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INFLUENCE OF MARKET DEVELOPMENT ON COMPETITIVENESS OF KTDA TEA FROM REGION 5 FACTORIES

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ABSTRACT

Market Development is a strategic management practice that aims at giving firms a competitive edge over other businesses. It focuses on market segmentation. Market focus and market penetration. This study aimed to examine the influence of market demand on the competitiveness of KTDA factories from Region 5. The study was anchored on international competitiveness theory and strategic management theory. A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. A sample of 109 was obtained from a target population of 162 using a random sampling method. Primary data was collected through online and physical questionnaires. The supervisor and experts were used to examine the validity of the research instrument while Cronbach Alpha was adopted to test for reliability, Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained was 0.819 which is above the threshold of 0.7. Descriptive statistics consisting of mean and standard deviations were used to summarize data while simple linear regression was used to test significance at 5%. The findings of the study showed that Market Development had a significant positive influence on firm competitiveness ($r=0.521$; $p<0.05$; $\beta=0.381$; $p<0.05$). This study thus concludes that market development significantly influences firm competitiveness and hence recommends the need for firms to embrace market development. The results are expected to be beneficial to the KTDA and other tea producers as well as the academia in directing future research.

KEYWORDS: *Competitiveness, Cross-Sectional Design, KTDA, Market Development*

INTRODUCTION

In the current global economy, which is characterized by the free flow of information and advancement in information technology, firm long-run performance and competitiveness in the market is a paramount subject. The strategic management school of thought defines competitiveness as the ability to profitably create and deliver value by way of cost leadership and or product differentiation. This approach implies that competitiveness is directly related to the factors that influence a firm's cost and demand structure (Porter, 1980). Akben-Selcuk, (2016) argues that in today's turbulent economic environment, competitiveness has become more important than ever for a firm's survival and success. In this study, we are establishing the influence that Market Development has on the competitiveness of KTDA factories from Region 5.

Market Development as a strategic management practice means a growth strategy that identifies and develops new market segments for the current product. It entails expanding the potential market through new users or new uses (Asnoff, 1993, Porter, 1990).

Turner (2010) indicated that market development involves market penetration, market segmentation, and market diversification practices involve focusing on selling existing products into existing markets to gain a higher market share.

Market development would be achieved through a price adjustment strategy that aims at increasing sales; augmented promotion which is a tool for increasing brand awareness; and distribution channels strategy which involves opening of new distribution channels like telemarketing, e-mail marketing and online marketing. Such opening of new distribution channels leads to increased market space and overall profitability and enhances the competitiveness of the firms' offerings

Kenya Tea Development Authority was established under statutory legislation on 20th January 1964 under Legal Notice No. 42 Section 190 of the Agricultural Act (Cap 318 of the Laws of Kenya). The enactment charged KTDA with the statutory responsibility of promoting and fostering the development of tea for small-scale tea growers within specifically scheduled tea-growing areas. This subsidiary legislation empowered KTDA to assist the small-scale tea farmers in expanding their holdings through the following goals and objectives; manage a tea extension programme to improve the level of management and crop husbandry, develop and maintain a tea infilling programme to cover vacancies within farms, increase the area under tea by recruiting more farmers, providing tea-planting materials, collecting, purchase and handling of green tea, processing of the tea leaf, manufacturing of tea, marketing of the made tea, payment of the growers after the necessary deductions and development of sound technical, financial and managerial infrastructure.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya agriculture in general is considered the backbone of the economy, employing nearly 80% of the workforce through production and the entire value chain of agricultural activities. Tea, in particular, makes a significant contribution to the economy, being the chief export product in Kenya. It earns the country foreign exchange besides being a source of employment for many Kenyans.

While the importance of the tea industry in Kenya cannot be overemphasized, in the recent past, the sector has been faced with challenges emanating from competition forces posed by new entrants from different frontiers including other emerging producers around the world. The cost of production, operational inefficiencies and strategies employed by actors in the tea industry have been noted to be some of the issues affecting the performance of the tea sector in Kenya. Strategic management practices are useful in managing the competitiveness of firms in the wake of intense competition in the industry. Therefore, there is a need to examine the influence that market development a strategic management practice that can be achieved through market segmentation, market focus, market penetration and market diversification affects the competitiveness of KTDA factories from Region 5.

Objective

To examine the influence of market development on competiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 factories.

Research Hypothesis

H_{01}: *Market development has no significant influence on the competitiveness of KTDA tea from Region 5 Factories.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two theories that is, **Theory of International Competitiveness** and **Strategic Management**

Theory

Theory of International Competitiveness

The theory of International Competitiveness was developed by Porter in 1980. It stipulates that through exporting the country accumulates wealth thus a country should maximize product exportation and minimize importation of the product from other countries. Porter states that international success in a particular industry is determined by four broad mutually reinforcing factors which create an environment that enables the firms to compete. The factors skilled human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources, infrastructure and natural resources.

Additionally, the firm strategy, structure and rivalry guide companies on organization and management, company objectives and the nature of rivalry in the home market to succeed in international markets as well as the government which has a strong influence on legal conditions that may affect the international competitiveness of a firm either by promoting or hindering exports. The factors are strongly interrelated and enable companies to gain competitiveness and global supremacy. The competitive position of KTDA tea factories would be reclaimed through cost leadership strategies, strategic planning and government support by creating a favourable economic, legal and regulatory environment. This is confirmed by Chemengich (2014) who indicated that 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 of participation in global networks. This helps the firm in cost reduction and seizing of new opportunities. The theory is relevant in that it gave insights into how KTDA tea will survive in the competition through strategic management practices, which include market development.

Strategic Management Theory

This theory was proposed by Porter in 1990. The theory integrates diverse management practices and perspectives in pursuit of goals in the context of rapid environmental changes in the world economy. It is directed towards the need for change to gain competitiveness in response to changing environmental circumstances. The field of strategic management according to Porter (1980) primarily concerns identifying long-term opportunities and threats and mobilization of resources to develop the capabilities in their desire to address the threats and implement a successful strategy to gain advantage of the opportunities. This theory also supports the study objective in the sense that for KTDA Tea to regain its competitiveness, it is required to differentiate its offerings and create a line of unique tea products. The differentiation strategy could be extremely powerful in coping with environmental forces. It provides insulation against competitive rivalry because of customers' brand loyalty.

Related Literature

Market development according to Asnoff (1993) is a strategy that promotes market growth through identifying and developing new market segments for the current product. This strategy targets non-buying consumers in currently targeted segments. It also targets new customers in new segments. It entails expanding the potential market through new users or new uses. New users according to Asnoff include new geographic segments, new demographics, new institutions or new psychographic segments. Market development involves market penetration, market segmentation, and market diversification. Market penetration strategy focuses on selling existing products into existing markets to gain a higher market share. The strategy involves selling more to current consumers and to new customers who can be thought of as being in the same marketplace (Turner, 2010). Asnoff (1993) asserted that market segmentation as a growth strategy identifies and develops new market segments for current products. Although other factors could influence competitiveness of the Kenyan Tea globally, Asnoff maintained that market segmentation leads to new customers in new segments which support the competitiveness of the product.

Neil (2011) observed that companies which previously focused on protected domestic markets are entering into markets in other countries creating new sources of competition, often targeted to price-sensitive market segments. Not only is competition intensifying for all firms regardless of their degree of global market involvement, but the basis for competition is changing as a result, competition continues to be market-based and ultimately relies on delivering superior value to consumers. However, success in global markets depends on knowledge accumulation and deployment. Today, more and more marketing companies specialize in translating products from one country to another (Neil, 2011). Tea as a natural beverage whose nutritional values have recently come to consumers' attention could be a very appealing beverage for these people.

UNCTAD, (2016) reported that tea importing and exporting countries have in the past experienced considerable inconsistencies and challenges in global tea trade. Such a scenario calls for a need for market segmentation hence product differentiation to bridge the gap and cater for the emerging needs of consumers. Market segmentation strategy may be executed in diverse ways including demographic, geographical, and behavioural segmentation among others. Omari (2015) and Chang (2002) cited that Kenya has over the years relied on the export of much of its tea to a few market destinations. Overreliance on the few export markets has been identified as an undesirable situation that has the potential to negatively affect Kenya's tea exports which have in the past been affected whenever there are intermittent trade disputes between Kenya and the leading markets. In addition, tea exports have also been affected by market instabilities in Key markets occasioned by political, social, and economic factors such as emerging wars in Egypt, Sudan, and Pakistan and the shortages of hard currency experienced in the recent past.

Moore and Pollushin (2008) discovered that some new entrants fail in the global markets as a result of underestimation of time, effort, and resources. There is a need for any firm that aims to enter into global markets to consider whether the firms have adequate human and financial resources required to execute their strategic objectives.

Tangus & Omari, (2016) sought to establish the effects of market expansion strategies on performance in the banking industry in Kenya, focusing on commercial banks in Mombasa. Specifically, the study focused on establishing the influence of market expansion strategies Market challenger, market leader and market niche strategies on the performance of commercial banks. The population of the study comprised senior managers in each commercial bank selected randomly. Data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics as the study had adopted descriptive research. The global finding of the study revealed a strong correlation coefficient between firm performance and the three market expansion strategies all with a significance of above 95%. The study recommended banking institutions use market expansion strategies to enhance their performance. These strategies by commercial banks require firms to put necessary policies in place for the strategies to succeed. The study notes that this will aid in the formulation and implementation of such strategies. As part of the recommendation, the study observed that employee and management commitment is required to support the strategy to succeed.

The strategic management school of thought defines competitiveness as the ability to profitably create and deliver value through cost leadership and or product differentiation. This approach implies that competitiveness is directly related to the factors that influence a firm's cost and demand structure (Porter, 1980). Bellendorf (1993), defines competitiveness as the capacity of firms and industries to survive in competitive situations and their ability to fight and improve their respective market positions against rivals.

In terms of a company's performance, Chan (2010) pointed out that competitiveness is a tool to reach the final goals, which is the performance of the company and industry in the desired market. This research advises that the performance of Kenyan tea firms needs to be measured in the light of the growth and success of the enterprise over the longer term, and that competitiveness ought to also be evaluated not as a short-term gain but as a sustained long-term advantage. Competitiveness relates generally to market economic matters, but it can also be considered to comprise three distinct divisions, which are the competitiveness of companies (microeconomic level), the competitiveness of industries (mezzo-economic level), and the competitiveness of national economies (macroeconomic level) (Drescher & Maurer, 2005).

According to Waiganjo (2013), business competitiveness is a regular idea scrutinized by academicians, consultants and practitioners due to the frequent and uncertain changes, greater competition between firms, and the need for continuous innovations, quality enhancement and cost reduction which force companies to face the challenge of improving their competitiveness and as a result their performance both locally and globally. This study identifies price as a measure of competitiveness because pricing defines a firm's competitive position in the market.

Kibicho (2015), discovered that high rates of productivity growth are often sought as a way of strengthening competitiveness, but there is no guarantee that favourable structural factors will increase sales in foreign markets.

The danger of overreliance on a few markets was demonstrated in 2008 by Pakistan's decision to reduce tea imports from Kenya. During this time, Kenyan tea exports shrunk to 80 million in 2007 from 98 million in 2005. This decrease was attributed to Pakistan's entry into the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India and Sri Lanka as part of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In addition, the danger of over-reliance on few export markets was also illustrated by Egypt's political crisis of February 2011, when the prices of tea fell from $3.28 for a kilo of grade 1 tea to $2.99 Egypt has a market share of 21 % of Kenyan tea (KTDA, 2014). Another observed challenge is that Kenyan tea is mainly exported in semi-processed form to produce well-known global tea brands. According to Nyangito and Kimura (1999), Kenya's tea is normally used for blending other teas of low quality for quality improvement due to the minimal value addition of exported tea. Ganewatta and Edwards (2000) in their study The Sri Lanka Tea Industry: Economic Issues and Government Policies argued that erratic tea prices have impacts on the economy as it serves as one of the major export earners to the country and also the majority of smallholders and estate workers depend on tea for their income. Therefore, lower tea prices have a greater impact on the performances of the entire economy and the living standard of the tea defendants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design to establish strategic management practices influencing the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 factories. A cross-sectional survey research design was deemed suitable

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for the study because it enabled the collection of data about a given phenomenon within a limited time horizon which can help describe incidences of events or provide an explanation of factors related to an organization or industry (Saunders, 2013; Theuri 2015). A cross-sectional survey research design is useful in overcoming time and budget constraints (Theuri, 2015).

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative mixed methods. The purpose of this was that both qualitative and quantitative research in combination will provide a better understanding of a research problem or issue than a particular research approach alone. The study was undertaken in KTDA Region 5 factories where factories in Kericho County, Bomet County and Nakuru County will form the study location. The target population of the study was 162 persons comprising 50 directors, 16 Factory Managers and 96 Members of Management in the 16 factories making up the Region Five (5) KTDA factories. Usually, each of the factories has six (6) directors, but some factories share directors. The total number of directors in region five KTDA factories is 50. Each of the sixteen factories is headed by a factory manager, therefore there are 16 factory managers. The management team of each factory comprises at least 6 members: The Factory operations manager, Production Manager, Production Assistant, Factory Accountant, Factory ICT manager and Factory procurement manager. Therefore, the total number of members of management was 96. These categories were selected as they possess relevant information for this study by their role in strategic decision-making. Furthermore, the top managers were targeted because strategic management issues are mostly handled by top managers of organizations and they were considered more knowledgeable about strategic issues and undertake strategic responsibilities in the organization. Top managers were considered the most appropriate to answer questions ranging from aspects of structure, strategy, and organizational competitiveness (Hung, 2006).

The study used primary data collected using online questionnaires and incorporated with physical questionnaires. The results of the competitiveness of KTDA factories from Region 5 were examined based on a five-point Likert scale and the results indicated a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.819 which was above the threshold of 0.7, hence reliable.
The data collected was screened before entering SPSS version 23.0. The screened data was coded and entered into the analytical software for analysis and presentation purposes. Microsoft Excel was used to complement SPSS where necessary. Descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviations were computed on market development and competitiveness. The study also utilized inferential statistics to test hypotheses at 5% where a simple linear regression model was applied in examining the individual relationship that occurs between variables that is market development and firm competitiveness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Market Development and Firm competitiveness
Market development results were obtained from N=109 respondents from KTDA factories from Region 5. The results were presented in *Table 1* in terms of percentage frequencies, mean and standard deviation

Table 1.

Statements	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Demographic Market Segmentation increases the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories.	109	1.00	5.00	3.91	0.98
Consumers' preference for Kenyan Tea influences the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	4.00	5.00	4.91	0.09
Price Differentiation Increases Competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	2.00	5.00	4.14	0.73
Market segmentation enables new market development increasing the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	1.00	5.00	3.61	1.08
Market diversification influences the Competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	2.00	5.00	4.01	0.16

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Concentration on traditional markets (Market Focus) influences the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	1.00	4.00	3.16	1.12
KDTA regulations and conditions influence competitiveness KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories	109	2.00	5.00	4.28	0.32
Valid N (listwise)	109				

Source: Field Data, (2021)

The findings indicate generally that; the majority of the respondents are of the view that market development strategies enhance firm competitiveness. Specifically, when asked whether Demographic Market Segmentation increases competitiveness, the mean was 3.91(std deviation 0.98) on a scale of 1 to 5 implying above above-average level of agreement. There was almost absolute consensus Consumer preference for Kenyan Tea influences the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories with a mean of 4.91 (std deviation 0.09) on a scale of 5. On the question of whether Price Differentiation Increases the Competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories, the respondents scored a mean of 4.14 (standard deviation 0.73) showing a higher level of agreement among the participants. There was, however, a mixed perception of whether Market segmentation enables increased competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories. The average score for this item was almost neutral with a mean of 3.61 (standard deviation 1.08). When asked whether Market diversification influences the Competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories, the mean was 4.01(std deviation 0.16) on a scale of 1 to 5 implying above above-average level of agreement. However, respondents were generally neutral on the question of whether Concentration on traditional markets (Market Focus) influences the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories. The mean for this measure was 3.16(std deviation 1.12) on a scale of 1 to 5 implying that respondents were indifferent on this matter. Finally, the respondents were asked to rate the influence of KDTA regulations and conditions on the competitiveness of KTDA Tea from Region 5 Factories. This question elicited either agree or strongly disagree responses with a mean of 4.28 (standard deviation 0.32) on a scale of 5 on the Lickert scale indicating a high level of agreement among the participants.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was carried out to assess the influence of market development on firm competitiveness. The correlation results are presented in *Table 2*

Table 2.

	Firm Competitiveness (Y)	**Market development X1**	
Firm Competitiveness (Y)	1.00		
Market development	0.521**	1.00	
N=	109	***Correlation is significant at 0.05 probability*	

Source: Field Data, (2021)

The findings from Table 2 demonstrate that Market Development had a moderately significant relationship with Firm competitiveness in KTDA Region 5 Factories. Correlation results in *Table 2* indicate that there is a significant correlation between Market development and Firm competitiveness ($r=0.521$; $p<0.05$).

These findings have some similarities with those of Mbithi, Muturi & Rambo (2015) who examined the effect of market Development Strategy on Performance in the Sugar Industry in Kenya where, although mixed outcomes were found regarding market development and performance, the study showed that product development increased market share which, Mbithi *et al.*, (2015) suggested that would eventually positively affect profitability. The study further alluded that specifically, rebranding, sales promotions, and different quantity packaging may be used in accessing new segments of the market while opening outlets or agencies could boost extending geographically for sugar companies.

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Testing of the Hypothesis

Market development and Firm competitiveness

This study sought to examine the influence of market development on firm competitiveness. To achieve this objective, the following hypothesis was tested;

Ho1: There is no significant Influence on Market development and Firm competitiveness

The results of hypothesis testing are presented in *Table 3.*

Table 3.

Model 1			Unstandardized Coefficients		Std'zedCoef	T	Sig.
			B	Std. Error	B		
1	(Constant)		1.332	0.232		5.736	0.000
	Market development		0.381	0.379	0.068	3.007	0.001
	R	0.798					
	R-Squared	0.637					
	Adjusted R-Squared	0.591					
	F- Change	0.000					
	N	109					
	a. Dependent Variable: Firm competitiveness						

Source: Field Data, (2021)

These results indicate that Market development has significant effect on Firm competitiveness. This is shown by a beta value of 0.381 which is not significant at a 95% level of confidence (p>0.05)

The findings of this study rejected the stated hypothesis that Ho1: There is no significant Influence on Market development and Firm competitiveness, hence implying the alternative hypothesis is supported.

The findings are also consistent with the findings of a similar study conducted on the banking industry. Tangus & Omari, (2016) found a strong correlation coefficient between firm performance and the three market expansion strategies all with a significance of above 95%. The study recommended banking institutions use market expansion strategies to enhance their performance. These strategies by commercial banks require firms to put necessary policies in place for the strategies to succeed. The study notes that this will aid in the formulation and implementation of such strategies. As part of the recommendation, the study observed that employee and management commitment is required to support the strategy to succeed

SUMMARY

Results from this study show that market development practices have a positive significant influence on Firm competitiveness. This is shown by a beta value of 0.381 which was significant at a 95% level of confidence (p>0.05). For this objective, the null hypothesis was hence rejected implying that the alternative hypothesis is supported.

CONCLUSION

The study found that Market development has a significant effect on Firm competitiveness. This finding leads to the conclusion that effective market development practices will lead to improved firm competitiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

About the conclusion that firm competitiveness is determined by how effectiveness of market development practices adopted by the firm are, it is recommended that the firms should focus on and invest in market development. This can be achieved by the identification of new market frontiers locally and internationally. It is further recommended that rebranding, sales promotions, and different quantity packaging may be used in accessing new segments of the market while opening outlets or agencies could boost extending geographically for sugar companies.

Further, given the foregoing conclusion, the study recommends firms in the tea industry apply market expansion strategies to enhance their competitiveness. These strategies require firms to put necessary policies in place for the strategies to succeed. This is expected to aid in the formulation and implementation of such strategies. As part of the recommendation, employee and management commitment is required to support the strategy to succeed.

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