

Competitive Strategies and Performance of Plastic Packaging Industries in Kenya: A Case Study of Coca-Cola Beverages Kenya-Preform Manufacturing Plant

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Abstract:- Manufacturing, especially the plastics manufacturing sector, faces significant challenges from the constantly shifting competitive business environment, and companies have been working hard to maintain their competitiveness. Porter provided evidence that implementing a generic competitive strategy can result in a more robust competitive advantage. The purpose of this research is to determine the effects of Porter's generic strategies on competitive advantage in the plastic packaging industries especially Coca-Cola Beverages Kenya. The sample size for this study was 50 respondents, whereas the population was roughly 45 respondents. Questionnaires were the primary means of gathering data. The findings underscore the required need to adapt specific porter strategy to have advantage over their competitors, such as Cost Leadership, Differentiation, cost focus and differentiation focus strategy. The study demonstrated that the cost focus, cost leadership, differentiation and differentiation focus strategy had impacted the Coca-Cola beverage Kenya's success among the competitors. Hence the study concludes that to maximize competitive advantage, the firm should focus on these strategy to edge out competition.

Keywords:- Porter's Generic Strategy, Cost Leadership, Differentiation, Cost Focus, Differentiation Focus Strategy, Plastic Manufacturing Industry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world's plastic packaging market is anticipated to increase starting from 0.103 billion tonnes within 2024 upto 0.123 billion tonnes within 2029, at a CAGR of 3.56% during the forecast period (2024-2029). Around the world, packaging is mostly made of plastic and is distinguished by its great technological complexity, low value, and short lifespan. 40% of the demand for plastic in Europe comes from packaging (Cimpan et al., 2021). The focus of this research is on plastic manufacturing by Coca-Cola Beverages Kenya Preform Manufacturing Plant (CCBK-PMP) located in Kenya's Nairobi region. Plastic packaging items are becoming more and more necessary as the population grows and more people migrate into cities. Packaged goods are in more demand. In addition, as the economy expanded, more

people in the region had more discretionary income and the middle class grew (Kuno et al., 2024). The demand for packaged goods expands along with people's spending power, propelling the expansion of the plastic packaging sector. Through businesses supplying blown film extrusion, injection stretch blow molding (ISBM), blow molding, and injection molding, Kenya's plastic packaging industry has advanced technologically (Kuno et al., 2024). There are several competitors vying for the same market, this sector is also the most competitive. In view of this, strategies are becoming a crucial management tool in today's cutthroat market (Akoi et al. 2021). Strategic management, which includes setting organizational goals, creating plans and policies to attain these goals, and assigning resources to implement a set of strategies, demonstrates the main direction of the company (Ali & Anwar, 2021). In order to give plastic manufacturing industries a competitive edge in the market, this study focuses on Porters' generic strategy model (Ali et al. 2021), which consists of cost leadership strategy, cost focus strategy, differentiation focus strategy and differentiation strategy (Ali, 2014).

➤ Research Objectives

The study's main objective was to ascertain how Porter's general strategies affected competitive advantage in plastic manufacturing industry. The impact of four generic strategies on competitive advantage had to be ascertained in order to meet this research goal: the first was the effect of cost leadership strategy; the second was the effect of differentiation strategy; the third was the effect of cost focus strategy and the fourth was the effect of differentiation focus strategy. What approach is better than the others for obtaining a competitive edge in the plastic manufacturing sector, as well?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW GENERIC STRATEGY

As per Thompson and Strickland (2010), strategy is characterized by the construction of a robust defense against the five rival elements (Fonseca & Lima, 2015). Businesses in the oil and gas sectors must create an unstable position through competitive strategy in order to effectively manage Porter's five opposing forces and so create a long-lasting

competitive advantage (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016). A corporation can only have one of two types of competitive advantage: low cost or distinctiveness (Anwar & Ghafoor, 2017), even though its strengths and weaknesses may differ from those of its rivals (Ibrahim, 2016). Mohanty and Gahan (2015) define strategy as the process of creating a unique and valuable position by a range of actions (Douglas et al., 2015). It is impossible for a company to be both a cost leader and a differentiator at the same time (Douglas et al., 2015). Instead, it must pick between the two (Douglas et al., 2015).

The primary strategies that outperform rivals are produced by the two forms of competitive advantage (Anwar & Ghafoor, 2017) and the variety of competitive activities the organization takes to attain them (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016). According to Aziz et al. (2021), there are three sorts of strategies that are regarded as generic since they may be used to various business types (Demir et al., 2020). Each company should use just one of those general tactics; if a company uses all three, it indicates that it has no competitive edge (Faraj et al. 2021).

Each of the general methods entails a different way to competitive advantage (Hameed & Anwar, 2018). The goal of the cost leadership strategy is to position the company as the industry's lowest-cost manufacturer or seller with the same potential profit (Hamza et al. 2021). A differentiation strategy enables a company to create or market distinctive goods or services (Ismael et al. 2021). A focused approach that enables the company to effectively service a certain clientele or market niche (Jamal et al. 2021).

Cost Leadership Strategy: This approach focuses on minimizing costs associated with business operations and can be implemented through low price, low input, experience, product design, economies of scale, and process design (Ireland & Hitt, 2011). The process of developing a product with features comparable to those of competitors but at a cheaper cost is known as low pricing (Mary, 2010). Low input also refers to having cheap labor and a location that is near storage and raw supplies (Ireland & Hitt, 2011). Experience-wise, efficacy and efficiency will benefit from greater experience (Ireland & Hitt, 2011). Larger-scale operations are necessary for economies of scale, as is the successful design of the product or process that results in lower-priced commodities (Abdullah et al. 2021).

Differentiation strategy: This type of strategy focuses on the distinctiveness of the good or service, giving the customer a valuable good (Ahmed et al. 2021). Special features, brand name/image, technology, distributors or suppliers, marketing messaging, or advertising can all be used to differentiate a product (Akoi et al. 2021).

Cost focus strategy: when a firm concentrates inside a certain set of customers by seeking either a cost leadership or differentiation advantage, as demonstrated by strategic management in action (Coulter, 2010). This can be seen when plastic packaging industries target niche markets, such as eco-friendly packaging solutions for environmentally conscious consumers or specialized packaging for the

beverages that contain dairy (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). By either minimizing production costs to offer competitive pricing or innovating to provide unique, high-quality solutions, different firms can effectively implement a market focus strategy to achieve a competitive edge (Ahmed et al. 2021).

Differentiation focus strategy entails offering special offers to a limited group of clients. The strategy is commonly referred to as niche differentiation, product specialization, or niche marketing (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). A strategy of focused differentiation entails appealing to a niche market segment by providing superior quality, creativity or value than competitors (Porter, 2015). Businesses that use focused differentiation methods might focus on a certain sales channel or demographic segment

➤ Conceptual Review

Fig 1 outlines the conceptual structure of this investigation. In the research model below, the researcher selected two variables: generic tactics (cost leadership, differentiation, focus, and differentiation) and competitive advantage as independent variables. The framework is based on the study hypothesis, which states that using Porter's general strategies will provide you a competitive edge in the market.

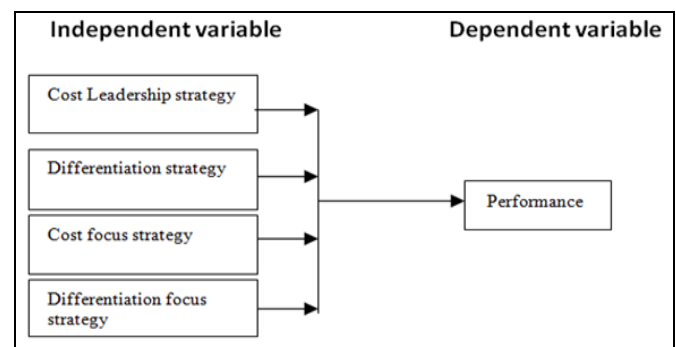


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework

➤ Research Hypothesis:

- H1: There is a positive impact of cost leadership strategy on competitive advantage
- H2: There is a positive impact of differentiation strategy on competitive advantage
- H3: There is a positive impact of cost focus strategy on competitive advantage
- H4: There is a positive impact of differentiation focus strategy on competitive advantage

III. METHODOLOGY

The target population, instruments, sampling size, and study design are all introduced in this section.

➤ Design of the Study

Data analysis in this study was done using a qualitative method. The researcher distributed a questionnaire to CCBK-PMP Kenya. There were two sections to the questionnaire:

the first asked questions about the participants' backgrounds and demographics. The participant's age, gender, degree of education, and number of years of experience were all included in the demographic questionnaires. The questionnaire's second portion asked questions about Porter's three generic tactics (differentiation focus strategy, cost leadership strategy, cost focus strategy and performance). The researcher asked four questions about differentiation strategy, four questions about cost focus strategy, and four questions about cost leadership, four questions on differentiation, five questions on performance.

➤ *Sampling Size and Target Population*

The researcher collected data from CCBK-PMP Kenya using the random sample approach. There were about 50 units in the study's population. The target population consisted of 45 units, and the researcher collected 45 correctly completed surveys from them. Consequently, 45 units made up the study's sample size.

➤ *Instrument*

A multiple-choice format was used in the questionnaire design. Each question was to be answered on a five-point

scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey was modified based on two distinct sources (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2017) and (Kothari 2014).

IV. RESULTS

The demographic analysis for research participants is elucidated in Table 1. As can be seen from the above data, 45 participants and 34 male participants took part in the study. 34 respondents are in the 18-35 age range, 10 respondents are in the 36-50 age range, and 1 respondent are in the 50–59 age range old, none participant fall into group of 60 years old and above. There were no PhD holders, two master's degree holders, 13 bachelor's degree holders among the participants, 15 diploma holders among the participants 10 certificate holders among the participants and ten secondary certificate holders among the participants. Of the participants, five had 1- 5 year's experience, while 33 had 6-10 years' experience, and 2 participants had 11-15 years' experience and none had above 15 years. Of the participants, 27 had non-managerial roles, while 16 held Middle Level roles, and 2 held Senior Level Management.

Table 1 Demographic Analysis

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	34	76 %
Females	11	24 %
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-35 years	34	75 %
36-50years	10	23 %
50-59years	1	2 %
Above 60 years	0	0 %
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	0	0 %
Secondary	5	11%
Certificate	10	22%
Diploma	15	33 %
Degree	13	29 %
Masters	2	5 %
PHD	0	0 %
Experience(s)	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	10	22%
6-10years	33	73 %
11-15years	2	5 %
Above 15 years	0	0 %
Position held	Frequency	Percentage
Non-Managerial Staff	27	60 %
Middle Level Management	16	36 %
Senior Level Management	2	4 %

Table 2 Reliability Test

Variable	No. Of Items	Pilot-Test (0.7)	Cronbach's Alpha
Cost leadership strategy	4	0.736	0.856
Differentiation strategy	4	0.704	0.872
Cost focus strategies	4	0.745	0.869
Differentiation focus strategies	4	0.766	0.923
Performance	5	0.797	0.916

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α) for the cost leadership strategy was 0.856, for the differentiation strategy it was 0.872, for the focus strategy it was 0.869, and for the growth strategy it was 0.923, for performance it was 0.916 as Table 6 demonstrates. Internal consistency reliability measurements were deemed high and appropriate in measuring the study variables; hence, they were deemed reliable for analysis and population generalization, as the reliability values surpass the 0.7 lower level of acceptability. The pilot study was used to

test the validity. After that, the instrument was changed so that the results and structure could be included into the finished product. Furthermore, throughout the questionnaire formulation stage, the supervisor and I had talks to verify that the measure contained a sufficient representative group of items that adequately probed the content. Anchoring the conceptions to the theory and empirical analysis of the data they were obtained from was another way that construct validity was ensured.

Table 3 Respondents views on Cost Leadership Strategy

Question	variables	percentage	frequency
CCBK-PMP's effectiveness in minimizing production costs	Strongly agreed	24%	10
	Agreed	49%	22
	Neutral	11%	6
	Disagreed	9%	4
	Strongly disagreed	7%	3
CCBK-PMP's effectiveness in management and reduction of material wastages.	Strongly agreed	26%	11
	Agreed	49%	22
	Neutral	9%	5
	Disagreed	7%	3
	Strongly disagreed	9%	4
CCBK-PMP's prioritization and maintenance of high standards of product quality	Strongly agreed	9%	4
	Agreed	56%	25
	Neutral	4%	2
	Disagreed	4%	2
	Strongly disagreed	27%	12
CCBK-PMP's efforts to maintain optimal production output levels.	Strongly agreed	42%	18
	Agreed	16%	8
	Neutral	11%	5
	Disagreed	11%	5
	Strongly disagreed	20%	9

➤ *Low Prices for our Products*

24% of the respondents strongly agreed while 49% of the respondents agreed. This indicates that a significant majority (73%) believe that low prices for the product had significance on the performance of the company against the competitors.

➤ *Management and Reduction of Material Wastages*

26% of the respondents strongly agreed while 49% of the respondents agreed. This indicates that a significant majority (75%) believes that if the company engages in management and reduction of material wastages, could lead to a more competitive advantage.

➤ *Maintenance of High Standards of Product Quality*

9% of the respondents strongly agreed while 56% of the respondents agreed. This indicates that a significant majority (65%) believes that if the company maintains the high quality standards, would increase customer base.

➤ *Optimal Production Output Levels*

42% of participants strongly agree, and 16% agree that maintenance of optimal production increases output levels that increase their performance, with a total of 58% acknowledging this issue.

Table 4 Respondents Views on Differentiation Strategy

Questions	variables	percentage	Frequency
CCBK-PMP's products consistently meet high-quality standards	Strongly agreed	40%	18
	Agreed	24%	10
	Neutral	14%	6
	Disagreed	2%	2
	Strongly disagreed	20%	9
CCBK-PMP's products are effectively branded and marketed	Strongly agreed	47%	21
	Agreed	22%	10
	Neutral	7%	3
	Disagreed	9%	5
	Strongly disagreed	15%	6
CCBK-PMP's products are superior to those offered by competitors	Strongly agreed	42%	19
	Agreed	24%	10
	Neutral	3%	2
	Disagreed	2%	1
	Strongly disagreed	28%	13
I am satisfied with the level of customer service provided by CCBK-PMP	Strongly agreed	20%	9
	Agreed	51%	22
	Neutral	6%	3
	Disagreed	7%	4
	Strongly disagreed	16%	7

➤ *Products Consistently Meet High-Quality Standards*

64% of respondents recognize that high-quality standards affects their performance, underlining the importance of good quality products in the market.

➤ *Effectively Branding and Marketing*

69% of the employees believe that effective branding affects their performance, indicating that the perceived value of marketing can open up more markets to have a competitive advantage.

➤ *Products are Superior to those Offered by Competitors*

42% strongly agree, and 24% agree that offering superior products compared to the competitors, will increase their economic stability and keep them as the major distributor of plastics.

➤ *The level of Customer Service*

20% strongly agree, and 51% agree that the company offers good customer services to their various customers, hence, impacting positively the performance outcomes

➤ *Cost Reduction Efforts*

53% strongly agree, and 16% agree that the company can effectively balance reduction in cost manufacturing without compromising the quality of the products to their customers indicating that they prioritize quality and efficiency in the industry.

➤ *Supply Chain Operations*

50% were neutral, 16% strongly agreed and 18% agreed that supply chain operations contribute significantly to cost savings and efficiencies, indicating that supply chain might slight affect the cost of production.

➤ *Pricing Strategies*

71% of the employees believe that effective pricing strategies sets them up as a cost leader in the industry,

indicating that the perceived value of the product can emphasize their position in the industry as the head.

➤ *Adapt to Fluctuations in Plastic Packaging Industries*

49% strongly agree, and 20% agree that the CCBK can effectively a adapt to fluctuations in plastic packaging demand and conditions indicating that CCBK have the ability to adapt to both economic and environmental adversaries.

➤ *Innovation*

42% strongly agree, and 22% agree that the company is known for its innovation in the plastic packaging industry indicating that they stay above the markets demand through innovation and efficiency in their products.

Table 5 Respondents Views on Cost Focus Strategy

Questions	variables	Percentage	frequency
CCBK-PMP effectively balances cost reduction efforts with maintaining product quality for its specific customers	Strongly agreed	53%	23
	Agreed	16%	8
	Neutral	5%	3
	Disagreed	13%	6
	Strongly disagreed	13%	5
CCBK PMP's supply chain operations contribute significantly to cost savings and efficiencies.	Strongly agreed	16%	7
	Agreed	18%	8
	Neutral	50%	22
	Disagreed	9%	4
	Strongly disagreed	7%	4
CCBK-PMP's pricing strategies in plastic packaging industry effectively positions us as a cost leader in the industry.	Strongly agreed	42%	19
	Agreed	29%	13
	Neutral	13%	5
	Disagreed	9%	5
	Strongly disagreed	7%	3
CCBK's strategies effectively adapt to fluctuations in plastic packaging demands and conditions.	Strongly agreed	49%	22
	Agreed	20%	9
	Neutral	13%	6
	Disagreed	7%	3
	Strongly disagreed	11%	5

➤ *Offers Unique Plastic Packaging Solutions*

49% strongly agree, and 24% agree that customers recognize that their brands offers unique plastic packaging solutions, hence this builds a good relationship between their customers and themselves.

➤ *Customers Satisfaction*

47% strongly agree, and 20% agree that the Customers are satisfied with the unique features of their plastic packaging products indicating that the positive responds to their products in the market.

Table 6 Respondents Views on Differentiation Focus Strategy

Question	variable	Percentage	frequency
CCBK-PMP is known for innovative plastic packaging designs and features.	Strongly agreed	42%	19
	Agreed	22%	10
	Neutral	3%	1
	Disagreed	11%	5
	Strongly disagreed	22%	10
Customers perceive our brand as offering unique plastic packaging solutions.	Strongly agreed	49%	22
	Agreed	24%	11
	Neutral	9%	4
	Disagreed	7%	3
	Strongly disagreed	11%	5
Customers are satisfied with the unique features of our plastic packaging products.	Strongly agreed	47%	21
	Agreed	20%	9
	Neutral	17%	8
	Disagreed	7%	3
	Strongly disagreed	9%	4
Customers show loyalty due to the unique benefits of our plastic packaging products.	Strongly agreed	16%	7
	Agreed	56%	25
	Neutral	4%	2
	Disagreed	11%	5
	Strongly disagreed	13%	6

➤ *Customers Loyalty*

16% strongly agree, and 56% agree that customers show loyalty due to the unique benefits of their plastic packaging products indicating their continuous efforts to satisfy the needs of the customers through offering distinctive products

➤ *Product Quality and Functionality*

73% of the employees believe that effective CCBK's products meet customer expectations for quality and functionality, indicating that the company effectively maintains the quality of their products to satisfy their customers.

➤ *Market Share Increase*

51% strongly agree, and 20% agree that CCBK's efforts have effectively increased their market share indicating their growth in the plastic packaging manufacturing industries.

➤ *Profability of the Company*

40% strongly agree, and 18% agree that CCBK's initiatives have led to improved profitability for the company indicating their continuous effort to make the company more lucrative.

➤ *Flexibility and Adaptability to Market Changes*

47% strongly agree, and 27% agree that CCBK initiatives have led to flexibility and adaptability to market changes indicating their level of adaptability to adverse market changes.

➤ *Environmental sustainability and responsibility*

53% strongly agree, and 16% agree that CCBK prioritizes environmental sustainability and responsibility indicating that the company observes due diligence in environmental conservation.

Table 7 Respondents Views on Performance

Questions	Variables	Percentage	frequency
CCBK's products meet customer expectations for quality and functionality.	Strongly agreed	20%	9
	Agreed	53%	24
	Neutral	7%	3
	Disagreed	4%	2
	Strongly disagreed	16%	7
CCBK's efforts have effectively increased their market share.	Strongly agreed	51%	23
	Agreed	20%	9
	Neutral	9%	4
	Disagreed	9%	4
	Strongly disagreed	11%	5
CCBK's initiatives have led to improved profitability for the company.	Strongly agreed	40%	18
	Agreed	18%	8
	Neutral	6%	3
	Disagreed	18%	8
	Strongly disagreed	18%	8
CCBK initiatives have led to flexibility and adaptability to market changes	Strongly agreed	47%	21
	Agreed	27%	12
	Neutral	6%	3
	Disagreed	9%	4
	Strongly disagreed	11%	5
CCBK prioritizes environmental sustainability and responsibility	Strongly agreed	20%	9
	Agreed	47%	21
	Neutral	2%	1
	Disagreed	11%	5
	Strongly disagreed	20%	9

V. DISCUSSION

➤ *Cost Leadership Strategy*

Cost leadership strategy: The results indicate that cost leadership strategy is strongly correlated with their performance. The high percentage of employees suggested that proper management could lead to better performance

through having management ensure environmental sustainability and maximize on high quality output. Product price reduction, as highlighted by a large portion of the employees, is another critical factor that positively affects performance. The company may need to implement strategies to improve price reduction and ensure good quality in the process.

➤ *Differentiation Strategy*

Differentiation strategy: Product quality and superiority are seen as influential factors in organisations performance. The perception of good and unique quality products affects the customers acumens and increases the importance of good working conditions and professional development. The concern over inadequate professional skills and lack of innovation suggests that ongoing professional development for employees is essential for the company to focus on through enhancing new methodologies to cater for diverse needs.

➤ *Cost Focus Strategy*

Cost focus strategy: The mixed perceptions of employees highlight that while it can be influential, other factors such as price reduction and good quality supply chain within the company are more consistently seen as impacting the performance. Cost strategies and fluctuation in plastic packaging are significant stressors that can detract from a good performance. The industry might consider providing additional support to employees by equipping them with the necessary knowledge that can enable them to faces these challenges.

➤ *Differentiation Focus Strategy*

Differentiation focus strategy: The significant influence of increasing market shares on companies performance increases the need for more unique and high quality products to help the company grow in the plastic packaging industry. Customers-producer relationships, as indicated by the impact of products quality, are crucial. Customer's loyalty and satisfaction can significantly boost the company performance.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research identifies a range of factors contributing to the companies performance among employees at Coca-Cola Beverages Kenya Preform Manufacturing Plant. The analysis reveals a complex interplay of porter strategies influencing CCBK-PMP performance, involving the employees themselves, their working environments. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving management interactions, enhancing product qualities, supporting employees with proper training and working conditions, and addressing working challenges. By tackling these factors, the company can create a more conducive environment for better performance.

RECCOMENDATIONS

CCBK-PMP should consider selling their products at average industry prices to outperform rivals or less expensive than usual rates to capture a larger market portion. By concentrating on a specific market segment, they can achieve attain a financial benefit or differentiation inside that particular portion. To further enhance performance, CCBK-PMP's management should implement cost focus strategies that expand their market reach and operations. This includes investing in market research, staff training, and new technologies to drive growth. Additionally, forming strategic

partnerships with like-minded companies can help reduce competition and uncertainty, boosting the firm's overall capacity and performance.

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