**(b) Individual Assignment - 2,500 words (20%)
 Strategic Analysis and Strategic Options**

This assignment is designed to test students understanding of three key areas:

* External Environments – the macro environment and the industry
* Internal Environments – the firm
* Strategic Choices – reasons why firms in same industry choose different strategic directions and the key uses associated with business level strategic choice.

The assignment is to be based on your choice of one of the following industries and associated firms within the selected industry.

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| --- | --- |
| **Industry** | **Example Firm** |
| Fast Food | McDonalds/KFC/Subway |
| Notebook Computers | Dell/Toshiba/HP/Apple/Lenovo |
| Accounting Services | KPMG/PWC/EYC |

This assignment will help you to understand key concepts in strategic management by conducting a real world analysis of an organisation and external environments.

There is a strong focus in developing an understanding of the issues associated with the choice of business level strategic direction.

**Task Requirements**

1. **External Environment Analysis**

You are to undertake an analysis of the external environment of the industry you have selected. This will require you to asses both the macro environment and the specific industry.

You MUST use some of the tools discussed in this unit to undertake this analysis. Remember – it is NOT a description of the external environment – but an ANALYSIS.

Remember that industries comprise customers, suppliers, competitors and complementors.

1. **Firm Level Analysis**

You are to choose one (1) firm in the selected industry and undertake a VERY detailed analysis of the firm’s key resources, capabilities and competencies.

This will require identifying the key strengths and weaknesses of the firm.

This will enable you to understand the key sources of sustainable competitive advantage for the firm.

As with Part (a) you are required to develop your answer drawing on some of the tools/frameworks of the unit. It is an analysis – not just a description of the chosen firms.

1. **Sustainable Competitive Advantage and Strategic Choice/Options**

Linking your understanding of BOTH Part (a) and Part (b) you are to:

Discuss which type of generic strategy you believe the selected firm has adopted and the key reasons why the firm has adopted this type of strategy.

In effect it is you identifying and understanding the key sources/drivers of the firm’s current competitive advantage – taking into account both external and internal factors.

You are also required to also discuss the following:

* Key issues and approaches the firm might consider to consolidate/protect its sustainable competitive advantage
* Some recommended key “top line” future strategic options

Remember – there are four (4) key generic business level strategies.

* Focussed cost advantage/cost leadership
* Focused differentiation
* Broad base cost advantage/cost leadership
* Broad based differentiation

**Assessment Criteria**:

The assignment will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Your ability to interpret, analyse, and respond to the question asked in an appropriate manner
* The thoroughness of research undertaken, extent of reading, collection of relevant data, and quality of sources consulted, etc.
* Your ability to analyse source material and draw valid conclusions to support arguments etc.
* Evidence of your understanding of firm level analysis and your ability to apply analytical frameworks and perspectives
* Evidence of personal reflection and insight
* Full acknowledgment of sources consulted, references used etc. including the bibliography
* Evidence of your ability to logically arrange and present the materials to an acceptable standard