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Abstract

Market development has been recognized as one of the strategies that improve sales performance of organizational products for decades. However, empirical research on the role of market development on improved sales performance of agricultural-based products is scanty. This study sought to investigate the relationship between market development and sales performance of agro-based dealers in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Ansoff matrix model and the push and pull theory. A descriptive research design was adopted and data was collected from 88 agro dealers in Nairobi City County using a closed-ended questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Reliability and validity were determined using Cronbach's alpha value and expert opinion respectively. The results from multiple linear regression analysis revealed that marketing development ($p=0.00$; $p<0.05$) has a significant relationship with sales performance of the agro-dealers in Nairobi City County. Based on these findings, it was concluded that agro-based companies have the potential to enhance their performance in their markets through deliberate implementation of market development. This study recommends that agro-dealer firm managers should embrace market development as a strategy to increase their sales performance.

Keywords: *Market Development, Sales Performance, Agro-Based Dealers & Kenya*.

1.1 Introduction

Sales performance has remained the critical aspect of consideration in modern-day profit-oriented organizations (Adu-Darko & Bruce-Twum, 2014; Blumberg & Perrone, 2011). Companies continue to adopt various strategies to achieve increase sales performance (Ebarefimia, 2014; Jaakkola, 2011; Kariuki, Iravo & Kihoro, 2012). However, research investigating the effect of marketing strategies on sales performance of agro-based dealers in developing world cities such as Nairobi City County is still inadequate. The importance of agricultural sectors in both developing and developed nations has been increasing particularly in the 21st century. Due to this, pressures for more effective strategies of marketing and managing marketing markets have continued to increase. Consistent to this assertion, Horsky and Nelson (2013) view that the key to frontline sales performance is the extent to which marketing strategies adopted by an agro-dealer are effective. Thus, the critical focus of agro-dealers is to adopt marketing strategies that exhibit consistency with the demands and dynamics of the market while ensuring that profit prospects are not compromised.

Ogutu and Mbula (2012) observe that the agro-dealer sector has demonstrated significant growth over the past few years. The sector has been instrumental in creating opportunities for profits especially for major participants. However, increased competition caused by the sector's perceived profitability has continued to threaten its attractiveness while reducing agro dealers' performance. The cutthroat competition characterizing the agro dealer market has forced agro-dealers in Nairobi County to rethink their marketing strategies. The new strategies being created are meant to assure improved sales performance in the face of market dynamics and complexities. The aim of the dealers is to compete effectively with the aim of outperforming their rivals in such a dynamic business environment. Murage (2011) recommends that the only way they can accomplish this is by identifying and adopting suitable marketing strategies that create and add value to customers.

One of the survival tactics that agro-dealers use is adoption of what they believe is the most effective marketing strategies. According to Kotler (2005), marketing strategies provide agro dealer organizations with the direct way through which they can reach target markets. Based on the definition by Silva (2014), a marketing strategy fundamentally focuses on increasing sales and achieving the desired sustainable competitive advantage. The types of marketing strategies that can be adopted include market strategies (market penetration strategy and market development strategy) and product strategies (product development and product diversification strategy). However, this study concentrates only on market development strategy.

Market development strategy is based on identification and development of new market segments for existing or current products. The target for this strategy is the non-buying customers in the markets that fall under the current target. Moreover, market development strategy targets new customers in new market segments. According to Weifels (2012), this strategy seeks to expand the potential market by introducing new users and/or new uses. When implemented well, the strategy seeks to create new people interested in the use of the product as well as new ways through which a given current product can be used. New users come from a variety of market segments including geographic, demographic, institutional and psychographic. Succeeding in the implementation of market development strategy is founded on carrying out proper research on the current customers, customers of the competitors, customers in the current market segments who are non-buying, and new segments of the market (Weifels, 2012). The starting point of implementing the market development strategy is the target customer because he or she influences all subsequent elements of the strategy statement.

Nairobi County is surrounded by several agricultural counties such as Kiambu, Kajiado and Murang'a. To serve the agricultural establishments in these counties by agricultural inputs, there are several agro-dealers in Nairobi County. The role of these dealers is to channel farm inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and knowledge about safe and efficient use of farm inputs to smallholder farmers. Agro-dealer are usually trainer and certified stockists. Based on the survey carried out by CNFA in the 85 districts where KASP has operations, a total of 5,156 agro dealers locally registered with the Kenyan affiliate, AGMARK, were identified. These represents 52% of the estimated 10,000 agro-dealers registered in Kenya. CNFA (2015) identified a total of 1,976 agro dealers certified through a six-module business management training program. The program involved sessions that could help organizations to achieve effective working capital management, control stocks, perform costing and pricing accurately, expand selling and marketing, do record keeping, and manage business relationships.

1.2 Problem Statement

The agro-dealers in Nairobi County are facing widespread challenges including fluctuating demand, stiff competition, and standardization of goods and services by the government. Sustaining their businesses requires agro-dealers to respond strategically to these challenges. Ondicho (2010) further insists the necessity of maintaining the highest standard in the key areas of their operation that translate into customer satisfaction and convenience. Remaining competitive and relevant could require agro-dealers in Nairobi identifying market strategies that enable them to remain at the top. Regardless of their endeavors to identify and adopt marketing strategies that promise them success, agro-dealers in Nairobi have continued to struggle with poor sales performance that are mostly seasonal. The survey carried out by Agri Experience in 2019 revealed that in Africa, the agro-dealers' proportion of seeds sales is 34%. The government has an equal share of 34%, NGOs 19% and other remaining organizations take the 14%. Increasing these sales percentages has remained a nightmare among majority of agro-dealers in Nairobi. Additionally, empirical scrutiny of previous studies' outcome on marketing strategies and sales performance has been inconclusive (Njoroge, 2015; Mwiti, 2011; Njeru, 2013) and exhibit gaps that necessitate further empirical inquiry.

1.3 Aim of the study

The study aimed to investigate the effect of market development strategy on the sales of performance of agro-based dealers in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the study

i. To analyze ways through which agro-dealers in Nairobi City County are applying the market development strategy.
ii. To find out the relationship between market development strategy and sales performance of agro-dealers in Nairobi City County.

1.5 Significance

Findings from this study informs policy formulators in the government and Ministry of Agriculture to develop positive fiscal policies that exhibit relevance and sensitivity to the forces that affect the penetration of agro-dealers in the Kenyan market. Second, findings from the study are beneficial to the firms dealing in the agro sector. the results provides, agro-dealer with accessibility to extensive information that enabled them to understand how to use market development to improve their sales performance in both local and international markets. Third, the study is beneficial to the scholars and academicians. This study sought to set a background for future researchers interested in exploring how marketing strategies are related to sales performance.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review:

2.1.1 The Ansoff Matrix Model

The Asoff Matrix model was developed by Igo Ansoff in 1957 (Schawel & Billing, 2018). The model provides a simple tool that organizations use to think about the risks of growth in a quick and simple way. The model is constructed in the form of a matrix that shows four strategies that a company can use to grow. Using the model, a company can determine the risks that comes with each strategy. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the Ansoff matrix model has four quadrants with each quadrant bearing a strategy that an organization can use to grow.

Figure 1: The Ansoff Matrix mode

(Source: Hussain et al., 2013)

In the market development quadrant, firms are putting existing products into entirely new markets (Ramphul, 2015). The only way through this can be achieved is by striving to find new uses for products or improve products by adding new features to them. The independent variable of the study market development. The model will help identify the effectiveness of market development in increasing sales performance of Agro-dealers in Nairobi County, Kenya.

2.1.2 Push and Pull Theory

Hopp and Spearman (2013) traces the roots of the push and pull theory to 1911 through the scholarly work of Fredrick Winslow Taylor. Taylor was working on The Principles of Scientific Management' when he came up with this theory. In this endeavor, attention was drawn to determination of the needs of potential customers and pushing the solutions to them. However, changes in the customer tastes and preferences coupled with increased competition and provider proliferation have exposed push solutions to criticism; according to Kimball (2012), customers view pushing solutions to them as intrusive. Customers tend to overlook push solutions because due to information overload that makes them lose track of solutions.

Given this limitation, several organizations are shifting from the push theory to the pull theory. This way, marketers seek to provide information and solutions in generally accessible format, which informs and allows consumers to determine and select the best suits for their needs.

Kimball (2012) argues that push solutions are most founded on the assumption that businesses have the ability to anticipate consumer needs in advance and prepare solutions ahead of time. However, rapid changes in tastes and preferences means that a customer's needs may shift, hence, solutions may become unsuitable by the time they are availed. Additionally, different customers may require varied solutions for the same problem.

Push theory have been historically associated with increased efficiency. This is due to the belief that push solutions tend to create a penultimate user manual that covers all the questions likely to be asked by a consumer. The aim of this is to limit the amount of contact that a customer may need to make an organization. This way, the push model reduces the costs of serving customers. Efficiency in training of support personnel is also achieved because of the limited areas for which service is provided. However, Gupta (2007) laments that implementation of the push model has been hit by impediments due to organizations realizing that they could be compromising effectiveness for efficiency.

In place of push theory, the marketing philosophy is calling upon for implementation of pull strategy. Pull strategy involves a customer visiting a business or provider and asking questions needed to inform a purchase decision and a representative of the provider answering the questions. Furthermore, pulling solutions involves a customer initiating the request for a solution that fits their specific needs as opposed to an organization or provider merely making a guess on what could be the solution for a given customer based on a pool of solutions that they have. The popularity of pulling solutions has been enhanced by distrust among consumers about the solutions they directly provide. For it to be effective, Farshid (2011) insists that a business should provide as much information as possible using varied formats in order to optimize a customer's ability to discover the most suitable solution to their needs. Although this model may not be efficient from the point of view of both customers and organizations, pulling has been found to be effective in several cases.

The relevance of the push and pull theory to this study is that it insists on changing from prescribing solutions to customers to allowing them choose solutions that are best suited to their needs. Hence, the marketing strategies that a business is going to adopt should be centered more on customers than on what a business thinks is best for a customer. Pull theory is fundamentally market development theory. Further, the theory provides explanation why most agro-dealers are doing away with the push strategy and adopting the pull strategy by providing maximizing provision of information and solutions in generally accessible formats to allow customers choose best solutions according to their preferences.

2.2 Empirical Review

Kyckling's (2010) study sought to explore how marketing development strategies influence sales performance. The context of the study was Finland and the study focused on business-to-business model. From the study, it was evident that the relationship between marketing and sales has a significant effect on the performance of a business or a unit of business being considered. The study further revealed that the form of the relationship between sales and marketing has an effect on business performance. However, this study was based on Finland, which may be contextually dissimilar to Kenya, hence, a new study is required to test this relationship in Kenya.

A similar study was carried out by Ghazaleh et al. (2009); from their investigation on the relationship between marketing development strategies and performance of limited companies

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in Tehran, Iran, there was evidence that perception of managers towards adoption of strategies affect the specific classes of behaviors adopted. These behavior can be customer-oriented selling, relational strategy, and adaptive selling). This greatly contributes towards creating a strong and lasting positive customer relationships.

Jaakkola (2011) endeavored to relate development of strategic markets with business sales performance of Finnish companies. The study was moderated by country-specific factors. Findings from the study revealed that inside-out marketing capabilities has the greatest effect on performance. This is followed by innovation orientation, outside-in marketing capabilities, and orientation of the market. The study further revealed that Finnish companies are the least effective in terms of strategic marketing. Although the study arrived at crucial findings regarding the development of strategic markets, it was set on a Finnish background, which may have varied contextual conditions to Kenya.

The primary aim of the study by Adu-Darko and Bruce-Twum (2014) was to investigate how marketing development influences performance of organizational sales. The study was based on a case study of Guinness Ghana breweries limited. From the study, a positive and significant effect of sales promotion on profitability was established. The study indicated that an increase in sales promotion has a strong association with increase in sales turnover. However, the study did not find a significant relationship between sales promotion and non-financial performance. In addition to the varied context, the study was also limited to only marketing development and failed to expand the concepts to other strategies of marketing.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 2 represents a hypothesised relationship between market development strategy (independent variable) and sales performance (dependent variable).

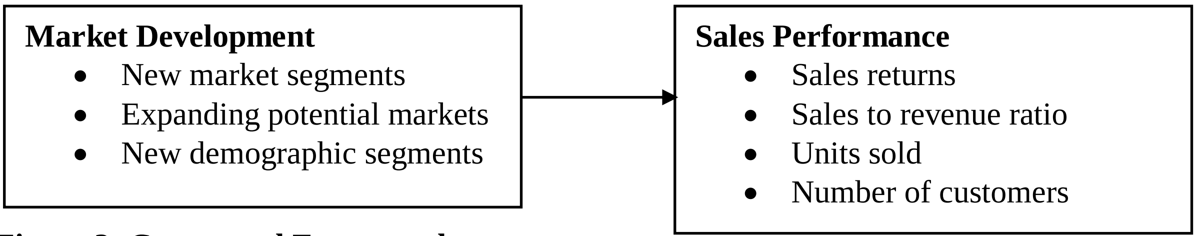

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Methodology

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The reason for choosing this design is because it enabled the researcher to describe the characteristics of how variables are interacting based on the data collected. This study focused on the effect of marketing strategies on the performance of sales performance for agro-dealers in Nairobi County, Kenya. The suitability of the descriptive design to this study was founded on the assertion by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that the design helps the researcher to identify the characteristics of variables and their interaction based on data. Moreover, it is possible to achieve high reliability when all subjects are presented with a standardized stimulus. This leads to elimination of observer subjectivity and enhances the level of reliability.

3.3 Sampling

The target population for this study included the managers of agro dealers in Nairobi County. Kephis (2016) identified 88 registered agro-dealers in Nairobi. Thus, the population of this study were 88 registered agro-dealers by KEPHIS in Nairobi City County. The unit of observation included the 88 directors of the agro dealers in Nairobi City County. The sampling procedure in this study was systematic sampling technique, which involved listing all the agro dealers in Nairobi County and selecting sample members according to a random starting point but with a fixed, periodic interval.

The researcher adopted Krejcie and Morgan's method to select a sample in this study. Given that the target population in this 88 agro-dealer firms in Nairobi City County, the method led to choosing of a sample of 70 agro dealers to participate in the study. Based on the requirements of the Central Limit Theorem, if the sample is large enough (N>30), a normal distribution curve was followed by the data (Gilbert & Churchill, 2001). Therefore, a sample of 70 respondents warranted a normal distribution curve. Selection of the firms to participate in the study involved use of systematic sampling. This involved listing the 88 firms and selecting jumping every 8th firm in the list until 70 firms were reached. One executive from each firm was recruited to participate in the study.

3.4 Data collection

Collection of primary data involved the use of a questionnaire. Administration method of the closed-ended questionnaire involved drop and pick later. This allowed the directors fill the questionnaire before collection on a later date from the respective marketing staffs of the agro-dealers in Nairobi City County Kenya. The choice of the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection was based on its ability to allow the researcher to maintain uniformity in the way of asking questions, thus, ensuring that the responses are compatible. In support of questionnaire as the instruments of data collection, Cooper and Schindler (2006) argue that the use of structured questions on the questionnaire is crucial because it provides for uniformity of responses to items. Structured items were included in the closed-ended questionnaire in order to allow for collection and analysis of quantitative data. The structured questionnaire items took the form of a five-point Likert scale and the respondents required to rate their responses based on a scale of 1-5.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher edited, coded, classified, and tabulated datasets. Data was further categorized, ordered, manipulated, and summarized in order to generate statistical information that was used to test hypotheses. Descriptive statistics (mean, mode and median) were generated to identify the nature of variables and describe them. Inferential statistics was used to determine the relationship between variables. Significant values (p-values) were used to test hypotheses. A multiple regression equation was used to determine the relationship between marketing development and sales performance of agro-dealers in Nairobi City County Kenya

The study will apply the following regression model

$$\mathbf{Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon}$$

Where; Y = Sales Performance

X_I = Market development

B_1= coefficient of market development.

ε= is the random error

One-way ANOVA was used as a basis for testing the level of significant of each of the independent variable on the dependent variable at the significance level of 95%.

3.6 Research Ethics

During questionnaire administration, utmost caution were exercised to ensure that respondents' rights and privacy are not infringed. Informed consent was implemented by ensuring that respondents are aware of all facts of the study; this was achieved through introducing them to the aim and purpose of the study in the language that they best understand. A data collection license was sought from NACOSTI in order to ascertain the legality of the research. The consent of the respondents was sought before involving them in the study. An informed consent was signed by both the researcher and the respondents. Confidentiality was ensured through avoiding disclosing the personal details of the respondents such as names and areas of residence on the face of the questionnaire.

4.1 Findings

4.2 Response rate and Reliability

The study administered questionnaires to 70 participants and 68 returned completed questionnaires giving a response rate of 97.14%. Based on the assertion by Bell (2017), a response rate of more than 50% can generate satisfactory statistical results, hence, permits the researcher to proceed to data analysis. Cronbach Alpha for the variable, market development, was 0.721 (items=6). This means that the research instrument was reliable for this study. Expert advice from three content experts from Kenyatta University based on the assessment of the questionnaire in relation to the study objectives confirmed that the instrument was valid.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics

The proportion of males was 52.94% men and that of females was 47.05%. More than half (66.18%) of the participants reported they had an undergraduate degree; 16.18% had a diploma qualification and 10.29% possessed a master's degree qualification. The remaining cohort (7.35%) had other educational qualifications. Majority of the respondents (50%) had a worked at their enterprises for a period of 6 to 8 years. This was followed by those who had worked between 3 to 5 years (30.88%). Relatively few respondents had worked for more than 9 years (13.86%).

4.3.1 Descriptive Analysis for Market Development

The researcher conducted descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviation) for the variable market development and presented the values in Table 1.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Market Development

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The dealer establishes new market segments for setting new enterprises	68	3.77	0.94
The dealer always expands premises to potential markets	68	4.20	0.64
The new demographic segments increases the performance of dealers	68	3.98	0.76
The dealer focuses on establishing new psychographic segments in the agro sector	68	3.79	0.95
The enterprise reaches out for new consumers in new geographic segments	68	4.04	0.74
The dealer identifies and develops new market segments for current products	68	3.86	0.71
Overall		**3.96**	**0.79**

Source: Researcher (2020)

The results in Table 4.6 indicate that a majority of the respondents agreed that their organizations are always expanding their premises to potential markets (M=4.2, SD=0.64). The findings also indicate show that the participants agreed that their enterprises reach out for new consumers in new geographic segments (M=4.04, SD=0.74). The statement, "The new demographic segments increase the performance of dealers," also ranked highly as indicated by a mean rating of 3.98. Although the participants agreed with the statement that, "The dealer establishes new market segments for setting new enterprises" it was ranked lowly compared to other market development practices (M=3.77, SD=0.94). The overall mean score for the items was 3.96, implying that the participants agreed that their enterprises participate in market development activities. Generally, these results reveal that most agro dealers strengthen their foothold in the market by expanding their existing business premises. The mean standard deviation of 0.79 implies that there was low variability in the respondents from the study.

4.4 Inferential Analysis

Inferential statistics form the study were presented Table 2 below.

Table 2: Inferential statistics

Coefficients					
Model	*B*	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*t*	*Sg.*
(Constant)	0.913	0.091		10.04	0.00
Market Development	0.488	0.058	0.579	8.38	0.00

(Source: Survey data, 2020)

Based on the results, market development has a statistically significant effect on sales performance of agro-dealers in Nairobi County. The results can be used to construct a prediction equation of the form:

*Sales Performance= 0.913+ 0.488*Market Development + e*

A unit increase in market development strategies would lead to a significant increase in sales performance of by 0.488 units (t=8.38, p< 0.05).

4.5 Discussion

The multiple linear regression applied in the study demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between market development and sales performance of the agro-dealers. In particular, it emerged that a unit increase in market development strategies would boost sales performance by 48.8%. As such, there no qualified support was given to the hypothesis. This reinforces previous research findings pointing to the significant and positive effect of market development on sales performance (Adu-Darko & Bruce-Twum, 2014; Ghazaleb & Mohammad, 2009; Jaakkola, 2011). However, the finding contradicts the evidence advanced by Kyckling (2010) that marketing development does not affect business performance.

5.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was designed to investigate the effects of marketing development on the sales performance of agro-dealers located in Nairobi City County. Findings revealed that agro-based companies can enhance their performance in their markets through deliberate implementation of market development. To be successful, agro-based firms should avoid excessively localizing their products and marketing programs. The problem with localization is that leads to incurring of unnecessarily high costs of entry into markets as well as local marketing, thus, causing firms to fail in their endeavors of achieving product and marketing differentiation from their close competitors. Firm managers should effectively implement market development strategy if they have to improve the performance of their sales.

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