



**INFLUENCE OF MARKET MIX MODIFICATION AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ON COMPETITIVE
ADVANTAGE IN AUTOMOBILE TYRE DISTRIBUTORS IN WESTERN REGION IN KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to establish the influence of market mix modification and Product development on competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region in Kenya. Specifically it aimed to determine the extent to which market mix modification affects competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region and to assess how product development affects competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region. The study used porter's theory of competitive advantage and open system theory. The study was conducted using descriptive survey design with a target population of 100 distributors currently in Western Region from which a sample size of 80 respondents were drawn using simple random sampling method. Questionnaires were used to collect data after pilot testing them in Kisumu County with ten respondents who were not part of the sample. This study is of immense benefit to the automobile industry since they can now appreciate the role played by market mix modification and product development on the operational in competitive advantage of automobile tyre distributors in Western Region in Kenya. Other firms in related industries will now be able to make appropriate decisions on competitive advantage and their implementation to enhance growth. Automobile tyre distributors will use the results of this study especially on challenges experienced in the adoption and implementations of competitive strategies through their outlets. The study found that market mix modification and product development had a positive significant relationship on competitive advantage hence determinants of competitive advantage. The study recommended that automotive tyre distributors should improve their markets and develop their products.

Key Words: Market Mix, Product Development

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INTRODUCTION

Companies strive to build sustainable competitive advantages which is at the heart of company's execution in markets. It's when company puts the generic strategies into practice and develops due to its value (Porter 1990). Thompson & Strickland (2012) argue that competitive strategy includes those tactics organization has in buyer attraction and position of market improvement.

Advantageous competition in companies grows out of the way the companies organize and perform discrete activities, (Porter, 1985) the aggressive overall business philosophies would be established on novel specialty regarding administration advancement. The mystery of a reasonable upper hand lies in playing out each progression in the esteem chain in a fitting way. An upper hand basically must be one that not just simply speaks to preferred execution over that of its rivals, additionally conveys honest to goodness esteem to the client, accordingly guaranteeing a predominant position in the market,(Coombs, 2010).

The rising interest for tyres in Africa has prompted to firm rivalry between tyre producers from the whole way across the world looking to gather a noteworthy share of the market for tyres in the new and rising African markets. Generally, European tyre makers had syndication over the African markets and numerous European brands were best offering 5(Michelin, BF Goodrich, Goodyear, Continental & Dunlop) tyres in numerous African nations (Coombs, 2010).

Kenya's driving tyre maker Kenyan producer, Sameer Africa, has been bringing in tyres from China to take care of a solid demand for low estimated items in the East Africa showcase. The organization additionally introduced a light truck tyre get together machine as of late furthermore expanded limit (Ouma, 2013).

Tyre manufacturing in Kenya is steadily growing in importance in the economy. Collectively, the industry has directly and indirectly created employment through the industry value chain. The

prevalent jingle by Kenya's sole tyre fabricating firm, Firestone East Africa (1969) Ltd, has since a long time ago turn out to be minimal more than a memory to some degree taking after the flooding of the nearby market by an expected Sh6 billion worth of imports (Ouma, 2013).

The association's fundamental rivals incorporate French monster, Michellin Tyres and Italy's Pirelli Tyres, both of whom have made huge advances and balanced out costs. Pirelli is privately spoken to by Nyanza Petroleum Dealers Ltd (Now Auto express Ltd) , who additionally bargain in Firestone tyres and are merchants of Alliance tyres for agribusiness apparatus and earth-moving gear (Michellin Company Profile, 2014).

Lately, the tyre organizations in Kenya have conveyed their contention to the wireless transmissions, each guaranteeing predominant items. While Pirelli and tyres Dubai Michellin required presentation since they were new in the market, a Firestone overview demonstrated that the Michellin crusade was significantly affecting deals and Firestone was compelled to set out all alone battle (Amanda, 2012).

The rising interest for tyres in Kenya has prompted to firm rivalry between tire producers from the whole way across the world trying to earn a noteworthy share of the market for tyres in the new and rising African markets. Michellin is solely promoted by Kingsway tyres who, nonetheless, declined to remark. Pirelli, which is sold locally by Nyanza Petroleum Company (now Auto Express Ltd), has limited its showcasing methodology to promotions painted in front of an audience Coach Busses, which, humorously, utilize Michellintyres (Michellin Company Profile, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

The automobile tyre enterprises business is highly competitive, with dealers not only competing among each other; but also with local manufacturers and other tyre importers (Hall, 2010). Due to the fierce competition and the changing business priorities in Kenya, one needs to

look at who has closed shop or has been forced to cut down operations to realize the magnitude of the problem (Okoth, 2010). He argues that well established and dominant multinational companies in Kenya are suddenly finding themselves sailing in turbulent water which has led to an enormous exit from Kenyan market. Most tyre product developments are easy to duplicate and when they provide nearly identical services, they can only distinguish themselves on the basis of price and quality and customer loyalty. With increasing competitive pressures and progressing globalization, the success of both a country's economy and a firm's performance depend largely on the degree to which they participate in global production networks. In this regard, firms have to reduce their costs and build new opportunities via optimized use of internal and external resources. This is done on the basis of their core competences; in order to withstand the competitive pressures of more developed competitors ((Yagahouti, Moradi & Tajamohammadi, 2011)). In Kenya, several studies on competitive advantage have covered oil companies, the telecommunications and cosmetic industry among others. However, very little has been done on determinants of competitive advantage on automobile tyre distributors. Therefore, the present study sought to establish the determinants of competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region in Kenya

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study was to establish the influence of market mix modification and Product development on competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region in Kenya. The following specific objectives guided the study:

- To examine the influence of market mix modification on competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region in Kenya.
- To examine the influence of product development on competitive advantage in

automobile tyre distributors in Western Region, Kenya.

The study was guided by the following research hypotheses;

- **HO₁:** Market mix modification does not significantly influence competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region, Kenya.
- **HO₂:** Product development does not significantly influence competitive advantage in automobile tyre distributors in Western Region, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Porter's Theory of Competitive Advantage

This theory of competitive forces approach was pioneered by Porter (1985), where it sees the embodiment of focused technique definition as 'relating an organization to its condition. The key part of the association's condition is the business or enterprises wherein it contends.' Industry structure emphatically impacts the aggressive guidelines of the game just as the techniques conceivably accessible to firms. In the aggressive powers model, five industry level powers section hindrances, danger of substitution, haggling intensity of purchasers, bartering intensity of providers, and contention among industry officeholders decide the inalienable benefit capability of an industry or sub portion of an industry.

The methodology can be utilized to help the firm discover a situation in an industry from which it can best shield itself against focused powers or impact them to support its, (Porter, 1985). This 'five-power' structure gives an efficient perspective about how focused powers work at the business level and how these powers decide the productivity of various ventures and industry fragments. The focused powers structure likewise contains various basic suppositions about the wellsprings of rivalry and the idea of the technique procedure. Accessible techniques are portrayed in Porter (1980).

Aggressive techniques are regularly gone for changing the uncompromising stance's in the business vis-à-vis contenders and providers. Industry structure assumes a focal job in deciding and restricting key activity. A few enterprises or subsectors of ventures become increasingly alluring on the grounds that they have auxiliary obstacles to focused powers (e.g., section boundaries) that permit firms better open doors for making maintainable upper hands. Rents are made to a great extent at the business or subsector level instead of at the firm level.

While there is some acknowledgment given to firm explicit resources, contrasts among firms relate basically proportional. This way to deal with system mirrors its hatching inside the field of modern association and specifically the mechanical structure (Tece, 1984).

Open System Theory

An open framework is a framework which persistently collaborates with its condition. Open System Theory (OST) was at first created by Bertalanffy (1956), a researcher, yet was promptly pertinent over all orders. Viewpoints of Open System Theory (OST) were additionally exceptional from crafted by Emery and Trist (Emery and Trist, 1960).

Open framework Theory is an advanced framework based changed administration hypothesis intended to make solid, imaginative and strong associations and networks in the present quick changing and unusual situations. Associations consistently go up against the vulnerability of new difficulties and issues that they need to address in an opportune, proficient, and viable way for their survival. In this way, beyond words are changed when the necessities fulfilled by them never again exist or have been supplanted by different needs (Thompson, 1967).

A frameworks view considers an association as a lot of connecting capacities that gain contributions from nature, process them, and afterward discharge the yields back to the outer condition

(Daft, 2001). Open-framework models center around occasions happening outside to the association that impact changes inside the association. Sugar organizations in Kenya have an open and dynamic versatile association with their outside condition and in this way utilizing ideas of Open Systems Theory (OST), the examination will draw out the job that large scale condition is playing in affecting decision of technique towards accomplishing organization objectives.

Review of Variables

Ansoff (1987) characterizes market blend alteration as taking current items and discovering new markets accomplished through opening up recently barred market portions, new promoting and appropriation channels and entering new geographic markets. McCarthy (2000) created two potential techniques for actualizing business sector blend as moving the present item into new topographical territories and growing deals by drawing in new markets.

Market direction empowers firms to deliver contributions, which, with respect to contributions by contenders, are seen by business sectors to offer better esteem (Day 1994). Market direction adds to authoritative adequacy and scientists have perceived the significance of analyzing the connection between market direction and aggressive procedure (Slater & Narver 1996).

Product development is the development of new products, making changes in the current product design or using new techniques and means in the current production methods Atsango (2012). It involves focusing on existing markets for existing products, differentiating through features and functions that current offers (Griffin & Mahon, 2016). We can look at the product development from two sides; internal side where it depends on knowledge, capacities, resources and the technologies used in the company, however; from the external side product development focuses on the consumers' needs and the owner's expectations (Goedhuys & Veugelers, 2008).

Expansion portrays the passage of an organization into new lines of movement through a procedure of inward advancement or through obtaining, which involves changes in its authoritative structure, framework or other administration systems (Sissy, 2015). Inside this definition is understood the supposition that the choice of the organization to enter another business connects to the decision of the section mode into that business. In the assembling enterprises, broadening is customarily

characterized as a company's extension to make/sell items that have no market cooperation with the company's different items. Since Barney (2007) first attached broadening technique to money related execution, researchers have explored the impacts of expansion on the exhibition of firms have. Past investigations have concentrated on the degree/degree (pretty much), course (relatedness or irrelevance), and mode (inward or securing based) of enhancement.

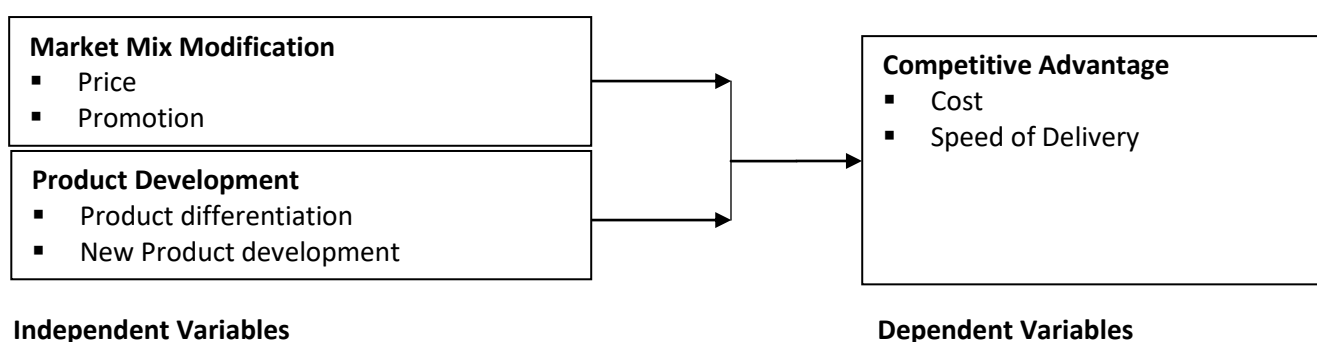


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

A decent arrangement of upper hand by and by includes building associations with existing markets and items (Johnson and Whittington, 2008). Berger and Ofek (2010) in their examination on focused impact on firm worth depict it as the section of a firm into new lines of movement through a procedure of inward advancement. Any adjustment of a present item that serves to grow the potential market infers that the organization is following a methodology of item enhancement. An investigation directed by Hitt, Hoskisson, and Kim (2011) demonstrates that organizations that have changed into items that utilization the current interior assets or abilities profits by economies of scale and gain higher returns. The consequences of enhancement might be amplified when global organizations profit by financial rents got from item and market assorted variety.

They likewise gain from different favorable circumstances epitomized in global exercises, for example, information procurement, capacity advancement, chance decrease, and corresponding

cooperative energies. Besides, Luo (2009) includes that such cooperative energies from item aggressiveness are bound to be acknowledged when firms venture into related lines of business or enterprises.

Upper hand centers around the quality and plan of the item to make a recognition that there are no substitutes accessible available. In spite of the fact that contenders may have a comparable item, the separation methodology centers around quality or structure contrasts. For this situation, a business picks up a bit of leeway in the market as clients see the item as one of a kind (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Moreover, item related expansion accentuates the operational cooperative energy that empowers a firm to profit by economies of scale. As indicated by Tavana (2014), a few firms may try to expand from a proactive methodology when it spots open doors for venture into enterprises whose advancements supplement its current business. It can likewise use existing capacities by venturing into different organizations, broadening into related

organizations as a road for cost decrease. Such firms have a forceful brand name that can be utilized to drive up deals. A firm can likewise broaden into a firmly related business or move into a totally new business that isn't identified with the present tasks (Schindler and Cooper, 2008).

As indicated by Kinyanjui, (2012) separation procedure expects to develop an upper hand by offering one of a kind items described by important highlights, for example, quality, advancement and client administration. This empowers the firm to procure better than expected returns by safeguarding it against focused powers of substitute items, contention in the business and risk of new participants because of the brand dedication it directions (Gachambi, 2007).

A good brand picture impacts purchaser conduct towards the brand as far as expanding steadfastness, instructing a value premium and creating positive verbal (Martenson, 2007). In addition, Peter et al., (2007) set that a correct brand name can bring out sentiments of trust, certainty, security, quality and numerous other alluring attributes. The brand picture includes a buyer's learning and convictions about the brand's different items and its non-item quality.

Mwangi (2008) directed an examination on variables influencing upper hand of stores in Kenya. He posted that, the board of the entire system required a turnaround idea into the earth testing presumptions, creating a dream, utilizing discretionary aptitudes to get ideal reactions, keeping activities moving by taking care of obstructions and opposition, keeping up the energy fusing new advancements and never dismissing the general objectives of appropriate income the executives. Jones (1994) contended that organizations increment their piece of the overall industry for notoriety. Market pioneers have the clout that they can use to further their potential benefit. Additionally, a firm might need to expand dealing power. A progressively huge player has a favorable position in exchanges with providers and

channel individuals than a littler player (Andreas, 2009).

According to Liao and Hu (2007), hotels in Taiwan have used product diversification strategies due to growing competition in the lodging industry to offer food and beverage service. The hotels are preferred locations to stage weddings, and they usually provide a wedding ceremony and a banquet package with discounted lodging services for the host and the guests.

It is widely accepted that hotels generate the major proportion of their profit from room sales, according to Payne, (2007), hotels in the USA have profit margins of 80% from lodging and 20% from food and beverage. Ooi, Hooy, and Som (2015) investigated corporate diversification and firm performance using evidence from the Asian hotel industry. A total of 42 hotel firms were investigated across 4 Asian economies, from the year 2001 to 2012. The study results suggested that unrelated industrial diversification is the only alternative to improve hotel firm performance. Unrelated international diversification instead has a significant adverse effect on firm performance. The results further showed that the board of directors implies an important link to the relationship between diversification and firm performance, only in a crisis period.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used in this study (cooper and schindler, 2011). This study used cross-sectional since it studied many units at the same time. The research adopted a survey method. The study was carried out in western region in Kenya where there were 100 distributors currently in operation dealing automobile tyre enterprises in western Kenya (Automobile enterprises Data, 2021). Therefore, the study targeted 100 branch outlets drawn from all the automobile tyre enterprises. The sampling frame for the present study was based on data received from the automobile tyre enterprises in Kenya western region. In order to draw a representative sample

population from the target population, this study used Krejcie-1970 model generated by Morgan in 1990 that shows sample sizes corresponding to given populations. Simple random sampling was used in this study to determine the sample sizes. A random sample is a useful blend of randomization and categorization, which enables both a quantitative and qualitative process of research to be undertaken (Cohen & Manion, 2003). The data collection instruments are tools used to collect information from the intended target population (sample size). The researcher developed the data collection instruments that was used in this study. The study used structured questionnaire for data collection. The data collected was derived from both primary and secondary sources. The researcher used the computer software Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 24 for windows to conduct initial data analysis using simple descriptive statistical measures such as, minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation and variance to give a glimpse of the general trend. However, deeper analysis involving correlation

analysis and regression analysis was used to determine the nature of the relationship between variables at a generally accepted current significant level of $P=0.05$ (Sekaran, 2013). Regression analysis was applied to analyze the relationship between a single dependent variable and each of the independent variables respectively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics on variables was presented on a 5-point Likert-type scale data that was summarized using frequency, measures of central tendency (mean) as well as measure of dispersal (standard deviation). Values of mean were used in this study to rank prevalence of different factors grouped together with high mean indicating high prevalence. On the other hand, larger standard deviation implies a greater spread in the data. This section is organized in five sub-sections based on components of market mix modification, product development, diversification strategy, corporate social responsibility and competitive advantage.

Market Mix Modification and Competitive Advantage

Table 1: Market Mix Modification and Competitive Advantage

Statement	N	Mean	S. Dev.
Setting low prices compared to other brands in the same category helps improve competitive advantage.	68	4.72	0.25
Product promotion leads to multiple markets and enhanced performance of firms	68	4.02	0.23
Offering lower prices products helps build up customer base	68	4.56	0.41
Product promotion helps defend a firm against competitive forces from substitute products/new entrants	68	3.50	1.68
High prices reduces demand for a particular class of products as customers switch to alternatives	68	4.41	1.42
Average	68	4.24	0.80

Source: Field Survey Data (2022)

As shown in Table 1, respondents noted, setting low prices compared to other brands in the same category helps improve competitive advantage (mean = 4.72, standard deviation = 0.25), product promotion leads to multiple markets and enhanced performance of firms (mean = 4.02, standard

deviation = 0.23) at the same time, offering lower prices products helps build up customer base (mean = 4.56, standard deviation = 0.41), product promotion helps defend a firm against competitive forces from substitute products/new entrants (mean = 3.5, standard deviation = 1.68).

Respondents further stated that, high prices reduces demand for a particular class of products as customers switch to alternatives (mean = 4.41, standard deviation = 1.42). The average mean was found to be mean of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.80.

This implies that, although competitive advantage was of value to automotive Tyre distributors Market

Product Development and Competitive Advantage

Table 2: Product Development and Competitive Advantage

Statement	N	Mean	S. Dev
Product modification helps achieve competitive advantage	68	3.08	0.29
New product development help in gaining competitive advantage	68	4.18	0.36
There is high product modification that vary among tyre firms	68	3.33	0.82
Creating new products for new businesses positively impacts business performance through enhanced market learning	68	3.38	0.12
To build a competitive advantage, tyre firms should strive for overall low-cost leadership	68	3.13	0.99
Average	68	3.42	0.52

As shown in Table 2, respondents highly rated that, product modification helps achieve competitive advantage (mean = 3.08, standard deviation = 0.29), New product development help in gaining competitive advantage (mean = 4.18, standard deviation = 0.36). There is high product modification that vary among tyre firms (mean = 3.33, standard deviation = 0.82). Creating new products for new businesses positively impacts business performance through enhanced market learning (mean = 3.38, standard deviation = 0.12) furthermore to build a competitive advantage, tyre firms should strive for overall low-cost leadership (mean = 3.13, standard deviation = 0.99). The mean

Mix Modification was not favourable to them. In most pricing and product promotion had an impact on Market Mix Modification for competitiveness. This practice determines competitive advantage existence. According to Zott & Amit, 2007 .market mix modification is generated through market improvements and has a competitive advantage to businesses.

average was found to be 3.42 with standard deviation being 0.52

These findings on product development are based on new product development and product modification. This determines competitive ability of automobile tyre firms. According to Hassan, Qureshi, Sharif and Mukhtar, (2013) product development has a competitive advantages as it contribution to company output. They further state that it increase companies' knowledge stock, contributes in reducing production costs and time of production process and that leads to an increase in investment returns and production efficiency.

Competitive Advantage

Table 3: Competitive Advantage of Automobile Tyres

Statement	N	Mean	S. Dev.
Competitive advantage is enhanced through speed delivery.	68	3.13	0.29
Cost improves competitive advantage	68	3.72	0.94
Market mix modification improves competitive advantage	68	3.7	0.65
Product development, affect competitive advantage	68	3.52	0.90
Diversification strategy, improves competitive advantage	68	3.47	0.97
Average	68	3.51	0.75

Table 3 showed that, Competitive advantage is enhanced through speed delivery. (mean = 3.13, standard deviation = 0.29), Cost improves competitive advantage (mean = 3.72, standard deviation = 0.94), Product development, affect competitive advantage (mean = 3.7, standard deviation = 0.65). Product development, affect competitive advantage (mean = 3.52, standard deviation = 0.90) and diversification strategy, improves competitive advantage (mean = 3.47, standard deviation = 0.97). Average mean was found to be 3.51 with standard deviation being 0.75.

As revealed in this study, competitive advantage is geared towards market mix modification, product development, diversification strategy and corporate social responsibility. According to Shyu and Chen (2018) competitive advantage leads to a firms profitability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Market improvements had notable findings: setting low prices compared to other brands in the same category helps improve competitive advantage (mean = 4.72, standard deviation = 0.25), product promotion leads to multiple markets and enhanced performance of firms (mean = 4.02, standard deviation = 0.23) at the same time, offering lower prices products helps build up customer base (mean = 4.56, standard deviation = 0.41), product promotion helps defend a firm against competitive forces from substitute products/new entrants (mean = 3.5, standard deviation = 1.68). Respondents further stated that, high prices reduces demand for a particular class of products as customers switch to alternatives (mean = 4.41, standard deviation = 1.42). The average mean was found to be mean of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.80.

Product development had notable findings: product modification helps achieve competitive advantage (mean = 3.08, standard deviation = 0.29), New product development help in gaining competitive advantage (mean = 4.18, standard deviation = 0.36).

There is high product modification that vary among tyre firms (mean = 3.33, standard deviation = 0.82). Creating new products for new businesses positively impacts business performance through enhanced market learning (mean = 3.38, standard deviation = 0.12) furthermore to build a competitive advantage, tyre firms should strive for overall low-cost leadership (mean = 3.13, standard deviation = 0.99). The mean average was found to be 3.42 with standard deviation being 0.52

Competitive advantage had notable findings: Competitive advantage is enhanced through speed delivery (mean = 3.13, standard deviation = 0.29), Cost improves competitive advantage (mean = 3.72, standard deviation = 0.94), Product development, affect competitive advantage (mean = 3.7, standard deviation = 0.65). Product development, affect competitive advantage (mean = 3.52, standard deviation = 0.90) and diversification strategy, improves competitive advantage (mean = 3.47, standard deviation = 0.97). Average mean was found to be 3.51 with standard deviation being 0.75.

The researcher can concluded that, market mix modification and product development, are determinants of competitive advantage for automobile Tyres. Market mix modification is based on market improvements approaches. Product development is based on improving existing product or coming up with a new product which has a competitive edge.

Based on the research findings, this study presents some of the key policy recommendations that could enhance competitive advantage:

The automobile Tyre industry should ensure that the products have a ready market and if possible improve the existing market for competitive advantage purposes.

The study strongly recommended formulation of a policy framework guiding product development so as to come out with the best products that meets the standards.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The current study was not exhaustive on all the aspects that researchers wished to include in addressing the research problem. Given this and other limitations, the researcher suggests the

following for further studies. A study investigating the determinants of competitive advantage in other firms in Kenya. The researcher also suggests more variables other than the one used in this study to be considered and included for further research.

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