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ABSTRACT

Tea processing firms in Kenya have been facing performance challenges in the recent past. The tea firms in Limuru Sub County have not been spared either. To remain afloat, it is important to think of suitable strategies that will improve performance of the same. These strategies if well planned, executed, controlled and evaluated will then turn around the performance of the tea firms. This study established the effect of market development strategies on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The study was anchored on the Resource based view theory and Ansoff's product model. Descriptive design approach was used in conducting the study. Cross sectional survey was used to give more insights in the study. The research population comprised of managers and supervisors working in the tea firms with the unit of observation being one hundred and thirteen respondents. The unit of analysis used was seventy respondents. Data was collected using structured questionnaires. The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data. Results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A unit increase in market development strategies would lead to 0.405 in tea firms' performance at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that market development strategies had an effect on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The study concluded that tea firms should seek to constantly invest more on market development strategies that had a large effect on performance. The study recommended that proper policy frameworks aimed at accommodating the market development strategies needed to be enhanced. This will go a long way in ensuring performance of the firms as well as sustainability of the same.

Keywords: *Market Development Strategies, Performance, Tea firms*

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INTRODUCTION

Tea firms in Kenya contribute to the country's economy in a significant way. The contributions range from; provision of employment across the value chain, foreign exchange and a form of livelihood. On average, about 6 million people benefit directly and indirectly from the tea sector. These include; tea farmers, employees of both tea farms and processing factories, brokers, buyers, cargo transporters and business enterprises both at local and international levels. Moreover, the tea subsector contributes to 4% of the country's GDP (Tea Board of Kenya, 2009). Out of the forty seven counties in Kenya, a total of twenty one heavily depend on tea proceeds (East Africa Tea Trade Association, EATTA 2019).

Performance in the tea industry in Kenya has been on the decline in the recent past. This has been as a result of diverse challenges. These challenges include; dollar exchange rates, preference of alternative beverages, price fluctuations, market glut, inelasticity of market, standardization procedure requirements by buyers, changes in climatic conditions and occurrences of unstable political climate in the market (EATTA,2019).

These challenges can be classified into three main sub sections namely; micro-environment, industry factors and macro external factors. The macro environmental factors include political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal. The industry factors include competition, inelasticity of made tea markets and price fluctuations. The micro environment factors include increased cost of production, internal wrangles by stakeholders (suppliers, management agents, and shareholders) and labour boycott. The challenges have led to problems of performance and market uncertainties. This notwithstanding, the cost of production keeps increasing steeply. As a result, the producers (farmers) and the manufacturers (factories) are left with minimal returns on their investments (Agriculture and Food Authority, AFA -Tea Directorate, 2014).

Study Objective

The objective of this study was to establish the effect of market development strategies on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, tea industry has been facing challenges that are a threat to its performance. These challenges include; dollar exchange rates, preference of alternative beverages, price fluctuations, market glut, inelasticity of market, standardization procedure requirements by buyers, changes in climatic conditions and occurrences of unstable political climate in the market (EATTA). Additionally, there has been an increase in the cost of production. The two issues combined have resulted into reduced earnings (Gesimba *et al*, 2005). As a result, the future of tea venture keeps diminishing (AFFA-Tea Directorate, 2014). FAO, 2015 indicates that tea markets have become inelastic. Therefore, consistent market development strategies must be established in a bid to increase markets leading to more sales and thus performance.

Several measures have been put in place to curb the challenges. For instance, the introduction of mechanized plucking and pruning (Ongong'a & Ochieng (2013). The main aim was to reduce human labor thus reduced wages. However, this has not assisted much as costs of spare parts and the machines keep skyrocketing. The quality of the end product has also been compromised due to mechanization (Koech & Kipkorir, 2019). These efforts have also led to massive layoffs of workers that entirely depend on tea for their livelihood (AFFA-Tea Directorate, 2014). Mechanization has also resulted in less competitive products and air pollution (Kitur & Rop, 2016). This journal seeks to establish the effect of market development strategies on the performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The strategies will assist in ensuring performance of the firms as well as their sustainability.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on one theory and one model/matrix. These are resource based view (rbv) theory and Ansoff product matrix.

Resource Based View (RBV) Theory

According to Barney (1991), firms' resources are major performance determinants and they contribute to their sustainable competitive advantage to a great extent. Resource based view theory is a managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources a firm can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Resources include assets, capabilities and competencies that firms possess. Assets comprise of land, finances, machinery and equipment. Capabilities include copy rights, patents and brand loyalties. Competences consist of skills, human resources, processing ability and organization structures. Assets, capabilities and competences are used by firms with the aim of positioning and building them a competitive advantage thus performance.

Managers are tasked with identification of potential key resources in their firms. This is followed by evaluation of whether the identified resources are valuable, rare, imitable and non-substitutable. Valuable refers to those resources that enable firms to implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Rareness means not available to other competitors. Imitable refers to those resources that cannot be easily implemented by others. Non-substitutable means an irreplaceable nature (Barney, 1991). Once the resource has been scrutinized and passed the value, rare, imitable and non-substitutable (VRIN) test, then it is deemed fit for use to create a competitive advantage for the said firm.

Resource based view is an approach where an organization looks inside themselves and identify resources that create competitive advantage instead of looking for it from the external environment. The theory finds it more feasible to exploit external opportunities using existing resources rather than acquiring new skills for each opportunity. Therefore, the resources are given a major role in helping companies achieve higher organization performance.

Barney (1991) posits that for resources to help an organization have a competitive advantage over the others in the industry, the said resources must pass the VRIN (value, rare, imitable, and non-substitutable) test. Barney further explains that for a resource to be considered to have value, it must have some worth in terms of economic terms. This will in turn contribute to the firms' profitability hence performance. For rareness, the resource must not be easily available to firms and potential competitors. For imitable, resources must not be easily replicated due to their unique nature. For non-substitutable, there should not be available alternatives in terms of raw material to competitors or products to consumers. Some qualities that may pass this test include patents, copyrights, organization culture, geographical location and historical background. These guarantee firms to have sustainable competitive advantage over a long period of time.

Penrose (1959) postulates that there exists a causal link between resources and capabilities. This link forms a platform between a firm's resources, productive opportunities and profitable firm growth. He however maintains that a firm cannot benefit from resources by their mere existence but by creating value through innovative management of the said resources. The study also argues that there is a close relationship between various kinds of resources with which a firm works and the development of the ideas, experience and knowledge of its managers. There are however two assumptions of RBV. These are; resources are heterogeneous especially human resources and culture and resources are immobile especially brand equity, processes, knowledge and intellectual property. In a nutshell, a firm's performance will depend on its ability to use its resources to create

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sustainable competitive advantage thereby ensuring its performance.

This research study adopted the RBV theory to explain how organizations could use their internal resources, competences and capabilities to create competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is achieved through careful analysis of both external and internal business environment. As a result, firms are able to identify within themselves resources that can be used to create sustainable competitive advantage. As a result, innovations of new ideas, process as well as products is achieved. Additionally, more diversified ways of doing business are established. These help firms produce products and services that set the business apart from the competitors in the industry. This theory was used to support both innovation and diversification variables. Thus firms can exploit their resources and devise new processes, products and services to enable them achieve competitive advantage. This will in turn improve their performance. This theory therefore supports performance, diversification, innovation and market development.

Ansoff's Product Model/Matrix

This model /matrix was developed by H. Igor Ansoff in 1957. According to Ansoff, firms can adopt four different strategies to market their products. These strategies are; market penetration, product development, market development and diversification. For market development, the strategy aims at increasing sales of existing products in an existing market. For product development, the strategy aims at introducing new products in an already existing market. For market development, the aim is to focus on searching and entering new markets using already existing products. By using diversification strategy, firms establish new products with new markets.

The four strategies engage different unique styles in marketing their products (Ansoff, 1957). For market penetration, the firms' aim is to increase market share of their products. According to Ansoff (1957), this is done through reduction in prices of goods and services while at the same time ensuring that the margins are achieved. Market penetration can also be achieved through promotions aimed at informing more customers of the existence of goods and services. Also, distribution channels can be enhanced in a bid to reach more customers resulting to a larger pool of the same. Competitor acquisition is another method that firms can use to increase market share. In so doing, the competitor customers combine with the existing ones resulting into a larger market share.

For product development, extensive research is involved with efforts to produce new products (Ansoff, 1957). Research and development is involved in terms of looking for market and a suitable product for the same. In this case, market surveys are carried out and innovations made on a product to fill the established market gap. This strategy can also involve acquisition of a competitor in a bid to combine efforts. As a result, the firms produce more superior products. Product development can also be achieved through strategic partnerships. This involves accessing partners' distribution network or brands. As a result, the firms get to produce products as per the demand of the combined network of customers.

For market development, the firms enter new geographical and customer segments. According to Ansoff (1957), firms use their technology leverage to gain new markets for their products. Market development is also viable where the customers in the new market are profitable. This implies that the customers have more income to spend on buying the products. Additionally, the consumer behavior of the prospective market should be similar to that of existing one. Market development can also be achieved by firms serving a different customer segment. This expansion can be both regionally and globally.

For diversification, new products are made for new markets. This is the most risky strategy but it offers most rewards in terms of highest returns (Ansoff, 1957). It has the largest potential for increased revenues. This is because new income streams are established. Basically, firms can employ two forms of diversification. These are; related and unrelated diversification. For related diversification, related products are produced. For instance, a grain miller establishing an animal feed factory to use the byproducts of the mill as raw material for the same. For unrelated diversification, the products do not have any relationship and each is dependent on its own. For instance, a mobile phone manufacturer venturing into clothing business. The matrix therefore supports market development, diversification and performance variables under the study.

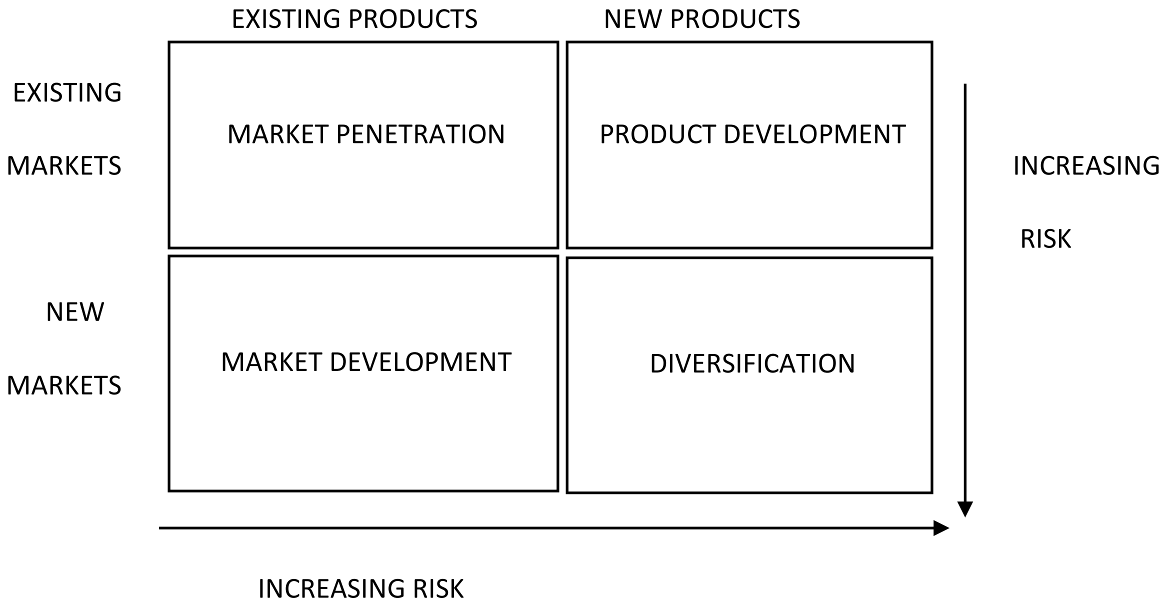

Figure 1: Ansoff Product Matrix

This study adopted the model to show how firms could create competitive advantage for their various products. A careful study of the products as well as potential markets should be carried out for a firm to decide which segment is the most suitable for the same. An analysis of the segments also dictates the resource allocation in terms of human resources (skills) and assets (machinery, funds). If products are placed in their respective right segments as indicated in figure1 then performance is achieved on the same. This model supported market development, diversification and performance variables covered in the study.

Empirical Framework

Market development strategies aim at taking steps to develop the existing markets. In this case, products are positioned at different market segments in a bid to increase sales. Organizations aim at introduction of their products and services to target markets not yet reached/established and serve on the same. The basic aim is to enlarge the market base thus increasing firms' performance.

Developing of new markets increases sales volumes and total turnover (Mbithi, Muturi & Rambo 2015). Additionally, market extension into new areas increased both sales volumes and turnover significantly. This was established by their study on the effect of market development strategy on performance of sugar industry in Kenya. Both therefore increased market share translating into business profitability and thus performance. Consequently, to access new market segments, use of techniques such as promotion, rebranding and repackaging into different quantities would assist. To improve geographical presence, opening of outlets and agencies was also recommended. The findings could be replicated in the current study as both studies focused on the agricultural sector. Moreover, the study used interviews as an

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additional data collection tool. This added more into the insights about the study.

Kimutai (2015) conducted a study on influence of strategic marketing practices on performance of firms in the flower industry in Kenya. The findings were that to boost performance, advertising as a promotion strategy is one method used to reach out to customers. From the study, it is important to ensure customers perceive products well otherwise the market can be lost to other competitors. Customer service is therefore key in ensuring satisfaction therefore maintaining good relationships leading to improved business performance. However, the study failed to emphasize that advertising can only influence performance over a relatively short period of time. Therefore, this may not lead to sustainable competitive advantage. Other strategies should accompany advertising to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage thus performance. The study was also specific on targeting marketing managers. This could result to bias as respondents were more inclined on marketing aspect. Ideally, marketing starts from lower levels and more personnel are involved in addition to marketing managers. The random sampling method used could also result into bias results consequently leading to misrepresentation of results.

Product promotion, packaging and pricing are essential elements in success of any organization (Eniola & Olorunleke, 2020). This was established in their study on marketing strategies impact on organization performance on SME'S in Kwara state, Nigeria. Moreover, production of quality products, reasonable and aggressive pricing, right product positioning, use of presentable and after sales service offer position products at a higher advantage compared to competitor products. The researcher opined that the findings could not operate as stand-alone. This implies that they have to have a robust marketing team to attain great performance. Moreover the same strategies can be replicated elsewhere with supporting elements as well.

Muga (2016) did a study on market development strategies and performance of multinational pharmaceutical companies in Kenya. The study affirmed that price reduction, increasing distribution channels and marginally changing product packaging were shown to have positive impact on sales increment. The research findings could be more inclined to multinational firms and are not a replica in local ones. Unlike multinationals which operate in masses, application of such strategies may prove to be expensive thus reducing the productivity local firms. This is especially more on price reduction. Additionally, the results could not be generalized for all firms. This is because diverse firms deal with different products.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted both qualitative and quantitative approach in developing an understanding of the objective under study. A descriptive design approach was used to establish the effect of market development strategies on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The target population comprised of managers and supervisors working in the tea firms. A census survey was carried out and the sample size comprised of 113 respondents. The data collection instrument used was a semi- structured questionnaire. This provided both qualitative and quantitative data which was subjected to analysis. The results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Tables were used to make presentations of the results. Inferential analysis was done using multiple regression analysis. The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also used in this study in testing the claim that there were no significant relationship between the market development strategies and performance in the tea firms in Limuru Sub County, Kenya.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Analysis

This study sought to assess the effects of market development strategies on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. Below are the findings of the analysis based on this objective;

The table below presented the findings of the research study;

Table 1: Market Development Strategies

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Management supports market extension through facilitation	70	1	5	3.86	1.011
Company sales staff aggressively market products	70	2	5	3.86	.822
Sales and marketing department well established	70	1	5	3.66	1.089
Management and supervisory seek new ideas	70	1	5	3.56	1.112
New market segments identified and served by company	70	1	5	3.54	.928
Management supports promotional activities	70	2	5	3.53	1.073
Pool of customers increases regularly	70	2	5	3.49	.847
New geographical areas realized more often	70	1	5	3.31	.941
Aggregate Score				**3.6**	**0.98**

Source: Research Data, 2021

According to table above, majority of the respondents were in agreement that management supports market extension through proper facilitation e.g. sales vehicles and airtime as indicated by a mean of 3.86. The respondents were also in agreement that; The company's sales staff were aggressively marketing their products (mean=3.86); sales and marketing department were well established(mean = 3.66); management and supervisory staff sought new ideas (mean=3.56); new markets were identified and served by the company (mean =3.54); management supporting promotional activities (mean =3.53); a pool of customers were increasing (mean = 3.49) and that new geographical areas were realized more often (mean = 3.31).

The findings in the above table indicate an aggregate mean score of 3.6 with standard deviation of 0.98. This shows that most of the respondents in the research study agreed on the market development strategies and their effect on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The findings indicate that market development strategies affect performance in the tea firms in Limuru Sub-county, with the management keen on facilitating market extensions and ensuring new ideas that have been suggested, are implemented. Company sales staff were also seen to be key in enhancing the performance of the tea firms in that they aggressively market the products and they have in place a sales and marketing department that coordinates this.

The findings are in agreement with Kimutai (2015) who concluded that there was a positive influence of strategic marketing practices on the performance of firms in the flower industry in Kenya. The findings were that to boost performance, advertising as a promotion strategy is one method used to reach out to customers. The findings are also in line with Mbithi, Muturi & Rambo (2015) who observed that market extension results into more sales. The findings also concur with Eniola & Olorunleke (2020) who established that product promotion, pricing and proper packaging put products and services at a competitive advantage. These findings also agree with Muga (2016) who noted that increase in distribution channels increase sales. From the study, it is important to ensure customers perceive products well otherwise the market can be lost to other competitors. This can be seen in the study as indicated by a mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 0.98.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Intensive Marketing

Respondents noted the need for intensive marketing for their products within their areas and beyond. This would lead to more additional markets both in local and global fronts. Respondents also were of the opinion that the management needed to provide branded cars and use other medium of marketing to ensure they reach the market more effectively. Other medium include advertisement through radio, television, social media as well as erecting banners on strategic areas. Marketing could also be done through promotions using items like tea samples, t-shirts and umbrellas. The aim was to make customers more aware of the existence of the products.

This was in agreement with Kimutai (2015) whose study found out that to boost performance, advertising as a promotion strategy is one method used to reach out to customers. Additionally, it is important to ensure customers perceive products well otherwise the market can be lost to other competitors. Customer service is therefore key in ensuring satisfaction therefore maintaining good relationships leading to improved business performance.

Training

Training and development of staff members was also noted as a motivating factor to the staff members who have been working in the firms to ensure they remain motivated and acquire more modern skills to work with newer technologies. Respondents were of the opinion that management should regularly consider trainings that are in tandem with current trends for developing their staff. This would ensure the company has higher levels of effectiveness with a high professional trained human resource.

Inferential Statistics

The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of market development strategies on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County, Kenya. To verify this, regression analysis was used. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables was explained through the multiple regression analysis as done below;

Table 2: Regression coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
	(Constant)	1.357	.400		3.391	.001
	Market development	.405	.135	.428	2.991	.004

The regression model in this study indicates that taking all factors constant at zero the firm performance would be at 1.357. The model further explains that a unit increase in market development strategies would lead to 0.405 increase in the tea firm performance.

The regression model can therefore be denoted as

Y= 1.357 + 0.405X

Firm Performance= 1.357 + 0.405 Market Development strategies.

The significance level of the variables shows that market development strategies were found to be statistically significant with a p- value of 0.004 which is below the threshold that is acceptable of ($p < 0.05$).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Market development strategies significantly influenced performance of tea firms. Majority of the respondents were keen to note that there was great support from management in terms of market extension facilitation and management were also

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keen to seek new ideas that would lead to an increase of performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. It was found out that the need to do more in terms of aggressive marketing, rebranding, market survey and value addition was evident. The tea farms in the region had invested in mechanization and technologies that led to proper usage of the resources available. However, the lack of specialized teams for marketing, lack of current and modern marketing, lack of attractive packaging among other issues were found to greatly affect the performance of the tea firms in Limuru Sub County. As per the regression model market development strategies influence performance by 0.405 which highlights this to be an urgent matter that needs to be well thought of. The indication was such that if given more attention, the market development strategies would largely improve performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County.

Market development strategies had a significant effect on performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County. The tea firms had identified and served new market segments. This had led to a regular customers' increase for their products. New geographical areas were identified regularly leading to an increase in customer base. Moreover, the firms' sales staff were aggressive in marketing their respective products. These aggressive efforts were being facilitated by management support through facilitation like sales vehicles and airtime. The management in the tea firms provided support in promotional activities with sales and marketing departments well established in terms of staff as well as infrastructure. Moreover, management and supervisory staff sought ideas that were aimed at increasing more customers for their products. The research concluded that a unit increase in market development strategies led to an increase in performance of tea firms in Limuru Sub County.

Based on the research study, the following recommendations were made;

The top managers in the tea firms should promote the use market development strategies to improve the performance of tea firms. This entails setting aside adequate budgets for installation of right technological infrastructure, hiring the right skills and provision of suitable platforms conducive for implementation of the strategies.

The strategic levels of management in the tea firms should allocate sufficient resources to support the strategies. These should be passed on to the top level managers, middle level as well as supervisors for implementation of the strategies. Appropriate use of the resources should bring out desirable results in terms of improved performance. The shareholders of the tea firms should easily pass suggestions regarding implementation of the innovation, diversification and market development strategies. In so doing, their net worth in the firms will increase as a result of improved performance.

The agricultural bodies in Kenya both at county and national governments should promote use of market development strategies in other tea firms within their areas of jurisdiction. Moreover, these strategies should be extended to other subsectors in the agricultural sector. National bodies such as TRF should source for funding for use in pilot experiments aimed at promoting use of market development strategies. The actual results from the experiments should provide grounds for implementation by the tea firms in the whole country. Moreover, more funds should be allocated for market surveys for the products from the tea firms. The aim should be to expand markets for the products both locally and globally.

Suggestion for Future Research

Similar studies can be carried out using same variables but in a wider area of research like a county or country. Other researchers could conduct a similar study using other key variables such as rebranding, technology and value addition as independent variables.

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