MARKETING STRATEGY INFLUENCE ON SALES PERFORMANCE OF REGISTERED COMMERCIAL PRINTING FIRMS IN NAIROBI

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of the study was to investigate the effects of marketing strategy on sales performance of registered commercial printing firms. The marketing mix theory and competitive signaling theory guided the study. This study adopted the descriptive research design. The population of the study included all 68 commercial printing firms operating in Nairobi County and the respondents included a total of 136 marketing managers and supervisors. Census technique was adopted where all the marketing managers and supervisors from all the printing firms were included in the study. Information was gathered using first hand sources covering questionnaire that will be piloted to ensure it is valid and reliable. The analysis of the gathered information was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) both qualitatively and quantitatively. Descriptive statistics were used to describe data in the form of means and standard deviation and inferential statistics were used to draw inferences. The study findings were presented in form of charts, tables and graphs and through the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques. From the results of descriptive statistics, it was shown that most of the respondents agree that products of high quality command high sales, the participants in the study further agreed that intrinsic value of their products influence their internal sales performance. Based on descriptive statistics, it was shown that respondents to this study expressed satisfaction with regard to value based pricing being able to increase sales volumes; the respondents agreed to the use of penetration pricing in setting of prices in a bid to up the sales volumes; they agreed that use of penetration pricing leads to adoption of products thereby increasing sales' performance. The study recommends that printing firms should enhance their product attributes in terms of branding, product design and quality specification. In addition, it is important that printing entities in Nairobi focus on analyzing the pricing mechanisms and strategies embraced so that they are well aligned with the overall brands.

Key Words: *product strategy, pricing strategy, sales performance, commercial printing firms, Nairobi*

INTRODUCTON

Current business environment is characterized by stiff competition globally, regionally and even locally as firms seek to outperform one another. To emerge competitive, firms are therefore called upon to relay features and importance of the product offering to current and potential customers after producing, price them in a manner that targeted customers can afford, package and place them in convenient places for the customers (Kotler, 2000). The International Business Information Systems (IBIS) World Industry Research Report on printing industry in the United States of America (2019) state that the printing industry is declining in the face of digital of products and services, and this is further worsened the demand for printing where advertising and publishing has shifted to online means in the last five years to 2019. The increase in consumer spending on advertisement has not helped the printing sector, since most of it has been done on non-print channels which are mostly the internet. In the other sectors like banks and retails, the use of e-commerce and ability for online transactions has seen the operations of the banks to become paperless.

IBIS world report, (2019) argued that printing can take place on paper, glass, metal, clothes, plastics and other materials. If the aspect of commercial printing is to gain competitively, then the players must work on digitalizing their processes, look at communication channels, economic and information revolution. To succeed, the commercial printing companies must answer these questions: 'what do prospecting customers and clients value, how do the market communicate on its needs, what is preferences of the clients and what are the changing habits, what will work today and even tomorrow and where is the competition coming from?' Having sound answers to these questions, may mean the survival and thriving of the sector.

Printing industry at a global view covers the whole print procedure from design to distribution and to provision of non-print services. Therefore , industry definition not only includes the many companies that do actual printing, but also those providing binding and other services including finishing encompassing die cutting, laminating, mounting, cutting, varnishing and trimming clients documents. Abubakar (2014) views global digital development in technology as the reason behind industry transformation. Digital printing has moved continuously and progressively transforming from being commercial sector function to an office function. Printers are therefore focused on adding customer value through customer support, as majority investment towards traditional technology methods to grow capacity.

For a while, Africa was not being appreciated as an opportunity region. However, the past decade has proved this perception wrong with the GDP of the 54 countries expanding faster than the global average. Currently, rapid growth is being experienced on Africa's economy stimulated by great energy investment, investment in information and communication technology sector. African development bank reveals that more than a third of African countries GDP have grown more than 6%. The growth has attracted global printer manufacturers to Africa's emerging economies as demand for printers globally facing volatility (Glore, 2018).

According to Ojwaka and Deya (2018) the commercial printing industry keeps making adjustments to try and handle the challenges the sector faces. The growth in computer usage and computer-based enterprises has made many organizations to make the internet a part of their operations and in the promotion/advertising activities. The use of digital advertising and online technologies has become so common because of its flexibility aspect and it is easy to control. While Glore (2018) noted that using the internet can reach millions of people across the globe. In 2011 alone, several registered websites were able to reach more than 200 million viewers (itproportal.com, 2011), while the number of internet uses was approximately 2 billion of whom 800 million are of Asian origin (Hanafizadeh, et al., 2012).

As Behboudi (2017) noted that monetization of online content has been seen as an alternative source of revenues to work in place of the dwindling advertising revenues. For media houses, they have experienced fall in newspaper readership. In Kenya, the newspaper readership and circulation has dropped, although there has generally been a drastic growth in Standard and Daily Nation newspapers. Over the years, the printing industry in Kenya has experienced a challenging business environment (Kiriba & Ishmail, 2017). This has led to throat cut competition by the players. Players in the industry are using all means possible to increase their sales. To achieve this, they have to become more focused on marketing and markets, and making their businesses more customers oriented. Their products must be more customized both in their development and in the way they are presented to the customer (Bailur, Schoemaker & Donner, 2016).

The market for digital printing is projected to reach Kshs.2, 885 billion in the next three years that is 2023 due to the advanced printing technologies which offer fast and high quality designs. The technologies have also ensured that the services are offered at an affordable cost, which means that many printing companies are shifting to the use of digital printing portfolios. The more the customers demand for customized products and make on-demand printing services, the higher the demand and growth of the digital printing (IBIS world report, 2019).

Internet advertising as defined by Abtahi, Behboudi and Hasanabad (2017) as a commercially available content on the website that firms design so as to ensure that their customers are aware of their product offerings. Glore (2018) viewed internet advertisement as deliberately established messages that are shared on the websites of the third parties and they include the search engines that can only be accessed through the internet. Internet advertisement helps the users including the advertisers to share information and interact with users online and this may have a far reaching influence on the decision taken by the customers to make a purchase of the products (Abtahi, et al., 2017).

Sales performance in an organization is a key determinant to its success and ability to survive (Groza, et al., 2016). In an effort to establish and maintain high sales performance, the leadership must conduct periodic measurement so as to formulate better strategies, shift their expectations and share feedback on how well the firm has done in terms of its sales, as well as create incentive measures that will push the sales personnel to achieve their sales targets (Hodge, 2018). The selling function is important for disposing the firms' products and allowing continuity of operations.

Marketing mix is a term used in reference to key elements that need to be given attention by marketers in order to market their product or service offering appropriately to their customers (Ahmed & Rahman, 2015). It is made up of the controllable variables combined by an organization to meet the needs of their target customers in terms of product, price, place and promotion. The main purpose of a marketing mix is to influence consumer decision to result in a profitable exchange (Išoraitė, 2016). Product mix or strategy as is widely referred to relate to physical attributes of the commodity offered by an organization to satisfy customers' needs. There are four basic dimensions that determine the product mix include the level of consistency, the depth, the length and the width of the goods and services. Width is used in reference to the lines of the products of the firm while the product length refers to the average number of items within the lines of the products. Depth is the variability of the products in view of their sizes, formulations and flavors. The consistency of the product is used in reference to the closeness of one product with another line of items based on usage, the lines of distribution among other established indicators (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018).

These 4Ps catered the needs for marketing of goods only, hence created a need to find strategies that will guide firms in marketing for their services. This need came about since services are inherently different from products with characteristics like intangibility, imperishable, inseparable and heterogeneous (Išoraitė, 2016). As such by Booms and Bitner in the 1980s came up with three new strategies to market services and they are the 3Ps; 'People, Process and Physical Evidence', which then completes the 7Ps of the extended marketing mix. These elements influence each other and when handled correctly, often they lead to organization in achieving great success. Anytime a business unit faces stiff competition, adopting the marketing mix elements, conducting in-depth market research and doing consultation with other stakeholders can give them a competitive edge (Mustapha, 2017).

As earlier indicated, the first printing press in Kenya was established in 1895 by the government press. Since then, the number of commercial printing firms in the country has grown to 300 companies, according to the records held by the registrar of companies (Kenya Department of Registrar General, 2019). This growth has been attributed to liberalization of the Kenyan economy, great improvements in technology, increased literacy levels and embracing of new technological processes. The growth is because the government press opened space for commercial business entrepreneurs to enter that sector, and those first businesses enjoyed very high profit margins as the sector was very attractive. In the last several years, the sector has been facing revolutionary changes. First, reform processes were initiated in the 1990s that called for liberalization of the Kenyan economy (Kiriba & Ishmail, 2017).

Integration of local firms with the worlds was initiated through privatization. With such, Kenyan Print Industry was able to modernize as they incorporated lasted technologies and machines which fluctuated. There are two main reasons to the growth of the sector. According to the World Bank 2012, the first reason is spread of education to over 66%, since as the education levels increase with literacy levels, and then the industry also grows. Hence, there is a positive and direct effect of increased level of literacy on regional paper circulation rise (KAM, 2014).

Automation progress, globalization and liberalization of regimes have led to changes in the printing industry which has occurred in the last 15 years. The shift in usage of modern technologies, latest machines and software, which has led to the sector in grow in leaps and bounds. Many of the printing firms are using high advanced and heavy machines including computer-aided and controlled printing machines. Some of the Kenyan market players are using UV digital printing and inkjet technologies among other state-of-the-art technologies which have adopted the use of pre-press services (Francis & Waiganjo, 2014). The Kenyan printing sector has experienced wide growth due to the readily available technologies, increase in consumerism and global brands.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The printing sector in Kenya faces a lot of pressure to adjust, adapt and transform its operations in an effort to maintain its profit margins in the highly competitive environment. Since the year 2013, printing industry suffered during the stock market crash in Kenya in 2010 and at the onset of recession in 2013 (Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF), 2019). Accordingly, about 9 percent of the population had not accessed print media by March 2019. This reality resulted in closure of businesses, merging and acquisitions among business players and which accounted for 20% of printers to be out of commission. The situation was made worse with the introduction of the digital world where many publications are now accessed online (Kenya Association of Employers, 2017). Several studies have been done on the effect of marketing mix strategy and sales performance for instance; Oktaviyanti, Masyhuri and Mulyo (2015) looked at marketing mix and sales performance of a particular product names “Industri Hilir Teh Walini”. Results showed that increases in marketing mix variables resulted in an increase in sales performance. Osman, Othman, Salahudin and Abdullah (2016) investigated on implementing green concepts of marketing mix and noted that the local small companies within the Malaysian business space need to have a better understanding of the mix marketing to sustain performance in the future. Ndikubwimana (2016) used the case of Rwanda to study market mix effects on sales volume among SMEs in Rwanda. Results show that appropriate application of marketing mix results in higher sales volume. Gituma (2017) focused on Unga Limited to examine the effect that marketing mix had on sales performance. From the results, place, price, promotion and product had positive relationship to sales performance. All the above studies were based on different contextual and conceptual backgrounds; none of them specifically looked at the effect of marketing strategy on sales performance of commercial printing firms in Nairobi hence creating the need of carrying out the current study.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study sought to determine the effects of marketing strategy on sales performance of commercial printing firms.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Mix Theory

Marketing mix theory was developed by Grönroos (1994). The theory has been used in making important decisions that are geared towards implementing a marketing plan. Marketing mix theory idea is aimed at organizing all the marketing plans aspects around the desires, habits and target market’s psychology (Blut, Teller & Floh, 2018). A number of attributes are combined under this theory so as to enhance the brand of the products. The price, promotion, product and place forming are the major components that are combined to form the Four P's. They are these four proxies that marketing managers leverage on enhance the marketing environment in their entities. This is aimed at making decisions that center the four P's on the customers in the target market so as to help in creating the perceived value and generating a positive response.

The marketing mix methodology was largely relevant during the initial days of marketing as a concept where the high proportion of the economy was represented by physical items and products (Grönroos, 1994). However, the concept has gained relevance as seen by most of the people proposed additional proxies (extended P's) that cover the people, processes and physical appearance among others (Kraak, Englund, Misyak & Serrano, 2017). However the marketing mix in today's life has most commonly remains based on the 4P's.

The marketing mix theory was applied to expose the activities and strategies that marketing managers undertake to increase their sales. In looking at the 4Ps in the marketing mix, it exposes the marketers and strategies they adopt in increasing their sales such as product, pricing, promotion and distribution strategy and how best to employ them for realization of high sales performance.

Competitive Signaling Theory

The competitive signaling theory was developed by Michael Spence (1973). It is an important theory as it gives a limit on the level of predatory pricing that can be attached to the costs both at the potential and actual entrants (Moss, Neubaum & Meyskens, 2015). When looking at limit pricing, it may be an indication that the prices are low and the entrepreneur is willing to protect his/her market through making sacrifices in terms of returns, where predatory pricing costs are adopted, it signals that the low cost structure is so as to fend off new entrants in the market and also that the entrepreneur has deep pockets. Modifications made to the price of products inform the market and the situation with the competition and it is based on the amount adjustments, the timings and context. Marketers need to be able to differentiate the temporal, evolving and structural changes in price as they produce different results (Hodis, Sriramachandramurthy & Sashittal, 2015).

When one marketer gives a price cut, the other market players may accommodate those changes; they may defend their market share by giving a counter offer like discounts or even low price cuts on the products (Tran, 2017). The market signals intent, motive, objective, goal and ability of different market players. The signals may be directed to their own customers (actual and potential), the competitors, other stakeholders and investors. After the signals are given, firms will study the signal and decide on which response to give, but one signal can have different interpretations depending on the context, the timing and receivers (Taj, S2016). The signal is either deemed as clear, consistent or aggressive, the case of a price increase can be seen as a response to increase in demand of the product or weakness in the structure of the sender. At times can choose to cooperate when they analyze the signal and find it to be a good one and avoid retaliation.

At times of imperfect information, signaling can be deemed as rational predation. In many markets, it important for the players to keep themselves informed of the conditions and characteristics of the market in terms of production and technological trends. Using asymmetry of information can be concluded as predatory, when the player can influence the belief system, values and expectations of rivals in the market place and hence impact on the entry and exit of a product in the market and the price adjustments (Courtney, Dutta & Li, 2017). But at times the managers can overreact to the signals given by other market players and in the face of their competition.

The theory is relevant in the study as expounds on adoption of a price strategy that gives more returns on the investors and owners of the business unit. Any pricing made should be after close scrutiny of the market, rival competition and after gathering a lot of information so as to increase the sales performance of the firm.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Concept of Sales Performance

Business units seek high profits, low cases of loses over a period time which is a key in the performance of the business venture (Groza, Locander & Howlett, 2016). Business ventures measure their performance in monetary terms against the investment made and the policies and its operations. Performance in general looks at the general strategy, innovative measures, quality of products and services, position held in the market place and the long-run view of the operations. One of the performance fronts in business is sales performance, whose key indicators are total revenue, marketing –related expenses, profit level and extent of customer satisfaction. Profit making is important to sustain the operations of the business that is why many investors seek new and improved products as per the market demands. Organizations also offer new ways to reduce operational costs like marketing and promotional costs that yield more returns. As such marketing is the life blood needed in an organization Improvement in the marketing decisions and factors will positively affect the economy (Yuan, Xu, Li & Lau, 2018).

Sales performance in an organization is a key determinant to its success and ability to survive (Groza, et al., 2016). In an effort to establish and maintain high sales performance, the leadership must conduct periodic measurement so as to formulate better strategies, shift their expectations and share feedback on how well the firm has done in terms of its sales, as well as create incentive measures that will push the sales personnel to achieve their sales targets (Hodge, 2018). The selling function is important for disposing the firms' products and allowing continuity of operations.

Product Strategy

Product Quality: Hajjat and Hajjat (2014) looked at how the quality of a product affects the performance of a business in some of the Arab companies. In order to illustrate the stages associated with the stages of developing a product from the process of conception up to the process of distributing, a model was developed. Data analysis was conducted through the use of structural equation modeling techniques. It was revealed that the extrinsic value of a product influenced the external performance while the intrinsic value of the product influenced internal performance.

According to Wang (2017), perceived product quality basically entails the process of assessing customers to find out their views regarding the product's quality. Agyekum, Haifeng and Agyeiwaa (2015) ascertain that quality is key when designing and manufacturing superior products and that customers are always found on the expectations that the products will be of high quality. The quality of a product is therefore regarded as a key contributor to the success of the competitive advantage of a firm. Product quality is perceived to be the degree to which a certain product achieves the customer's needs. On the other hand perceived quality entails the judgment of the consumer regarding how the product is much superior or it is excelling in the market.

Product Packaging: Rehema and Paswan (2012) researched on how consumers react to new packaging design. With regard to the previously done research, it is suggested that when the quality of a product and the prices are combined together, they will influence the intention of the customers towards the power of purchasing. A product that is packaged and has a low process receives less attention as compared to those that are charged highly. However, according to some studies, the attitude of a customer towards the package of a product and its quality is believed to have an effect on the purchasing decision when it comes to buying of products that have low charges (Rehema and Paswan, 2012).

In accordance to Velasco, Woods, Petit, Cheok and Spence (2016), product package possesses important attributes that help in communicating the ability to consume. A product package is basically a container that helps in the identification, preservation, protection and relates directly with the product itself. Effective design of a package requires that there be knowledge materials, their properties, methods of manufacturing together with the process of conversion. The design of a package plays a key role in both increasing the product visibility and helping in easily recognizing the product. Product packaging is also believed to play a key role in revitalizing the brands of a company with the main purpose of increasing the sales. Stanujkic, Karabasevic and Zavadskas (2015) states that the design of a package is believed to have an effect on the belief of a consumer regarding the products and the beliefs of consumption which increase the purchasing decision and the volume of sales.

Branding: Ajagbe, Long and Solomon (2014) looked at how the promotion of sales and the branding of a product affect the performance of a company using a case study of AIICO insurance Nigerian PLC. A total of 60 employees were sampled by the study and data collection done through use of survey questionnaires. Chi-square plays an essential role when it came to analysis of the data. Branding of a product and promotion of the sales were seen to affect the growth of the organization. Kalembe (2015) on how branding contribution enhances Rwandan tourisms performance reveled that branding and performance of the tourism sector in Rwanda related to each other.

Njawa (2015) conducted a study on how advertisement affects the performance of an organization with focus on technologically established firms. The study's population included the employees of TIGO. The views for the respondents were obtained through primary sources. It was shown that awareness; loyalty and equity of the brand significantly affected the performance of an organization. Adegbuyi, Ajagbe, Kehinde, Adegbuyi and Akande (2015) researched on the strategic roles played by branding in the sales performance of an organization. A survey method was adopted by the study. Data collection from 150 respondents was done through use of structured questionnaires. It was showed that branding significantly influenced the performance of sales.

Lamptey (2017) researched on how branding affect the firm's performance using a case study of the pharmaceutical products in the retail industry, the mediating role of customers. It was noted that branding positively affected the performance of an organization. A study by Kim, Kim and Jeong (2003) on how consumer-based brand equity affects the performance in financial terms of a firm revealed that the loyalty of a brand, image together with awareness positively affected profitability while the quality of a brand negatively affected financial performance.

Pricing Strategy

Odhiambo (2013) looked at pricing as a tool of enhancing comnpetititiev position and how this enhances the ability of sales generated by the pharmaceutical entities to perform. The study findings revealed that the decision and strategy of pricing significantly affected the performance of sales. In accordance to Howard, Bach, Berndt and Conti (2015), pricing entails the process that allows an organization to determine what it will get when it exchanges its products after factoring in the costs of manufacturing, competition, products' quality, the condition and the place of the market.

Value Based Pricing: This is the process of setting prices on the basis of the perceived value of a customer with regard to the products/ services. According to Töytäri, Rajala and Alejandro (2015), thias is among the strategies for pricing that deliver more profits. It describes the charge for the highly desired alternative of the consumer in addition to the value derived from differentiation. It is determined by the product itself and informed by the perceptions on the value of the product. The setting of the value based pricing is done by putting into consideration the product/ service value on the target consumers (Danzon, Towse & Mestre- Ferrandiz, 2015).

A study by De Toni, Milan, Saciloto and Larentis (2017) on how the pricing levels and strategies affect corporate profitability noted a direct link between profitability of the firm and the adopted value based pricing. Liozu and Hinterhuber (2013) researched on pricing orientation, pricing capabilities and performance of the firm. A total of 1,812 professional involved in pricing were surveyed to measure how the approach of pricing influences performance of a firm. The study revealed that value-based pricing and performance of the firm positively related to each other. Hinterhuber (2008) investigated on the strategies of customer value-based pricing and the main reason behind companies' resistance through the adoption of a two-stage empirical approach. The findings of the study showed that value assessment deficits, value communication deficits, insufficient effectiveness of market segmentation, sales force management deficits and insufficient support from the senior management team are the key factors that hinder the process of implementing the strategy of value-based pricing.

Penetration Pricing: Sije and Oloko (2013) investigated on the strategy of penetration pricing and performance of Kenyan SMEs. Selection of employees from various SMEs was done through use of stratified random sampling. Data analysis was done through use of descriptive and inferential statistics and the study findings revealed that penetration pricing and performance positively correlated to each other. In accordance to El Maghraby, Ahmed and Osman (2015), the strategy of penetration entails the process where a product/ service are charged a low price to allow easy market penetration. Rémuzat, Dorey, Cristeau, Ionescu, Radière and Toumi (2017) ascertain that penetration pricing is a process that allows organizations to set lower prices for newly established products/services so that they can easily penetrate to new and existing markets. Du and Chen (2017) suggested that penetration pricing plays a major role in supporting launching of new products.

Wainaina and Oloko (2016) focused on the ability to penetrate the market and its link with the ability of the firm to grow with key emphasis on firms that take part in processing of soft drinks. The study employed the use of stratified random sampling. Variable relationships were done through use of correlation and the findings revealed that penetration pricing negatively impacted the growth of an organization. It is believed that penetration pricing can contribute to increase in market share and also the volume of sales. Additionally, Liu, Zhai and Chen (2019) ascertain that the strategy of penetration pricing can be adopted by organizations to help in promoting complementary products.

Nyaga and Muema (2017) conducted a study on how the strategy of penetration pricing affected Kenyan insurance firms' profitability. 45 insurance companies were used as the target population. Data form the period of 2008-2012 was adopted by the study and 900 employees were used as the sample. In order to sample 2 employees from each of the insurance companies, the technique of purposive sampling was used. The study revealed that penetration pricing and profitability of the firm positively related to each other.

In accordance to Kienzler and Kowalkowski (2017), the strategy of penetration pricing is used by organizations to help in pricing their products and services at a price that is lower than the normal one. With regard to this, an organization develops the ability to get accepted in the market, enhance the overall share in the market or lowering the level of competition in the market. Charging very low prices means that firms must forget the probable revenue streams and create an impression to the end users that the quality of the product is low. Through this, it will be a challenge for the firm to raise the general level of prices. Additionally, it will become much difficult for products that are charged at low prices to takeoff in the market.

Price Discount: In accordance to Kuntner and Teichert (2016), promotion of prices covers the coupons and other messages that drive customers to buy more products. In today's life, most customers have gained awareness of all the communication campaigns which has enabled them to seek for offers of promoting the prices of the products. The promotion of prices strongly affects customers. They play a role in influencing customers to purchase one particular brand rather than purchasing another and also purchasing in greater quantities (Liu, Li, Peng, Lv and Zhang, 2015). Price discount entails the process where customers are given products at reduced prices other than the regular one. Li, Wang and Dai (2016) argue that firms can leverage on discounts to induce product trials which may grow the repeated purchases through the customers that are already in place and those that are new to the firm.

Moslehi and Haeri (2016) researched on how promotion affects the perceived quality and the intention of repurchasing. The adopted design was descriptive survey and it was based on performance. In total, the customers of coffee shops adding to 230 of them were targeted and sampled with aid of simple random means. It was shown that promotion of prices significantly impacted perceived product quality and service quality. Cui, Yang and Chou (2016) on how the strategies of promoting prices affect the sales performance of manufacturers revealed that the strategies of promoting prices affects performance of sales.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design whose essence is to determine and report the correct state of things without manipulating the information (Ponelis, 2015). Thus, the descriptive design was ideal as it enabled the researcher to have a description of the marketing mix strategies that printing entities in Nairobi had adopted as well as the state of their general performance in terms of sales. According to Tang, Hallouch, Chernyak, Kamaya and Sirlin (2018), a targeted population covers a related group of individuals, things or items that have analyzable attributes. In this inquiry, 68 printing firms in Nairobi were targeted (KAM, 2020) and the respondents included the marketing managers and supervisors from the commercial printing firms. All the 136 marketing managers and supervisors in the commercial printing companies were targeted and included in the inquiry. With these relatively smaller targeted respondents, census was adopted and this all of them were included in the investigation. By this census, it was possible to gather information from all the participants. This is the process of gathering information that interest the researcher in an established manner and which is systematic so as to provide answers to the study questions, evaluate the outcomes and test the stated hypotheses (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Data collection procedure refers to the process that the researcher will undertake in order to administer the data collection instruments (Mauša, Galinac-Grbac & Dalbelo-Bašić, 2016). An introduction letter was sent to the respondents' firm and the management of the various printing firms to be allowed to undertake the research in their firm, before commencement of the exercise. On being granted permission, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the staff members through the email. Polite reminders and follow up was done to inform the respondents on the need to fill in the questionnaires. Once the questionnaires had been filled in, they were emailed back to the researcher. The gathered information was processed and analyzed quantitatively as supported by SPSS tool. Descriptive statistics were used to describe data in the form of means and standard deviation. The researcher also used the regression analysis. The link between marketing mix strategies and the ability of sales to perform was explored regressionally with the model as summarized as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y is Sales Performance; β_0 is a constant; β_1 and β_2 are regression coefficients; X_1 is product strategy; X_2 is pricing strategy; ε is error term

RESEARCH RESULTS

Product Strategy and Sales Performance

The study sought to determine the effect of product strategy on sales performance. From the results of descriptive statistics, it was shown that most of the respondents agree that products of high quality command high sales, the participants in the study further agreed that intrinsic value of their products influence their internal sales performance. They were in agreement that the designs of their packages increases product visibility as well as market recognition; they agreed that well labeled products attract more clients therefore a greater sales volume and finally respondents felt that brand names increase product visibility therefore greater sales. Overall, the respondents were moderately satisfied with their Product Strategy as provided by printing firms. From the results of correlation analysis, it was shown that product strategy had a positive correlation with sales performance. Regression results indicated that products strategy had significant effect on sales performances.

Pricing Strategy and Sales Performance

The study sought to establish the effect of pricing strategy on sales performance. Based on descriptive statistics, it was shown that respondents to this study expressed satisfaction with regard to value based pricing being able to increase sales volumes; the respondents agreed to the use of penetration pricing in setting of prices in a bid to up the sales volumes; they agreed that use of penetration pricing leads to adoption of products thereby increasing sales' performance. The respondents moderately assented to price bundling of products thereby increasing sales performance. Regarding giving of bonus packs to keep customer loyalty and effectively increasing their market share. Overall, the respondents were moderately satisfied with the Pricing strategy of the various commercial printing firms. In view of the results of the correlation analysis, it was shown that pricing strategy has positive correlation with sales performance. In view of regression analysis, pricing strategy was found to significantly predict the performance of sales of the firm.

CONCLUSION

The first objective of the study sought to determine the effect of product strategy on sales performance of commercially established printing entities in Nairobi. Inferential results indicated that product strategy had direct interaction with sales performances of the commercial printi9ng entities in Nairobi. It was noted that product strategy significantly predicts sales performance of commercial printing firms in Nairobi. From descriptive statistics, the study revealed that most commercial printing firms in Nairobi do practice product strategy as a component of their marketing mix strategy.

The second objective of the study sought to determine the effect of pricing strategy on sales performance of commercially established printing entities in Nairobi. From correlation results, pricing strategy and sales performance of the commercially established printing entities in Nairobi were found to be directly linked with each other. Regression results indicated that pricing strategy and sales performance of the commercially established printing entities in Nairobi were significantly linked with each other. From descriptive statistics, the study noted that most of the commercial printing firms in Nairobi had embraced pricing strategy as a component of their marketing mix strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that printing firms should enhance their product attributes in terms of branding, product design and quality specification. Through these efforts, it would take a lot of time for the end users to forget the product offering in their mind and this will boost the general performance of the product. There is need for modification of the systems for packaging that provide solutions to issues faced by the clients including the need for portability and convenience and the safety measurers so as to consider customer requirements. The study recommends that printing firms should heavily invest in innovation to increase their product development that cannot be easily replicated by competitors.

It is important that printing entities in Nairobi focus on analyzing the pricing mechanisms and strategies embraced so that they are well aligned with the overall brands. This way, they will be able to increase the overall demand in the market such that the end users are not able to shift to other rivals in the industry with similar product offerings. Rather, the customers will have a sense of loyalty and intimacy of sticking to their present brands. It is recommended that printing firms should invest in innovation through R&D so as to develop cost effective methods in their operations in order to be able to adequately compete with emerging trends.

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