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## Analysis of Market Development Strategies on Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Cement Manufacturing Companies in Kenya

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### ABSTRACT

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Corporate organizational managers are working towards sustainable growth and ensuring competitive advantage is maintained. Businesses are becoming highly competitive and very demanding. Manufacturing companies are currently opting to various strategies to deal with such emerging competitive issues. The objective of this study was to assess influence of market development strategy on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population were all the six cement manufacturing companies in Kenya with the respondents being the top management dealing with strategic management in each of cement manufacturing company. Census sampling approach was adopted to encompass all the six cement manufacturing companies. A proportionate sample of 108 respondents was chosen as a representative of the whole. From the findings, Market Development Strategy had a positive influence on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. The study concluded that Market development strategies have a positive effect on sustainable competitive advantage in the cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. The study recommended that management should assess their market development strategies for suitability considering company's structure, culture, and policies, as well as the overall targeted goals, before implementing it. Market development strategies that will improve sustainability include continuously exploring new geographic markets, the company starting new distribution channels, the company introducing new market segment, adding new distribution channels, having charged content of advertising or promotion, concentrating on development of dominant product, having added new demographic segments, company having new institutional segments, having targeted new customers in new segments and having targeted segments.

**Key Words:** Market Development Strategies, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Manufacturing Companies.

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### 1.0 Introduction

Corporate organizational managers are working towards sustainable growth and ensuring competitive advantage within and without each other is maintained. Businesses are becoming highly competitive and very demanding. According to Clark, (2020) most firms and industries are currently opting to various strategies to deal with such emerging issues. Accordingly, the industry

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in which companies operate have been changing requiring companies to constantly review and align their strategies as per the prevailing market dynamics (Rothaermel, 2015). Globally, dynamism in the market has been shaped by liberalization, interdependence, and technological enhancements. In this regard, competition has been seen to affect organizations to a much greater extent as compared to the past (Kavale, 2016). Organizations need to have appropriate strategies so as to attain the desired competitive advantage. According to Kilonzo, (2014) competitive advantage refers to the position that a firm occupies against its competitors. The higher the competitive advantage, the more profitable that organization will be in the market.

Accordingly, the industry which understands that competitive advantage goes beyond attainment of competitiveness to increasing the efficiency of the firm (Porter, 2012). Competitive strategies are put to gain a competitive edge against the rivals. Ouma, (2016) termed competitive strategy as dealing exclusively with the management action plan for competing successfully and providing superior value to customers. Strategic management measures are therefore of importance in strategic alignment in promoting sustainability in these companies (David & David, 2019). Strategy is termed as action employed by a firm in attaining the set goals over a specified time frame (Hill & Jones, 2013). Ouma, (2016) defines strategies as management action plans essential in achieving the desired value and quality in firms' undertakings. In a similar manner, Thompson and Strickland, (2015) perceived strategy as combined moves and approaches employed in accomplishment of the vision and objectives of an organization. Corporate strategy is therefore an approach geared towards attainment of superiority in performance. The principal concern is identification of the key priority areas to be focused by a firm in order to ensure maximization of profits. Strategies help organization to exercise the choice of direction for strategic actions (Hill & Jones, 2012). Their role is proper direction of the companies' resources as per the objectives and goals (Kutllovci, et al., 2012).

Some of the key strategies identified in the existing literature include market development (Muga, 2016). If well implemented, the company gains an upper hand against competitors (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012). Outcomes of these strategies which are giving the companies an upper hand against the rival companies will be different based on the type of strategy employed and effectiveness of the implementation process (Hill & Jones, 2012). Achievement of sustainable competitive advantage has proven to be a huge challenge to most organizations in both the developed and developing countries. Regionally, majority of manufacturing companies have failed within 5-10 years of inception (Samant & Sangle, 2016). This high rate of failure is due lack of manufacturing companies adopting strategies to achieve sustained competitive advantage. In Kenya, the same applies as the manufacturing sector is witnessing not only dwindling performance but also fluctuations in the returns accrued each year (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). This has resulted in most of the manufacturing companies continue to report losses with some going to the extent of insolvency or collapse. The manufacturing sector contributes to 8% of the country's GDP since 2016 (RoK, 2017). Specifically, the cement manufacturing industry in Kenya is characterized by having only few players which sensitizes the importance of attainment of competitive advantage by the cement manufacturing companies to remain profitable. The cement manufacturing companies must ensure that their strategies are well aligned with internal and external factors (Nyasimi, & Gitau, 2016).

Market development entails growing revenues by selling an existing product into a new market that was previously considered unprofitable for the company; this technique allows the company to attract additional customers for its present products (Gupta, 2020). This approach may be



implemented by entering a new geographical market, developing new product dimensions such as packaging, utilizing a new distribution channel, or creating a new market segment by providing various pricing points. With the present market's increased rivalry, organizations must seek out new markets to sell their products rather than depending solely on their existing consumer base. Market development is therefore a comprehensive marketing strategy that involves promoting existing commodities to buyers in nearby marketing sectors, usually with cosmetic improvements. Companies look for new markets for their existing products as they mature in their current markets. This is a frequent method for reaping the full benefits of a successful product. Entering various geographical locations available on a national and global scale is a great example that can be applied here (Hussain, et al., 2013). The risk of adopting this approach is low if a corporation can leverage established sales channels in the new market (Pearce & Robinson, 2011).

Businesses must be competitive to effectively serve targeted audiences in a meaningful and long-term manner through the implementation of proper marketing strategies. A good marketing strategy should indicate to a company where they want to go in the long run, that is why marketing strategy is often referred to as a continuous process (Ambler, et al, 2014). According to Abdulkadir (2012), the primary goals of business organizations should be to achieve a competitive edge and increase firm performance in comparison to their competitors. Market development allows businesses to monetize some of their existing assets by discovering new demographically, or geographically defined markets for existing products. Changes in media choices, commercial appeals, and distribution are commonly used to demonstrate that the method is in use (Pearce & Robinson, 2011). They go on to say that in order for a product to have sustainable and differential advantages, it must provide benefits to customers, be unique, sustainable, and profitable, and that once a company has established its differential advantages, it can improve its competitiveness by diversifying its products, introducing new brands, changing existing brands, and changing customers' beliefs. According to Tanguis and Omar (2017), market expansion strategies are aimed at attaining a larger market share, even if it means sacrificing short-term earnings. The most widely pursued corporate market expansion tactics are sales, asset, and profit growth. Companies that operate in rapidly growing state must expand in order to remain competitive. Market penetration, as argued by Kasiso (2017), can help a company save money, increase their market share, and sell more products across the country.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

Market Efficiency Theory of Innovation was introduced by Merton (1990) in providing a framework for innovations in companies. The theory is based on the principle that external forces strongly shape the nature of innovations formulated and implemented by the company. These forces not only create inefficiency in the market but also shaping the social welfare. According to this theory, the market on which companies operate is very imperfect hence the need for innovations in order to thrive. Merton's theory suggests that technological innovations occur randomly and follow a pattern similar to that of financial markets, where prices of financial assets also follow a random walk pattern. According to this theory, technological innovations are unpredictable and occur randomly in response to market forces, and it is impossible to consistently predict which innovations will succeed or fail. Merton argues that the market efficiently incorporates new information about technological innovations into stock prices, and the prices of innovative firms accurately reflect the expected future earnings of the firm resulting from its

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innovation. Merton's theory also suggests that the market is quick to recognize the value of innovative ideas and incorporates them into the prices of innovative firms.

The theory has important implications for the management of innovative firms. It suggests that firms should focus on developing a portfolio of innovative ideas rather than trying to predict which ideas will be successful. Firms should also focus on maintaining their innovative capacity and respond quickly to changes in market conditions (Merton, 1990). The Market Efficiency Theory of Innovation has been subject to criticism, with some scholars arguing that technological innovations are not purely random and that there are factors that can help predict the success of innovations. However, the theory has also been influential in shaping our understanding of how innovation works and how firms can best manage innovation. The relevance of this theory is that it describes three main motivations behind market innovations which include risk pooling, risk sharing and risk hedging. The theory is applicable to this study in the fact that manufacturing companies require marketing innovations that will enable them access both local and foreign markets and therefore become efficient. The theory formed an anchor in explaining the effect of market development strategy on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

According to an empirical study by Mbithi et al. (2015) on how market development strategy affected performance in the Kenyan sugar industry, there was a connection between marketing development strategy and company performance. They used two strategies to examine the market development strategy. The strategies included creating a new market niche and expanding to a new geographic area. According to their analysis, the expansion into new geographic areas had a statistically significant impact on sales volume whereas the development of new market categories had a non-significant impact on overall turnover and sales volume. Based on their research, they came to the conclusion that growing into new markets and creating new market niches did not lead to higher profits, but rather higher market share, which would eventually have a favourable impact on profitability.

The performance of SMEs in Thika Sub-county was found to be positively correlated with market development strategy by Wanjiru and George (2015). The researchers observed, in light of the study's findings, that the number of SMEs' new branches opened during the 2013 fiscal year served as a proxy for the market development plan. The study indicated a correlation between the success of SMEs and their market expansion strategy. It also discovered that the average number of new branches launched was the same for small and medium-sized businesses. Regarding the connection between market penetration and SME performance, they discovered that in the Thika Sub-County, there was a correlation between market penetration strategy and SME performance.

Kotabe (2016) examined development of MNCs in China. The study was undertaken by a descriptive approach and established that market development enabled the companies compete in the emerging economies. A similar finding was obtained by Kyengo, et al, (2016) who established a positive significant effect brought about by market focus and market development strategies. The study was however limited to only the mobile telephony companies hence cannot be equally compared to the cement manufacturing companies. Ndung'u, et al., (2016) who researched Equity bank in responding to the competitive industry. The study was done using a descriptive research design and concluded that organizational capabilities, market dominance and focus strategies improved the organizational performance of the bank. In a comparable study, Munga, (2016)

studied market development strategies adopted by multinational pharmaceuticals in Kenya. The study revealed that market development strategies had a positive contribution to the performance. The scope of the study was however narrow focusing on only the market development strategies.

Nyasimi and Gitau (2016), conducted a study on the effectiveness of strategic responses among cement manufacturing companies. The study used a cross sectional approach design and collected data using questionnaires. The findings of the study were that competitive strategies highly improved the performance of these firms. Similarly, Muchemi (2017) and Niyi (2018) also found a positive effect brought about by market development strategies in their respective studies. This current study investigated whether the same exists for the cement companies. The effect of growth strategies on the performance of SME's in Kenya was assessed by Cherotich (2017). The study employed a descriptive research approach, with a population size of 126 employees and a sample size of 95 employees. The instrument of choice for gathering data was a questionnaire. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents with assistance from the human resources division. The study's findings and results showed that market penetration, product development, and market development were all beneficial to SME success. These companies employed market penetration techniques to expand their market share, which in turn increased product sales. To stay ahead of the competition, product development plans were primarily concerned with innovation and the improvement of existing items. The results also suggest that a key component of a successful product development strategy is conducting regular consumer and product surveys. In order to provide consumers with higher-quality products and further expand market share by entering new markets, market development strategies typically make use of technology advancements.

Wanjohi (2018) conducted research on the performance of small-scale businesses in Kiambu town in terms of strategic management methods. Utilizing questionnaires, data was gathered. The results were presented using percentages and frequency tables. In order to analyse the data, responses to the questionnaires are tabulated, coded, and processed using a computer program called Statistical Package for Social Science version 24. To arrive at significant findings and inferences, inferential statistics as well as descriptive statistics like the mean were used. Results show that most respondents strongly believe that their company has accepted the use of card payments and mobile money; they also found that their SME identifies competitors, ascertains the causes of competitors' performance, and takes these factors into account when formulating strategy. A large majority also strongly agreed that your SME places a high premium on product differentiation and that their products are developed and designed in accordance with the needs of the market. Most respondents agreed that product innovation involves lowering manufacturing costs for current products' components and materials, raising manufacturing quality for current products' components and materials, and creating new features for current products that make them easier for customers to use and more satisfying to them.

### **3.0 Research Methods**

The main research philosophy paradigms include positivism, experimental, realism and relativism (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Realism is quantitative by nature and focuses more on figures; relativism is the paradigm that advocates for experimental data collection methods while experimental design falls under relativism and include laboratory data collection. The study will be approached from positivism philosophy. This study took a positivist philosophical approach.

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Positivist paradigm posits that, to empirically establish the correlation between two variables in a study, it is necessary to formulate and test hypotheses.

This philosophy is based on the assumption that scientific propositions are factual only if the observed effects are validated by empirical tests. It adopts a clear independent and objective quantitative approach to investigating phenomena (Eriksson, & Kovalainen, 2015). This choice is informed by the fact the study will be anchored on theories reviewed and requires quantitative data and corresponding analytical techniques. The hypothetic-deductive method has six minimal components which comprise of: theory, hypothesis, operational definition, measurement, testing and verification. Some of the assumptions underlying this research philosophy include events can be objectively measured and the findings can be generalized to the larger population. The principles of positivism comprise an observable social reality therefore making it the preferred paradigm for this study (Saunders, et al, 2009). According Sekaran and Bougie (2016) assumptions produced in research are comparable to generalization produced by natural scientists' positivism also emphasizes on quantifiable observations that are used for statistical analysis. The methodological implications of positivism are evident in this study.

The research design should be comprehensive enough to allow conducting of the research in a smooth and organized way through collection of all the required information (Polit & Becker, 2016). This study adopted a descriptive research design. As described by Kothari, (2017) descriptive research design refers to a research approach tailored towards providing a detailed profile of the study topic while describing the study constructs. The research design enables precise determination of situations, events and persons hence considered the best approach to address the study objectives (Aaker, 2011). The study adopted this research design since the researcher intended to analyse corporate strategies on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. The research design also enabled capturing of the qualitative aspects of the study through the open-ended questions. The unit of study constituted all the six cement manufacturing companies in the cement industry in Kenya. As such the managerial employees in each manufacturing firm were targeted. These respondents were selected due to their direct involvement in ensuring that sustainable competitive advantage is attained in these companies hence are the most appropriate for the study. This entailed a total of 108 respondents

Due to the population being small and manageable, census sampling approach was used so as to target these specific 108 respondents from the six cement manufacturing companies. This entailed a complete enumeration of all items in a population which meet the study criteria and is most recommended so as to ensure equal representation of all the study elements in a small population (Kothari, 2014). The respondents for the study were selected using simple random sampling so as to ensure equal representation of the study population with no bias. Data for this study was collected using primary means. The primary means was through self-administered questionnaires as recommended by Frick (2009). The use of a questionnaire for data collection provided advantages such as versatility, speed and cost effectiveness. The questionnaire was semi-structured into sections; the first section of the questionnaire collected background information of the respondent; the second part collected data on the first objective of the study, the third part collected data on the second objective, the fourth part collected data on the third objective, the fifth part collected data on the fourth objective, the sixth part collected data on the fifth objective whereas the seventh part collected data on the dependent variable. A Likert Scale was employed in rating the responses of the respondents. Secondary data on the other hand was obtained from the audited reports of the cement manufacturing companies for the 5-year period between 2016 and 2020 (both

years inclusive). These gave more detailed and refined information especially on the competitive advantage of the companies.

A pilot study was done on 5 respondents who were selected from Karsan Ramji & Sons. Karsan Ramji & Sons was selected for the study excluded from the actual study. This firm was also chosen as the pilot testing site as it is the most proximate to the researcher and not part of the study population hence convenient. The population selected in the pilot study were not the respondents for the study. Cronbach's alpha was then used to assess internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire based on the feedback of the pilot test. The piloted respondents were encouraged to make comments and suggestions concerning instructions, clarity of questions and relevance on the data collection instruments. This revealed vague questions, deficiencies in the questionnaire and provided an opportunity to analyse the data to see if the methods of analysis were appropriate. Validity entails the accuracy of the data collection instrument. In this study, data validity was achieved using content validity which is the extent of effectiveness of the elements in the data collection instruments in terms of relevancy and appropriateness. This ensured the data collection instruments actually achieved what the researcher sought to measure and appropriate amendments were made based on their suggestions.

In this study, Cronbach Alpha was used in measuring the internal consistency of the findings. The coefficients range from 0 to 1 whereby a correlation of higher than 0.7 was deemed reliable. This is in accordance to Coopers and Schindler (2008) who recommends an alpha value of 0.7 and above to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. The study used self-administered questionnaires. Drop and pick method were used in the administration where the researcher visited the premises of the business to introduce the study and leave the questionnaire with the respondents. According to Frost, *et al.*, (2010) a drop and pick method is recommended for descriptive studies because it gives the respondent time to fill the questionnaire hence high response rate. To facilitate the introduction, the researcher sought an introductory letter from the university's directorate of postgraduate studies. After the introduction, the researcher left the questionnaires with respondents for a period of two weeks then pick them for data cleaning. Follow ups were made using calls and emails to ensure a high response rate is attained.

Descriptive statistics was used to check the central tendency and the dispersion of the data variables. Inferential statistics on the other hand was used in determination of the relationship and association between the research variables. The analysed data was summarized and presented in tables and figures. Tests were two tailed and were designed to check on equal relations. Every correlation greater than the positive critical values of ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) and also less than their negative values lie within the accepted region of the two-tailed test and vice versa. Regression analysis on the other hand was used in determination of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

## 4.0 Research Findings

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

**Table 11. Market Development Strategy and Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
The company continuously explores new geographic markets	3.72	1.534
The company has started new distribution channels	4.15	1.353
The company has introduced new market segment	3.52	1.326
The company has added new distribution channels	3.38	1.393



Statement	Mean	Std Dev
The company has changed content of advertising or promotion	3.56	1.458
The company has concentrated on development of dominant product	3.96	1.356
The company has added new demographic segments	3.30	1.312
The company has new institutional segments	3.44	1.664
The company has targeted new customers in new segments	3.85	1.238
The target has been on non-buying customers in specific segments.	3.87	1.003
<b>Average Mean score</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>1.364</b>

Source: Research Findings (2023)

The findings in table 1 reveal that according to the respondents, the most used market development practice was starting of new distribution channels which is important in ensuring that the customers are adequately reached with the required products at the shortest time possible. The results also show that the least adopted market development practice was adding new demographic segments. This could be concluded that the consumption of cement products is not greatly affected by demographic factors as posited by Kiseli, (2016). From the descriptive statistics results, it was deduced that many respondents agreed with the statements on market development strategy implying a large extent of adoption in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya as indicated by an overall mean of ( $\bar{x}$ =3.68). The average standard deviation of 1.364 indicates that the data points in a dataset are relatively close to the mean which is a relatively small amount of spread.

#### 4.2 Regression Analysis

The study sought to establish the influence of market development strategy on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. A multiple regression model was used and the Regression model summary is presented in Table 2.

**Table 22 Model Summary on the relationship between market development strategy and sustainable competitive advantage**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	.838 <sup>a</sup>	.702	.660	.51187	1.231

a. Predictors: (Constant), Market Development Strategies

b. Dependent Variable: sustainable competitive advantage

From Table 1, the coefficient of determination (Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>) implied that that the regression could explain up to 66 percent of the variation in the competitive advantage. The remaining percent of the variation could be due to other predictors not in the model. The model test of fitness results is presented in Table 2 indicating the reliability of the model in predicting competitive advantage. Comparably, Athuai (2017) on a case study on Airways revealed that there was positive evidence of the strategy measures employed and competitive advantage in the company. Based on this study, companies which are faced with a decline in performance ought to adopt process re-engineering strategies so as to improve its competitive advantage.



**Table 33 ANOVA for the relationship between market development strategy and sustainable competitive advantage**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	43.793	10	4.379	16.714	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	18.603	71	.262		
	Total	62.396	81			

The model result of fitness indicates an F-statistic of 16.714 and a p-value of 0.000<0.05. This indicates that the model is fit for prediction at 95 percent confidence level. Market development strategies had a significant effect on the cement company’s’ competitive advantage. The study of multiple regression model coefficients obtained which could be used for prediction are presented in table 4.

**Table 4: Model coefficients for the relationship between market development strategy and sustainable competitive advantage**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.653	.449		3.684	.000
New geographic markets	.206	.064	.359	3.236	.002
New distribution channels	-.054	.059	-.084	-.921	.000
New market segment	.051	.072	.077	.710	.000
New distribution channels	.135	.057	.215	2.358	.021
Charged content of advertising or promotion	.266	.061	.441	4.363	.000
Development of dominant product	.039	.053	.060	.729	.000
New demographic segments	-.046	.050	-.067	-.911	.000
New institutional segments	-.096	.044	-.181	-2.199	.000
Targeted new customers in new segments	.145	.068	.204	2.122	.000
Non buying customers in currently targeted segments.	-.060	.069	-.069	-.872	.000

As shown below, all the variables except the company has started new distribution channels, the company has added new demographic segments, the company has new institutional segments, the company has new institutional segments, and the company has targeted on non –buying customers in currently targeted segments were found to affect positively sustainable competitive advantage in the cement manufacturing companies. This implies that an increase in these practices will result in improvement of the competitive advantage. In addition, all the variables have a p-value less than 5% (P < 0.05) meaning that these variables are significant in explaining the variations in competitive advantage in the cement manufacturing companies.

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of market development strategy on sustainable competitive advantage. The descriptive statistics obtained an average mean score 3.68 of which implies a large extent of adoption of the constructs investigated in cement manufacturing companies. From the correlation analysis, market development (r=0.543\*\*, P=0.000) was



established to be positively correlated to sustainable competitive advantage in the cement manufacturing companies. This compares to the regression analysis where the model coefficient results confirmed a positive relationship between market development strategy and sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies. One recent study that supports the findings of this study is by Kim and Lee (2021), who found that market development strategies positively influenced the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the fashion industry in South Korea.

## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

From the results, market development strategies have a strong positive effect on sustainable competitive advantage in cement manufacturing companies in Kenya. The study concludes that market development strategy affects the competitiveness of the cement manufacturing companies. Therefore, an improvement in these practices influences the competitive advantage of the companies in a positive spectrum. By adopting one of these strategies, a firm can create a competitive advantage that allows it to outperform its rivals in the market. This competitive advantage can lead to higher profits, market share, and long-term sustainability.

### 5.2 Recommendations

The study found that market development strategies significantly affected sustainable competitive advantage. The study recommends that manufacturing companies in Kenya to invest in market development strategies for sustainable competitive advantage. Market development strategies that will improve sustainability include continuously exploring new geographic markets, the company starting new distribution channels, the company introducing new market segment, adding new distribution channels, having changed content of advertising or promotion, concentrating on development of dominant product, having added new demographic segments, company having new institutional segments, having targeted new customers in new segments and having targeted segments.

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