MARKETING STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE OF DAIRY FIRMS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

A constant decline in the consumption of processed milk products, a failure to create and carry out sustainable marketing strategies, and poor service delivery had accelerated the poor performance of milk processing firms in Kiambu. The dairy industry's performance in 2019 reportedly declined by 6.7%. Despite the fact that production costs were growing, market prices were relatively modest and stable, which reduced profit margins. Farmers' milk supplies and market trends had also resulted in unequal profitability trends, posing financial issues for dairy companies. This had resulted in financial distress for a number of dairy operations for many dairy farmers in terms of milk prices, credit payment periods, and also returns at the end of the year. The general objective of this study was to investigate the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study objectives assessed the effect of product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy, and price strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study was guided by Resource Based View Theory, Innovation Diffusion Theory, and Balanced Scorecard Theory. The investigation adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study population was 26 dairy firms in Kiambu County. The study targeted managers, assistant managers, and marketing managers of the dairy firms, forming 78 respondents. The study employed a census method for sampling. Questionnaires were used to gather the data. The validity was accessed using the construct validity method. The Cronbach's alpha with a coefficient of 0.7 was used for reliability. A total of 10% of the population targeted was purposefully chosen for the pilot study. Version 26 of the Statistical Package for Social Science was used to conduct both descriptive and inferential analyses of the data that had been collected. While inferential statistics utilized regression models, correlations, and analysis of variance, descriptive statistics used the mean, standard deviation, and frequency. In order to present the studied data, bar graphs, pie charts, and frequency tables were used. The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.765 indicates a strong positive relationship between these marketing strategies and firm performance. This suggests that as dairy firms enhance their marketing strategies, their overall performance tends to improve significantly. The R Square value of 0.585 means that approximately 58.5% of the variance in the performance of dairy firms can be explained by the combined effect of the marketing strategies under study. The regression analysis show that there exists relationship between various marketing strategies specifically product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy, and price strategy and their impact on the performance of dairy firms since the P-value was 0.001. The study concludes that marketing strategies significantly impact the performance of dairy firms. The dairy firms that prioritize product innovation, quality enhancement, and diversification are better positioned to succeed in a competitive market. Through offering products that meet consumer needs and preferences, these firms build stronger brand loyalty and achieve sustainable growth. The study recommends that managers of dairy firms, especially the marketing manager should conduct regular market research to understand consumer preferences, investing in digital marketing channels to reach a wider audience, and adopting innovative techniques to differentiate the brand from competitors. The county and national government through the ministry of agriculture should support the dairy firms by creating policies that promote effective marketing strategies that have long-lasting benefits. Providing resources for training programs on marketing skills, facilitating partnerships between dairy firms and research institutions for market analysis, and offering incentives for sustainable marketing practices which strengthen the sector.

Keywords: Position Strategy, Price Strategy, Product Strategy, Promotion Strategy, Performance and Marketing Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The way a company integrates different production and market strategies to meet its financial responsibilities is shown by the organizational performance factor. The strategic choices made to direct the production and distribution of services or products to generate money are one of the key variables defining how organizations can attain growth (Kumar, 2018). A strategic plan prescribes a list of options to achieve its mission, vision, and organizational or firm objectives. These basic tenets form a basis through which the achievement of the organization and company can attain in the short and long term. A study by Okwiri (2020) on the future of dairy farming in Kenya warned that the quality of dairy products in Kenya will continue to deteriorate unless local companies adopt modern processing strategies in order to be competitive in the international market. A study by Kimeu (2023) on the difficulties facing the Kenyan dairy sector highlighted that many dairy companies continue to face challenges from international competitors due to poor processing and packaging methods. Every organization depends on its surroundings, and the approach an organization uses to interact with its surroundings is what connects it to it. A company's ability to compete in the dynamic, complex, and unpredictable environment depends on the success of the strategy it develops for each of its many functions. The success of dairy farms varies greatly based on their size, turnover, volume, market share, and profits. Given that 70% of Kenya's milk is marketable, 56% of it is sold in informal marketplaces (Mbaya, Maina & Namusonga, 2021). It's estimated that large dairy corporations account for 85% of milk sold through authorized channels. The performance of the small dairy farms that may reach these marketplaces is therefore constrained by their limited availability.
In India, Mdoe and Mlay (2022) stated that a variety of factors can contribute to the partial or total collapse of dairy forms, including a lack of careful planning and an inability to develop effective marketing strategies to counter competition. A suitable strategy is required for the successful supply of new products into the market. A marketing plan plays a critical role in acquiring market share and achieving long-term success for most firms. As a result, marketing strategies assist organizations to achieve a better situation or status than they had before to implementing the strategy.

The actual output or achievements of an organization measured against its intended aims and objectives is known as organizational performance (Kawira, 2021). Stated differently, an organization's effectiveness can be evaluated based on its achieves its objectives. It is critical for an organization's owners or management to understand its performance rate in order to determine what adjustments may be implemented. Perera and Jayasuriya (2014) suggest that without knowledge of performance, leaders will be unable to determine when specific adjustments are required in the firm. In this research, organizational performance was examined in terms of Market share growth and Revenue share. Market share growth is the gradual increase in a company's share of overall sales or revenue within a certain market. It is a critical performance metric that shows how well a business attracts clients and outperforms rivals in its sector. Any competing brand's ultimate goal is to increase its market share. Every company puts a lot of effort into growing and defending its market share. Offering excellent goods and services at affordable costs is one way to do this (Reibstein et al. 2019). Market share is a measure of a company's performance in relation to its rivals. This metric reflects variations in revenue from sales.

Marketing strategies are a management strategy utilized to support the development of more superior products in response to consumer demand and the acquisition of potential market shares from rivals, hence enhancing the performance of networks involved in the manufacturing of dairy products (Martinez, 2014). A sound analysis of the business environment is the initial phase of creating a marketing strategy that is competitive, which should also involve a thorough awareness of the environment's strategic constraints. As it generally takes the competitiveness of the market into account, Grant (2012) advises that it is substantially required to strive to grasp many components of the external business environment, which includes cultural, economic, technological, political, and legal issues.

Various marketing strategies are utilized by the organization to enhance performance. These include; pricing strategy, products strategy, promotion and position strategy (Melese and Wondimkun, 2022). Any organization's operations depend on product-related marketing strategies, which take into account product strategy, the usage of technology during product development, and the choice of distribution channels. Meanwhile, the product includes the services and benefits it provides, it is regarded as much more than just a commodity that is sold (Amstrong & Philip, 2005). The goods and services supplied for sale or consumption that cater to the demands and preferences of the consumer are included in the product strategy. Packaging, labeling, branding, and product qualities (such as quality, design, style, and functionality) are just a few of the many components that make up product strategy. According to Rapert et al. (1996) price is the value of products or services that consumers are prepared to pay for their use. The choice of product, target market, and distribution will all have an impact on how price is used in its marketing strategy (Kienzler & Kowalkowski, 2017). When it comes to pricing, an organization's price strategy is seen as a methodical decision-making process in this regard (Ali & Anwar, 2021).

The dairy business in Kenya is active, and it plays a significant on many people's lives, including those of farmers, milk vendors, processors, and consumers, both economically and nutritionally. Kenya has one of Sub-Saharan Africa's largest dairy sectors. Dairy producers in the country have a wonderful potential to make a living while providing quality and secure milk to the industry from a dairy cow population estimated to be around 4 million (Macmillan, 2020).

Currently, with an expected growth rate of 7%, Kenya boasts one of the most developed dairy subsectors in Sub-Saharan Africa. With 5.2 billion liters produced year, Kenya is Africa's third-largest milk producer, after only Ethiopia and Sudan. With 120 liters consumed per person, Kenyans consume more milk than the continent's average of 50 liters, but far short of the globally recommended 250 liters (Rademaker, 2016). Rising earnings, population expansion, and urbanization are driving demand for dairy products in Kenya, as they do in other emerging countries. It is anticipated that consumer demand for safe and high-quality milk products will rise along with regional integration, cross-border trade, consumption diversification (including yoghurt and cheese), and industrial customers' adoption of the product in baking, confectionery, and fast food (Kimiti, Muathe & Murigi, 2020).

The milk sector generated approximately 500,000 direct jobs and 750,000 more employments in associated ancillary services (Mwangi & Gakobo, 2018). Because of its significance, the industry has received several reforms and legislative support, including zero-rating of milk processing inputs and tax advantages for new investments. Because the industry is exceedingly competitive, organizations must implement appropriate marketing techniques to improve performance (Kimiti, 2022). The European importation of items made from processed milk has exacerbated competition in the local market.

Statement of the Problem

Despite tremendous growth in the dairy industry, Kenya's market prices are relatively modest and stable despite the country's rapidly rising manufacturing costs, which reduces profit margins. The firms are hence not able to get the returns on their investments which is an indicator of poor performance. A constant decline in the consumption of processed milk products, inadequate service performance and a failure to create and carry out marketing plans has accelerated the poor performance of milk processing firms in Kiambu. There has been a reported 6.7% decline in the performance of the dairy industry in 2020 (KDB, 2020). Milk supplies by and market movements have additionally resulted in inconsistent profitability patterns, posing financial difficulties for the dairy firms. This has resulted to financial distress for a number of dairy operations to many dairy farmers in terms of the milk prices, credit payment periods and also returns at the end of the year. County (Onam, Omondi & Battenweck, 2019).

There is growing concern about whether the dairy firms can preserve and prolong their competitive advantage in the face of heavy competition from rivals without establishing alliances. Because of rivalry, as more cooperatives enter the same market and client consumption patterns change, many dairy cooperatives' market shares and sizes have decreased over time (Mathinji & Waithaka, 2019). Smallholder dairy farmers' milk production and revenue levels are determined by the functioning of the dairy cooperative organizations to which they belong.

Researches on marketing strategies show the importance of these strategies on the competitiveness of any company. For example, Banalieva and Dhanaraj (2013) conducted research on market expansion strategies and found that creating new goods and services, growing market bases, and attracting and retaining a specific customer niche were the three main ways to achieve market expansion. Aluoch (2014) conducted an investigation on the problems of implementing an expansion strategy at Hashi Energy Ltd-Kenya and discovered useful techniques for resolving the challenges encountered during the firm's worldwide growth activities. Among the internal components that appear to have gone unaddressed are the cooperatives' competitive tactics for dealing with the increased competition in recent years. Previous studies however did not focus on the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. A knowledge gap therefore existed and this study sought to bridge this gap.

Research Objectives

General objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Specific objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

a. To assess the effect of product strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
b. To determine the effect of promotion strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
c. To analyze the effect of position strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
d. To examine the effect of price strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Hypotheses

The study utilized null hypotheses;

i. H_{o1} There is no significant effect of product strategy on performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
i. H_{o2} There is no significant effect of promotion strategy on performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
ii. H_O3 There is no significant effect of position strategy on performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.
iii. H_O4 There is no significant effect of price strategy on performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Resource-Based View Theory

Birger Wernerfelt (1984) first introduced the hypothesis, while Jay B. Barney (1991) later developed it. According to the RBV hypothesis, a company's resources, or collections of resources, are what provide it a competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984). The resource-based view of an organization determines the firm's capacity to maintain competitiveness in a way that makes it challenging for competitors to replicate its performance (Putri & Yuniawan, 2016). This widens the gap with competitors in terms of competition. The idea holds that a firm needs resources that are rare, valuable, unique, non-tradable, non-substitutable, and firm-specific in order to stay competitive (Barney, 2013).

Companies gain a competitive advantage by utilizing unique resources that are unusual to the company and that cannot be simply transferred, purchased openly, or adopted. The notion further cautions businesses that not all resources may contribute to a competitive advantage and that management must carefully choose and capitalize on each one's individuality.

The presence of special resources within a company is a definite sign of future prospects for great performance. This does not imply that the company's position is assured indefinitely because newer technologies and market advancements continue to take place, necessitating the constant re-invention of the company's tactics. In order to endure market instability and overcome market problems, competitive advantage must be maintained and sustained. To do this, resources and processes must be continuously improved. As the company develops its distinctive resources, it must also enhance its capabilities because they are embedded resources that cannot be transferred to another organization.

RBV theory is of insights to the study as it assists to understand how resources related to product strategy could include research and development capabilities, product innovation teams, or exclusive supplier relationships. Examine whether certain resources are crucial for successful product strategies.

The Resource-Based View theory provide insights into why and how dairy firms make certain marketing decisions based on their unique resources and capabilities. RBV can help explain how dairy firms position themselves in the market. Whether they focus on being a premium brand with superior quality products or a cost-efficient option with widespread availability, their resource base will influence this decision. The capabilities of a dairy firm, such as efficient production processes, strong branding skills, and innovative product development, can influence their marketing strategies. For instance, if a dairy firm has the capability to quickly introduce new flavors or packaging, they can use this as a marketing tactic to attract customers looking for variety.

Innovation Diffusion Theory

E.M. Rogers created this theory in 1962. According to the theory, a new idea's likelihood to spread depends on four factors: the invention itself, communication pathways, the passage of time, and the social system. The theory aims to explain why a thing or a person might want to use new technology instead of old or as a supplement to old-fashioned activities. According to

Rogers (1962), there are important aspects, such as complexity, willingness to explore new things, relative advantage over others, and adaptability, that contribute to the adoption of technology. The capacity to create new goods, adjust to new procedures, and employ applications that suit the preferences and tastes of customers are all important factors in the adaptability and proliferation of new innovation in businesses. Organizations are now competitive in the market thanks to the use of new technology. With the help of new technology, businesses may expand their product ranges' depth and breadth, increasing variety and their ability to appeal to a wide range of clients with various tastes.

Ajayi and Atanda (2012) contend that dairy firms should carefully consider its decision to adopt a new technology and base it on the potential rewards. The organization's management should examine the costs associated with implementing the product, newer capabilities and skills, as well as the constraints that come with adopting new technology. Ajayi and Atanda (2012) added suggest that already adopting the technology, the company should think about how it would help with production of a range of products, higher volumes, and integration with existing technologies.

The Innovation Diffusion Theory into their marketing strategies can help dairy firms predict how consumers will respond to their new offerings and design targeted approaches to drive adoption. This theory provides a structured framework for understanding the dynamics of innovation adoption, enabling dairy firms to make informed decisions about product positioning, messaging, and communication channels. The theory highlights five characteristics of innovations: complexity, trialability, observability, relative advantage, and compatibility. Dairy firms can analyze these attributes to design marketing strategies that address potential barriers to adoption and enhance the attractiveness of their offerings.

Balanced Scorecard Theory

The Balanced Scorecard was developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton (1992). The BSC was unveiled as an integrated system that combined traditional financial performance metrics that looked backward and more forward-looking non-financial metrics that measured internal operations, customer satisfaction, learning, and growth. An organization's strategic goals are translated into a set of performance targets by the balanced scorecard, which are then monitored, assessed, and changed as necessary to ensure that the organization's objectives are met.

The theory revolves on four key performance indicators (learning and growth, internal processes, customer-related elements, and financial aspects (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). In their analysis, the proponents aimed to augment conventional financial measurements with forward-looking financial performance indicators. (Asiedu, 2015) concurred, saying that the instrument worked well for tracking and assessing performance metrics whose drivers were personnel, internal business, and customer value.
Financial Perspective: -This perspective concentrates on metrics of financial performance that show how well the business has done financially in reaching its goals. Profitability, cash flow, ROI, and sales growth are a few examples of important indicators. Customer Perspective: -

This method assesses an organization's performance by looking at it from the customers' point of view. It includes metrics for market share, acquisition, retention, and customer happiness. Organizations can increase long-term profitability and foster customer loyalty by comprehending and satisfying client wants. Internal Perspective: - This viewpoint concentrates on the internal operations and procedures that are essential to meeting financial targets and providing value to clients. It entails determining the most important processes, streamlining and streamlining them for maximum efficacy, and keeping an eye on performance metrics including productivity, quality, and cycle time. Learning and Growth Perspective: This viewpoint assesses how well an organization can innovate, develop, and adapt over time. It includes metrics for worker competencies, job satisfaction, and company culture.

The BSC theory makes use of a four-balanced perspective dimension because, according to Gawankar et al. (2015), organizations must consider all four perspectives simultaneously in order to improve inclusivity, as each perspective's unique contributions are essential to the overall sustainability of an institution. The idea enhances the alignment of non-financial and financial measurements by helping to realize and integrate the contributions of all pertinent organizational value drivers. The Balanced Scorecard is therefore significant to the study since it allows organizations to measure and track customer satisfaction and Market share growth. By focusing on customer satisfaction, a company is able to gauge how well it is meeting the needs and expectations of its customers, which is often a leading indicator of future financial success.

Empirical Literature Review

This section presents the previous similar studies on marketing strategies and performance of dairy firms from international, regional and local.

Product strategy and firm Performance

In Kosovo, an investigation by Pula, Qerimi and Qerimi (2022) on influence of strategic marketing on performance of the dairy industry. The investigation embraced descriptive as research design. Questionnaires were utilized in information gathering. Using multiple regression analysis, the interaction among the research variables was demonstrated. From the results, it was established product marking strategy statistically correlates with the performance of dairy industry since the value of $P<0.05$. However, this creates a study gap since the investigation was done in Kosovo although the present investigation will be done in Kenya.

A study in Indonesia on role of product strategy on marketing performance by Hendar, Zulfa, Ratnawati and Mulyana (2020). In this investigation, correlational research design was used. The research targeted 330 small fashion business. The data were gathered through questionnaires. The results demonstrate that product development and features have a major impact on marketing performance. Nevertheless, the current study concentrated on product features and development while an in-depth research can be done including other variables to enhance generalization of the findings.

Abdullah and Rosliyati (2020) conducted a study on value generation, competitive advantages, and product market strategy as a determining factor of marketing performance. The correlational research design was used. The hypothesis was tested using the verification analysis. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was the analytical tool utilized. Based on the stratified random sampling technique, 160 directors of BPR in West Java, Indonesia, made up the sample size. The results demonstrate how competitive advantage, value creation, and product market strategy all had a favorable impact on marketing performance.

In Nigeria, a study by Aworemi, Odeyemi and Oyedokun (2012) on the impact of United Bank of Africa's performance on the effectiveness of product marketing strategies. The study adopted descriptive research design. The published UBA brochure records in the chosen branches served as the source of the secondary data. The data produced from the published brochure was analyzed using regression analysis and table numerous presentations, utilizing both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that relationship amongst the product marketing strategy and the bank deposit profile showed a positive association with a Multiple R-value of 0.92. The study concludes that products marketing strategy boost the bank deposit profile. Contextually, the investigation was carried in banking status while the research will be conducted in dairy firms in Kenya.

In Kenya, a study by Muola (2017) effects of marketing tactics on Kenyan small- and medium-sized businesses' sales performance. The study used a descriptive research design. Managers of small and medium-sized businesses located in Nairobi's Central Business District were the study's target audience. Fifty small and medium business managers in the Nairobi CBD, or 10% of the population, who had been properly registered with the County Government, made up the study's sample. Using questionnaires, main data for this study was gathered. According to the study's aims, both open-ended and closed-ended surveys were included. The acquired data was subjected to descriptive statistics analysis. The findings of the study revealed that that SMEs can accomplish a variety of business objectives with the aid of a product development plan, including breaking into new markets, increasing sales to current clients, and outbidding rivals for business. In this context, the study was conducted among SMEs in Nairobi, whereas the present study would focus on dairy firms in Kiambu County.

Promotion Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

In Indonesia, a case on the role of competitive advantage in mediating the effect of promotional strategy on marketing performance by Yasa, Giantari, Setini and Rahmayanti (2020). Descriptive research design was employed in the study. The study used a sample size of 100 managers of SME. The study utilized questionnaires. The data collected were analyzed descriptively. The findings demonstrate that promotional strategy was very capable of enhancing competitive advantage and that it had a favorable and significant impact on it. Additionally, the attainment of marketing success is positively and significantly impacted by competitive advantage. This indicates that a stronger competitive advantage leads to better marketing performance and that the influence of promotional strategy on marketing performance was considerably mediated by the competitive advantage. Geographically, the new study will be undertaken in Kenya, whereas the previous study was conducted in Indonesia.

In Nigeria, Gbolagade Adewale and Oyewale (2013) conducted a study on the influence of marketing strategy on the performance of specific small and medium-sized businesses. This study employed the survey research design approach, which entails gathering information from 103 respondents via a self-designed questionnaire. The closed-ended questionnaire was employed in the process of gathering data. The statistical program for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 was utilized to examine the data using correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis. According to the findings, there was a substantial combined relationship between promotion and after-sale service and business performance in terms of profitability, market share, return on investment, and expansion ($R2 = 0.465$; $P<.05$. The study concludes that blend of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion affects the marketing performance of business. But the examination was conducted in Nigeria, whereas the present investigation would take place in Kenya to fill in the study gaps.

Pembi, Fudamu, and Adamu (2017) conducted study to investigate how sales promotion tactics affect the performance of Nigerian organizations. A descriptive research design was utilized. All employees of the Flour Mills of Nigeria branch in Maiduguri, Borno State, including upper, middle, and lower level management, made up the study's population. The research utilized a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods. Using random sample methods, questionnaires were given to twenty (20) employees. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like percentage analysis, and regression analysis was employed to evaluate hypotheses. The outcome shows that sales promotion tactics have a major and favorable impact on the performance of organizations. According to the study, a company's sales promotion campaign should always be planned, managed, directed, and regulated as doing so will enable them to implement promotional techniques that are both successful and efficient. In this context, the study on organizational performance was conducted in Nigeria, whereas the current study—which will focus on dairy firms would be conducted in Kenya.

In Kenya, a study by Justine (2019) on the association among promotional strategies and market performance of logistic companies in Kenya. Dalsey, Hillblom and Lynn (DHL) Supply Chain Limited conducted the study. The research design used in the study was descriptive. The study's target population consisted of 554 DHL Limited branch employees. The sample of 166 employees who received questionnaires was chosen using the stratified random sampling technique. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. From findings, it was seen that the firm's market success has been greatly impacted by the positive public relations that the client and the firm have built. It has been shown that implementing personal selling is crucial for boosting sales and market share, cutting expenses, and fostering strong client relationships. Conceptually, the study was done at logistic companies while the current research will be done at dairy firms.

Position Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

A study in United Kingdom by Kaleka and Morgan (2019) discuss how strategic intents in global markets are driven by marketing skills and present performance. The study embraced descriptive research design. Semi-structured interviews were utilized in data gathering. The statistics were analyzed descriptively. The findings of the investigation explained market position demonstrate the unmistakable impact of product development capability, present market performance, and informational capability on marketing distinctiveness and efficiency intents. The study was done United Kingdom which is an industrialized nation, whereas Kenya, a developing nation, will host the present study.

A study in Malaysia, the effects of market orientation and innovation on the competitive advantage and commercial performance of textile SMEs are examined by Udriyah, Tham, and Azam (2019). Descriptive research design was utilized in the research. The investigation targeted textile SMEs in Selangor from which 150 SME were randomly selected to form sample size. The questionnaires were utilized in data collection. The research is analyzed using SPSS 20.0's path analysis function. The outcome demonstrates that, at least in part, market orientation and innovation had favorable and noteworthy effects on competitive advantage. Of the competitive advantage, 46.3% is attributed to market orientation and innovation, and the remaining 54.7% is determined by other factors not covered in this study. Conceptually, the study was done and targeted textile SMEs while the current study will be done in dairy farming to fill the study gaps.

In South Korea, a study by Na, Kang and Jeong (2019) on the impact of market orientation on sharing economy company performance. Correlational design was utilized. There were 400 responders in the sample. Surveys were employed to gather data. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were performed on the gathered data. The study's conclusions showed that there was a substantial relationship between the market orientation of sharing economy businesses and customer orientation effect performance of the business. The research was completed in South Korea, but in order to close any research gaps, a new study will be carried out in Kenya.

In Nigeria, a study by Amin (2021) the impact of marketing tactics on small and medium enterprises' performance. A correlational research design was used in the study. From a population of 2825, which included all SMEs in Abuja that were registered with SMEDAN, a sample size of 339 was selected. The findings of the regression analysis were displayed in tables and figures. The results showed that position marketing strategy was the most often used and made the greatest contribution to the model. The study variables (market positioning and product positioning) showed a positive correlation, suggesting that the use of marketing tactics improved the performance of SMEs in Abuja. Methodologically, study utilized correlational design while the current study will employ a descriptive research.

In Kenya, an investigation by Ole Kulet, Wanyoike, and Koima (2019) about how organizational performance in the telecommunications business is affected by the optimal product strategic positioning. In this study, a descriptive survey research design was adopted. 6,149 front office staff members of Kenya's four largest telecom companies—Safaricom, Airtel, Equitel, and Orange—were the target population. 144 respondents were chosen at random from a cross-section of the workforce, with a focus on front desk staff because they handled day-to-day customer service. The data was obtained through the use of questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyze the survey results (SPSS). For data analysis and hypothesis testing, multiple regressions and Pearson correlation were employed. Through multiple regression analysis, the study determined that the optimal product strategic positioning had a significant coefficient (β=0.152, p value=0.031), suggesting a beneficial impact on organizational performance. While the current study will focus on dairy companies, the previous study was conducted in the telecommunications industry.

Price Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

In Nigeria, Pricing strategy was examined by Hyginus, Wabuji, and Christian (2019) as a determinant in consumable goods sales performance. The survey design method was used in this investigation. The thirty-two (32) employees of the six Wukari-based businesses that deal in consumable goods made up the study's population. The researcher utilized the full population as the sample size because the population of the enterprises is manageable. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study to analyze the data. The results showed that the pricing strategies of rivals affected the consumable goods sales performance. The study used a survey research methodology, however in order to close any research gaps, the present study will utilize a descriptive research design. In Ethiopia, a study by Melese and Wondimkun (2022) impact of marketing mix strategy on brewery facilities' sales results. The research employed a quantitative survey methodology. Two beer companies, Dashen and Habesha Beer, had 232 randomly selected employees get the surveys in total; 220 of the valid questions were used for study. The results of the correlation and regression study showed that the distribution, price, promotion, and product mix strategies have a significant and beneficial impact on the sales performance of Ethiopian beer industry enterprises. However, the current study utilized correlation and regression to analysis the data whereas the descriptive design will utilize in this study.

In Uganda, an investigation into pricing tactics and financial performance conducted in 2019 by Nafuna, Ayub, Sulait, Watundu, Tirisa, and Nakol. Private primary schools were the study's setting. The 184 private primary school projects in Kampala district's Rubaga Division, Urban Council, constituted the study population in 2017. The research design used in the study was cross-sectional, descriptive, and analytical. The correlation coefficient ($r = .554$, $p < .05$) demonstrated a considerable perfect positive association between price strategy and financial performance, according to the correlation research findings. The financial success of private primary schools in the context of Ugandan businesses was inferred to be positively influenced by price strategy, with its dimensions including cost-based, competitive-based, and perceived value. Conceptually, the investigation was carried in Uganda focusing on private primary schools Although the current research will be conducted in Kenya focusing on dairy firms.
In Kenya, a study by Kawira (2021) pricing strategy's impact on micro, small, and medium-sized businesses' (MSMEs) performance. The survey design chosen was descriptive. In Tharaka-Nithi County, 8,526 MSMEs with licenses were part of the study population. The study sample of 368 MSMEs was obtained by using stratified sampling and random sampling approaches. Questionnaires were used to gather data by hand and delivery method. Both inferential and descriptive statistics were used to assess quantitative data. The outcomes additionally demonstrated that, as indicated by β=0.621, sig value =0.000, <0.05, an efficient pricing approach significantly improves the performance of MSMEs in Kenya. In this context,

the research encompassed micro, small, and medium-sized businesses, but the current study will involve dairy firms.

Conceptual Framework

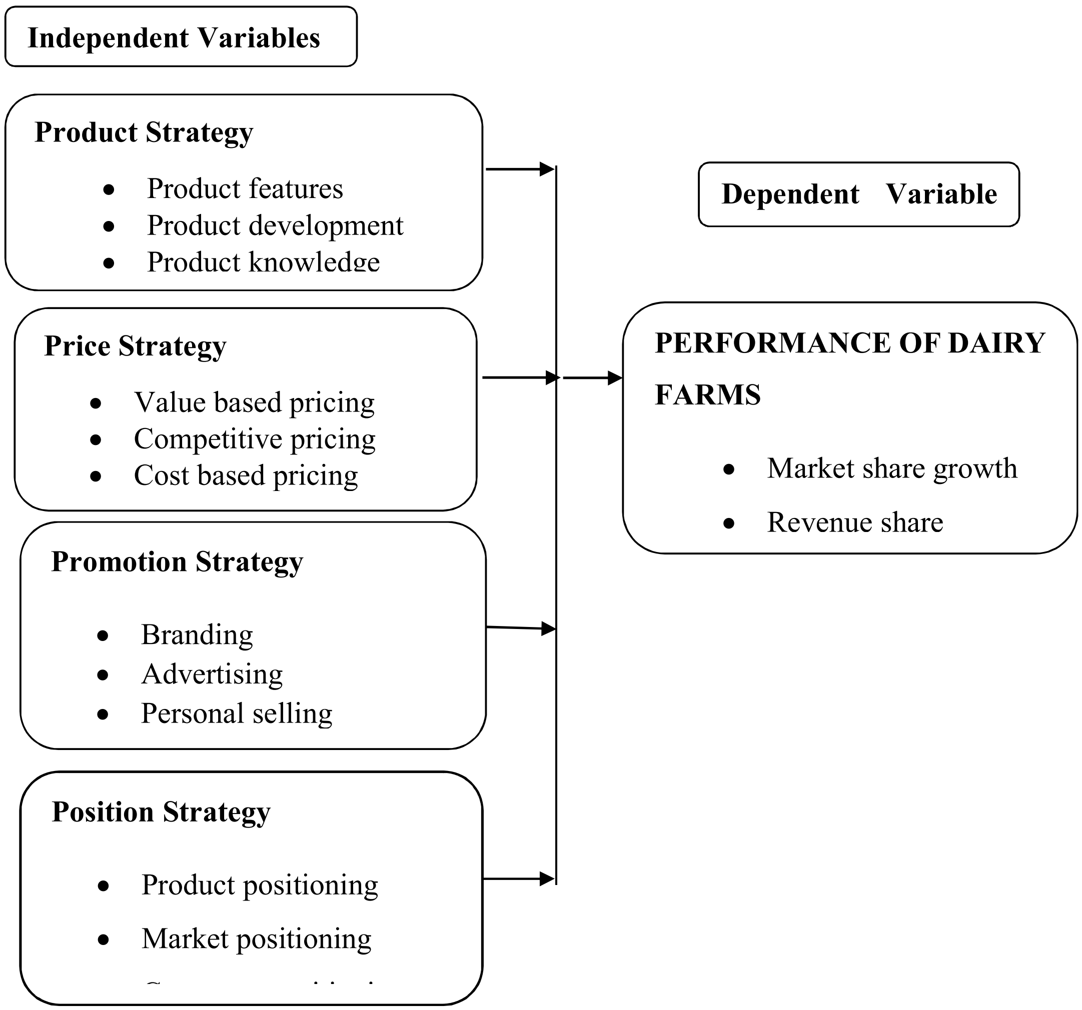

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The investigation adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study population was 26 dairy firms in Kiambu County. The study targeted managers, assistant managers, and marketing managers of the dairy firms, forming 78 respondents. The study employed a census method for sampling. Questionnaires were used to gather the data. The validity was accessed using the construct validity method. The Cronbach's alpha with a coefficient of 0.7 was used for reliability. A total of 10% of the population targeted was purposefully chosen for the pilot study. Version 26 of the Statistical Package for Social Science was used to conduct both descriptive and inferential analyses of the data that had been collected. While inferential statistics utilized regression models, correlations, and analysis of variance, descriptive statistics used the mean, standard deviation, and frequency. In order to present the studied data, bar graphs, pie charts, and frequency tables were used. Research ethics are emphasized because it involved interactions with people or confidential documents, so it was crucial to focus on appropriate behavior in these interactions. The researcher requested permission to collect data and obtained relevant documents by providing a cover letter from the University. Additionally, a research license from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) was required.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The researcher administered 78 questionnaires to the selected respondents. However, 72 questionnaires were dully filled and returned to the researcher. This gave a response rate of 92.3% which is deemed sufficient for the study. This correlates with Aguinis, Bergh and Molina-Azorin (2023) recommendation that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and over is excellent. This indicates that the response rate from this study was excellent. The findings are as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Response	72	92.3
Non Response	6	7.7
Total	**78**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2024)

Descriptive statistics

Product Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

The first objective of the study was to assess the effect of product strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the product strategy and how it affects the performance of dairy firms on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree). The results were presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics on Product Strategy

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
A well-defined product strategy positively impacts the market share of dairy firms.	31.9 %	47.6%	6.5%	7.8%	6.2%	3.64	0.752
Continuous adaptation and refinement of product strategies are essential for sustained success and growth in the dairy industry.	30.2%	42.9%	7.1%	13.5%	6.3%	3.61	0.783
Strategic product positioning is a key determinant of success for dairy firms in the competitive market.	29.7%	46.5%	8.3%	9.6%	5.9%	3.73	0.791
Aligning product strategies with consumer preferences and trends is crucial for the success of dairy firms.	31.5%	44.1%	6.8%	9.1%	8.5%	3.74	0.786
Adopting innovative product strategies enhances the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market.	33.4%	45.8%	9.3%	7.8%	3.7%	3.80	0.795

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.2 highlight the critical role of product strategy in the performance of dairy firms. The mean scores, all above 3.5, indicate a general agreement among respondents that various aspects of product strategy are integral to the success and competitiveness of dairy firms. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that a well-defined product strategy positively impacts the market share of dairy firms, with a mean of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 0.752. This was back-up by a significant portion of respondents (31.9% strongly agree and 47.6% agree) recognize the importance of a clear product strategy in capturing market share. A well-defined product strategy helps dairy companies enhance brand reputation, attract loyal customers, and gain a competitive edge in the market, ultimately leading to increased market share and sustainable business success. This aligns with the work of Pula, Qerimi and Qerimi (2022), who argue that product strategy is fundamental in differentiating a firm's offerings and meeting customer needs effectively, which in turn boosts market share.

Continuous adaptation and refinement of product strategies are essential for sustained success and growth in the dairy industry, has a mean of 3.61 and a standard deviation of 0.783. The results indicate that 73.1% of respondents either strongly agree or agree with this statement. The dairy market is dynamic, with changing consumer preferences, technological advancements, regulatory requirements, and competitive pressures influencing product development and marketing strategies. This finding is consistent with the dynamic capabilities theory, which posits that firms must continuously adapt their strategies to changing market conditions to sustain competitive advantage (Abdullah & Rosliyati, 2020). The dairy industry, being highly competitive and subject to changing consumer preferences, necessitates continuous product innovation and adaptation.

Strategic product positioning is a key determinant of success for dairy firms in the competitive market received a mean score of 3.73 with a standard deviation of 0.791, reflecting strong agreement among respondents. Effective product positioning helps dairy firms differentiate themselves, attract target consumers, and communicate value in a crowded marketplace. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Hendar, Zulfa, Ratnawati and Mulyana (2020) who established that effective product positioning allows firms to establish a distinct place in the minds of consumers, which is crucial for success in a crowded market. This is particularly relevant in the dairy industry, where product differentiation can be challenging due to the commoditized nature of many dairy products.

Aligning product strategies with consumer preferences and trends is crucial for the success of dairy firms received a mean score of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 0.786. The high level of agreement (75.6% agree or strongly agree) underscores the importance of consumer-centric product strategies. Consumer preferences, tastes, and lifestyles play a significant role in shaping product demand and purchasing behaviour in the dairy market. Dairy companies must conduct market research, analyse consumer insights, and monitor industry trends to understand changing preferences and adapt their product strategies accordingly. This finding is supported by Aworemi, Odeyemi and Oyedokun (2012), who highlight the necessity of understanding and responding to consumer trends to maintain relevance and market share in a dynamic industry.

Adopting innovative product strategies enhances the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market garnered the highest mean score of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.795. This suggests that respondents perceive innovation as a critical factor in maintaining competitiveness. Adopting an innovative product strategy enables dairy companies to enhance their product portfolio, attract new customers, and strengthen their market position by offering differentiated, high-value products that set them apart from competitors. This is supported by Schumpeter's theory of innovation, which emphasizes the role of new product development and differentiation in driving competitive advantage (Hochuli, Hochuli & Schmid, 2021). In the dairy sector, firms that continuously innovate whether through new product lines, packaging, or marketing are better positioned to capture market share and respond to evolving consumer demands (Muola, 2017).

Promotion Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

The objective two was to determine the effect of promotion strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the promotion strategy and how it affects the performance of dairy firms on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The means and standard deviations were developed. The results were presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Promotion Strategy

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Promotion strategies enhance in creating awareness and driving consumer preference for dairy products.	23.5%	43.5%	12.8%	10.5%	9.7%	3.74	0.686
Innovative and creative promotion strategies enhance the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market	26.8%	41.6%	11.3%	9.6%	10.7%	3.72	0.694
The implementation of effective promotion strategies significantly contributes to the financial performance of dairy firms.	20.6%	48.6%	9.2%	13.7%	8.5%	3.76	0.732
Strategic promotion and advertising contribute significantly to the success of dairy firms in the competitive market.	23.4%	45.4%	12.5%	9.7%	9.0%	3.68	0.681
Effectiveness of promotion strategies in creating awareness and driving consumer preference for dairy products.	27.6%	46.3%	9.1%	8.3%	8.7%	3.75	0.694
Targeted and personalized promotion approaches are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy companies.	29.4%	43.8%	13.5%	8.4%	4.9%	3.86	0.752
A well-planned promotion strategy positively influences	25.6%	45.3%	9.5%	10.6%	9.0%	3.75	0.763

the reputation and brand image of dairy firms.							
Well-executed promotional activities positively impact the market share of dairy firms.	27.8%	47.6%	11.2%	7.5%	5.9%	3.69	0.749

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings in Table 4.3 offer valuable insights into how promotion strategies are perceived to impact the performance of dairy firms. The high mean scores across all statements reflect a consensus among respondents on the importance of promotion strategies in driving consumer awareness, preference, and overall firm performance. The findings show that majority of the respondents agreed that promotion strategies enhance in creating awareness and driving consumer preference for dairy products, having a mean score of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 0.686. With 67% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, this finding highlights the crucial role of promotional strategies in raising product awareness and influencing consumer preferences. Effective promotion strategies such as advertising, social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and in-store promotions help dairy firms reach their target audience, create visibility, and drive consumer interest in their products. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Amam, Jadmiko and Harsita (2020) who established that promotion is an essential component of the marketing mix that helps create brand awareness, inform potential customers, and persuade them to choose a particular product over competitors.

Innovative and creative promotion strategies enhance the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market garnered a mean score of 3.72 with a standard deviation of 0.694. The substantial agreement (68.4%) among respondents suggests that creativity in promotional activities is seen as a vital factor in maintaining a competitive edge. Embracing innovation and creativity in promotion strategies enables dairy firms to enhance brand visibility, attract new customers, and strengthen their market position by offering fresh, appealing, and relevant marketing initiatives that leave a lasting impression. This finding is consistent with the King'ori (2022) who highlighted the importance of innovation in promotional efforts to capture consumer attention and differentiate a brand in a crowded marketplace. Creative promotions like influencer partnerships, experiential marketing campaigns, social media contests, and interactive online platforms allow dairy firms to connect with their target audience in meaningful ways and build strong brand loyalty.

The implementation of effective promotion strategies significantly contributes to the financial performance of dairy firms, achieved a mean score of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.732. With nearly 70% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing, the data suggest a strong belief in the direct link between effective promotional efforts and improved financial outcomes. Well-executed promotion strategies that target the right audience, communicate clear value propositions, and drive purchase intent lead to increased sales volumes, market share gains, and enhanced brand profitability. This perspective is supported by Okwiri (2020) who demonstrated that well-executed promotion strategies lead to improved product visibility and demand generation for dairy firms. Through targeted advertising, promotions, discounts, and incentives, dairy firms create a buzz around their products, generate excitement among consumers, and stimulate purchase intent.

Strategic promotion and advertising contribute significantly to the success of dairy firms in the competitive market, respondents showed a mean score of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.681. The high level of agreement (68.8%) aligns with the notion that well-planned and executed promotional strategies are critical for business success in competitive industries like the dairy sector. Advertising campaigns, public relations initiatives, event sponsorships, and digital marketing efforts are key elements of strategic promotion that enable dairy firms to reach, influence, and persuade consumers effectively. The findings agree with the findings of a study by Mbaya, Maina and Namusonga (2021) who established that advertising is a key element of promotion, helps to communicate product value, build brand loyalty, and ultimately drive sales.

Effectiveness of promotion strategies in creating awareness and driving consumer preference for dairy products, scored a mean of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.694. This indicates that respondents recognize the effectiveness of promotional strategies in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences. The success of promotion strategies in the dairy industry is determined by their ability to generate awareness, influence consumer perceptions, and drive preference for dairy products. The results are supported by Justine (2019) who established that promotional activities, when aligned with consumer expectations, can significantly influence purchasing decisions and enhance brand loyalty.

Targeted and personalized promotion approaches are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy companies received the highest mean score of 3.86 and a standard deviation of 0.752. This reflects a strong agreement (73.2%) among respondents on the importance of personalized promotion strategies in enhancing performance. Targeted promotion approaches help dairy firms optimize marketing spend, enhance customer relationships, and improve overall performance metrics such as return on investment, customer acquisition costs, and brand perception. The findings are supported by Pembi, Fudamu and Adamu (2017) who established that personalized marketing, which tailors' messages and offers to individual consumers, has been shown to improve engagement, conversion rates, and customer satisfaction, leading to better business outcomes.

A well-planned promotion strategy positively influences the reputation and brand image of dairy firms, achieved a mean score of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.763. The data suggest that respondents believe in the power of strategic promotions to shape a firm's public image and reputation. The findings are consistent with the findings of a research by Gbolagade Adewale and Oyewale (2013) who established that a positive brand image, bolstered by effective promotional strategies, is critical for long-term success and customer loyalty in the dairy industry.

Well-executed promotional activities positively impact the market share of dairy firms, received a mean score of 3.69 with a standard deviation of 0.749. This indicates that respondents see a clear connection between effective promotions and market share expansion. Promotion is a powerful tool for shaping consumer perceptions, building brand credibility, and enhancing the overall reputation of dairy companies in the market. The results are supported by Yasa, Giantari, Setini and Rahmayanti (2020) who established that effective promotion helps firms communicate their value proposition, reach new customers, and retain existing ones, thereby increasing market share. Well-designed promotion strategies not only attract new customers but also create opportunities for upselling, cross-selling, and building long-term customer relationships. This, in turn, contributes to a healthier bottom line and overall financial success for dairy firms.

Position Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

The objective three was to analyse the effect of position strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the position strategy and how it affects the performance of dairy firms on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The means and standard deviations were developed. The results were presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics on Position Strategy

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Effective strategic positioning plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance metrics of dairy firms.	20.1 %	39.5%	16.4%	10.2%	13.8%	3.68	0.681
Strategic positioning and branding significantly contribute to the success of dairy firms in the competitive market.	22.4%	38.7%	15.3%	13.9%	9.7%	3.64	0.673
Innovative and well-defined positioning strategies contribute to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market.	23.8%	39.6%	14.5%	10.8%	11.3%	3.73	0.694
A well-executed positioning strategy positively influences the reputation and brand image of dairy firms.	25.6%	39.7%	12.3%	11.9%	10.5%	3.65	0.676

The effectiveness of positioning strategies in creating a distinct identity for dairy products influences consumer preference.	21.4%	37.4%	15.9%	14.3%	11.0%	3.61	0.667

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.4 highlight the perceptions of respondents regarding the significance of positioning strategies in the performance of dairy firms. The results show that majority of the respondents agreed that effective strategic positioning plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance metrics of dairy companies with a mean score of 3.68 and a standard deviation of 0.681. This indicates that a majority of respondents (59.6%) agree that effective positioning significantly impacts performance metrics. Strategic positioning helps companies align their products and messaging with the needs and preferences of consumers, enabling them to attract, retain, and engage customers effectively. This customer-centric approach not only drives sales and revenue growth but also improves brand loyalty, market share, and overall business performance for dairy firms. This finding aligns with Ole Kulet, Wanyoike, and Koima (2019), who assert that strategic positioning allows firms to differentiate themselves in the market, thereby enhancing their competitive edge and overall performance.
Strategic positioning and branding significantly contribute to the success of dairy firms in the competitive market, received a mean score of 3.64 with a standard deviation of 0.673. Here, 61.1% of respondents agreed, suggesting a recognition of the vital role that both positioning and branding play in achieving market success. A strong brand identity and positioning strategy help dairy companies establish a compelling narrative, create emotional connections with consumers, and build trust and credibility in the marketplace. According to Kaleka and Morgan (2019), strong branding and positioning not only help in creating a unique market presence but also in building customer loyalty, which is crucial in competitive industries like dairy.

Innovative and well-defined positioning strategies contribute to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market, garnered a mean score of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 0.694. The agreement among respondents (63.4%) underscores the importance of innovation in positioning strategies. Innovating in product development, packaging, pricing, promotion, and distribution allows dairy firms to stay relevant, capture new market opportunities, and adapt to changing consumer preferences. This is consistent with the views of Na, Kang and Jeong (2019), who argue that positioning is about occupying a distinct space in the consumer's mind, which can be effectively achieved through innovative strategies that resonate with target audiences.

A well-executed positioning strategy positively influences the reputation and brand image of dairy firms, the mean score is 3.65 with a standard deviation of 0.676, and 65.3% of respondents expressed agreement. This finding suggests that respondents believe that effective positioning is instrumental in shaping a positive brand image and reputation. Through consistently delivering on their brand promise, values, and quality standards, companies can

build a positive reputation and earn the trust and loyalty of consumers. Udriyah, Tham, and Azam (2019) emphasize that positioning strategies that align with consumer values and expectations can significantly enhance a brand's image, leading to long-term success.
The effectiveness of positioning strategies in creating a distinct identity for dairy products influences consumer preference, achieved a mean score of 3.61 with a standard deviation of 0.667. With 58.8% of respondents agreeing, the data indicates that distinct positioning is perceived to influence consumer preferences significantly. Consumer preferences are shaped by factors such as brand reputation, perceived value, quality, and emotional appeal, all of which are influenced by the positioning strategies employed by dairy firms. This supports the study of Amin (2021) who established that well-defined positioning helps in differentiating products in a crowded market, thereby swaying consumer preferences and driving sales.

Price Strategy and Performance of Dairy Firms

The fourth objective of the study was to examine the effect of price strategy on the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement about the price strategy and how it affects the performance of dairy firms on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The means and standard deviations were developed. The results were presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Descriptive Statistics on Price Strategy

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev
Effective price strategies play a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance metrics of dairy companies.	23.6 %	38.4%	11.9%	15.7%	10.4%	3.73	0.723
Strategic pricing approaches are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy companies.	26.7%	35.3%	14.3%	16.1%	7.6%	3.71	0.709
Continuous adaptation and refinement of pricing strategies are essential for sustained success and growth in the dairy industry.	22.8%	40.6%	13.5%	15.4%	7.7%	3.69	0.702
The effectiveness of pricing strategies in responding to market fluctuations influences	26.9%	42.8%	11.7%	14.1%	4.5%	3.79	0.714

consumer preference for dairy products.							
Offering competitive pricing contributes to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market.	20.2%	36.5%	16.7%	14.8%	11.8%	3.60	0.669
Aligning product prices with consumer affordability is crucial for the success of dairy companies.	24.3%	37.7%	14.5%	15.3%	8.2%	3.64	0.672

Source: Field Data (2024)

The results presented in Table 4.5 provide insights into the perceptions of respondents regarding the significance of price strategies in the performance of dairy companies. The data reflects a consensus among respondents on the importance of strategic pricing in enhancing the overall performance metrics and competitiveness of dairy firms. The findings show that majority of the respondents agreed that effective price strategies play a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance metrics of dairy companies with a mean score of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 0.723. This indicates that a majority of respondents (62%) agree on the importance of pricing strategies in improving performance metrics. Pricing is a key element of the marketing mix that directly impacts revenue, profitability, and market share. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Melese and Wondimkun (2022) who established that pricing is a critical component of the marketing mix that directly influences consumer perceptions, sales volume, and overall profitability. In the context of dairy firms, effective pricing strategies help the firms optimize their profit margins while remaining competitive in the market.

Strategic pricing approaches are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy companies, the mean score is 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.709. Here, 62% of respondents expressed agreement, highlighting the relevance of strategic pricing in performance improvement. Strategic pricing approaches consider factors such as product positioning, target market segments, pricing models, discounts, promotions, and pricing psychology to influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions. The results are supported by Nafuna et al. (2019) who emphasized that strategic pricing is not just about setting the right price, but also about understanding the market dynamics and consumer behaviour to maximize value. In a competitive industry like dairy, where price sensitivity is often high, strategic pricing can help firms balance between profitability and market share.

Continuous adaptation and refinement of pricing strategies are essential for sustained success and growth in the dairy industry, shows a mean score of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 0.702. With 63.4% of respondents in agreement, this finding underscores the importance of flexible and adaptive pricing strategies in responding to market changes. The dairy market is dynamic and highly competitive, with fluctuating input costs, changing consumer trends, and evolving regulatory requirements. Dairy companies must continuously evaluate and refine their pricing strategies to remain agile, responsive, and competitive in the market. According to Kawira (2021), adapting pricing strategies in response to market conditions, competitor actions, and consumer preferences is vital for maintaining a firm's market position and ensuring long-term growth.

The effectiveness of pricing strategies in responding to market fluctuations influences consumer preference for dairy products, garnered a mean score of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.714, with 69.7% of respondents agreeing. This suggests a strong belief that responsive pricing strategies are crucial for influencing consumer choices. Consumers are price-sensitive and often make purchase decisions based on the perceived value and affordability of products. Hyginus, Wabuji, and Christian (2019) support this by emphasizing that pricing strategies that are responsive to market fluctuations help the firms attract and retain customers, thereby enhancing their market share.

Offering competitive pricing contributes to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the market, had a mean score of 3.60 and a standard deviation of 0.669, with 56.7% of respondents agreeing. Dairy companies that offer competitive prices relative to the value delivered by their products can gain a competitive edge, attract price-sensitive consumers, and expand their customer base. Competitive pricing also helps dairy firms defend against price competition from rivals, maintain market share, and foster brand loyalty. Competitive pricing is critical in markets where consumers have multiple alternatives, as it can attract price-sensitive customers while maintaining profitability (Kelly, Shalloo, Wallace & Dillon, 2020).

Aligning product prices with consumer affordability is crucial for the success of dairy companies, received a mean score of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 0.672. The agreement among 62% of respondents highlights the importance of setting prices that align with the purchasing power of target customers. Price transparency, value for money, and pricing options that cater to different customer segments can enhance consumer trust, satisfaction, and loyalty. This is supported by Melese and Wondimkun (2022), who argue that pricing strategies must consider consumer affordability to ensure product accessibility and market penetration.

Performance of Dairy Firms

The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement level with each statement related to performance of dairy firms on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (moderate agree), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree). The means and standard deviations were developed. The results were presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Descriptive statistics on Performance of Dairy Firms

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.Dev

The marketing strategies employed by dairy firms significantly impact their overall financial performance.	24.8 %	43.5%	14.9%	12.3%	4.5%	3.76	0.724
The integration of digital marketing channels contributes to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the dairy industry	27.4%	41.6%	13.7%	14.5%	2.8%	3.67	0.703
Strategic marketing approaches, such as promotions and advertising, are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy firms.	22.3%	43.8%	16.4%	11.8%	5.7%	3.71	0.716
Aligning marketing strategies with the local culture and preferences is crucial for the success of dairy firms.	26.9%	42.3%	13.7%	12.1%	5.0%	3.69	0.709

Source: Field Data (2024)

The findings presented in Table 4.6 show that majority of the respondents agreed that marketing strategies employed by dairy firms significantly impact their overall financial performance with a mean score of 3.76 and a standard deviation of 0.724. With 68.3% of respondents agreeing, this underscores the critical role of marketing strategies in driving financial outcomes. Through strategic marketing planning, execution, and evaluation, dairy companies can enhance customer engagement, loyalty, and market competitiveness, ultimately leading to improved financial performance and sustainable business growth. The findings are supported by the findings of a study by Smith, Johnson and Williams (2023) who established that effective marketing strategies enhanced brand equity, customer loyalty, and sales, thereby improving financial performance. This is particularly important in the dairy industry, where competition is intense, and firms must differentiate themselves to maintain profitability.

The integration of digital marketing channels contributes to the competitiveness of dairy firms in the dairy industry, received a mean score of 3.67 with a standard deviation of 0.703. With 69% of respondents agreeing, this finding emphasizes the importance of digital marketing in enhancing competitiveness. Digital marketing also allows dairy firms to track marketing performance metrics, analyse consumer behaviour, and tailor marketing campaigns to specific target segments. The results concur with the findings of Mwangi and Gakobo (2018) who argued that marketing allows firms to reach a broader audience, engage with customers more effectively, and gather data to refine their strategies. For dairy firms, integrating digital channels such as social media, email marketing, and online advertising can significantly boost their market presence and attract tech-savvy consumers.

Strategic marketing approaches, such as promotions and advertising, are key in improving the overall performance metrics of dairy firms, the mean score is 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.716. Approximately 66.1% of respondents agree with this statement, indicating that traditional marketing approaches remain vital in the dairy sector. Dairy companies often use promotional tactics such as discounts, coupons, contests, product bundling, and loyalty programs to attract customers, drive sales volume, and increase market share. Advertising through various channels such as television, radio, print, and digital media helps dairy firms communicate product benefits, differentiate themselves from competitors, and build brand equity. The findings are consistent with the findings of Thomas, Martinez and White (2023) who established that promotions and advertising play a crucial role in creating brand awareness, influencing consumer perceptions, and driving sales. In the dairy industry, where product differentiation is often minimal, effective promotions and advertising can help firms stand out and capture market share.

Aligning marketing strategies with the local culture and preferences is crucial for the success of dairy firms, has a mean score of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 0.709. With 69.2% of respondents agreeing, this finding highlights the importance of cultural alignment in marketing strategies. Dairy companies that tailor their marketing strategies to resonate with local culture, traditions, and values can establish stronger connections with customers and drive brand loyalty. The findings agree with the findings of a study by Kawira (2021) who established that understanding and aligning with local culture is essential for marketing success, as it allows firms to connect with consumers on a deeper level and meet their unique needs. In the dairy industry, aligning product offerings and marketing messages with local tastes and preferences can enhance consumer acceptance and brand loyalty.

Inferential Analysis

The researcher did a regression analysis to establish the relationship between marketing strategies and the performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. The findings of Model Summary, ANOVA, and Regression coefficients are as shown in subsequent sections.

Model Summary

The findings of coefficient of correlation R and coefficient of adjusted determination R^2 is as shown in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 Model Summary Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.765	0.585	0.526	0.0165

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy and price strategy

b. Dependent Variable: Performance of dairy firms

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4.7 provides the finding on the relationship between marketing strategies specifically product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy, and price strategy and the performance of dairy firms. The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.765 indicates a strong positive relationship between these marketing strategies and firm performance. This suggests that as dairy firms enhance their marketing strategies, their overall performance tends to improve significantly. The R Square value of 0.585 means that approximately 58.5% of the variance in the performance of dairy firms can be explained by the combined effect of the marketing strategies under study. This is a substantial proportion, indicating that these strategies are critical drivers of performance. However, it also suggests that there are other factors not included in the model that account for the remaining 41.5% of the variation. These findings align with the findings of a study by Melese and Wondimkun (2022) who established that effective product strategies, which involve the development of high-quality products tailored to consumer needs, can significantly enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to better firm performance. Similarly, promotion strategies that effectively communicate the value proposition of the products can increase market visibility and consumer engagement, directly impacting sales and profitability. Positioning and pricing strategies also play pivotal roles. By clearly differentiating their products in the market and setting competitive prices, dairy firms attract and retain a broader customer base, which in turn drives performance metrics such as sales revenue and market share

ANOVA

An ANOVA was conducted at 95% level of significant, the findings of $F_{Calculated}$ and $F_{Critical}$ are as shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.2 ANOVA Results

Model	SS	df	MS	F	Significance
Regression	23.53	4	.184	13.6	0.001[a]
Residual	74.26	74	1.153		
Total	97.79	78			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy and price strategy

b. Dependent Variable: Performance of dairy firms

Source: Field Data (2024)

Table 4.8 presents the findings of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The P-value is 0.001 which is less than 0.05 hence the regression model is statistically significant. This means that the product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy and price strategy collectively have a significant effect on the performance of dairy firms. The F-value of 13.6 is well above the critical value typically required for statistical significance, which confirms that the model's predictors have a meaningful effect on the performance of dairy firms. The findings infer that integrated marketing strategies are crucial for firms to achieve competitive advantage and drive performance outcomes such as market share and profitability.

Regression Coefficients

In order to establish the individual influence of independent variables on dependent variables, the researcher conducted regression analysis. The findings are as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Regression Coefficients

Multiple Regression Analysis					
Variables	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	β	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	3.365	0.221		1.119	.003
Product strategy	0.284	0.0123	0.136	1.121	.002
Promotion strategy	0.271	0.0113	0.129	1.143	.005
Position strategy	0.256	0.0131	0.120	1.127	.002
Price strategy	0.267	0.0124	0.117	1.128	.001

Source: Field Data (2024)

The researcher conducted a multiple regression analysis in order to determine the relationship between marketing strategies and performance of dairy firms in Kiambu County, Kenya. As per the SPSS generated table, the equation ($\mathbf{Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon}$) becomes:

$\mathbf{Y = 3.365 + 0.284X_1 + 0.271X_2 + 0.256X_3 + 0.267X_3 + \varepsilon}$

Where Y = Performance of dairy firms

X_1 = Product strategy

X_2 = Promotion strategy

X_3 = Position strategy

X_4 = Price strategy

The regression analysis presented in Table 4.9 explores the relationship between various marketing strategies specifically product strategy, promotion strategy, position strategy, and price strategy and their impact on the performance of dairy firms. Starting with the constant term, which is statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.003$, with a coefficient of 3.365, indicates the baseline level of performance when all other predictors are zero. This suggests that even without explicit marketing efforts, dairy firms achieve a certain level of performance, potentially driven by other factors like operational efficiency or market stability.

Product strategy emerges as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.136$, $t = 1.121$, $p = 0.002$), indicating that for every unit increase in product strategy activities, dairy firm performance increases by 0.284 units, holding other factors constant. This emphasises the importance of product development, quality improvement, and innovation in enhancing overall firm performance within the dairy industry context.

Similarly, promotion strategy ($\beta = 0.129$, $t = 1.143$, $p = 0.005$) demonstrates a positive association with firm performance. A unit increase in promotional activities such as advertising, sales promotions, or public relations efforts is linked to a 0.271-unit increase in performance, suggesting that effective promotional campaigns can enhance brand visibility and market penetration.

Position strategy ($\beta = 0.120$, $t = 1.127$, $p = 0.002$) and price strategy ($\beta = 0.117$, $t = 1.128$, $p = 0.001$) also show statistically significant impacts on dairy firm performance. Positioning strategies that define how dairy products are perceived in the market, coupled with pricing strategies that optimize profitability without sacrificing market share, are crucial for sustaining competitive advantage.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study Findings

The findings from objective one show that product strategy significantly influences the performance of dairy firms. The regression analysis revealed a positive relationship, with a coefficient of 0.284, indicating that enhancements in product strategy lead to an improvement in firm performance. This shows that dairy firms that focus on product development, including innovations in product variety, quality improvements, and packaging, they are more likely to see better performance outcomes. This attributed to the increased customer satisfaction and brand loyalty that often accompany high-quality and diverse product offerings. In a competitive market, product differentiation becomes a key factor in attracting and retaining customers, ultimately driving sales and profitability.

The findings from objective two show that promotion strategy has a significant impact on the performance of dairy firms, with a coefficient of 0.271. The study infers that effective promotional activities, such as advertising, sales promotions, and public relations efforts, play a crucial role in enhancing a firm's market presence and customer engagement. Dairy firms that invest in targeted promotional campaigns are likely to experience increased brand awareness, which can translate into higher sales volumes and market share. This finding emphasizes the importance of consistent and strategic communication with the target audience, using various channels to highlight product benefits and foster brand recognition in a crowded marketplace.

The results from objective three show that position strategy have a substantial effect on the performance of dairy firms, as indicated by a coefficient of 0.256. This result emphasises the importance of how a dairy firm's products are perceived in the marketplace. A well-defined positioning strategy helps a firm establish a unique identity and competitive advantage, which can lead to stronger customer loyalty and a clearer brand image. Through effectively positioning their products to meet specific consumer needs and preferences, dairy firms differentiate themselves from competitors, thereby enhancing their performance. The positioning strategy adopted by dairy firms greatly influences consumer perception and competitive advantage.

The findings from fourth objective show that price strategy as another critical factor affecting the performance of dairy firms, with a coefficient of 0.267. This finding infers that pricing strategy influence consumer purchasing behaviour and overall profitability. A well-considered price strategy that balances competitiveness with profitability enables firms to attract price-sensitive consumers while maintaining healthy margins. The positive impact of price strategy on performance implies that firms that adopt flexible pricing models, such as promotional pricing or value-based pricing, are better positioned to respond to market demands and consumer expectations. This finding reinforces the importance of pricing as a dynamic tool that firms can use to optimize revenue and market positioning.

Conclusion

The study concludes that marketing strategies significantly impact the performance of dairy firms. The dairy firms that prioritize product innovation, quality enhancement, and diversification are better positioned to succeed in a competitive market. Through offering products that meet consumer needs and preferences, these firms build stronger brand loyalty and achieve sustainable growth.

The study established that dairy firms that effectively communicate their value propositions through targeted promotional activities enhanced their brand visibility and customer engagement. This increased market presence translates into higher sales volumes and improved profitability, demonstrating the importance of consistent and strategic marketing communications.

Strategic positioning is vital for dairy firms to differentiate themselves from competitors and establish a unique market position. Through clearly defining how their products are perceived in the market, dairy firms create a unique brand identity that resonates with consumers. This strategic positioning helps dairy firms differentiate themselves from competitors, leading to stronger customer loyalty and a more robust market position.
The price strategy was found to have a substantial effect on performance, emphasizing the need for dairy firms to carefully consider their pricing models. A well-balanced price strategy that aligns with consumer expectations and market conditions helped firms attract and retain customers while maintaining profitability.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made based on study findings:

i. The managers of dairy firms, especially the marketing manager should conduct regular market research to understand consumer preferences, investing in digital marketing channels to reach a wider audience, and adopting innovative techniques to differentiate the brand from competitors. Through analyzing key performance indicators and consumer feedback, managers will make informed decisions to optimize their marketing efforts and drive business growth.

ii. For county and national government through the ministry of agriculture should support the dairy firms by creating policies that promote effective marketing strategies that have long-lasting benefits. Providing resources for training programs on marketing skills, facilitating partnerships between dairy firms and research institutions for market analysis, and offering incentives for sustainable marketing practices which strengthen the sector.

iii. Stakeholders, including suppliers, distributors, and industry associations should work together in transparent way in building strategic partnerships, and sharing best practices that support dairy firms in expanding market reach and increasing competitiveness. These collaborative efforts promote the value of dairy products, address market challenges, and advocate for favorable policies that benefit the entire industry ecosystem.

iv. Policy makers at the national level have the opportunity to shape the regulatory framework to incentivize dairy firms to invest in effective marketing strategies. They should establish guidelines that encourage ethical marketing practices, ensuring fair competition in the market, and providing access to financial resources for marketing initiatives. Moreover, aligning marketing policies with broader agricultural and economic development goals may create a conducive environment for dairy firms to succeed and contribute to food security and rural livelihoods.

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