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EFFECT OF STRATEGIC ORIENTATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF LARGE RETAIL STORES IN NAIROBI

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of strategic orientation on the performance of large retail stores in Nairobi. The study specifically sought to establish the effect of market orientation, and entrepreneurial orientation on performance of large retail stores in Nairobi. The research design adopted was descriptive cross sectional research design. The population of the study comprised of all the 15 large retail stores in Nairobi. The study used primary data that were collected through self-administered questionnaires. The data was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics. The regression analysis was used to assess the effect of strategic orientation on the performance of large retail stores in Nairobi. The study established that market orientation enables the retail stores to focus on ensuring that the customers are satisfied through review of business strategy, competitor analysis, customer future needs discussion, focusing more on customers than competitors and dissemination of data on customer satisfaction at all levels. Entrepreneurial orientation was found to have enabled the retail stores to launch new products in the market, adopt aggressive attitude towards competitors, reviewing periodically product development to ensure that they are in line with what customers want, developing innovative actions, and carrying out risky projects when they involve profitable opportunities The regression analysis revealed that the performance of large retail stores was influenced to a large extent by market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and interaction orientation.

Key Words: strategic orientation, performance, market orientation, and Entrepreneurial orientation

Background of the Study

Strategic orientation is the core element to success for many organizations in creating proper behaviors to achieve superior performance (Hakala, 2010), since strategic orientation focuses on the way a firm adapts and interacts with its external environments. Strategic orientation represents an approach to business and it contains various dimensions including technology, market, entrepreneurial, and learning orientations that are expected to make the firm better suited to confront the business challenges that keep on emerging every other day. For instance, firms with a high level of technology have strong orientation to research and development (R&D) and use sophisticated technology to develop new products while a market orientation requires organizations to focus on customers and their needs (Keskin, 2008). He further points that by a firm being able to strategically oriented, it will be able to develop new skills, a strong strategic vision in their business, establish a good strategy and realign their structure, systems, leadership behavior, human resource policies, culture, values and management processes. Organizational performance is the analysis of a company's performance as compared to its goals and objectives. There is a strong relationship between organization performance and the several dimensions of strategic orientation. 0Strategic orientation provides an organization with a better understanding of its customers which leads to enhanced customer satisfaction and thus organizational performance.

This study will be founded by contingency theory that states that firm competitiveness depends on the alignment of the organization with the environment and congruence of the organizational elements with one another (McKee, 2009). The theory elaborates that the greater the consistency between the competitive strategy and contingent factors, the organization has positive impact on average performance. Competitive strategy deals with the internal and external environment, and acts as intervention between an organization and its environment to achieve competitive advantages. Competitiveness in organization is valued as a multi-dimensional model comprising of customer values, shareholder values and an organization's ability to react.

The competition in the Kenyan retail sector has intensified recently resulting in a number of retail stores adopting various strategies in order to improve their performance. Despite the economic and technological change in business organizations, as well as the healthy competitions among firms, some organizations still have the problem of adapting to these changes and also having the competitive advantage over others. Strategic management in the retail sector demand that retail stores should have effective systems in place to counter unpredictable events that can sustain their operations and minimize the risks involved through market orientations. Only those organizations that is able to adapt to the changing environment and adopt new ideas and ways of doing business that can be guaranteed hope of survival. In Kenya Retail stores have different characteristics of strategic orientation which are important for firm innovativeness and firm performance. Strategic orientation is important in the examination of organization culture's through employees focus on their time, energy and resources in decision making.

Research Problem

Day and Lichtenstein (2006) posit that many firms have spent a vast amount of resources in order to improve their competitiveness and sustainability by looking at their internal processes. However, Morgan and Strong (2003) are of the opinion that firms may improve the value of their established performance through their strategic orientation. Strategic orientation has been gaining more attention since it was recognized as the core element to success for many organizations. Gatignon and Xuereb (2007) postulate that strategic orientation is related to creating proper behaviors to achieve superior performance and it focuses on the way a firm adapts to and interacts with its external environments. They further opine that for strategic orientations to be effective, companies must create an internal alignment between organizational features (goals, values, resources, capabilities, structure and systems) and create a fit between the internal organizational and its external environment. This fit depends on the strategic orientation a company has.

Studies that have been done on strategic orientation and its effects on performance include Kohli and Jaworski (1993) study on the market orientation shows a positive effect on performance. Paladino (2007) study established that there was a positive effect of market orientation on innovation, product quality, and overall performance. On the other hand, Mentzer and Cooper, (2010) shows that market orientation concept involves generating, disseminating, and responding to market intelligence thus considered as effects on both current and future customer needs. Lumpkin and Dess (2006) researched on the relationship between strategic orientation and firm performance of small and medium enterprises in Malaysia. The study established that entrepreneurial and market orientation both have a positive direct effect on superior firm performance, interaction orientation which is a relatively new concept, did not show any significant effect on firm performance.

Locally, studies have been done concerning strategic orientation, for instance on ICT as a strategic orientation for service delivery in the office of the Vice-President and Ministry of Home Affairs (Ougo, 2011). The findings indicated that the adoption of ICT by the ministry result to better service delivery. Organization have advanced in different measures of strategic orientation but not yet discovered the real impact of strategic orientation on the performance in business or organization. Most of the studies focus on specific orientation and disregard considering possibility of interaction functioning as a system. Kaptuya, (2014) study on the role of strategic orientation as a source of competitive advantage at Geothermal Development Corporation in Kenya established that there was effective coordination between the different departments which leads to proper planning and coordination of activities, helps in creating proper understanding among persons, gives the company clear strategic direction, reduces conflicts among functional areas, time management and effective utilization of resources. From the studies that have been undertaken, there is no study that has been undertaken on the relationships between strategic orientation and organizational performance of large retail stores. This study will therefore seek to answer the question; what is the relationship between strategic orientation and performance of large retail stores in Nairobi?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to determine the relationships between strategic orientation and performance of large retail stores in Nairobi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

Contingency Theory

This research is based on the contingency theory whose proponents are Kast and Rosenzweig (1985). The theory based upon the organismic analogy, views organizations as consisting of a series of interdependent subsystems, each of which has a function to perform within the context of the organization as a whole. This can be related to technology, quality customer service, employees' motivation and marketing strategy that are can be used to as a strategic response to competition by retail stores. Organizational effectiveness is dependent on a fit or match between the type of technology, environmental volatility, the size of the organization, the features of the organizational structure and its information system. Contingency theories are developed from the sociological functionalist theories of organization structure such as the structural approaches to organizational studies (Reid and Smith, 2000). On other hand contingency theory is regarded as a dominant paradigm in management accounting research (Cadez and Guilding, 2008).

The human subsystem embraces the people in the organization, their leadership, and their motivation. Contingency theory assumes that each of the subsystems is open to a range of variation. Each should be designed so that it is congruent with the others and corresponds to the environment with which it is faced (Mentzer, 2001). The technology used in the organization will also have an important effect upon the subsystems and the organizational structure. Contingency theory additionally rests upon the open systems view that regards the organization as dependent upon the wider environment. The organization and environment are seen as being in a state of mutual influence and interdependence. The marketing strategy performance decides whether it survives or not, and is determined by the way the organization manages its relationship with the environment.

Contingency theorists Kast and Rosenzweig (1985) suggest that a leaner organizational structure and reduced red tape increase flexibility and facilitate the fit between intra-organizational processes and the environment. Economically, a key reason for downsizing is to reduce costs as organizations seek to maximize efficiency Zhang (2000) and business objectives can be best achieved with fewer employees. A modem variation of contingency theory is configuration theory, which states that the fit between contingency and structural variables is limited to just a few configurations or gestalts, that is, fits (Miller, 1986). Therefore, contingency theory is concerned with the relationship between misfit and performance. This provides the explanation of why organizations adopt the structures and there by produce the associations between structural and contingency variables.

Strategic Orientation

Market Orientation

Market orientation is the ability to understand and satisfy a customer's needs through firms /organizations seeking to improve skills that create and disperse information valuable to customers and competitors. Firms with market orientation strategy are more innovative and adapt new products, services, and processes. Therefore, market orientation functions as a motivational factor that promotes firm innovativeness, success in developmental activities in respect to new product creation and effect on new-product success rates (Baker and Sinkula, 2009). Im and Workman, (2004) point out that market orientated organizations are proactive to satisfy customers and maintain strong, positive relationships with firm innovativeness and therefore an organization's market orientation change process should be conceptualized as sequential.

Proactive market orientation is important because it implies a forward-looking stance accompanied by innovative or new-venturing activity. Therefore, creative firms should engage in a greater level of information-scanning activities. Thus, proactive market oriented involves searching for new information and knowledge. In 21st century market orientation places the highest priority on the profitable creation and maintenance of superior customer value in business firms. The market orientation emphasizes the need for the entire organization to acquire, disseminate, and respond to market intelligence from the firm's target buyers and current and potential competitors (Jaworski and Kohli, 2003).

Ngo and O'Cass (2012) suggest that the impact of market orientation depends on the country in which it is implemented. In less developed countries, managers should anticipate higher payoffs from their marketing orientation perhaps because proactive marketing strategies are generally not practised in developing countries and this could result in greater returns for firms adopting marketing orientation (Ngo and O'Cass, 2012).

Jaworski and Kohli (2003) identified top management, interdepartmental dynamics and organizational systems as the sources of market orientation. Firstly, top management reinforcement can motivate the organization's staff to track changing markets and be more alert to market needs (Jaworski and Kohli, 2003). The leadership capability of a top level manager of the company is the key point of market orientation development (Laurie, 2006). The other source of market orientation is interdepartmental dynamics which is actually made up of two types: interdepartmental conflict and interdepartmental connectedness (Jaworski and Kohli, 2003). Interdepartmental conflict due to incompatibility of actual or desired responses may contribute to internal communication breakdown and internal competition which will lower the overall market orientation of the organization. On the other hand, interdepartmental connectedness can contribute to greater market orientation, as it encourages information flow and interdependency between departments to coordinate their actions for better marketing practices.

Han, Kim, and Srivastava (2013) noted that the consequences of market orientation, includes consequences on employees, environment and business performance. The effect on employees can lead to organizational commitment as market orientation is able to provide psychological and social benefits to employees when employees from different departments work together for the ultimate goal of satisfying customers. The consequences on environment are explained as the effect on the larger market by the strategies of market orientation such as aggressive advertising or market expansion undertaken by the firm. Finally, business performance refers to rise in sales, profits or market share due to market orientation.

Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation consists of both proactive and risk-taking position and this behaviour will be characterized by boldness and tolerance for risk which result to new-market entry and new-product creation. Entrepreneurial orientation can be regarded as an antecedent of firm innovativeness, providing consistent support for firms' innovation activities. Research studies report positive associations between a company's entrepreneurial orientation and the firm approaches strategy formulation, organizational structure, corporate culture, marketing philosophy, human resource management practices, and control systems, but the management challenges lies in designing work environments that reinforce employee entrepreneurial behavior (Schindehutte, Morris and Kocak, 2008).

The entrepreneurial orientation constructs support, both the fields of entrepreneurship and strategic management. Studies carried out shows three dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation, as innovativeness, risk taking, and proactive: Innovativeness is the fundamental posture of an entrepreneurial organization in terms of developing new products or inventing new processes while risk-taking is associated with the willingness to commit significant resources to opportunities and to take calculated business risks and proactive is perseverance in ensuring initiatives are implemented (Marinoet, 2002). The entrepreneurial-oriented organizations change and shape the environment thus are willing to commit resources to exploit uncertain opportunities, through explore new and creative ideas that lead to changes in the marketplace and do so proactively ahead of the competition in anticipation of future demand (Keh, 2007).

Mckee (2009) noted that entrepreneurial orientation is an important factor for firm performance because entrepreneurial firms are more likely to increase new product development, facilitate new business creation, and reenergize existing operations. Entrepreneurial orientation has also been linked to key organizational outcomes such as innovativeness and strategic flexibility. Entrepreneurial orientation is premised on the assumption that the individual (entrepreneur) possesses certain characteristics of proactiveness, innovativeness, risk-taking, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. These characteristics in an entrepreneur together with other organizational factors and environments will constitute the nature of entrepreneurial orientation in the firm.

Proactiveness is defined as a forward-looking perspective characteristic of a marketplace leader that uses its foresight to anticipate future demand and shape the environment (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). It reflects how an organization reacts to market opportunities, acting with initiative and opportunistically to influence market trends, expectations and demand. A proactive firm is differentiated from a reactive firm by being the first to act (Wiesen, 2014). Basically, innovativeness results from the achievement made by the firm in developing new products, services and processes. It is believed that innovative firms are better performing than their competitors Lumpkin and Dess, 2006). Morgan and Strong (2003) define risk-taking as the tendency of a firm to engage in high-risk projects with the aid of managerial preferences that choose bold actions to achieve a firm's objective. However, Lumpkin and Dess (2006) argue that it is important to note that risk has various meanings depending on the context in which it is applied. Hakala (2010) argued that autonomy is consistent with entrepreneurial independence as autonomy is required to bring a new idea to completion unfettered by the shackles of corporate bureaucracy. Aggressiveness captures the facet of a firm's strategic orientation that, in comparison with its competitors, rapidly deploys resources to improve market position (Clark and Montgomery, 2006). Such a trait is characteristic of the marketing company that seeks first-mover advantage and exhibits a combative posture in exploiting market opportunities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive cross sectional research design which describe or define a subject, by creating a profile of large and retail stores through the collection of data and tabulation of the frequencies on research variables or their interaction (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). According to the licensing department list in Nairobi County, the study choose 23 large retail stores in Nairobi (Appendix II) that was the target population as they offered specific and unique goods and services to their target markets. Since the population size was small, the study was a census. The study used primary data which was collected through self-administered questionnaires. The descriptive statistics data analysis method was used to analyze quantitative data through calculating the percentages and means specifically for the purpose of analyzing the quantitative data and presenting it inform of table and charts. Regression analysis was used to assess the effects of strategic orientation on performance of large retail stores.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 30 questionnaires were issued out and only 22 were returned. This represented a response rate of 73%.

Strategic Orientation

Strategic orientation acts as a symptom of business direction and set up of activities, the strategic directions are implemented by a firm in guiding activities for superior performance. The respondents were requested to indicate the influence of strategic orientation on performance of large retail stores in a five point Likert scale. The range was 'not at all (1)' to 'very great extent' (5). The scores of not at all and small extent have been taken to represent a variable which had a mean score of 0 to 2.5 on the continuous Likert scale. The scores of 'moderate extent' have been taken to represent a variable with a mean score of 2.5 to 3.4 on the continuous Likert scale and the score of both great extent and very great extent have been taken to represent a variable which had a mean score of 3.5 to 5.0 on a continuous Likert scale. A standard deviation of >0.9 implies a significant difference on the impact of the variable among respondents.

Market Orientation

The respondents were requested to indicate the role played by market orientation on the competitiveness of the large retail stores. The results are presented in table 4.4.

Table 1: Market Orientation

Market orientation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The retail store continually monitor customers and competitors to find new ways to improve customer satisfaction	4.6364	.4923
The store freely communicate information about our successful and unsuccessful customer experiences with our staff	3.8182	1.1806
Marketing personnel in our business unit spend time discussing customers future needs with other functional departments	4.0909	.9211
The retail store strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of the customer's need	4.3636	.9021
The firm survey end-users at least once a year to assess the quality of our products and services	4.2273	.8125
The store is more customers focused than our competitors	3.9545	1.2527
The retail store business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction	4.2943	1.0319
The retail store have regular measures of customer service	4.1174	1.0690
In this business, data about customer satisfaction is disseminated at all levels on a regular basis	4.1385	1.0690
The retail store periodically review the likely effect of changes in our business environment (e.g. regulation) on customers	4.2727	.9847
Data on customer satisfaction are disseminated at all levels in this business unit on a regular basis	4.0642	.8679

The results indicate that the respondents were in agreement on all the factors to a great extent. They were in agreement that the retail stores continually monitor customers and competitors to find new ways to improve customer satisfaction with a mean score of 4.63. They further indicated that the retail store strategy for competitive advantage is based on the customer's need (mean = 4.36); business objectives being driven primarily by customer satisfaction (mean = 4.2943); periodic review of the likely effect of changes in business environment on customers (mean = 4.2727); survey of end-users to assess the quality of store products (mean = 4.2273) and that that the data about customer satisfaction is disseminated at all levels on a regular basis (mean = 4.1385).

The study further established that the retail store have regular measures of customer service (mean = 4.1174); marketing personnel spend time discussing customers future needs with other functional departments (mean = 4.0909); dissemination of data on customer satisfaction at all levels in this business unit on a regular basis (mean = 4.0642); focusing more on customers than competitors (mean = 3.9545) and freely communication of information about successful and unsuccessful customer experiences with the staff (mean = 3.8182). From the results, it can be concluded that market orientation enables the retail stores to focus on ensuring that the customers are satisfied through review of business strategy, competitor analysis, customer future needs discussion, dissemination of data on customer satisfaction at all levels.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The respondents were requested to indicate the entrepreneurial decisions that have been made by the retail store in order to achieve competitive advantage over its competitors.

Table 2: Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurial Orientation	Mean	Std. Deviation
The retail store have launched many new products/services on the market in the recent past	4.4545	.9116
The changes introduced in the retail store product/services are usually important	3.9545	1.1329
The retail store usually beat our competitors in developing innovative actions	3.7727	1.1097
The retail store usually adopt an aggressive attitude towards our competitors	4.3182	1.0413
The retail store tend to carry out risky projects when they involve profitable opportunities	3.5909	1.1405
When uncertainty is high, we adopt a brave and aggressive attitude to exploit possible opportunities	4.2727	.9847
The retail firm periodically review our product development effort to ensure that they are in line with what customers want	4.1818	.9069

The results in table 2 indicate that the large retail stores have used entrepreneurial orientation in order to ensure that they compete effectively with other retail stores. The use of entrepreneurial orientation was achieved through launching many new products in the market in the recent past (mean = 4.4545); adopting an aggressive attitude towards our competitors (mean = 4.3182); adopting a brave and aggressive attitude to exploit possible opportunities (4.2727); periodically reviewing product development effort to ensure that they are in line with what customers want (mean = 4.818); introducing changes in the retail store products (mean = 3.9545); developing innovative actions (3.7727) and carrying out risky projects when they involve profitable opportunities (mean = 3.5909). From the results, it can be concluded that the retail stores aggressiveness has enabled them to launch new products, exploiting opportunities that come their way, developing innovative actions and taking risks.

Performance Measures

The respondents were requested to indicate the effect of strategic orientation on performance of the retail stores. This was important for the study in order to determine whether strategic orientation has an effect on the performance of the stores.

Table 3: Performance Measures

Performance measures	Mean	Std. Deviation
Increase in market share	4.5909	.9081
Increase the profits of the outlet	4.3182	.8930
Increased company sales volume	4.4091	.9512
Increased customer satisfaction	4.2273	1.0660
Efficiency in serving customers	4.5000	.6725
Enhanced organization relationship with its customers	4.5455	.7385

The results indicate that strategic orientation affects the performance of large retail stores as it increases market share (mean 4.5909); enhance organization relationship with its customers (mean = 4.5455); efficiency in serving customers (mean 4.50); increase sales volume (mean = 4.4091); increase profits of the store (mean = 4.3182) and that it increases customer satisfaction (mean 4.2273). From the results, strategic orientation influence performance of the large retail stores as it increases market share, relationship with customers, efficiency in serving customers, sales volume, profits and customer satisfaction.

Relationship between Strategic Orientation and Performance

The relationship between strategic orientation (market, entrepreneurial) on large retail stores performance was tested by using linear regression analysis, based on the regression model presented. The following show the model summary, ANOVA and coefficients of regression.

Table 4: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.908[a]	.825	.783	.65323
a. Predictors: (Constant), market, entrepreneurial				

The three independent variables that were studied, explain only 78.3% of the performance of large retail stores as represented by the R squared. This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 21.2% of the performance of large retail stores. R is the correlation coefficient which shows the relationship between the study variables, from the findings shown in the table above there was a strong positive relationship between the study variables as shown by .908.

Table 5: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.534	3	1.267	54.455	.024[a]
	Residual	9.307	18	2.327		
	Total	11.841	21			

The significance value is .024 which is less that 0.05 thus the model is statistically significance in predicting how market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and interaction orientation affect the performance of large retail stores. The F critical at 5% level of significance was 3.23. Since F calculated is greater than the F critical (value = 54.455), this shows that the overall model was significant.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.121	1.223		2.917	.0367
Market orientation	.210	.104	.157	3.081	.0188
Entrepreneurial orientation	.180	.145	.087	2.578	.0267
a. Dependent Variable: employees					

From the data, the generated table was

$Y= 1.121+ 0.210\ X_1+ 0.180X_2$

According to the regression equation established, taking all the three strategic orientation constructs into account constant at zero, performance of large retail stores will be 1.121. The data findings analyzed also shows that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in market orientation will lead to a 0.210 increase in performance of large retail stores and a unit increase in entrepreneurial will lead to a 0.180 increase in performance of large retail stores. This infers that interaction orientation contribute more to the performance of large retail stores followed by market orientation then entrepreneurial orientation.
At 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence, market orientation showed a 0.0188 level of significant and entrepreneurial orientation showed a 0.0267 level of significant hence the most significant factor is interaction orientation. The t critical at 5% level of significance at k = 3 degrees of freedom is 2.245. Since all t calculated values were above 2.245 then all the variables were significant in explaining the performance.

Conclusion

Today's consumers are highly knowledgeable and demanding. For the large retail stores to succeed in the competitive environment, they have to be responsive to the needs and wants of their target customers better than competitors. This call for retail stores to be market, entrepreneurial and interactive oriented. The study concludes that strategic orientation influence the performance of the large retail stores positively as it result in increased market share, relationship with customers, efficiency in serving customers, sales volume, profits and customer satisfaction. The level of adoption of each of the three components of market-orientation positively influences the level of large retail stores performance

Recommendations

The study found out that market orientation influences company operations and it is recommended that it is important for the companies to develop and sustain a market-oriented organizational culture. In addition to directly affecting firm performance, a strong market orientation contributes to both incremental and radical innovation, helping to balance the firm's portfolio of offerings and achieve continuous success while reducing risk. A strong market orientation may also influence the decisions of new product development teams and other organizational gatekeepers that are critical to the success of radical innovations.

The study found out that entrepreneurial orientation was the most significant dimension of strategic orientation. This finding could provide a roadmap for the order in which strategic orientations need to be applied in any firm. For large retail stores, entrepreneurial orientation can play a major role in determining the survival and success of the firms. After entrepreneurial orientation is established, firms need to understand and establish market orientation to adopt the best marketing techniques that are able to counter challenges of changing customer preferences and product offerings from competitors.

Suggestion for further research

The study was undertaken on the effect of strategic orientation on performance of large retail stores. Future research in this area should consider a longitudinal study where firms are asked to operationalize certain orientations over a period of time and then the firm performance is measured before and after such a trial period. Such a longitudinal study with diachronic measurement of firm performance will provide more objective as well as substantive data about the actual effect of specific strategic orientations.

Future studies should also consider the effect of interaction orientation on innovation success. Even if interaction orientation does not directly deliver superior firm performance, it may still lead to innovation success in terms of improved customer and service value. It can also be asked how this result of innovation success from interaction orientation fails to translate itself into the final result of firm performance and actions may be proposed to remedy this.

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