, and efficient business and strategic intelligence system. Such a system will support the decision-making process through the research, collection, processing, and dissemination of strategic information between stakeholders from the state to the corporate level; but also, at different internal levels of Congolese companies for greater competitiveness on local and international markets.

Decision theory is generally described as a theory on which choices can be based and which makes it possible to rationalize (but not absolutely) decisions [14]. As an approach, Jouini [15] has pointed out that decision theory attempts both to describe the ways in which an individual or organization makes a decision (descriptive approach) and to provide tools for optimal decision-making (normative approach). In all cases, it focuses on an ideal decision-maker capable of coldly analyzing all alternatives with infinite computing power, and deciding either on a rational basis, or in line with his or her own preferences. Thus, Allain [16], has shown that the aim of decision making is to solve a problem by translating the choice made into a behavior (a sequence of actions). It involves a number of distinct operations: defining the object (what the decision is and will be about), searching for, analyzing and organizing useful information, developing and evaluating decision hypotheses, drawing in particular on prior knowledge and/or experience, choosing a decision hypothesis and implementing it.

For this reason, decision theory considers as information only that which is likely to lead to or modify a decision. For the proponents of this theory, information can be defined as data that reduces uncertainty. It requires that, in any decision-making process, we ensure the relevance of information, and organize information circuits (at both state and corporate levels) so that available information is properly processed and distributed to the right people, at the right time.

This is the very purpose of business and strategic intelligence, because a good business and strategic intelligence method must consider information from the context of the company or the various companies in a country.

As De Maillard and Kubler [17] have argued, the decision-maker is a key player, making political choices and committing the future of societies. Systems and decision approaches are used to explain how Congolese companies (managers) can access useful information from various sources (internal and state), to better organize and structure themselves, to improve their decision-making processes, to adapt their business strategies to competition and the market for greater competitiveness, success, and prosperity, and to contribute to the healthy development of the eastern DRC.

2.2. Empirical Review

Vas [18] showed that business strategy consists of defining the company's goals (missions) and long-term orientation (vision) in order to create value for its customers and for all its stakeholders, by mobilizing its environment, its specific resources and competencies that will enable it to build a sustainable competitive advantage. The strategy allows the company to make decisions (choices) that commit it in a sustainable way. Based on this definition and as a concept, business strategy has the following characteristics: long term, goal, business, diagnosis, and stakeholders [18]. This description leads us to conceive business strategy in its content and objectives as an intelligent process within a company.

Lepere and Marcoux [19] point out that business and strategic intelligence can be considered a more formalized and structured approach than traditional business management strategy models. It provides organizations that use it with an additional asset, as it enables even small structures to become more influential when they manage to federate offensive and effective approaches. In this sense, Lepere and Marcoux [19] has also indicated that strategic intelligence enables a company to develop in a controlled way, taking into account offensive and defensive

behaviors through four pillars of strategic intelligence: 1) *the collection, watch and monitoring pillar*, broken down into defensive activities consisting in monitoring everything that is said about the company's products and services, and offensive activities consisting in collecting information in order to carry out the company's projects; 2) *the sharing and enrichment pillar*, characterized by collective practice, which establishes that all employees must be involved in the process or activities; 3) *the protection pillar*, which is offensive in nature, concerns the protection of company information, physical security against theft and intrusion, security against human leaks through blackmail or elicitation techniques, IT security and intellectual protection through trademarks, patents and models; 4) *the influence pillar*, particularly linked to NICTs, which are important for business intelligence. How each pillar is dealt with depends on the culture of the company's managers and the size of the business.

Lusset[20] stated that the objective of a business strategy is to evaluate the company's chances of being favorably positioned in its sector of activity over time. A company must be guided by a global strategy, which must be disseminated within the company, and which must unite all employees and aim to optimize the company's development and growth. Lusset, maintained that an informational watch is also highly recommended in order to be able to anticipate, foresee and adapt to any change that disrupts the conditions under which the company carries out its activity [20]. This description of business strategy seems to establish recognition of the evolution from a business strategy approach to the adoption of a business and strategic intelligence approach.

Mayer and Quick ([21]: pp. 29-30), affirmed that "Business intelligence is used as an umbrella term to describe concepts and methods for improving business decision making by using fact-based support. (...) Business intelligence is designed to assist individual users in processing vast quantities of data when making decision in an organization context; consequently, Business intelligence improved organizational action and decision-making." This brief definition synthesizes the concept well but seems much more theoretical than practically explanatory and seems to limit the notion or the practice of Business intelligence to the level of an organization by ignoring the state level.

Grossmann & Rinderle-Ma [22] presented business intelligence through a number of elements that characterize it, namely: Task, Foundation, Realization, and Delivery. Task: it provides decision support for specific goals defined in the context of business activities in different domain areas taking into account the organizational and institutional framework. Foundation: its support relies on empirical information based on data and uses different types of knowledge and theories for information generation. Realization: the decision support has to be realized as a system using the actual capabilities in information and communication technologies (ICT). Delivery: A Business intelligence system has to deliver information at the right time to the right people in an appropriate form.

Based on this Grossmann & Rinderle-Ma description and various definitions mentioned above including Martre[8], Mayer & Quick [21], Delbecque[23] and Prunckun[24], business and strategic intelligence is precisely and finally defined in this study as "the set of coordinated actions using technologies for research, processing and sharing of information useful to actors to enable action and decision-making in the context of influencing actions for the benefit or success of companies or states. It is therefore a collective and interactive approach designed to assist users in acquiring free and sometimes confidential commercial data, it aims at the offensive acquisition and sharing of information, to maximize the relevance of the decision or to influence the market in an advantageous way". In general, the activities in business and strategic intelligence do not mostly consist in the automation of the collection, processing, and dissemination of information, but involve both individual and collective actions of the various human actors of the organization acting in interaction. This is a conceptualization that seems to be made with an eye to the practice of business and strategic intelligence at a corporate level. Moreover, it is a process, the activities of which include responsibilities internal to the company/companies and responsibilities involving the responsibilities of the state in favor of companies for efficiency in market competition.

Indeed, in an empirical study on the practices of Moroccan companies in terms of business intelligence, Rida Chafic[25] wanted to reproduce the real image of the intelligence system set up within the companies he solicited. He based his problematic on the assertions of Clerc ([26]: p. 119) when he said: "The advances in business intelligence seem more significant in large companies."

Thus, his research question was: "What are the practices of large Moroccan companies in terms of business intelligence?" Chafic limited the scope of his study to the identification of the practices of large structures with a monitoring or business intelligence unit. The findings of his study were that the practices are informal, and the information remains unstructured, it also revealed the lack of financial and human resources to initiate the monitoring process. This approach seemed interesting to us because the problem was approached in a way similar to the one we support in this study. The difference lies in the problematic, insofar as Chafic sought to identify the practices of business intelligence within Moroccan companies, which he recognizes in advance the existence of cells or agents of watch (of business intelligence) in these companies. On the other hand, within the framework of our study, it is first of all a question of verifying the knowledge of business and strategic intelligence or the existence of a policies of business and strategic intelligence at the State level, and at the companies' level, through some of its functions.

Speaking of the role of strategic intelligence and its impact on management, McDowell ([27]: p. 25) has shown that "strategic intelligence focuses on the long-term goals of agencies, groups, organizations, and governments. It deals with important objectives and overall plans, and while it may or may not need to operate in an operational environment close to the day-to-day action, this depends on the level at which the strategic client is located. This form of intelligence may be localized at the district or regional level, or it may be conducted at the headquarters level, in close proximity to organizational and national customers, whether they are corporate leaders, senior government officials, group commanders, or politicians". By his assertion, this author argues that business and strategic intelligence as a single domain, as conceived in our study, is the preserve of organizations and governments at their various levels of structure and echelon, and as such, strategic analysis is a legitimate component of decision making for managers to realize their full potential to solve major problems. Indeed, McDowell asserted that "the purpose of strategic intelligence is to support the effective achievement of organizational goals." He even added that "from the perspective of a practical understanding of strategic intelligence, it does not matter whether these objectives are limited to an organization, a government agency, a corporate empire, or even international relations."

In this regard, McDowell argued that what is essential to understanding the role and nature of strategic intelligence are two key assertions that must be accepted as true. The first is that strategic intelligence is deliberately designed to enable decisions that are specifically relevant to long-term policy making. The second argues that strategic intelligence also provides a means to support business objectives by generating insights into future challenges that, if considered, will have a direct impact on business planning. Seen in this light, business and strategic intelligence, if it is to serve as a means or strategy for business efficiency, performance, and progress, must be conceived, adapted, used properly and methodically ([27]: p. 26). The author has also demonstrated that "strategic research as an intelligence product is a powerful management tool if used appropriately.

It can focus on specific topics of concern to the organization or business, or, in a broader context, it can analyze the organization's working environment and identify risks, threats, and opportunities." As this author has argued, strategic intelligence has a key role to play in all areas of corporate management and planning ([27]: p. 28).

Some have addressed this theme of business and strategic intelligence not only as a weapon to enrich companies' databases to make them more efficient and competitive on the world market, but also as a tool for the economic development of countries. In the report presented to the Committee on Cooperation and Development of the "Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie" on business intelligence, Dufau [12] shows the process of integrating business and strategic intelligence in the so-called French-speaking area. Taking the example of Morocco, where Business and strategic intelligence is linked to development, the report notes that: "In recent years, Moroccan political, economic, and academic leaders have gradually appropriated business intelligence to master strategic information useful for the development of companies, public bodies but also projects and territories. This approach is considered the main asset in the economic battle and in the management of international power relations." With a view to defining business intelligence, Morocco has decided to organize a public policy of business intelligence at national and territorial level, which does not consist in copying and pasting concepts practiced in Western countries. The country is more concerned about the sustainability of its development by preserving its

identity and seeking new capacities for economic and cultural power. This trend is confirmed by the concepts of business intelligence of two Moroccan personalities mentioned in the report.

Concerning the emergence of business intelligence in Africa, Morocco remains one of the significant examples, and one of the wills to implement a national policy in this area. Other African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo seem less advanced in this direction. Most of these countries are still interested in the conceptual dimension of business intelligence. On the other hand, the Dufau report reveals that 2008 was a year of business intelligence in Central, North and West Africa, where specialists invited decision-makers to discuss the major challenges of seeking, protecting, disseminating, and strategically managing useful information in the face of increasing global competition ([12]:p. 28). Most countries in the world have developed business intelligence policies and created structures in charge because they have understood that it is the only alternative to protect their economies and face the powerful global competition.

This new reality, accentuated by globalization and the development of information and communication technologies, is now considered a strategic tool for the development of States and companies around the world. Even the most powerful and emerging nations now acknowledge that they have achieved this. In France, for example, the conclusions of the report of the "Business Intelligence" group, chaired by Martre [8], have made the State and companies aware that the impact of international competition on stakeholders, the impact on economic strategies and the unemployment rate are fundamental issues for the country.

From this perspective, strategic management of economic information has become a tool in its own right for a constant understanding of the reality of competitors' markets, techniques and ways of thinking, their culture, intentions and ability to execute. The French players then understood that the approach is at the heart of national business intelligence systems, which now appear to be essential levers in the service of competition and employment.

In this sense, Denayer and Vandecastelaere [28], have shown that a country's competitiveness is a theme that has been attracting interest for some time now. They show that two decades ago, in 2000, Europe adopted the Lisbon Strategy, which aimed to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world". Building on this strategy, ten years later the EU launched the EU-2020 strategy, which aims to transform the European economy into a highly competitive, social, and sustainable market economy. And now, against the backdrop of the debt crisis and slowing economic recovery, the themes of competitiveness and growth have taken on even greater prominence on the political agenda. These authors have noted that, over the years, a consensus has nevertheless emerged that a competitive economy is one that succeeds in increasing the income and prosperity of its population. And even the European Commission defines competitiveness as the ability of a national economy to sustainably improve the standard of living of its inhabitants and provide them with a high level of employment. While other powerful countries such as Japan, Germany, USA and Sweden, to name but a few, had already made it the strategic driver of their development and commercial success with major deployments, France found that its mechanism remained very far from the effectiveness of the systems developed by what it calls "competitors-partners". These reservations reveal that in the current context, the partnership does not exclude competition on the international market where the so-called industrialized countries, the so-called emerging countries and the countries of the South are all called upon to compete for their own economic growth.

In fact, as far as healthy development is concerned, the analyses and criticisms made of the problem of economic development have led various researchers to conclude that there is a lack of balance in its content between industrialized and developing countries. As a result, a model of development had to be proposed that was much fairer and that brought to the concept what the first approach lacked in strength in terms of distributive justice and assurance. Jean-Francois Dortier [29] argued that at the same time, the negative effects of development (urban concentration, destruction of traditional ways of life, inequalities, and pollution) led many experts to advocate sustainable development as a balanced path to development.

A minority of radical thinkers have come to reject development as a whole, which destroys the Third World more than it helps it. In proposing sustainable development, the concern of these critical scholars was to reconcile continued global economic growth with the preservation of natural resources for future generations and the fight

against inequality. According to the existing literature, the major concern was that sustainable development should meet the basic needs of the poorest, to whom the highest priority should be given; and that of the limits that the state of technology and social organization impose on the capacity of the environment to meet current and future needs [29]. This vision has given development not only an economic but also a humanistic character that has opened the way to the concept of development that can be considered equitable, just, and healthy.

In this sense, Vittorio Vaccari has argued that “the purpose of technical and social development lies in the progress of cultural, moral, and spiritual values, in a word of the civilization that the generations before ours, through the effort of centuries, have conquered. This progress is linked to the right and to the capacity to have an interior life and to be able to manifest the mysterious force of the love for the neighbor. In front of the technical development, each one must take his share of moral responsibility” [30]. For this author, to think of a development in the sense of technical and social progress, which does not consider the values, the love, and the right of the neighbor, is to ignore the dignity and the greatness of the man, which would be the same objective of economic development. Thus, Vittorio affirmed that the greater instrumentality of the quantitative values of the technical development does not satisfy our hopes, as well as the average opinion of the masses does not satisfy our intelligence. The essential part of our life is its secret. Our wealth is the possibility of defending the dignity and greatness of man even in the age of the industrial economy.

This defense is a very great and beautiful factor. It is an affirmation of life [30]. Thus, despite being recognized as a strategy that promotes business progress and development, Lepere and Marcoux [19] point out that the business and strategic intelligence approach still too often suffers from being equated with espionage, which companies need to avoid in order to practice influence within the law, while taking care not to divulge their own competitive differentiation methods and strategies. It is an approach to influencing that would help Congolese companies compete for the healthy progress and development of the eastern DRC.

2.3. Summary of the Literature Review

The study was based on theory of system and theory of decision. Theory of system highlights that the system refers to a set of elements functioning in a unitary manner and in permanent interaction. Decision theory is generally described as a theory on which choices can be based and which makes it possible to rationalize (but not absolutely) decisions. Systems and decision approaches are used to explain how Congolese companies (managers) can access useful information from various sources (internal and state), to better organize and structure themselves, to improve their decision-making processes, to adapt their business strategies to competition and the market for greater competitiveness, success, and prosperity, and to contribute to the healthy development of the eastern DRC.

The empirical review provides a description and a comprehensive overview of various studies conducted on different aspects related to the business and strategic intelligence, making-decision, and development. It includes research into the concepts and contributions of business and strategic intelligence to the success of companies and states. It also includes studies into the effects of business and strategic intelligence on company progress and development. It also discusses the importance of information management in the decision-making process at company or state level, and its impact on corporate prosperity and economic growth.

3. Methodology

The study was based on a multiple case study in a mixed approach. In a case study, the main objective is a complete description and understanding of the case and its context ([31]: p. 3). The research collected data from four public departments and four Congolese companies operating in mining sector and agricultural sector. Then, the quantitative findings were obtained through a survey questionnaire, and the qualitative findings were obtained through interviews. The content analysis method associated to the functional method made it possible to detect the level of knowledge of business and strategic intelligence among Congolese companies and government departments; and also, through the description of practices in use, to determine the perception of the positioning of companies on the

market, in order to determine the existence or necessity of implementing business and strategic intelligence policies in the economic system in the east of the DRC. When we talk about eastern DRC, we are referring specifically to the provinces of North Kivu, and South Kivu.

As in a mixed approach, we opted for a simultaneous process in which we collected both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a complete analysis of the research questions. Thus, both forms of data were collected at the same time and were then integrated into the interpretation of the overall results. The process was based on the third data combination strategy, which consisted of linking the data (quantitative and qualitative) when we analysed one of them.

Statistically speaking, in a general (standard) way, the sample size for a known or finite population (determined number) for scientific research, must be constituted at least from 30% of the target population. Indeed, the sample size (n) to be drawn for this study was 30 percent of all members of four selected companies for a confidence level of 95 percent and a value of $p \geq 0.05$ with a Standard Deviation Means analysis. The global number of employees in all target companies (N) is 106, or an overall sample size (n) of 31.8 (± 32) individuals. Since the total number of employees was not that large, it was practically possible to use a large sample size by extending the survey to the entire population in order to significantly reduce the margin of error. However, because access to all employees was not allowed by the employers, the sample size for this study was only expanded from 30% to 50% per firm, making a total of 54 employees (Table 1).

As a mixed approach, interpretive data were obtained with 20 managers or executive agents in order of 4 respondents in each company, and 8 heads of public departments of mining and agriculture in order of 2 persons in each department in two provinces. Statistical Data were obtained with a stratified sampling of 54 employees constituting the sum of 30% of the employee headcount of each

Table 1: Sample size by Strata or Firm

N°	Strata/Firm	Economic Sector	Total Number	Sample size (30%)	Number	Sample size used (50%)	Number used
01	ETS OLIVE - Minings	Wolframite-Cassiterite	21	6.3	6	10.5	11
02	ETS OLIVE Agriculture	Cinchona tree	26	7.8	8	13	13
03	CONGOCOM S.A.R.L	Wolframite-Cassiterite and Gold	33	9.9	10	16.5	17
04	NBB & Frères S.A.R.L	Colombo-Tantalite, Cassiterite, and Gold	26	7.8	8	13	13
TOTAL			106	31.8 = ± 32	32	53	54

4. Findings, Analysis, and Interpretation

Based on the three objectives of the study, we formulated our findings under six variables (or themes), of which we present a summary:

- 1) Knowledge and understanding of business and strategic intelligence or competitive intelligence in Congolese companies and public departments in eastern DRC.
- 2) Existence of Department in charge of information Management in the companies and in the public departments in eastern DRC.
- 3) Need of a Strategic Department/Section/Team in the companies and in the public departments in eastern DRC.
- 4) Existence of Business and strategic intelligence policies in the companies and in the public departments in eastern DRC.
- 5) Expectation and need of companies' policies (units) and a national policy (or system) of business and strategic intelligence to support Congolese companies in the market.
- 6) Perception on the Congolese companies' current position in the local and international Market.

4.1. Knowledge and Understanding of Business and Strategic Intelligence or Competitive Intelligence in Congolese Companies and Public Departments in Eastern DRC

The findings are that 92.6% of respondents did not know what Business and Strategic Intelligence or Competitive Intelligence is (Table 2). This shows that the minimum score is 1 and the maximum is 2. The mean score was 1.93 (standard deviation = 0.264), indicating that, on average, almost all respondents know nothing about business and strategic intelligence. These findings can be explained by the various understandings that respondents have of what business and strategic intelligence is, revealing that almost half (46.3%) have no idea what it is, while others have conceptions that do not correspond or are unlikely to correspond to a conception of business and strategic intelligence. They variously think that Business and Strategic Intelligence is as following: 31.5% it is the economics of marketing actions; 9.3% it is intellectual skills; 9.3% the intellectual capacity that enables a company to compete on the market, and 7.4% it is customer's research (Table 3 and Table 4). This is confirmed by interview findings, which support that in Congolese companies, in general, business and strategic intelligence is not yet known by managers and executives in different economic sectors, either as a process, or as a practice, let alone as a concept in the business world. Some managers and executives believe that business and strategic intelligence could be nothing more than the marketing mix. Even within the public state departments of the mining and agriculture sectors, business and strategic intelligence as a concept or as a practice, is not known by various actors. Within public departments and Congolese companies, each member has his or her own perception of what business and strategic intelligence is or can be in a company and in a country.

Table 2: Respondents' knowledge of Business and Strategic Intelligence

Know what is Business Intelligence/Strategic Intelligence/Competitive Intelligence		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE - Minings	CONGOCOM S.A.R.L	NBB & Frères S.A.R.L	ETS OLIVE - Agriculture	
Yes	Count	2	0	0	2	4
	% of Total	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	7.4%
No	Count	9	17	13	11	50
	% of Total	16.7%	31.5%	24.1%	20.4%	92.6%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

Table 3: The mean score for "know what is Business and strategic intelligence

Know what is Business Intelligence/Strategic Intelligence/Competitive Intelligence						
Statistic			Bootstrap ^a			
			Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
Lower	Upper					
N	Valid	54	0	0	54	54
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.93	.00	.03	1.85	1.98
Std. Error of Mean		.036				
Std. Deviation		.264	-.006	.056	.136	.360

Minimum	1
Maximum	2
a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 54 bootstrap samples	

Table 4: Individual understanding of respondents of what Business and Strategic Intelligence can be

Personal understanding of what Business Intelligence/Strategic Intelligence/Competitive Intelligence can be		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE - Minings	CONGOCOM S.A.R.L	NBB & Freres S.A.R.L	ETS OLIVE - Agriculture	
Economic Marketing	Count	0	9	8	0	17
	% of Total	0.0%	16.7%	14.8%	0.0%	31.5%
The search for Customers	Count	0	4	0	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Intelligence of competencies	Count	5	0	0	0	5
	% of Total	9.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%
Intelligence that allows the company to compete in the market	Count	0	0	0	5	5
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	9.3%
No ideas	Count	6	4	5	8	23
	% of Total	11.1%	7.4%	9.3%	14.8%	42.6%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

4.2. Existence of Department in Charge of Information Management in the Companies and in the Public Departments in Eastern DRC

The findings are that 55.6% of companies affirm that they do not have a department or unit in charge of information management, when 27.8% of companies estimate that they have information management system in the finance department; 9.3% of companies estimate that information management is done during management meetings, and 7.4% of companies estimate that they have information management through what the administration department do (Table 5).

This shows that the minimum score is 1 and the maximum score is 4. The mean score was 3.13 (standard deviation = 1.065), indicating that on average, most respondents to a moderate degree assert that there is no information management and retention department in their company's structure. The finding that respondents attest that there is no information management and retention department in their companies is explained by the fact that a large majority express the need to have a strategic department or unit in their companies' structure (Table 6). The interview's findings confirm the lack of internal structure or unit to collect and analyze data to support decision-making in Congolese companies in the face of market challenges or crisis. There is not any organizational unit specifically dedicated to the task of providing strategic support (strategic information and analysis) for decision-making, with a particular focus on the competition. Testimonies from company managers and executives indicate that strategic issues, if they exist at all, fall within the discretionary power of the CEO or manager alone. The reality in companies is not different from the various public departments in all the various provinces of the eastern DRC. For example, the main way by which public services access information on the traceability of product in the mining sector and facilitate companies' access to the international market without the risk of being considered as blood

minerals, is the regional certification mechanism of the Kimberley Process. Charging to take 6 measures aimed at preventing the financing of armed groups through the marketing of 3T minerals (Coltane-Cassiterite, Cobalt, Germanium), the process was created by the Heads of State of the African Great Lakes region. These measures establish that for a mining site to be productive, it must be certified by experts from the national Ministry of Mines to check, qualify and validate whether it is credible, i.e., that the products do not come from a red zone. Findings are that all national mechanisms for collecting statistical production data in the DRC, are not processes of researching, collecting, processing, and disseminating strategic information for the benefit of companies to make them competitive on the market, but are rather and above all state mechanisms for collecting strategic information to control company production and marketing by public services for the benefit of the State administration.

Table 5: Department in charge of the management and conservation of information in this company

Department in charge of the management and conservation of information in this company		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE	CONGOCOM	NBB & Freres	ETS OLIVE	
		Minings	S.A.R.L	S.A.R.L	Agriculture	
Administration	Count	0	4	0	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Finance	Count	11	0	0	4	15
	% of Total	20.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	27.8%
Meeting of the company's executives	Count	0	0	0	5	5
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	9.3%
It does not exist in this company	Count	0	13	13	4	30
	% of Total	0.0%	24.1%	24.1%	7.4%	55.6%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

Table 6: Mean score of existence of the department in charge of the management and conservation of information in companies

Department in charge of the management and conservation of information in this company						
Statistic			Bootstrap ^a			
			Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
N	Valid	54	0	0	54	54
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.13	-.03	.15	2.81	3.37
Std. Error of Mean		.145				
Std. Deviation		1.065	-.017	.062	.937	1.193
Minimum		1				
Maximum		4				

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 54 bootstrap samples

4.3. Need of a Strategic Department/Section/Team in the Companies and in the Public Departments in Eastern DRC

Findings are that 83.3% of companies need to set up a business and strategic intelligence department/section/team, while 16.7% do not (Table 7). This shows that the minimum score is 1 and the maximum is 2. The average score was 1.17 (standard deviation = 0.376), indicating that, on average, respondents broadly express the need for a strategic business intelligence department or unit in their companies. The finding that almost all respondents approve of the need for a business and strategic intelligence structure in their companies is mainly explained by the organizational interest in having information to know how to prevent and anticipate situations, and the interest in being able to improve and increase the company's financial advantage; but also, the need to carry out in-depth analyses and find appropriate solutions to the company's challenges; to ensure the company's success and survival, to manage, store and secure company information, and to have a database and to be able to update the company's operations according to the context (Table 8 and Table 9). The interpretive findings are that the establishment of a national business and strategic intelligence system in the form of a special strategic office or Agency to support companies in different economic sectors to be more competitive on the national and international market is considered an important need by public departments. In government departments, all those involved feel that it is necessary to set up branches of such an intelligence office in all the divisions of the country's provinces and territories to support local companies to succeed in various competitive situations.

Table 7: The need to have a department/section/strategic intelligence team in the company

The need to have a department/section/strategic intelligence team in this company		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE	CONGOCOM	NBB & Freres	ETS OLIVE	
		Minings	S.A.R.L	S.A.R.L	Agriculture	
yes	Count	11	13	13	8	45
	% of Total	20.4%	24.1%	24.1%	14.8%	83.3%
No	Count	0	4	0	5	9
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	9.3%	16.7%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

Table 8: Mean score for the need of a department/intelligence team in companies

The need to have a department/section/strategic intelligence team in this company						
Statistic		Bootstrap ^a				
		Bias	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		
				Lower	Upper	
N	Valid	54	0	0	54	54
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.17	.00	.05	1.05	1.30
Std. Error of Mean		.051				
Std. Deviation		.376	-.005	.050	.206	.461
Minimum		1				
Maximum		2				

a. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 54 bootstrap samples

Table 9: Reasons of need/not need of a Strategic department/section/team in the company

Reasons of need/not need to have a Strategic department/section/team in the company		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE	CONGOCOM	NBB & Freres	ETS OLIVE	
		Minings	S.A.R.L	S.A.R.L	Agriculture	
Yes, having a database and updating the company's operations in relation to the context	Count	0	3	1	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	5.6%	1.9%	0.0%	7.4%
Yes, to manage, keep and secure the information in the company	Count	0	4	0	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Yes, Having the information to know how to prevent and anticipate situations	Count	5	6	8	0	19
	% of Total	9.3%	11.1%	14.8%	0.0%	35.2%
Yes, to improve and increase the financial advantage of the company	Count	6	0	0	4	10
	% of Total	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	18.5%
Yes, essential for the success and survival of the company	Count	0	0	0	4	4
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.4%
Yes, to make deep analysis and find appropriate solutions to the company's challenges	Count	0	0	4	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	7.4%
No, because the company's customers are served efficiently	Count	0	0	0	5	5
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	9.3%
No, because the existing departments are already sufficient	Count	0	4	0	0	4
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

4.4. Existence of Business and Strategic Intelligence Policies in the Companies and in the Public Departments in Eastern DRC

Findings are that in Congolese companies, as in public institutions or departments at central and provincial level, nothing is established or operationalized as a business and strategic intelligence policy, in either theoretical or practical form. In addition to the fact that, in a bid to win markets for their products, some unrepresented companies resort to certain methods and tools of competitive intelligence, simply by imitation and without the necessary

expertise, there are no regulations or laws governing the conception, methods, and practice of strategic or competitive intelligence by companies or public departments in favor of local companies in the DRC. Experiences and testimonies from various operators (managers and executives of companies, the chamber of commerce, heads and executives of public departments, company employees, and even the legal texts in both the mining and agricultural sectors) are that Congolese companies in the eastern DRC are not supported by the Congolese state, even to a lesser degree, with a view to making them more competitive on local and international markets vis-a-vis concurrent foreign companies operating in the Congo or those from other countries offering similar products. Congolese company managers indicate that, apart from facilitating rapid access to the official documents required to export products through the Kimberley process, there is no other form of support provided by the State via its departments. Findings highlight the absence of national business and strategic intelligence policy (or system) in place in the DRC to help local companies compete in the market. On the other hand, there are legal instruments (the new mining code, the forestry code, and the law on agriculture) that define and govern the exploitation of resources by companies of various categories. The competitive nature of these laws generally lies in the dividends drawn by the State treasury in terms of exploitation rights and legal taxes to be paid by various mining or agricultural operators (national and foreign), and in particular the inclusion in the mining code of new types of minerals classified as strategic (adding value to products), rather than in terms of policies aimed at making Congolese companies more competitive on the market. In reality, these mining and agricultural codes are just strategic instruments for the benefit of the state coffers, but because of their exorbitant nature and abusive application, they undermine and reduce the ability of Congolese companies to compete effectively on the markets, and to contribute to economic growth and development in the eastern DRC.

4.5. Expectation and Need Companies' Policies (Units) and National Policy (or System) of Business and Strategic Intelligence to Support Congolese Companies in the Market

The findings are that the main expectations of Congolese companies in terms of state support for greater competitiveness in the international market are of various kinds and reflect the crying need for the implementation of business intelligence policies in companies, upstream, and national strategic intelligence policies, downstream. The study identified the following main expectations: business peace and security; reducing the number of taxes and rates payable on export products; state financial subsidies and bank facilities; Strategic market guidance; Congolese companies through specialized public and diplomatic services with useful information on market opportunities; Negotiate contracts on behalf of Congolese companies with foreign governments and business circles; Set up a collaborative (more interactive) system or establishment dedicated to strategic intelligence for the benefit of local companies; Set up a state-local business partnership and business promotion network for market competitiveness, prosperity, and economic recovery in the eastern DRC. The finding shows that the consideration by companies, on the one hand, and by the government, on the other, of different market challenges in terms of performance in the management of strategic information and these various expectations, as well as their translation into the business and strategic intelligence policies as expressed need, constitutes an alternative strategy to ensure progress and development in the east of the DRC.

4.6. Perception on the Congolese Companies' Current Position in the Local and International Market

Findings are that, in terms of Congolese companies' positioning, compared to their competitors on the African Great Lakes sub-regional market and the international market, employees estimate that at 59.3% they are currently in an advantageous position; at 22.2% they are currently in a neither advantageous nor disadvantageous position; at 11.1% they are currently in a very advantageous position and at 7.4% they are currently in a non-advantageous position (Table 10 and Table 11). This employees' perception is based more on the productivity view or quantity of products they have, and the sale realized on the local market as subcontractors to other companies in the region, but not on the

international market. However, the interpretive findings are that some Congolese companies occupy advantageous positions on the local market (as operators and buyers), which potentially would make them more competitive on the international market, if they were strategically organized or equipped internally, and if the State was to accompany them with measures far more favorable to the competitiveness of their business, rather than the many exorbitant taxes, red tape and legal restrictions. These weaken them and sometimes force them to abandon or operate locally as subcontractors to the benefit of foreign companies, who are their competitors on the market. Statistics available from government departments and testimonies from managers indicate that out of over 200 registered and operational operators, the top 5 listed as the largest operators of 3T minerals (Coltan-Cassiterite, Cobalt, Germanium) and Gold, and on the list of Cinchona farmers, are essentially Congolese companies [32].

Table 10: Perception on the current market position of the company, at different levels, compared to its competitors in the same sector in DRC

Perception on the current market position of the company, at different levels, compared to its competitors in the same sector in DRC		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE Minings	CONGOCOM S.A.R.L	NBB & Freres S.A.R.L	ETS OLIVE Agriculture	
Very advantageous (leader position)	Count	0	0	0	5	5
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	9.3%	9.3%
Advantageous (challenger position)	Count	11	4	0	4	19
	% of Total	20.4%	7.4%	0.0%	7.4%	35.2%
Neither advantageous nor unadvantageous (more acceptable position, as a follower of the leader and the challenger)	Count	0	13	13	0	26
	% of Total	0.0%	24.1%	24.1%	0.0%	48.1%
Not advantageous (inferior position)	Count	0	0	0	4	4
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.4%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

Table 11: Perception of the company's current position in the market, at different levels, compared to its competitors in the same sector in the Great Lakes region of Africa

Perception of the company's current position in the market, at different levels, compared to its competitors in the same sector in the Great Lakes region of Africa		Company/Stratum				Total
		ETS OLIVE Minings	CONGOCOM S.A.R.L	NBB & Freres S.A.R.L	ETS OLIVE Agriculture	
Very advantageous (leader position)	Count	5	0	1	0	6
	% of Total	9.3%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	11.1%
Advantageous (challenger position)	Count	6	13	4	9	32
	% of Total	11.1%	24.1%	7.4%	16.7%	59.3%
Neither advantageous nor	Count	0	4	8	0	12
	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	14.8%	0.0%	22.2%

non-advantageous (acceptable position, as a follower of the leader and challenger)	% of Total	0.0%	7.4%	14.8%	0.0%	22.2%
Not advantageous (inferior position)	Count	0	0	0	4	4
	% of Total	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	7.4%
Total	Count	11	17	13	13	54
	% of Total	20.4%	31.5%	24.1%	24.1%	100.0%

4.7. Summary

Sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 offer a rich and clear reality of the business challenges facing Congolese companies in eastern DRC in terms of competing and making progress. They reveal the obvious importance of building business intelligence policies at state level and within Congolese companies in order to develop their competitiveness on the international market. Section 4.1 highlights the general level of knowledge that exists in public departments and companies (actors) regarding business and strategic intelligence, its methods, its tools, and practices. It reveals how the large ignorance of business and strategic intelligence and its strengths in companies and state institutions constitutes one of the main obstacles to business performance and competitiveness of Congolese companies on the international market. Section 4.2 discusses the operability of the process of searching, collecting, processing, and disseminating strategic information for strategic decision-making in companies' practices and in public departments, or the functioning of a unit or department in charge of information management.

It shows that in Congolese companies, as well as in public departments, there were no units or departments set up to deal with the management of strategic information needed for defensive or offensive actions. Section 4.3 evaluated the need to operate an information management unit in Congolese enterprises and to set up a public agency to manage strategic information for effective and profitable competitive actions. It shows that Congolese companies need for implementation of internal and national strategic department and unit as alternative to set up an efficient and appropriate corporate system for business and strategic intelligence. Section 4.4 seeks to identify the existence and operability of business and strategic intelligence policies in Congolese companies and public departments. It shows that from the provincial to the national level, there are no established business and strategic intelligence policies and practices at companies and state levels, in either theoretical or practical form (i.e., methods, strategies, model and structure). Section 4.5 identifies the main expectations of Congolese companies in terms of state support for greater competitiveness in the international market. It shows the market challenges in terms of performance in the management of strategic information and expectations, which traduce the expressed need for the implementation of internal business intelligence policies in companies, upstream, and national strategic intelligence policies, downstream, and how this constitutes an alternative strategy to promote Congolese companies competitiveness. Section 4.6 identifies the perceptions of Congolese companies (managers, executive officers, employees) on their positioning on the local and international markets in relation to the challenges (internal or national) in terms of management (and access) of strategic information for decision-making and actions, but also in the face of competitive pressure. This reveals perceptions that seem paradoxical, but which are justified in the context in the sense that employees have a partial or localist image of the market, which puts Congolese companies in an advantageous position; Whereas managers have a global picture of the market, which puts Congolese companies in a position that is partly advantageous in the local market and totally disadvantageous in the international market.

5. Conclusions

The study highlights the development challenge, the importance and the opportunity to establish a real business and strategic intelligence system in DRC, developing and implementing business and strategic intelligence policies in parallel at two levels: companies' policies in support of internal strategic making-decision management, and national policies in support of local businesses competitiveness on the international market and prosperity, which can promote business progress and development in the eastern DRC. Thus, it seemed essential to know the role that business and strategic intelligence is likely to play in the progress and development of the DRC via local companies' business in its Eastern region. In general, it was a question of showing the link that exists between the building (development) and implementation of business and strategic intelligence policies at companies' level and national level as strategies to promote competitiveness and success of Congolese companies in the international market, and the level of economic progress and development in a region or country, by fixing the glance particularly on the important role of the mastering the information management process by organizational actors in the decision-making process in partnership and real strategic support of the government to local companies.

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Congolese companies in the eastern DRC do not know really what business and strategic intelligence is, nor what its practices and tools are; nor do they have elaborate policies or application systems (departments/cells/units) dedicated to business and strategic intelligence.

Thus, the practices of Congolese companies in the eastern DRC are not based on business and strategic intelligence policies, methods and strategies, the aims of which are intentionally offensive or defensive to the advantage of companies on markets (local and international). Considering the findings evidence of the study, the research hypothesis (H1) is confirmed.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, a number of recommendations can be made:

- 1) To set up policies of business and strategic intelligence system in Congolese companies, providing for the establishment of a strategic intelligence unit in the organizational structure. Its mission must be to design, propose and improve the corporate strategic intelligence policies and actions, and to support company's stakeholders with useful information to make efficient actions for the company's success in the market.
- 2) To set up a national policy of business and strategic intelligence system, providing for the establishment of a national strategic intelligence centre/agency. Its mission must be to design, propose and improve national strategic intelligence policies and activities, and to support Congolese companies with useful information to make them more competitive on the international market.
- 3) To build the capacity of companies' staff and public department staff with the aim of improving their skills to be efficient and qualified human resources for the national business competitiveness.
- 4) To standardize R&D in Congolese companies, so that innovation is the basis of business creation and development, rather than opportunism.

Finally, further research should be conducted to better understand the opportunity and impact of business and strategic intelligence in African countries, and particularly in the DRC.

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Comment [MAH2]: Recent references are to be included

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