

Customization and its Influence on the Performance of International Courier Firms in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the influence of customization on the performance of international courier companies operating in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research design, utilizing the survey technique as its methodology. The research focused on operations managers, with an estimated population of 55 individuals representing various international courier firms in Kenya. To gather data, the researcher employed a census-based purposive sampling approach, targeting both primary and secondary sources. The data collection instrument of choice was the questionnaire, which had undergone a pilot test involving five local national courier companies in Kisumu. The analysis of quantitative data involved the application of both descriptive statistics, such as percentages, frequencies, averages, and standard deviation, as well as inferential statistics, including regression analysis and Pearson's correlations. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were rigorously addressed, ensuring the integrity of the study. The findings of the study were presented through the use of tables. The research findings, as indicated by the model summary derived from simple linear regression, revealed that customization accounted for 23.8% ($R^2 = 0.238$) of the variations observed in the performance of international courier companies in Kenya, with a statistically significant p -value of 0.001. When controlling for other factors within the model, multiple linear regression analysis demonstrated that a one-unit change in customization led to a substantial improvement of 0.397 units in the performance of these companies ($\beta = 0.397$, $t = 3.489$, $P < 0.05$). Consequently, the study rejected the second null hypothesis and established that customization had a noteworthy influence on the performance of international courier companies in Kenya. The research contributes to existing theory by highlighting the relevance of market segmentation in the context of the freight industry, offering a foundation for future studies in this field. Furthermore, the study recommends that management in the courier industry actively seek feedback from their clientele to gauge their satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement. Emphasizing a market-oriented approach is suggested, as it would enable these companies to better understand the genuine needs and desires of their customers, ultimately enhancing their overall performance.

Keywords: Customization, International Courier Companies, Market Segmentation, Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

A courier service is a company that transports and delivers things such as letters, packages, and larger shipments of goods; however, its original niche was the rapid delivery of time-sensitive documents such as contracts. They provide services to corporations and people that want speedy service, accountability, and tracking that cannot be accommodated by normal mail. These requirements cannot be met by regular mail. Around the turn of the century, three of the major courier services were commercial delivery services, the United States Postal Service, and bicycle messenger services (Cohen et al., 2005). Small businesses in a few cities throughout the United States established the first courier services in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When there were relatively few telephones in households, personal communications had to be delivered in person. There were several early firms that offered delivery services for parcels and baggage. In the early 20th century, the proliferation of major retail and department shops led to an increase in the need for package delivery services, which saw their popularity soar. Over the course of the subsequent several decades, the scope of such services expanded. Even though a lack of gasoline and rubber caused a fall in the courier sector during World War II, the industry rebounded after the war thanks to increased usage of air freight by courier services, which opened up new markets (Campbell et al., 2010).

The proliferation and variety of transportation options have led to problems with regulatory compliance. Companies that delivered by airplane or automobile were often subject to various regulations over pricing and other aspects of their business operations. These regulations govern a variety of variables. The birth of fax technology and electronic mail marked a new era of competition for the record transport business in the late eighties. However, some transportation firms have branched out to offer new services to their clients as a result of the continuing development of the global marketplace and the continued necessity for the physical conveyance of specific commodities. These "logistics," or "support," solutions were developed to aid clients in becoming more productive via computerized monitoring of manufacturing materials and guidance with handling sales orders and shipments (Kumar, 2008).

The increasingly scattered structure of operations for businesses within the economy worldwide, the expansion of mail-order commerce, and the escalating cost of postal services after 1970 caused a change in the character of courier services, making them more varied and competitive. As other modes of transportation, like trucks, began to merge with courier services, the distinctions between the two became less clear. The commercial delivery businesses that were formerly a complement to the United States Postal Service eventually formed rivals to the government-owned mailing services. In response, Postal Services increased its focus on its overnight Express Mail delivery as well as its Priority Mail service, which delivers packages in two days (Cohen et al., 2005). Regulatory problems were caused by the expansion and increased specialization of the delivery business. Companies that carried their goods by airplane or truck were often subject to different regulations on pricing and other elements connected to their business networks. Late in the 1980s, the introduction of fax machines and electronic mail brought about new levels of competition in the market for document delivery services. However, given the continued growth of the global marketplace and the continued necessity for the physical delivery of some commodities, several delivery businesses started to broaden their operations and offer new services to the clients they serviced. Logistics refers to the services that help businesses run more smoothly by keeping track of the supplies they use in production and the orders and shipments that come in (Kumar, 2008).

The Kenya Communications Act of 1998 gives the CCK the responsibility of issuing licenses and regulating postal and courier services in Kenya. All operators must be licensed, prices for essential services must be regulated, regulations must be enforced to ensure license requirements are met, and a regulated postal and courier market must be created. In Kenya, there are a total of 253 postal and courier companies, which includes transporters and freighters that correctly handle papers and goods fitting within the specifications established in the Kenya Communications Act 1998. The deregulation of postal and courier services has resulted in the subsector seeing exponential development in recent years, as stated in the online version of the standard newspaper that was published on April 30, 2009. Income from courier services surged by 86% in 2008, despite the fact that this area of the telecommunications business is not as flashy nor as widely used as mobile telephones. The CCK reports that at the end of December 2008, industry earnings had reached 1.99 billion shillings, almost double the industry's 2007 total of 1.06 billion shillings. The participants in the courier sector believe there is room for more expansion. Because of its commonplace nature in management field studies, the structure and concept of organizational performance are seldom defined openly. According to Alshehhi et al. (2018), there are three ways to assess whether or not an organization is meeting its objectives: by looking at how well it is doing its operations, its finances, and its overall performance. Financial success is the primary metric used in studies of empirical strategies. Iuliana and Maria (2016) explain that organizational performance is often synonymous with other concepts like production, efficiency, effectiveness, economies, earnings potential, and competitiveness. To that end, it is becoming more crucial to provide a simple definition of performance. Instead of focusing on the economic features of efficiency and effectiveness, dictionaries in French, English, and Romanian describe the notion of performance via the lens of result, accomplished goal, and quality. In accordance with the Romanian Language Explanatory Dictionary, the best outcome achieved by means of a technical framework, device, or equipment, etc.; the result (especially spectacular) won by someone in an athletic event; a great accomplishment in an area of effort; a performance

Improvements in technology are essential for the development of the postal and courier industries. The expansion of e-commerce and home delivery, along with improvements in transportation and other infrastructure in emerging nations, will lead to sustained growth in the sector (Crew & Kleindorfer, 2012). Although most businesses now use some kind of courier service, others absolutely must have overnight and same-day deliveries made on a regular basis. Distribution is essential for many businesses, including banks, which need help moving checks and vouchers, managing their mailrooms, and sending out statements; factories, which need to ship out finished products; and pharmaceutical distributors, which must get their drugs to pharmacies all over the country (Crew & Kleindorfer, 2012). The advent of competition between different organizations that provide courier services has resulted in a high level of proficiency amongst many competitors in the courier service industry, in addition to simultaneously controlling the rates that are being given on the market. Because the vast majority of businesses operating in this sector are locally owned and operated, Kenyans have been afforded new job possibilities, and the country has been able to keep more of its earnings inside its borders (Taylor & Hallsworth, 2010).

In this study, organizational performance measures of international courier firms used were the volume of customer referrals, fresh client flow, retaining clients, and loyalty among clients. These qualitative measures were used to indicate the performance of the international courier companies. These are the expected outcomes of niche marketing strategy implementation by the courier firms in Kenya, meaning that effective implementation of niche marketing will result in an increased number of customer referrals, new customers streaming into the firms, the firm will retain its current customers from deflecting, and both the new and current customers will be retained.

Because of the positive effects it is thought to have on CRM, customization is now widely used (Freeland, 2003; Lemon et al., 2002). Intense global rivalry, fragmented markets for discerning consumers, low prices for basic goods, and fast technical innovation are only a few of the hallmarks of the new industrial revolution that the advent of a global economy has brought about. Personalization of products and services is a major factor in this shift. Products tailored to individual buyers' needs are gaining popularity and may help a business grow rapidly. It is difficult for businesses that specialize in bespoke goods to produce and transport high-quality things that match the demands of each individual client, but doing so has become a new competitive advantage (Huang et al., 2005).

This tendency has also been pushed by the new technology-driven potential to deploy cost-efficient techniques for mass customization of products (Durray et al., 2000). Business-to-business marketplaces, which have always been and will continue to be an essential component of the business world, are especially impacted by these changes. In these markets, catering to the specific requirements of each individual customer has been and will continue to be an important focus (Kleinaltenkamp & Jacob, 2002). Because B2B marketplaces differ from consumer markets, the majority of services and products offered ought to be tailored to the unique desires of each individual client (Kleinaltenkamp, 2015). This is mostly true with business-to-business (B2B) services, which are certainly customized, although to variable levels, since the clientele is always involved in the design, production, and distribution processes (Haumann et al., 2015). As opined by Cermak et al. (1994), "customer involvement" is described as "the degree or level to which a client actively participates in shaping and influencing the design, development, and delivery of a product or service" (Dong et al., 2015).

The customization concept, which describes the level to which a firm's products or services may be tailored to meet the different requirements or specifications of its clientele (Anderson et al., 1997), has been gaining traction as a viable business idea among various companies and organizations. Contrasting the routine practice of making an effort to serve as many customers as possible by satisfying just a subset of their individual wants In this regard, the ultimate objective of customization and personalization is to adhere to as many of those needs as possible for each individual client. The goal of customization is to meet the needs of each unique consumer in as many ways as possible (Simonson, 2005; Fiore et al., 2004).

Uma and Chandramowleeswaran (2015) state that providing greater value to clients in a cost-effective and customer-satisfying manner is one of the most basic difficulties confronting modern organizations. Businesses need to do this since they are increasingly catering to niche markets or even individual clients. One of the biggest problems in service provision is the difficulty of maintaining both high quality and high productivity. According to Duray (2002) there are commercial, marketing, and manufacturing strategies that are related to personalized goods. Since mass customization was born in the manufacturing sector (that is, producers who create and sell physical items), the manufacturing sector predominates in the research environment pertaining to mass customization. This is one of the research gaps among the corpus of extant literature on widespread customization within the service sector, as stated by Piller and Tseng (2010). This is reflected in the five competitive features we've just covered, where the phrase "product" appears often but "service" is conspicuously absent. However, service industry businesses may also greatly benefit from adopting a mass customization strategy, as shown by the findings of the study by Piller and Tseng (2010).

According to Uma and Chandramowleeswaran (2015), achieving cost savings, dependability, and productivity gains requires standardizing the service process and product, while meeting individual customer demands requires tailoring the service offering. The best way to save costs, increase dependability, and boost productivity is to standardize service processes and products. De Koning et al. (2008) found that it is in everyone's interest for service industry competitors to strive for greater operational effectiveness and efficiency. Examples of this include increased quality, decreased cycle time, increased production, less waste, and eliminated rework (De Koning et al., 2008). One particular approach to achieving these kinds of advancements in the service sector is to embrace the concept of mass customization as a business approach. Furthermore, Piller (2003) detailed the merits of this adaptable manufacturing method in the context of the productive manufacture of a broad variety of products.

The capacity for customization enables businesses to modify their service items, processes, and staff structures in order to cater to unique requirements posed by specific use cases, according to Anning-Dorson (2016). This is the consequence of the provider's systems for service being aligned to meet the needs of a certain consumer within a particular usage case in order to provide a one-of-a-kind experience for that specific customer. Therefore, the capacity

to customize products acts as a moderating element in the link between innovativeness and the success of an organization. Customization has the ability to raise the company's performance because it includes the customer in the value creation procedures, enabling their input into its development and refinement, as stated by Lee et al. (2015; Migas et al. (2008).

Businesses that, in the words of Hult et al. (2004), maintain tight relationships with their clientele are more likely to gain from innovative activity than are businesses that do not do so. Being able to maintain a strong relationship with consumers helps to create knowledge about their current and future requirements as well as to react to that information, as asserted by Jaworski and Kohli (1993). In the same vein, Story et al. (2015) state that having those types of skills helps companies produce creative goods and processes that are personalized to the preferences of their consumers. The outcome is a rise in revenue and productivity for these businesses. At the same time, scholars Ngo and O'Cass stated in their 2013 survey that customer involvement is directly linked to new product development. This is because companies that encourage user input and customization are better equipped to align their innovative efforts with what consumers want. When a company's process innovation is in step with what its customers want, it increases its chances of success both financially and non-financially.

There are upsides to demand that come from customer-driven product modification. Providing customers with items that are unique to them increases their satisfaction and loyalty, as well as their propensity to spend more (Murthi & Sarkar, 2003; Dewan et al., 2003; Ansari & Mela, 2003). Customer value, contentment, and loyalty are all impacted by product customization because of the positive effects on the bottom line. There is a correlation between personalized email content and higher click-through rates, as shown by research by Ansari and Mela (2003). An online survey of a representative cross-section of internet consumers was undertaken under Srinivasan et al. (2002) with the assistance of a well-known market research firm. The authors investigated the effects of personalization on the loyalty of clients in a business-to-consumer (B2C) setting on the internet and discovered a strong correlation between the two. According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2004), businesses may strengthen their relationships with consumers and increase loyalty and retention rates by providing individualized services. In order to provide a really unique experience for customers, customized service requires the mental contributions and creative participation of the staff (Safizadeh, 2008).

Niu (2021) claims that a combination of data versatility, process flexibility, and adaptability, as well as all three together, has a considerable favorable effect on the performance of a customized service-oriented manufacturing information system. Research on the correlation between adaptability and productivity has shown that a number of factors impact system performance; among them is the ability to modify both processes and data. Adaptability in the system is where the benefits of process adaptability become apparent in terms of improved performance.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As a result of recent changes in the nature of the business environment, companies are being forced to look for new ways to compete. No business can cater to everyone's needs; so instead, the focus should be on selecting the right clients and delivering what they want. Businesses are able to generate value thanks to innovation, and marketing assists those businesses in capturing that value (firm success). Organizations that offer their goods within a segmented grouping or subset will be exceptionally skilled due to their knowledge regarding the requirements and aspirations of their target clients (Akbar et al., 2015).

According to research, traditional businesses are in danger from the emergence of younger, more creative rivals, and the ongoing advancement of information and manufacturing technology calls into question the efficacy of their marketing plans (Dalgic, 2018). According to Robbins and Coulter (2009), the necessity for innovation in the field of courier services, which operates in an ongoing environment that is both unpredictable and competitive, cannot be overlooked. In order to thrive in today's fast-paced and fiercely competitive global market, the courier services business must, first and foremost, innovate on a consistent basis. Every firm operating on a global scale has difficulties both within and outside the organization that may impede its ability to achieve its objectives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Traditional criteria include market segmentation based on the descriptive features of clients. The activity of splitting prospective clients into subsets depending on demographics, socioeconomic, or psychological criteria is referred to as "market segmentation" (Powers & Sterling, 2008). The individuals who match the specifications are presumed to be identical in at least some ways (for instance, their expectations and desires) since both parties possess a trait on which the criteria depend (e.g., an advanced education level). In theory as well as practice, behavioral segmentation is implemented alongside more traditional criteria to differentiate clients depending on their viewpoints

on the value they draw from specific products, the simplicity with which they are able to buy, and the brands they would rather choose. The tastes and aspirations of the market in question form the foundation of this sort of segmentation. The core idea arises from the notion that customers may have varied identifying characteristics while sharing common expectations and desires (Powers & Sterling, 2008).

The first thing to do when segmenting markets is to "choose a market or product category for investigation." According to Lamb et al. (2003), deciding on a foundation or grounds for market segmentation is the second stage. Picking segmentation descriptors is the third step. Identifying and analyzing segments is the fourth strategy. Selecting intended consumers is the fifth stage. Lastly, it's important to "create, execute, and maintain proper marketing mixtures." Product, distribution, promotion, and pricing tactics make up what is known as "the marketing mix," a set of tools used to establish and maintain profitable connections with certain consumer groups.

The increasing level of competitiveness in today's business environment, along with market globalization, has produced a rise in the use of strategic approaches by companies in their marketing endeavors. Long-term financial performance in market-oriented businesses is predicated on the strategic planning of marketing activities (Milisavljević, 2010). Strategic targeting is the process by which firms decide which segments of the market to serve (Choy, Shin, & Lee, 2013). Approaching the market with the purpose of addressing the needs of customers and creating long-term connections with those clients is a critical component of a need-strengthening strategy. Recent marketing researchers have concluded that segmentation is a crucial part of any successful marketing plan. The writers here argue that this strategy's proper use has become the bedrock of gaining a market advantage (Kotler & Keler, 2011).

Companies, as explained by Chernev (2012), utilize market segmentation to "optimize the effectiveness of their business actions by focusing on business activities," "optimize the cost efficiency of their business activities by rationalizing business activities," and "direct resources toward the needs and preferences of a specific market segment". The measurement of customer preferences in terms of product attributes and purchasing behavior is a key component of market segmentation. Continuous monitoring and tactical modifications are vital for long-term segmentation success. It was decided that a continuous method was necessary since the aforementioned factors are always changing as a result of several impacts. According to certain research, newly available market data might significantly influence how the aforementioned components develop (Ma et al., 2014). Consumers are highly responsive to a variety of conditions, including the availability of new information, in terms of their preferences and priorities for financial and non-financial rewards. The work of market segmentation is made more difficult by the complexity of customer wants. Buyers place a high value on a product or service's worth when making a purchase. Value is defined by academics (Powers & Sterling, 2008) as the "difference between the benefits that are gained by consumers and the sacrifice placed in it."

According to Amplify XL (2022), the most crucial question you will need to ask yourself if you want to create a courier service is, "What businesses or people will find value in my courier service?" It's easy to be tempted to respond with "everyone." However, if you want to please everyone, you will end up pleasing no one. You will not only be able to decide on the appropriate marketing strategy and craft the appropriate marketing messages once you have a clear understanding of who you are targeting and, more importantly, who you are not targeting; you will also be able to tailor your core products or services to the specific requirements of your target audience when you have this knowledge. In terms of marketing, though, the more pressing question is: how do they decide on a courier service? And just which aspects do they take into consideration? Further, according to the findings of Amplify XL (2022), clients choose a courier service mostly on the basis of three criteria: speed, reliability, and timeliness. Cost and service to the customer come in second. After this comes convenience, then reach, and finally safety. And lastly, before choosing a certain courier company as their delivery service, some business clients may take into consideration the amount of space that the firm has available for storing packages.

Market segmentation, at its core, is the process of dividing a market into smaller, more manageable groups of customers with similar wants and aspirations; hence, this notion was pertinent to our study. Because of this division, it is simpler to use specialized marketing by concentrating on specific areas. Furthermore, by comprehending segmentation, the researcher will be able to identify certain markets that courier services are attempting to target, which is essential knowledge for specialized marketing. Individuals in areas that are not operated by standard postal vehicles require another form of communication; persons who must transport large or heavy items; people in dire need of a dependable delivery service; global shipping firms alongside receivers; victims of illness or impairment that renders them incapable of moving their individual loads; organizations with urgent orders or document submissions; and individuals who have time-sensitive contents to send by mail or deliver are all listed in Amplify XL (2022).

2.1.2 Research Gaps

While mass customization is mentioned as a strategy to achieve operational effectiveness and efficiency, there's a conceptual gap in understanding its practical implications and challenges in the service sector. Research could delve

into the specific benefits, drawbacks, and implementation challenges associated with mass customization of services. Customization acts as a moderating element in the link between innovativeness and organizational success. However, it lacks a deep exploration of how customization influences the innovation process and the extent to which it contributes to organizational success. Research could investigate the nuanced relationship between customization, innovation, and performance outcomes.

The cited studies by Uma and Chandramowleeswaran (2015) and De Koning et al. (2008) do not specify when the research was conducted. Given the dynamic nature of the service industry, there's a need to assess the temporal relevance of their findings and whether they hold true in the present business landscape. Because of this, the present research seeks to evaluate the effect of customization on international courier firms' performance in Kenya.

III. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research design was utilized by the researchers in this study. The research had a population of 55 respondents, including operations managers representing stakeholders in international courier businesses in Kenya. Purposive sampling technique was used through census method. The census approach was used, and the researcher sent questionnaires to each of the 55 companies. The author used questionnaires for data collection. The quantitative data acquired for this study was examined using both descriptive and inferential statistical approaches. SPSS version 21.0 was used to analyze the data. Descriptive analysis displayed the responses of the respondents using percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics involved the use of statistical measurement tools such as regression analysis and Pearson correlations. Tables were used to display the data.

IV. FINDINGS

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Customization

The participants who were sampled were given 9 propositions on customization. The outcomes are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Customization

| No | Statements | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|----|---|------|-----------|
| 1 | Using a client database, our organization categorizes customers based on the services they demand. | 3.71 | .918 |
| 2 | Our company employs a variety of approaches to detect and forecast client needs. | 3.98 | 1.214 |
| 3 | To guarantee that our clients' demands are addressed, we include them in the service delivery process. | 3.83 | 1.430 |
| 4 | Our organization evaluates its services based on the demands of its customers. | 4.02 | 1.275 |
| 5 | We offer many service packages to our clients. | 3.80 | .942 |
| 6 | Our service packages are enjoyable and satisfying to our consumers. | 3.90 | .631 |
| 7 | We often solicit feedback from our clients on their level of satisfaction with our services in order to identify areas for advancement. | 4.41 | .840 |
| 8 | Our price is established by the segmented market's demands. | 4.02 | .712 |
| 9 | Our tailored services are derived from and provided via service innovation and brand promotion. | 3.95 | 1.303 |

N=41

According to the mean of 3.71 with an insignificant SD of 0.918 in Table 1, participants were in agreement that their firms categorize clients based on services requested by maintaining a customer database. Participants further agreed that their firm uses a range of approaches to discover customer needs and estimate both current and future needs, as evidenced by an average of 3.98 and a substantial S.D. of 1.214. Moreover, respondents also agreed that they include their clients in the service delivery process to guarantee their demands are addressed, as evidenced by an average of 3.83 with a standard deviation of 1.430. This meant that not all foreign courier firms included their clients in the service delivery process to guarantee that their demands were satisfied.

In addition, participants believed that their organization reviews its services based on consumer demands, as reported by a mean of 4.02 with a substantial S.D. of 1.275. This suggested that not all businesses that exploit clients need to evaluate their offerings. As evidenced by an average of 3.80 and an insignificant S.D. of 0.942, respondents

agreed that they provide several service packages to their clients. In a similar vein, those surveyed agreed that their clients like and are content with their service packages, as demonstrated by an average of 3.90 with a 0.631 S.D.

Outcomes further showed that participants acknowledged that they routinely seek opinions from their consumers on their level of satisfaction with their services in order to identify areas for development, as shown by an average of 4.41 with an insignificant S.D. of 0.840. In addition, participants were in agreement that price is influenced by the segmented market's demands, as evidenced by an average of 4.02 and an insignificant S.D. of 0.712. Finally, respondents believed that their source of personalized services was obtained from and via service innovation and brand marketing, as evidenced by a median rating of 3.95. This implies that product and service offers must be tailored to the unique needs of each individual customer, with the objective of meeting as many of those needs as possible for each individual client.

4.2 Firm Performance

The sampled respondents were provided with 9 statements related to firm performance. The results are as presented in Table 2

Table 2

Firm Performance

| No | Statements | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|----|--|------|-----------|
| 1 | Niche marketing leads to increased number of customer referrals. | 4.37 | .915 |
| 2 | Niche marketing lead to increased new customer traffic to the firm | 4.44 | .634 |
| 3 | Niche marketing leads to high customer retention | 4.51 | .637 |
| 4 | Niche marketing ensures customer loyalty to the firm | 4.59 | .631 |
| 5 | Niche marketing leads to enhanced customer relationship | 4.51 | .637 |
| 6 | Niche marketing leads to increased customer satisfaction | 4.51 | .506 |
| 7 | Niche marketing leads to improved brand image of the company | 4.51 | .840 |
| 8 | Niche marketing ensures less competition | 3.44 | 1.077 |
| 9 | Niche marketing ensures efficiency in serving customers | 4.29 | .716 |

N=41

According to Table 2, participants agreed that specialty marketing increases the number of client referrals by an average of 4.37 with an insignificant S.D. of 0.915. Respondents also believed that specialty marketing generated new consumer traffic to the company, as evidenced by an average of 4.44 with an insignificant S.D. of 0.634. According to an average of 4.51 and a considerable S.D. of 0.637, respondents strongly agreed that specialty marketing leads to good client retention.

Participants additionally firmly agreed that specialty marketing guarantees client loyalty to the business, as evidenced by an average of 4.59 with a statistically insignificant S.D. of 0.631. Similarly, respondents strongly agreed that specialty marketing leads to improved customer relationships, as evidenced by an average of 4.51 and an insignificant S.D. of 0.637. Furthermore, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that specialty marketing increases consumer satisfaction, as evidenced by a median of 4.51 with a statistically insignificant S.D. of 0.506.

Participants strongly agreed that specialty marketing improves the company's image as a brand, as evidenced by an average of 4.51 with an insignificant S.D. of 0.840. Nevertheless, an average of 3.44 with a substantial S.D. of 1.077 indicated that participants were ambivalent on whether specialized marketing ensured reduced competition. This meant that not every specialized marketing strategy guarantees less competition. Ultimately, the findings revealed that respondents agreed that niche marketing ensures efficiency in serving customers, as evidenced by an average of 4.29 with an insignificant S.D. of 0.716, indicating that the respondents' opinions were adequately consistent, reinforcing the perception that niche marketing is a reliable strategy for improving client service effectiveness.

4.3 Firm Performance and Personalization

The study sought to ascertain whether or not there is a link between customisation and organizational business performance. The Pearson correlation analysis test was used to achieve this aim, and the results are shown in Table 2 hereunder.

Table 3*Correlation Analysis Customization*

| | | Customization | Firm performance |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Customization | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .506** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 41 | 41 |
| Firm performance | Pearson Correlation | .488** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 41 | 41 |

** . The significance threshold for correlation is 0.01 (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that the substantial positive relationship between customization and the performance of international courier services in Kenya is $r = 0.488$, $P = 0.000$. This demonstrated the presence of a strong link between customization and performance. This suggests that increased personalization might result in higher performance from international courier businesses in Kenya. The study's goal was to investigate how personalization influences the efficiency of international courier firms in Kenya. The second null hypothesis that motivated the experiments is as follows:

Ho2: There is no substantial association between customisation and international courier company performance in Kenya.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 show the outcomes of simple regression analysis.

Table 4*Model Summary; Customization and Firm Performance*

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .488 ^a | .238 | .218 | .50997 | 2.451 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customization

b. Dependent Variable: Performance

According to the statistics in Table 4, customization had a value of r squared = 0.238, which amounted to 23.8%. This was the proportion of firm performance attributed to customization, with the remaining 76.2% attributed to unspecified reasons because the study focused on the customization and performance of international courier firms in Kenya. The research is also intended to determine the direct impact of customization on the performance of international courier firms in Kenya. The analysis of variance test was performed, and the results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5*ANOVA; Customization and Firm Performance*

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|--------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 3.166 | 1 | 3.166 | 12.175 | .001 ^b |
| | Residual | 10.143 | 39 | .260 | | |
| | Total | 13.309 | 40 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Customization

The outcomes of Table 5 above revealed that $F(1, 39) = 12.175$ and the P value was 0.001. The tests were carried out at the 0.5 or 5% level of significance. According to the findings, personalization had a statistically significant influence on the success of international courier firms in Kenya, making it a solid predictor of company performance. Table 6 shows the outcomes of research that tried to determine the regression coefficient between customization and the performance of international courier firms in Kenya.

Table 6
Customization, Regression Coefficient, and Business Performance

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.792 | .457 | | 6.104 | .000 |
| | Customization | .397 | .114 | .488 | 3.489 | .001 |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

It was discovered that a one-unit increase in customization was correlated with a 0.397-unit improvement in business results, with the regression coefficient B computed in Table 5 to be 0.397. The outcomes led to the conclusion that personalization had a statistically significant influence on the success of international courier services in Kenya, since the data demonstrated that the second null hypothesis was untrue. The equation for the conventional linear regression model was generated using the information from the regression coefficients as follows:

$$\text{Firm Performance} = 2.792 + 0.397 * \text{Customization} + 0.457$$

According to the outcomes, personalization has a favorable and significant impact on the performance of international courier firms in Kenya. This means that as personalization rises, so does company performance. This verifies the claim that business performance is dependent on specialist marketing, such as organizational customization. Incentives, for example, medical and automobile allowances for employees, strengthen their contribution, culminating in improved company performance, particularly in terms of client satisfaction. Chandra et al. (2022) came to the same conclusions, demonstrating that personalization has the most beneficial influence on marketing success, and they found the same outcomes. According to the findings of the study, a product that is effectively differentiated has the potential to be a point-of-difference in the market, contributing to increased customer acceptance through factors such as ease of use, durability, and reliability, and can therefore act as a basis for competitive advantage. Mugwe and Kagiri (2016) found that customized marketing significantly influences performance at Coca-Cola Kenya. The descriptive statistics for the independent variable “customization” indicated a mean score of 4.53 (SD = 0.68), demonstrating a moderate degree of customization, with scores varying from a minimum of 3.21 to a maximum of 5.87.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The research offers valuable insights into the pivotal role of customization in shaping the performance of international courier firms in Kenya. Through a comprehensive analysis involving Pearson correlation and regression models, significant findings have emerged, shedding light on the dynamics of the Kenyan courier industry. Firstly, the Pearson correlation analysis underscores a noteworthy and moderate association between customization and the performance of international courier companies. This underscores the intrinsic link between a firm's capacity to tailor its services and its overall effectiveness within the Kenyan market. Secondly, the simple linear regression model highlights that customization accounts for a substantial 23.8% of the performance variations observed in international courier businesses in Kenya. This emphasizes the crucial role that customization played in fostering the success of these businesses, thereby demonstrating its significance in the sector. The multiple linear regression analysis also shows that a one-unit change in customization greatly improves firm performance. This shows how powerful customization is as a success driver in the Kenyan international courier sector.

In conclusion, this study firmly rejects the second null hypothesis, confirming that customization exerts a substantial and favorable influence on the performance of international courier firms in Kenya. These companies adeptly employ diverse strategies to fathom customer needs, continuously seek client feedback for service enhancement, and tailor pricing structures to distinct market segments. Notably, customization not only confers a competitive edge but also stimulates innovation by aligning product and service development with customer preferences, further nurturing enduring customer relationships. In essence, customization emerges as a cornerstone of success in Kenya's dynamic courier landscape.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of the study's compelling findings, international courier companies operating in Kenya should make customization a top priority and invest in tailored service offerings. This strategic shift will enable them to proactively address the diverse and evolving needs of their customer base. By doing so, these companies can significantly enhance their overall performance and competitiveness in the dynamic courier industry landscape of Kenya.

Furthermore, the study's conclusions emphasize the importance of actively seeking customer feedback to gauge satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement. Management should harness this valuable information to refine their services and enhance customer experiences. Leveraging customer opinions in their marketing campaigns can also give them a competitive edge, as it demonstrates a deep understanding of customer preferences and fosters stronger customer relationships. Ultimately, these recommendations underscore the pivotal role of customization and customer-centric approaches in the success and growth of international courier firms in Kenya.

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