

**THE INFLUENCE OF MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES ON THE
BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF SMALL AND MEDIUM
ENTERPRISES IN NAIROBI CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**

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**SUBMITTED TO THE STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS
SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF COMMERCE OF STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY**

NOVEMBER 2024

DECEMBER

DECLARATION

I, Alma Mwachiro, declare that the project titled, The Influence of Marketing Mix Strategies in the Organizational Performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District, is my work and has not been submitted by any other person. This material has not been written or published by another person except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

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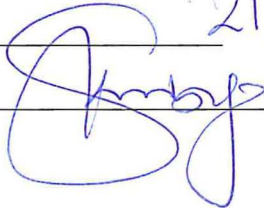
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents Professor Eric Chenje and Mrs Susan Mumba, who have supported me throughout my four-year university journey.

Their encouragement and prayers have motivated me to excel in school. I am forever grateful for their support and that they have never given up on me

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the individuals who have enabled me to complete the project. I want to thank my project supervisor, Dr Stella Nyongesa, who has committed her time and energy to guide and advise me in the formulation and completion of the project.

I want to thank my mentor Ms Michelle Ntoyai who has continuously motivated me throughout the course and also as I did research on this particular project.

I want to thank my classmates who have encouraged me in any way they could.

Lastly, I want to thank God for the strength and dedication throughout this period.

ABBREVIATIONS

SMEs – Small and Medium Enterprises

CBD – Central Business District

BSC – Balanced Score Card

KNBS – Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

MSME – Micro Small and Medium Enterprises

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

CRM- Customer Relationship Management

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Performance refers to the outcomes achieved by individuals, teams, or organizations regarding output, efficiency, and effectiveness (Armstrong 2017). Schermerhorn Jr., Bachrach, and Wright (2020) also defined performance as the measure of how well the business and individuals can achieve their goals and objectives. Steers, Bigley, and Porter (2021) support the definition made by Schermerhorn Jr by defining performance as the degree to which an individual or organization achieves its goals and meets shareholders' expectations. The study will focus more on how performance satisfies the customers' needs and achieves the goals set by the organization or business.

Kotler and Keller (2016) suggest that marketing encompasses the identification and fulfillment of human and social needs, as well as the creation of value for customers and the establishment of strong customer relationships to gain value in return. Marketing involves the activities, institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Solomon 2017). Businesses can satisfy various customer needs by carrying out marketing promotions through planning, execution, and supervision (O'Cass, Ngo, & Siahtiri, 2012). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly understanding the need to establish their marketing strategies to enable them to have a broad understanding of the environment, customers, and the needs of their customers.

The contribution of marketing strategy in the organization lies in the formulation of strategies to choose the right customer, build relationships of trust with them and create growth. Hence, it is necessary to train and motivate the staff to provide an exceptional level of service to customers to cope with the outside world of customers (Kariithi. 2015). There is an importance in creating a strong brand for SMEs to distinguish themselves from competitors. Successful marketing enhances brand recognition and awareness hence fostering customer loyalty and trust. Premium pricing can be demanded by a powerful brand thus promoting customer advocacy (Aaker, 2017). According to Grewal & Levy (2017), marketing directly impacts sales and revenue growth. By identifying and targeting the right market segments, SMEs can customize their products and services to meet customer needs

thereby resulting in increased product sales. Promotions, discounts, and loyalty programs are examples of marketing techniques that may boost short-term sales as well as long-term revenue growth

1.1.1 Marketing Mix Strategies

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing strategies involve the long-term planning and actions that a company takes to reach and attract its target audience and ultimately drive profitable customer action. They also define marketing strategies as the logic by which the business unit expects to achieve its marketing objectives and goals. Solomon, Marshall, and Stuart (2017) define marketing strategies as a set of actions designed to achieve competitive advantage and meet customer needs better than competitors.

Marketing strategies involve systematic and creative planning that aligns company resources with the needs and wants of target markets to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. (Cravens and Piercy, 2018). According to Homburg, Kuester, and Krohmer (2020), marketing strategies are used by a firm to communicate its unique value proposition to consumers, differentiating itself from competitors.

There are different marketing mix components such as price, product, place, promotion, physical evidence, people, and process. Zeithmal , Bitner & Gremler (2018) defined people as the individuals who represent the company and interact with the customers, including employees and management. Lovelock & Writz (2016) described the process as the procedure, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which a service is delivered. It includes the entire customer experience from order placement to delivery. Physical evidence was described by Hoffman and Bateson (2017) as the tangible elements that support the service or product, such as packaging, branding, and the physical environment where the service is delivered.

Kotler and Keller (2016) described pricing as the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue; the others produce costs. Pricing decisions must consider the competitive and legal environment the company operates. Solomon (2017) went ahead and defined pricing strategy as a critical element of the marketing mix because it directly affects the revenue and profitability of the firm. It involves understanding how much consumers are willing to pay and how much the company needs to charge to cover its costs and make a profit.

According to Fahy and Jobber (2019), Place strategy involves the various activities the firm undertakes to make the product available to target customers. These activities include selecting distribution channels, managing logistics, and ensuring product availability. Homburg, Kuester, and Krohmer (2020) also define place or distribution, decisions are crucial as they impact the firm's ability to serve its customers efficiently and effectively, and to maintain a competitive edge in the market. Promotion has been defined by Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2016) as the activities and tools that communicate the value of a product and persuade customers to buy it. This includes advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, public relations, and digital marketing. Kerin and Hartley (2022) define promotion as the element of the marketing mix that serves to inform, persuade, and remind customers about the product. Effective promotion strategies integrate multiple communication channels to reach the target audience. Product development strategy has been described by Cravens and Piercy (2018) as a critical aspect of the marketing mix that involves innovation, design, and development of new products or significant improvements to existing ones to meet market needs and preferences.

The study focused on price strategies, product development strategies, place strategies, and promotional strategies since they cover the crucial aspects of marketing that lead to the success of a product or service. Kotler & Keller (2016) the concentration of the four strategies, it enables businesses to form clear and focused marketing strategies hence it allows easier management and coordination of marketing efforts therefore ensuring all the aspects are aligned towards common goals. Armstrong & Kotler (2017) the four elements are versatile and can be adapted by any industry, product, and market conditions. Its adaptability makes it an important tool for academic researchers and practitioners. Blythe (2016) the simplicity of the four elements makes it easy to communicate and understand, both within the organization and when it comes to the stakeholders

An organization's capacity to expand, strengthen its market share, and reduce the influence of competitors relies heavily on its marketing strategy (Kenu 2019). Organizations adopt marketing strategies when deciding which markets to target, where to focus their efforts, and which market segments to sell to. In a study conducted by Akindoju in 2016, it was found that financial limitations, managerial expertise, leadership abilities, advertising, strategic thinking, and education play crucial roles in determining the success or failure of small businesses. Dzisi and Ofosu (2014) noted that implementing sustainable marketing strategies are important factors that support SME performance and growth.

This study sought to establish the role of marketing strategies on the Organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District. Marketing strategies are long-term and comprehensive plans to achieve competitive advantage by aligning the customer needs with the company resources. It addresses the creation of creative business models, positioning, targeting, and segmentation, as well as significant aspects of organizing, administering, and tracking marketing initiatives. The main idea is that better and long-lasting value may be produced for shareholders and customers through the management of marketing strategy.

1.1.2 Organizational Performance

According to Richard et al. (2016) organizational performance as the ability of an organization to achieve its goals and objectives through the efficient and effective utilization of resources, which includes financial outcomes, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and learning and growth metrics. Kaplan and Norton (2018) elaborated that organizational performance is viewed through the lens of the Balanced Scorecard, which measures performance in four key areas: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth. This approach ensures a balanced view of organizational success. Neely (2017) defined organizational performance as the assessment of how well an organization achieves its goals, which includes financial performance, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement.

Performance in SMEs is often measured by financial indicators such as profitability, revenue growth, and return on investment, as well as non-financial indicators including customer satisfaction, market share, and innovation capacity (Stokes & Wilson 2016). SMEs can improve their financial performance by reducing marketing costs and increasing revenues (Mutua & Muathe, 2021). By so doing, a company is not only able to attain profitability, but it also goes ahead to sustain its business operations thus ensuring that resources are allocated effectively for the purposes of innovation and expansion.

Nairobi's ever-changing business environment was tough on SMEs, but by focusing on targeted marketing campaigns that helped them acquire new customers while retaining old ones through personalized relationship marketing, they could grow sustainably and remain profitable. In summary, the mutual relationship between strategic marketing activities and

business performance indicators underscored the indispensable character of marketing in promoting SME success and resilience within Nairobi's urban economic landscape.

1.1.3 Small and Medium Enterprises in Nairobi

In relation to the performance of small and medium enterprises, (Makate, 2014) addressed how it is widely acknowledged that the SME sector has played a critical role in boosting economic growth and rapid development in most developing nations. SME accomplishments have typically been divided into financial and non-financial elements (Efiom & Edet, 2018). Financial performance includes a wide range of metrics such as profits, sales, return on investment, etc., while non-financial measures for SMEs' success include continuous business processes for a period of three years, personal engagement and autonomy, and work-life balance (Efiom & Edet, 2018).

Market techniques are progressively gaining recognition in industrialized nations like Kenya since they equip individuals with the marketing knowledge and skills required to run profitable businesses. The increased rate of unemployment and movement from rural to urban areas is a result of the growth of small and medium enterprises which are now thriving and allowing the youth for employment. KNBS (2016) emphasized the critical role that micro, small, and medium enterprises play in Kenya's development process, particularly in terms of creating job and income possibilities for the majority of the population. Indeed, the MSME sector employs much more people than the formal industry. Kenya's Vision 2030 aims to encourage small and medium firms, as well as industrial parks, in order to reduce the country's unemployment rate. The main aim of the government is to turn the country into a middle-income nation. This will also lead to poverty reduction and increased provision of goods and services.

In Kenya, this sector is anticipated to employ 14.9 million people. The value of MSME output is projected at Ksh 3,369.1 billion, compared to a national output of Ksh 9,971.4 billion, indicating a 33.8% contribution to GDP in 2015. In terms of gross value added, the MSME is predicted to have generated 1,613.0 billion, compared to Ksh 5,668.2 billion for the entire economy (KNBS 2016). Micro-sized firms contributed to 81.1% of MSMEs' reported employment. It is estimated that roughly 80% of enterprises in Kenya are SMEs, contributing approximately 40% of GDP (KNBS, 2016).

It has been recognized that the Kenyan government has made numerous initiatives that lower the cost of doing business, which can lead to increased competitiveness of Kenyan goods in both domestic and export markets. According to the World Bank's 2019 Ease of Doing Business Report, Kenya improved its ease of doing business ranking for the fourth consecutive year, moving up 19 places to number 61 in 2018 from position 80 in 2017. The primary ease of doing business metrics that improved were property registration, loan availability, minority investor protection, tax compliance, contract enforcement, and insolvency resolution. However, there was a decrease in indications for beginning a business, dealing with construction permits, accessing power, and trading across borders have all decreased (KAM, 2019; World Bank, 2019).

1.2 Problem statement

The foundation of the Kenyan economy is made up of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), but many of them face challenges in achieving sustainable growth, especially in the Nairobi Central Business District (NCBD). The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of marketing strategies in driving the organizational performance of Small and Medium Enterprises. According to the 2016 micro, small, and medium enterprise survey, of the registered enterprises, micro (58.3%), small (35.6%), and medium (33.5%) sized establishments do not promote or advertise their goods or services. On the other hand, Effiom and Edet (2018) discovered that marketing tactics have a negative and insignificant link with SMEs' profitability.

In Kenya, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a significant role in promoting employment creation, economic growth, and lowering levels of poverty (World Bank 2016). Even though it is part of Vision 2030, it still has difficulties. MSMEs must gradually innovate in order to guarantee that their products and services meet unmet consumer wants if they are to prosper in the untapped world of business. According to the MSME 2016 study, product innovation was present in small businesses active in manufacturing, ICT, finance, and health care. Furthermore, MSMEs did not exhibit many process or marketing innovations (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2016). According to the MSME 2016 survey, a high majority of MSMEs did not sell or advertise their goods or services at all, relying instead on product quality and customer happiness as marketing tools. The MSME

firm owners indicated a wish for the government to help with market promotion and provide an enabling climate for fair competition. (Osano, 2019)

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2016), roughly 500,000 SMEs in Kenya close their doors each year. Furthermore, the KNBS survey revealed that nearly 2.2 million SMEs failed. For enhanced efficiency and sustainability, SMEs have to constantly search for new chances to increase their competitiveness in the ever-changing market.

Despite the increased recognition of the four marketing mix elements, price, product development, place, and promotion, as an essential tool for organizational performance, many SMEs have trouble implementing them in their businesses. Their inability to know the importance of these strategies hinders their ability to compete in the ever-dynamic market. This gap necessitates an in-depth understanding of the connection between marketing mix strategies and organizational performance. The objective of the study was to evaluate the impact of each component of the marketing mix on organizational performance, investigate the degree to which small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nairobi have adopted marketing mix strategies, and identify the challenges that these SMEs encounter in utilizing marketing mix strategies to improve their performance.

1.3 Research Objectives.

- i.** To determine the influence of pricing strategies in the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in the Nairobi Central Business District
- ii.** To examine the influence of distribution strategies in enhancing the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in the Nairobi Central Business District
- iii.** To analyze the influence of promotional strategies in driving organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in the Nairobi Central Business District
- iv.** To establish the influence of product development strategies in the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District

1.4 Research Questions

- i.** What is the influence of pricing strategies in the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District?
- ii.** What is the influence of distribution strategies in enhancing the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District?
- iii.** What is the influence of promotional strategies in driving the organizational performance of small and medium enterprises in the Nairobi Central Business District?
- iv.** What is the influence of product development strategies in the organizational performance of medium enterprises in Nairobi Central Business District?

1.5 Scope of the study

This study focused on the marketing strategies that might have contributed to the performance of SMEs in Nairobi CBD. The study revolved around elements such as the marketing mix, with a specific focus on the SMEs in the Nairobi Central Business District. The study involved several sectors, it focused on retail stores selling beauty products, clothing, technology equipment, and household items, hence providing a more nuanced understanding of the impact of marketing mix strategies. The study was limited to the Nairobi Central Business District, which was the hub of various businesses, and it provided a diverse context for examining marketing strategies. The research focused on the recent trends over a specified period of 3 years to capture the current dynamics of the market and the impact of evolving marketing strategies.

1.6 Significance of the study

The main aim of this study was to show the relationship between marketing strategies and the organizational performance of Small and Medium Enterprises and how effective they are. This was considered invaluable to the SME owners since they would know how the marketing strategies would work in their businesses and prevent them from losing their customers to competitors. By examining various marketing strategies such as price strategies, product development strategies, place strategies, and promotional strategies the study enabled business owners to know of the best practices and potential failures of the business.

The results of the study helped the business owners to get more knowledge on how to boost customer satisfaction and get feedback on their products including what to improve on. In addition, by providing tailored assistance programs that cater to the particular difficulties experienced by SMEs in this area, the results helped policymakers and business development service providers create an atmosphere that is more favourable for their growth.

The findings of this study enabled investors to make more informed choices regarding fund allocation by identifying which marketing strategies yield superior performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, financial institutions were better equipped to evaluate the feasibility and risks associated with lending to SMEs, taking into account their marketing strategies and the anticipated effects on performance. Consultants leveraged these insights to provide data-informed recommendations to their clients, thus aiding small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in optimizing their marketing strategies. This study added to the current body of knowledge regarding marketing approaches and organizational success, establishing a foundation for subsequent research. Researchers could leverage the results to create novel frameworks or models for assessing marketing effectiveness across various contexts. By recognizing the significance of efficient marketing in boosting the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), policymakers could design initiatives aimed at increasing the overall economic impact of SMEs within the Central Business District.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical foundation of the study and reviews the literature on the role of marketing mix strategies in the Organizational Performance of SMEs in Nairobi Central Business District. The research is presented by researchers, scholars, and authors.

2.2 Theoretical review

This section outlines the theories that support the topic of study. The theories used in the study are Balanced Scorecard theory and Resource Based View.

2.2.1 Resource Based View Theory

Barney (1991) developed the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory that argues that the resources and abilities a company possesses determine its competitive edge and returns. RBV suggests that resources need to be VRIN (valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable) to sustain competitive advantage. The company's resources can either be tangible such as financial assets or intangible like brand reputation. Organizations can improve their competitive position, examples will be, with regard to costs, quality, or further factors for differentiation, if they possess and exploit resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. Competitive marketing strategies can be developed through the use of the resource-based view theory. According to this view, an organization's ability to acquire and utilize resources confers a competitive advantage, rather than its capacity to control its surroundings.

Under the RBV theory, product development can be exploited by SMEs as their inherent competency to achieve growth. Wambugu (2017) indicated that the differentiation of products by businesses attracts more customers and improves the market share. Differentiation of products through innovation will enable the SMEs in Nairobi to make their products unique and difficult for their rivals to mimic. Kivuva (2020) indicated that the improvement of the quality of the products boosts customer satisfaction and loyalty. This on the other hand it gives the SMEs a competitive advantage

The RBV theory indicates that effective pricing strategies need to be anchored on internal capabilities and market conditions. Murithi (2017) established that value-based pricing enhanced the willingness of the customer to buy the product. Nyaga (2018) indicated that

SMEs that have dynamic pricing are able to respond to market changes and maintain competitive advantage

RBV puts emphasis on intangible assets such as customer satisfaction and brand image. Wambugu (2017) indicates that when small and medium enterprises build a positive brand image, they are able to attract their customers more effectively. SMEs can use digital marketing techniques to reach a broader audience at a lower cost. This will allow SMEs to enhance their market presence through social media and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and content marketing (Mwangi & Omondi, 2018)

The distribution channels that SMEs use is a critical resource in the Resource Based View theory. Sarkar (2016) established that strategic partnerships made by SMEs enable them to move goods in the country easily together with ensuring that the businesses have sufficient products in their various outlets therefore serving numerous regions at the same time. The use of e-commerce has also enabled SMEs to sell their products outside their geographic regions by targeting both local and international markets hence increasing their competitive advantage

2.2.2 Balanced Scorecard Theory

The balanced scorecard (BSC) framework, introduced by Kaplan and Norton in the early 1990s, has become an essential tool for evaluating organizational performance beyond traditional financial metrics. This framework promotes a multi-faceted approach that integrates four essential perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth (Kaplan & Norton, 2016). Their BSC is designed to complement “financial measures of past performance with their measures of the drivers of future performance”. The name of their concept reflects an intent to keep score of a set of items that maintain a balance “between short-term and long-term objectives, between financial and non-financial measures, between lagging and leading indicators, and between internal and external performance perspectives”

Balance Scorecard is a performance management tool that helps organizations translate their vision and strategy into real action. This is done using a set of financial and non-financial indicators that are integrated in a cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, Balance Scorecard enabling organizations to monitor and manage their performance more effectively and

thoroughly (Zulbasri et al., 2023). This approach helps to review how an organisation is performing from various perspectives, such as growth and learning, internal services, customer and finance (Yulianto et al., 2023). The implementation of the balance score card retains the financial perspective and hence the short-term and long-term performance of an organization (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

The relationship between the implementation of balance score card and financial performance is reflected in the financial perspective of the balance score card. Howell et al. (2007) stated that during implementation of the BSC firms need to have an aim of ensuring quality; short lead times and customer satisfaction for improved the financial performance.

Integrating marketing mix strategies with the BSC enables SMEs to build a culture of continuous improvement by analyzing internal processes and learning results, as proposed by Muriuki and Karanja (2021), who emphasize the importance of feedback loops in marketing strategy optimization. The balanced scorecard offers a methodical approach to not just measuring but improving the organizational performance through strategic marketing activities of SMEs that face competitive constraints (Wambua & Karanja, 2023). This extensive assessment methodology eventually helps to translate marketing initiatives into actual performance outcomes, guaranteeing that SMEs can respond quickly to market dynamics and consumer needs while supporting long-term success (Mugure & Kilonzo, 2022).

2.3 Empirical Literature review

2.3.1 Product development strategies and organizational performance

Wambugu (2017) did research on the role of product differentiation in gaining competitive edge among SMEs in Kenya. The aim was to investigate the role of product differentiation in gaining competitive edge in the market by focusing on how unique products features influence customer choice and brand loyalty. The study was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya where the total sample size was 200 respondents. The respondents included product managers and business owners from selected companies. The study used stratified random sampling to ensure representation across several sectors such as technology and retail and the data analysis method employed was both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The findings were in the case that a business introduces a new product that stands out in the market, it can automatically attract potential customers. SMEs should also strive

to improve the quality of their products so as to gain a good reputation. The business should also have unique things that only identify to them such as brand logo, packaging and advertising that will have an individual attachment to the consumers. In the case that a business has a unique product that is not easily replicable by their competitors, it is easy for them to attain new customers and also retain them. Most SMEs offer the same products with their competitors but in the case that they decide to diversify and produce a unique product, they can offer premium prices for the products, therefore increasing the revenue earned by the business.

2.3.2 Pricing strategies and organizational performance

An acceptable price change is defined by the customer's willingness and ability to purchase goods, as well as the seller's production and distribution costs. Businesses often use price discrimination to adjust prices based on product quality, with higher-quality products typically priced at a premium for increased profitability. Additionally, some companies may choose to donate a portion of their profits towards charitable causes in an effort to demonstrate social responsibility. Makgoe (2015) Location plays a significant role in small and medium-sized enterprises' costs; transportation accessibility directly affects supply chain efficiency which can ultimately affect pricing decisions. However, despite these challenges faced by SMEs - competitiveness rests largely upon effective pricing strategies among Kenyan businesses. This suggests that businesses use pricing as a small- and medium-sized business marketing approach. This could therefore have an adverse effect on the businesses or cause them to shut down. Businesses with a restricted focus on the market are more likely to set their prices by keeping an eye on their competitors or by increasing their prices to stick to set profit margins. Such businesses are likely to see a decline in market share, revenue margins, and satisfaction with customers.

Ingenbleek (2015) did research on Price strategies for successful SMEs: the impact of customer orientation on SME performance. The study aimed to explore the pricing strategies employed by successful SMSs and to assess how they contribute to the market success and financial performance. The study was conducted in several European countries and focused on several ranges of industries within the region. The study used both purposive and random sampling to select SMEs that were identified as successful based on profitability and market share. The study included 150 SMEs across different industries. The respondents were

mainly price managers and SME owners. The data analysis method used was both qualitative and quantitative methods. The findings of the study were, customer-oriented pricing revolves around setting the price of products according to what the customer perceives rather than what your competitors are pricing. This in the long run ensures that the customers are satisfied with the services or products offered which also brings about the concept of customer loyalty. Some of the SMEs that considered the value of the product and customer feedback were able to attract more price-sensitive customers at the same time they get their deserved profits. The use of psychological pricing also affected the sales of products a perfect example is selling a phone for ksh 49,999 instead of ksh 50,000 which can easily attract customers giving them the impression that the device is cheap. SMEs also tend to maximize the prices of products especially in seasons or even periods where there is high demand of the product as well as they also reduce the prices in the case that there is little or no demand of the product or service.

2.3.3 Promotion strategies and Organizational Performance

According to Van Scheers and Radipere (2014), advertising serves as a tool for aiding small and medium enterprises in setting themselves apart from competitors. However, Clow and Barack (2014) point out that limited financial resources often prevent most small businesses from promoting their products to larger audiences. Thus, these companies must first develop the product, set an appropriate market price, select distribution channels before reaching potential customers through marketing tactics. The business owner must carefully analyze each media option's costs against its effectiveness in achieving goals while leveraging all possible communication channels available to inform consumers about product availability.

Carson and Gilmore (2015) noted that many small firms struggle with limited promotional resources to compete against larger companies. One viable solution to overcome this difficulty is by establishing business networks, where a joint marketing plan can be developed so that happy clients or prospects will spread the word among potential customers directly. Furthermore, leveraging eco-friendly online promotion tactics instead of print media can help. The transparency in promoting correct information must also be acknowledged for easy accessibility of relevant details required by customers.

Smith (2016) conducted research on the impact of social media marketing on SME performance. The aim of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of social media marketing on the effectiveness of social media marketing on the business performance of

SMEs. The study was done in New York, USA. The sampling method used was stratified random sampling while the sample size was 150 SMEs. The respondents to the research conducted were owners and marketing managers of SMEs. The data analysis method used was regression analysis and content analysis. The study findings are that SMEs which used social media platforms experienced a significant increase in brand visibility. Social media gave the businesses an opportunity to reach a broad audience beyond the local markets. He also found out that SMEs that engaged with their customers through regular posts and direct messages experienced a high level of customer interaction which was crucial in building customer loyalty. Social media was also identified as a cost-effective strategy for SMEs especially the ones that have marketing budgets. In comparison with traditional advertising, social media offered a high return on investments allowing businesses to reach a wide audience with minimal expenditure. By targeting specific demographics and interests through social media marketing, businesses were able to attract new customers and convert them into actual buyers in a more effective way. Social media platforms provided businesses with feedback through monitoring customer comments and interactions, business could gain real time information on customer preferences, pain points and expectations enabling them to adjust their product offerings accordingly.

2.3.4 Distribution strategies and Organizational Performance

Medium-sized businesses are confronted with two major challenges - gaining market access and staying competitive. For small and medium firms operating on a global scale, they must make difficult decisions around their management systems. When it comes to retail enterprises, the surrounding environment plays an important role in influencing factors such as performance, structure, and location development. To tackle this environment effectively; retailers have to take into consideration social-economic-political-technological aspects when making managerial choices that cater for these external forces. Information about where customers reside is key in determining firm productivity since product/service transportation cost can significantly affect overhead expenditure-thus impacting profitability. Cavusgil & Zou 2014 highlight how imperative it is important for an average business entity to set up shop within its target consumers' geographical proximity if possible maximizing profits by reducing logistical costs while reaching critical masses of customers and serving them efficiently at low rates which reduces operations expenses overall

Sarkar (2016) did research on Distribution strategies for small and medium enterprises: an exploratory study. The aim of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of various distribution strategies on the performance and market reach of small and medium enterprises. The study was done in Kolkata, India. The study used purposive sampling to select SMEs actively engaged in different distribution strategies. The total sample size was 120 SMEs. The respondents included owners and managers of SMEs who were responsible for the distribution decisions within their businesses. The study utilized descriptive statistics to summarize the data together with regression analysis to identify the relationship between distribution strategies and business performance. The findings of the study were, SMEs that diversified distribution channels such as direct sales and online platforms reduced the dependency on one channel which enabled them to penetrate different markets in different countries. Collaboration with distributors enabled them to access new markets and reduce their distribution costs. It also allowed them to leverage on the networks that the distribution companies have. The use of an e-commerce platform enables the business to get global customers and operate for 24 hours, every day of the week. Pop up stores enabled the businesses to have one on one conversations with the customers and get immediate feedback which leads to improved customer insights. The frequent changing of the market makes it harder for the SMEs that do not have technology to ensure streamlined operations with the logistics companies. The technology gives the business a competitive advantage and aids in the navigation of any challenges faced in the distribution of the products.

2.4 Research gaps

Some of the studies have focused on general strategies in specific countries or regions. More research is required to be done so as to understand the different marketing strategies that vary in different regions and markets, especially in emerging markets such as Kenya. Some of the studies have not indicated the long-term effects of the marketing strategies used by businesspeople in the SME workspace. The research done only focuses on one of the marketing strategies mentioned, there is need to do research on SMEs that use multiple marketing strategies in their businesses and the impact that it has made. There should be research done to show how SMEs implement the marketing strategies and the barriers that the businesses face when implementing. An example of the barriers faced is lack of expertise and financial constraints. The impact of the Global COVID 19 pandemic affected the way business' function. There is no research that has been done to show how the pandemic

affected the marketing strategies in the SMEs and how their businesses recovered after the pandemic.

2.5 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework identifies the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The framework is used to outline possible research ideas or thoughts. The conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation of the dependent and independent variables. The dependent variables are product development strategies, promotion strategies, place strategies, pricing strategies and digital marketing strategies while the independent variable is the Organizational Performance of SMEs in Nairobi Central Business District

Figure 2.1

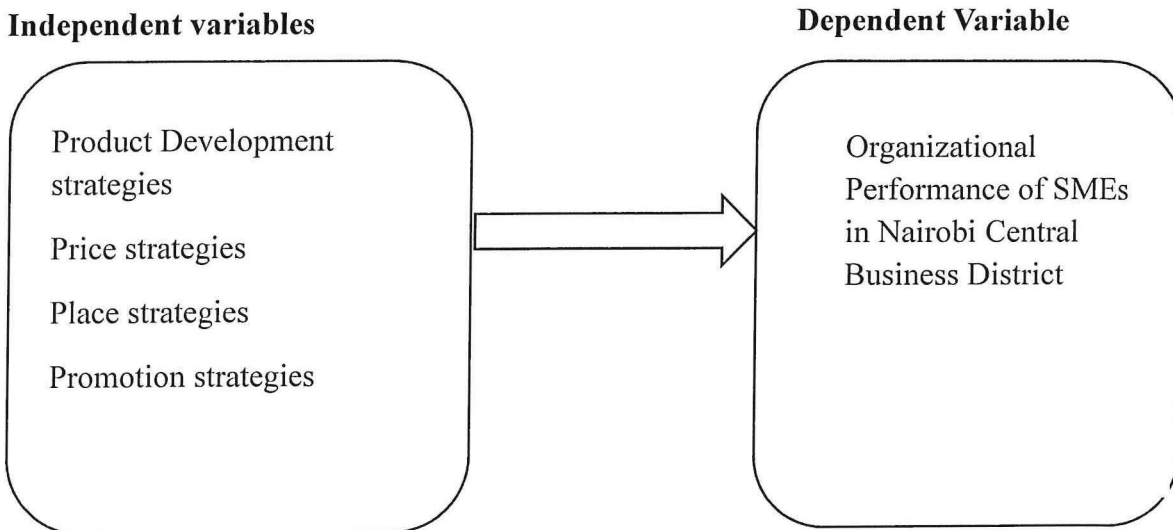


Figure 2.1

2.6 Study Variable Operationalization

Table 2.1

Variable	Definition	Indicators	Measurement	Source
Product Strategy	a critical aspect of the marketing mix that involves innovation, design, and development of new products or significant improvements to existing ones to meet market needs and preferences.	Product quality, innovation and features	Likert scale 1-5	Cravens and Piercy (2018)
Price Strategy	the only element in the marketing mix that produces revenue; the others produce costs	Pricing flexibility, pricing competitiveness	Likert Scale 1 - 5	Kotler and Keller (2016)
Place Strategy	the various activities the firm undertakes to make the product available to target customers	Distribution channels, Market logistics	Likert Scale 1 - 5	Fahy and Jobber (2019)
Promotion Strategy	the activities and tools that communicate the value of a product and persuade customers to buy it.	Advertising, public relations	Likert scale 1-5	Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2016)
Organizational Performance	organizational performance is viewed through the Balanced Scorecard, which measures performance	Balanced Scorecard metrics: financial, customer,	Likert Scale 1 - 5	Kaplan and Norton (2018)

	in four key areas: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth.	internal processes, learning and growth		
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Chapter Summary

The literature review emphasizes on how crucial it is to manage the marketing mix strategies effectively in order to propel success in a small and medium enterprise. Based on the Resource Based View and Marketing Mix Theory, the review demonstrates how SMEs can use their resources and capabilities to gain competitive edge and enhance performance. Well executed marketing mix strategies have a positive impact on customer retention, market share, sales growth and profitability. However, there is still a deficiency of research that is devoted exclusively to SMEs, indicating the necessity for more research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research is the systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to increase the understanding of the world in general and of the phenomenon under study in particular. According to Kothari (2015), research methodology is defined as "a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it, we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods or techniques but also the methodology."

This chapter provides the methodology that is used to conduct research. It involves the collection and analysis of data

3.2 Research Design

Kothari (2015) defines research design as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. It constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. This study will use the descriptive research design to determine the role of marketing mix strategies in the organizational performance of SMEs in Nairobi Central Business District , Kenya.

According to Creswell (2018), descriptive research design is used to describe an event, a happening, a community, and even an individual. It involves the observation and description of the subject without influencing it in any way. Descriptive research is used on structured problems, and it gives the answers to who, when, what, where and how of the phenomenon under study.

3.3 Population

According to Creswell (2018), a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics. A researcher defines the population in terms of elements such as age, gender, occupation, education, or other specific criteria relevant to the research.

3.4 Sampling

The target population of this study was comprised of SMEs in the Nairobi Central Business District, Kenya. The approximate sample size of the study was 100 SMEs in the Central Business District. The method of sampling used was random sampling. This method was

highly convenient due to the difficulty of collecting data and covering the large scale of businesses. Examples of businesses that were sampled included fashion shops, restaurants, and shoe-selling shops. The SMEs were required to give information about their businesses through the questionnaire that was provided.

3.5 Data collection methods

According to Creswell (2018), data collection involves the steps of gathering data, ranging from determining the site or individuals to study, gaining access and making rapport, sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, and storing data.

The data collection method used was the primary method whereby the SME owners filled out a questionnaire. The questionnaire included semi-structured and structured questions so as to enable feedback. The open-ended questions gave more information on what has not been captured in the questionnaire that was relevant to the study. The questionnaires gave the business owners a chance to fill out information in an anonymous state, hence honest feedback and it also saved time compared to all the other methods of data collection methods

3.6 Data Analysis

There was an analysis of the questionnaires filled in by the businesses. There was a checking of the responses written by the respondents. This ensured that the data was free from errors and missing information. Descriptive statistics were used, such as mean scores, to analyze the data collected. The analysis was used to determine the role of marketing mix strategies in the organizational performance of SMEs in the Nairobi Central Business District. The data was used to show the relationship between the marketing strategies (product development, pricing, place, and promotion) and the SME growth factors (profitability, growth of assets, and increase in the customer base). The questionnaire provided more information on the challenges and successes of business owners when they implemented marketing strategies. This analysis was designed to determine the main growth drivers, appraise the effects of specific marketing strategies, and propose feasible recommendations for SMEs to step up their marketing practices and achieve sustainable growth. The results were presented in table form.

3.7 Research Quality

The study used quantitative methods. The random sampling ensured that the study accurately investigated the relationship between marketing strategies and the organizational performance of SMEs in Nairobi CBD. The study also included validated scales that were used for the survey questions. The questionnaires formulated ensured that all aspects of the marketing mix strategies and organizational performance were valid. The study was designed in a way that it could be replicable by other researchers who wanted to yield similar results. There was accuracy in the collection process, which helped in the minimization of errors. The research outcomes were related to academic and practical implications by situating them within the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, showcasing a clear connection.

3.8 Ethical issues in research

Obtaining consent from business owners who choose to take part in the study is crucial. These participants must understand the research objectives and potential outcomes and benefits. The identity of participating businesses and their data should be kept confidential for exclusive use in the study. Also, it's necessary to ensure that our chosen research methods don't cause any harm - either physical or financial- to these business owners. The identification of conflicts of interest before starting work is required because it may influence how accurately information collected can be presented later. Throughout this process, honesty and transparency are vital regarding findings as well as limitations encountered during data collection so there are no arguments about what was discovered through investigation done by a researcher involved with project development stages beforehand the planning stage begins.

Measures need to be announced earlier to make sure no unauthorized access happens at all times not maximizing caution protocols and mandatory guarding against leaks purposed disasters signs lurking around every corner while minimizing completely negligible elements despite perfect execution plans reviewed frequently. Moreover, the researcher should offer business owners a chance to participate voluntarily and disclose they can withdraw from study participation if response consequences were negative. Lastly, preventing data loss and corruption is necessary by being truthful when reporting findings throughout your research process's various stages until submission for final assessment as trustworthy information available toward alternative explanations out there examine opposing arguments or at least studying them instead of ignoring mentions, focusing solely

misunderstanding conveyed through revealing experiments meticulously devises adopting crucial steps discussed above in fine detail utmost care taken preventative measures against possible injuries ensuing legal proceedings ending poorly costly financial compensation awarded people offices impacted conducted impartially ethically according to latest best practices employed widely under strict ethical guidelines observed scrupulously around the world now.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a summary of the data sources, descriptive statistics, inferential analysis, and a discussion of the findings in relation to the study objectives. Each section focuses on particular aspects of the research questions.

4.2 Response Rate

The study targeted a sample size of 100 SMEs; however, 72 SMEs provided responses, resulting in a response rate of 72%. This level of response is considered adequate for analysis and provides a sufficient basis for drawing conclusions related to the research objectives.

Table 4.1 Response Rate

Targeted Sample Size	Responses Received	Response Rate
100	72	72%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3 Demographic Analysis

4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

The gender distribution of respondents indicates a slight majority of female participants at 51.4%, with male respondents accounting for 48.6%. This balanced gender representation allows for insights into perspectives from both genders in the study.

Table 4.2 : Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	29	48.60%
Female	31	51.40%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3.2 Age of Respondents

The age distribution of respondents shows that the majority are between the ages of 20 and 29, representing the largest age group in the study. Respondents aged 50 to 59 form the second largest group, followed by those aged 30 to 39, and finally those aged 40 to 49. The dominance of younger respondents indicates a growing entrepreneurial spirit among youth, while the significant presence of older respondents reflects their experience and continued contribution to the SME sector.

Table 4.3 : Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 29	30	41.70%
30 – 39	16	22.20%
40 – 49	9	12.50%
50 – 59	17	23.60%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3.3 Level of education

The educational background of respondents varies, with the majority holding a Bachelor's degree (35 respondents), followed by those with a Diploma (16 respondents) and a Master's degree (12 respondents). A smaller number of respondents have achieved education at the Secondary, Certificate, and PhD levels, while none reported having only a Primary level education. The high levels of education among respondents suggest that SME owners and managers are well- equipped to make informed decisions and adopt innovative business strategies.

Table 4.4 Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	0	0.00%
Secondary	3	4.20%
Certificate	3	4.20%
Diploma	16	22.20%
Bachelor's Degree	35	48.60%
Master's Degree	12	16.70%
PhD	3	4.20%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3.4 Years of operation

The data on years of operation shows that most businesses have been operating between 1 to 3 years (20 respondents), followed by those in operation for less than 1 year (18 respondents). Fewer respondents reported operating for 4 to 6 years, and the smallest groups have been in business for 7 to 10 years and more than 10 years. The high percentage of businesses operating for less than three years highlights a vibrant but potentially volatile SME environment, where many businesses are in the early stages of development.

Table 4.5 : Years of Operation

Years of Operation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 year	18	25.00%
1 to 3 years	20	27.80%
4 to 6 years	17	23.60%
7 to 10 years	8	11.10%
More than 10 years	8	11.10%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3.5 Role in the business

The majority of respondents hold the role of Owner (48 respondents), indicating direct decision-making influence. Other respondents include Sales Managers (11), Managers (7), and Marketing Managers (4), reflecting a range of roles involved in business operations. The predominance of owners among respondents indicates that decisions and strategies discussed are largely shaped by individuals with direct control over the businesses.

Table 4.6 : Role in the Business

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Owner	48	66.70%
Manager	7	9.70%
Marketing Manager	4	5.60%
Sales Manager	11	15.30%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.3.6 Primary industry of the SME

The primary industry of the SMEs surveyed shows a concentration in the Services sector, with 38 respondents operating in this field. Retail follows with 24 respondents, while smaller numbers are in Manufacturing, Food and Beverages, Household Items, Technology, and Fashion industries. The concentration in the Services sector reflects Nairobi's position as a service-oriented economy, with retail businesses also being important in the urban market.

Table 4.7 : Primary Industry of the SMEs

Industry	Frequency	Percentage
Food and Beverages	1	1.40%
Manufacturing	6	8.30%
Retail	24	33.30%
Services	38	52.80%
Household Items	1	1.40%
Technology	1	1.40%
Fashion	1	1.40%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

4.4.1 Product Development Strategies

To assess the impact of Product Development Strategies, the following statements were evaluated using a Likert scale of 1 – 5. The means and standard deviations for each statement are summarized below. The findings indicate that SMEs prioritize frequent introduction of new products or services as a way to remain competitive. Differentiation strategies are common approaches used to attract and retain customers, highlighting the importance of innovation in business growth.

Table 4.8 : Product Development Strategies

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
How often do you introduce new products or services?	3.8	0.9
Rate the impact of product development on your business growth.	4.1	0.7

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Respondents indicated a fairly high frequency of introducing new products or services (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.9), suggesting that most SMEs prioritize product innovation as a way to stay competitive. The impact of product development on business growth was also rated positively (Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.7), reflecting a general consensus that innovation directly contributes to business expansion.

The respondents were also asked to show how they differentiate their products with the competitors. The data below shows the feedback.

Table 4.9 : Product differentiation with Competitors

Question: How do you differentiate your products with your competitors?	Frequency	Percentage
Unique features	20	27.80%
Superior quality	15	20.80%
Branding	12	16.70%
Customer service	18	25.00%
Others	7	9.70%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Most SMEs differentiate their products through unique features, customer service, superior quality, and branding. Unique features and customer service were particularly common approaches, highlighting a focus on creating distinct offerings and maintaining strong client relations.

4.4.2 Pricing Strategies

The following statements on Pricing Strategies were evaluated using a Likert scale of 1 – 5. The means and standard deviations for each statement are summarized below. The results show that SMEs moderately adapt their pricing strategies to market changes, with customer-oriented and competitive pricing being the most common approaches. This flexibility allows SMEs to meet customer needs and remain competitive.

Table 4.10: Pricing Strategies

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
How flexible are your pricing strategies in response to market changes?	3.6	1
Rate the impact of your pricing strategy on your business growth.	4	0.8

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The flexibility of pricing strategies in response to market changes was rated moderately (Mean = 3.6, SD = 1.0), indicating that while many SMEs adjust their prices based on market conditions, there's variability in approach. Respondents generally agreed that pricing strategies positively impact growth (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.8), suggesting that strategic pricing aligns well with their growth objectives

Table 4.11 : Primary Pricing Strategy

Question: Which pricing strategy do you primarily use?	Frequency	Percentage
Customer-oriented pricing	25	34.70%
Value-based pricing	15	20.80%
Competitive pricing	22	30.60%
Psychological pricing	8	11.10%
Other	2	2.80%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Customer-oriented and competitive pricing were the primary strategies used, showing a strong emphasis on aligning prices with customer needs and competitor pricing. Fewer SMEs used psychological pricing, while value-based pricing also played a significant role for many businesses.

4.4.3 Promotional Strategies

The data below summarizes key indicators of Promotional Strategies among the SMEs that gave responses to the study. The findings reveal that promotional activities effectively attract new customers and positively impact business growth. SMEs heavily rely on advertising, social media marketing, and digital platforms, showing a shift toward modern marketing methods to reach their target audience.

Table 4.12 : Promotional Strategies

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
How effective are your promotional activities in attracting new customers?	3.9	0.8
Rate the impact of your promotional strategies on your business growth.	4.2	0.6

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Promotional activities were rated as effective in attracting new customers (Mean = 3.9, SD = 0.8), suggesting that SMEs find value in their promotional efforts, with most experiencing consistent results. The respondents agreed that promotional strategies have a favorable impact on business growth (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.6), reflecting confidence in the role of marketing activities in driving customer acquisition and retention.

Table 4.13 : Promotional Activities Used

Question: Which promotional activities do you use?	Frequency	Percentage
Advertising	30	41.7%
Digital Marketing	20	27.8%
Social Media Marketing	28	38.9%
Sales Promotion	15	20.8%
Public Relations	12	16.7%
Other	3	4.2%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Advertising and social media marketing were the most widely used promotional activities, reflecting a reliance on digital platforms to attract customers. Digital marketing and sales promotion were also popular, indicating a diverse promotional approach across various channels.

4.4.4 Distribution Strategies

The effectiveness of distribution channels in reaching target markets was rated moderately (Mean = 3.7, SD = 0.9), indicating that most SMEs find their distribution strategies fairly successful but see room for improvement. The impact of distribution on growth received a positive rating (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.7), showing that distribution remains a significant contributor to business expansion for most respondents.

Table 4.14 Distribution Strategies

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
How effective are your distribution channels in reaching your target market?	3.7	0.9
Rate the impact of your distribution strategies on your business growth.	3.8	0.7

Source: Primary Data (2024)

The most frequently used distribution channels were online platforms and direct sales, showing a preference for digital and direct approaches to reach customers. Distributors were also commonly used, while retail outlets were less common, suggesting that many SMEs prioritize online presence over physical retail.

Table 4.15 Distribution Channels Used

Question: Which distribution channels do you use?	Frequency	Percentage
Direct sales	22	30.60%
Distributors	18	25.00%
Online Platforms	25	34.70%
Retail Outlets	10	13.90%
Other	2	2.80%

Source: Primary Data (2024)

4.4.5 Organizational Performance

Respondents rated their agreement with each statement on the performance of their business.

The table below presents the mean and standard deviation for each statement.

Table 4.16 Organizational Performance

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
Our SME has experienced revenue growth in the past year.	4.1	0.8
Our profit margins have improved over the past year.	4	0.7
We have seen an increase in our customer base.	4.2	0.9
Our customers are highly satisfied with our products/services.	4.3	0.6
Our internal processes have become more efficient.	4	0.8
Our employees are motivated and engaged.	4.1	0.7
We have a strong brand presence in the market.	4.2	0.8

Source: Primary Data (2024)

Respondents indicated that their SMEs have experienced revenue growth over the past year, with a mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.8). This suggests a strong consensus among SMEs regarding positive financial performance in the recent year. The improvement in profit margins was also positively rated (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.7), indicating that many SMEs have successfully enhanced their profitability, further supporting the notion of overall financial health. The perception of an increasing customer base received a high rating (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.9), highlighting that SMEs are effectively attracting new customers, which is crucial for sustainable growth. Customer satisfaction with products and services scored the highest among the performance indicators (Mean = 4.3, SD = 0.6). This demonstrates that SMEs are meeting customer needs and expectations, which is essential for customer retention and brand loyalty. The efficiency of internal processes was rated positively (Mean = 4.0, SD =

0.8), suggesting that many SMEs have implemented improvements to streamline operations, which can enhance overall productivity. The motivation and engagement of employees were also rated well (Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.7), indicating that SMEs are fostering a positive work environment, which can lead to higher productivity and reduced turnover. A strong brand presence in the market was reflected in the mean score of 4.2 (SD = 0.8), suggesting that SMEs feel confident in their market positioning and visibility.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five summarizes the study's key findings, draws conclusions from the data analyzed, and offers recommendations for SMEs.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Product Development Strategies

The analysis of product development strategies revealed that the majority of SMEs in the study frequently introduce new products or services, with a mean score of 3.8 (SD = 0.9). This frequency shows the importance of innovation in maintaining a competitive edge in the market. SMEs also indicated a strong belief in the positive impact of product development on business growth, with a mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.7). This suggests that innovation is not only a strategy for differentiation but also a critical factor for business expansion. Among the strategies for differentiating their products, SMEs predominantly relied on unique features (27.8%), customer service (25%), and superior quality (20.8%). These findings suggest that SMEs are highly focused on providing value-added features and personalized experiences to distinguish themselves from competitors. The emphasis on unique features and customer service highlights a strategic approach to creating lasting customer relationships, which are crucial for brand loyalty and sustained market presence.

These findings align with Cooper (2019), who identified innovation and product uniqueness as key drivers of success in new product development. Similarly, Morgan and Liker (2020) highlighted the integration of people, processes, and technology in successful product development systems, such as Toyota's approach. Unlike Cooper (2019), who emphasized structured product development processes, SMEs in this study rely more on informal and adaptive approaches, suggesting room for improvement in formalized innovation strategies. Resource-Based Theory supports these findings by emphasizing that leveraging unique innovation and customer focus, helps businesses gain a competitive advantage. Balanced Scorecard Theory outlines the importance of innovation as a driver of long-term organizational growth and learning.

5.2.2 Pricing Strategies

Pricing strategies were a significant focus for SMEs, with respondents indicating a moderate level of flexibility in adjusting prices in response to market changes (Mean = 3.6, SD = 1.0). This suggests that while many SMEs are responsive to market dynamics, there is variability in how often and to what extent they adjust their prices. Despite this variability, SMEs generally agreed on the positive impact of pricing strategies on their growth (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.8), reflecting the importance of strategic pricing in achieving business objectives. The most commonly used pricing strategies were customer-oriented pricing (34.7%) and competitive pricing (30.6%), indicating that SMEs focus on aligning their pricing with customer expectations and competitor pricing. A smaller proportion of respondents used value-based pricing (20.8%) or psychological pricing (11.1%), highlighting that while these strategies are considered, they are not as prevalent. This trend suggests that SMEs are concerned with meeting customer needs and staying competitive in the market.

Nagle and Müller (2017) similarly emphasize the importance of customer-oriented pricing for profitability, supporting this study's results. Gibbs et al. (2018) also found that pricing tailored to customer preferences leads to better performance, in markets like the sharing economy. SMEs in Nairobi display moderate pricing flexibility, contrasting with Gibbs et al. (2018), who noted greater adaptability in highly competitive markets. This limitation may stem from resource constraints or insufficient market data. The Balanced Scorecard Theory connects pricing strategies to financial performance by linking effective pricing to profitability and customer satisfaction metrics. The Resource-Based Theory also supports the findings, as effective pricing strategies demonstrate how SMEs use limited resources creatively to compete in their markets.

5.2.3 Promotional Strategies

Promotional strategies were highly rated by SMEs, with respondents indicating that their promotional activities were effective in attracting new customers (Mean = 3.9, SD = 0.8). This result suggests that SMEs recognize the value of their marketing efforts and see consistent outcomes from their promotional initiatives. Additionally, SMEs rated the impact of promotional strategies on business growth positively (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.6), indicating that marketing activities play a crucial role in customer acquisition and retention. The most frequently used promotional activities were advertising (41.7%) and social media marketing (38.9%), reflecting a strong emphasis on digital platforms for reaching a broad audience.

Digital marketing (27.8%) and sales promotions (20.8%) were also commonly employed, showing a diversified approach to promotion. These findings suggest that SMEs rely heavily on both traditional and digital channels to boost brand visibility and foster engagement with customers.

These findings align with Momin et al. (2014), who emphasized the positive impact of both traditional and innovative promotional strategies. Abdeta and Zewdie (2021) also concluded that an effective promotional mix improves organizational performance. Momin et al. (2014) highlighted the importance of tailoring campaigns to specific demographics, an area where Nairobi's SMEs could improve to enhance effectiveness further. The Resource-Based Theory supports these findings by illustrating how SMEs leverage unique strengths like creativity and digital expertise to engage customers. The Balanced Scorecard Theory also emphasizes the role of promotional strategies in achieving customer acquisition and retention goals, which enhance financial performance.

5.2.4 Distribution Strategies

The effectiveness of distribution strategies among SMEs was rated moderately (Mean = 3.7, SD = 0.9), indicating that while most SMEs find their distribution channels somewhat successful, there is room for improvement. The impact of distribution strategies on business growth was positively rated (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.7), suggesting that SMEs recognize the critical role that distribution plays in expanding their market reach. Among the distribution channels used, online platforms emerged as the most popular choice (34.7%), highlighting the growing preference for digital channels in reaching customers. Direct sales were also commonly utilized (30.6%), reflecting the value placed on personal interaction and relationship-building in the sales process. Distributors were another key channel (25%), indicating that many SMEs rely on intermediaries to help extend their reach. Retail outlets were less commonly used (13.9%), suggesting that online and direct sales are prioritized over traditional physical distribution methods. These findings show that SMEs are adapting their distribution strategies to the digital age

This aligns with Janjevic and Winkenbach (2020), who noted the dominance of online distribution in mature e-commerce markets. Pu et al. (2020) highlighted the effectiveness of direct selling and agency selling in specific contexts. The limited emphasis on retail outlets in this study contrasts with Pu et al. (2020), suggesting that Nairobi's SMEs prioritize digital

channels due to cost-effectiveness and broader reach. The Balanced Scorecard Theory highlights distribution efficiency as a key factor in improving financial performance and customer satisfaction. The Resource-Based Theory reinforces this finding by showing how SMEs use their resources to create value and gain a competitive edge.

5.2.5 Organizational Performance

The evaluation of organizational performance revealed several positive trends among SMEs. Respondents indicated that their SMEs experienced revenue growth over the past year (Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.8), suggesting strong financial performance and effective business strategies. Profit margins also showed improvement (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.7), indicating that many SMEs have successfully enhanced their profitability through efficient operations or strategic pricing. The perception of an increasing customer base (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.9) reflects the effectiveness of customer acquisition efforts, which is crucial for long-term growth and sustainability. The highest-rated performance indicator was customer satisfaction with products and services (Mean = 4.3, SD = 0.6), demonstrating that SMEs are successfully meeting customer needs, an essential factor in fostering loyalty and repeat business. Respondents highlighted improvements in internal processes (Mean = 4.0, SD = 0.8), suggesting that many SMEs have streamlined their operations, leading to better productivity and efficiency. Employee motivation and engagement also received high ratings (Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.7), pointing to a positive work environment that can contribute to reduced turnover and increased productivity. The perception of a strong brand presence in the market (Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.8) reflects SMEs' confidence in their market positioning, which can help them maintain competitive advantage and visibility in their industries.

These results align with Abdeta and Zewdie (2021), who found that well-executed marketing strategies positively impact organizational performance. However, Janjevic and Winkenbach (2020) emphasized last-mile distribution as critical for customer satisfaction, an area less addressed in this study. This suggests that Nairobi's SMEs could further enhance customer satisfaction by improving their delivery strategies. From a theoretical standpoint, the Balanced Scorecard Theory is evident in the findings, as SMEs' strong performance reflects success across financial, customer, and internal process perspectives. The Resource-Based Theory supports this by highlighting how SMEs leverage internal strengths to achieve growth and competitiveness.

5.3 Conclusions

For SMEs in Nairobi's Central Business District, pricing strategies serve as a key lever in attracting and retaining customers. Many SMEs can boost sales and maintain competitiveness. Customer-oriented and competitive pricing approaches, commonly used by these businesses, help balance profitability with market demand, which in turn supports long-term financial health. This flexible pricing, responding to shifts in market conditions, enhances customer trust and business resilience for improved revenue and growth stability.

Distribution strategies are instrumental in the ability of SMEs to reach and engage their target markets effectively. Embracing online platforms and direct sales channels has allowed many SMEs to enhance accessibility and responsiveness, which are crucial in a digital-first consumer environment. For many businesses, this focus on flexible and targeted distribution strengthens their market presence, allowing them to meet customers where they are. SMEs create a sustainable framework for expanding their customer base and fueling organizational growth.

Promotional strategies are not only about creating brand awareness; they're about building lasting customer relationships for SMEs in Nairobi. The strategic use of both digital and traditional promotional activities—like social media marketing and advertising—allows SMEs to connect deeply with a diverse audience. Effective promotions are a driving force behind customer acquisition, strengthening loyalty, and fostering engagement, all of which are critical for sustained growth. These targeted promotional efforts propel SMEs toward greater customer retention and overall business success.

Product development stands as a critical factor in differentiating SMEs within Nairobi's competitive business district. Through continuous innovation, these businesses not only attract new customers but also maintain the loyalty of existing ones by meeting evolving needs and preferences. SMEs carve out a unique position in the market that fosters sustained growth. These development strategies are key to ensuring that SMEs stay relevant and resilient, creating value for customers and stability for the business itself.

5.4 Recommendations

Implementing adaptable pricing strategies allows SMEs to respond effectively to market changes and customer preferences. A flexible pricing model is crucial in maintaining competitiveness and can contribute positively to both customer retention and profitability.

Through prioritizing a customer-oriented approach, SMEs can better align pricing with market expectations, which may strengthen customer loyalty and support revenue stability.

Adopting digital and direct distribution channels offers SMEs expanded access to their target markets. An increased online presence, through e-commerce platforms or social media, allows SMEs to broaden their customer base beyond traditional boundaries. This approach can improve market reach and streamline sales processes, positioning SMEs for growth in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

Data-driven promotional strategies can enhance the effectiveness of marketing initiatives for SMEs. Leveraging data analytics enables businesses to create targeted campaigns that resonate with specific audience segments, leading to higher engagement rates and optimized marketing spend. Combining digital promotions with traditional advertising may also increase brand exposure across varied customer demographics, supporting overall business performance.

Continuous product development and innovation are key to maintaining market relevance and differentiation for SMEs. Regular product updates or quality improvements can strengthen brand positioning and attract a wider customer base. Integrating customer feedback into the development process further enhances product alignment with market needs, which is integral to sustaining business growth and competitiveness.

5.5 Areas of future research

This study focused on SMEs in general without differentiating the influence of marketing mix strategies across various industries. The research gap lies in examining how these strategies vary in effectiveness depending on industry-specific factors, which could provide more tailored insights for SMEs in sectors like retail, technology, and manufacturing.

Investigating how the adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and automation tools, influences the effectiveness of marketing strategies in SMEs presents a significant research opportunity. This study could assess how technology impacts product development, pricing flexibility, promotional outreach and distribution efficiency, ultimately shaping organizational performance.

The influence of CRM systems on the implementation and success of marketing strategies in SMEs. This investigation might analyze how effective customer data management and

engagement practices can enhance promotional activities, refine pricing strategies and improve product development, contributing to overall business performance.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The study is limited by its geographic focus on SMEs in Nairobi's Central Business District. This restriction means the findings may not apply to SMEs located in other regions of Kenya or different countries, where market conditions and customer preferences may differ.

Another limitation is the relatively small sample size of 72 respondents out of a targeted 100. Although a 72% response rate is considered adequate, a larger sample size would provide more comprehensive data and increase the reliability and generalizability of the results.

The study also relies on self-reported data, which introduces the potential for bias. Respondents may have provided answers that reflect social desirability, potentially overstating the effectiveness of their marketing strategies or downplaying any challenges they faced, which can affect the accuracy of the findings.

The study does not differentiate between the marketing strategies of SMEs in various industries. Without accounting for industry-specific factors, the study fails to capture how marketing strategies may vary between retail, technology, or manufacturing, limiting the applicability of the results across different types of businesses.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire seeks to gain more information on the topic, the role of Marketing Strategies in the revenue growth of small and medium enterprises in the Nairobi Central Business District. All information collected will be strictly used for academic purposes.

SECTION A : RESPONDENTS PROFILE

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Age

- 20 – 29
- 30- 39
- 40- 49
- 50- 59

3. Level of education

- Primary level
- Secondary level
- Certificate
- Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD

4. How long has your SME been in operation

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 4 to 6 years
- 7 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

5. What is your role in the business

- Owner
- Manager
- Marketing Manager
- Sales Manager
- Other (please specify) _____

6. What is the primary industry of your SME

- Food and Beverages
- House hold Items
- Technology
- Fashion
- Any other _____

SECTION B: MARKETING MIX STRATEGIES

7. How often do you introduce new products or services

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

8. How do you differentiate your products with your competitors

- Unique features
- Superior quality
- Branding
- Customer service
- Others _____

9. Rate the impact of product development on your business growth.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

10. Which pricing strategy do you primarily use? (Check all that apply)

- Customer-oriented pricing
- Value-based pricing
- Competitive pricing
- Psychological pricing
- Other (specify) _____

11. How flexible are your pricing strategies in response to market changes?

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

12. Rate the impact of your pricing strategy on your business growth.

- 5
- 4
- 3

- 2
- 1

13. Which promotional activities do you use? (Check all that apply)

- Advertising
- Digital Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Sales Promotion
- Public Relations
- Other (specify) _____

14. How effective are your promotional activities in attracting new customers?

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

15. Rate the impact of your promotional strategies on your business growth.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

16. Which distribution channels do you use? (Check all that apply)

- Direct sales
- Distributors
- Online Platforms
- Retail Outlets
- Other (specify) _____

17. How effective are your distribution channels in reaching your target market?

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

18. Rate the impact of your distribution strategies on your business growth.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

19. Which marketing strategy do you believe has had the greatest impact on your business growth?

- Product Development
- Pricing strategy
- Promotion
- Distribution
-
- Other (specify) _____

20. What are the major challenges you face in implementing effective marketing strategies? (Check all that apply)

- Limited Budget
- Competition
- Lack of expertise
- Market Dynamics
- Technological changes
- Other (specify) _____

21. What opportunities do you see for improving your marketing strategies? (Select all that apply)

- Adopting new technologies
- Training and development of staff
- Expanding Digital Marketing Efforts
- Increasing Marketing Budget
- Collaborating with other businesses

SECTION C: ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

22. Our SME has experienced revenue growth in the past year.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

23. Our profit margins have improved over the past year.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

24. We have seen an increase in our customer base.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

25. Our customers are highly satisfied with our products/services.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

26. Our internal processes have become more efficient.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

27. Our employees are motivated and engaged.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

28. We have a strong brand presence in the market.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

29. Our marketing strategies have contributed significantly to our overall success.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1