

Effect of Differentiation Strategy on Marketing Performance of Fast Moving Consumer Goods in Abraka, Delta State

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Abstract

Firms within the same industry have been selling products that are good substitutes for each other, yet it is commonly the case that no firm within the industry sells a product that is identical to that sold by a competing firm. Product differentiation occurs within the products sold by a single seller and between the products sold by different sellers. The overall objective of this study sought to analyze product differentiation and its effects on a marketing performance using selected fast moving consumer goods firms in Abraka, Delta State. The specific objectives were to; establish the effect of product differentiation on marketing performance, determine the effect of distribution channels differentiation on marketing performance, assess the effect of market differentiation on marketing performance and determine the effect of process differentiation on marketing performance. The study adopted cross sectional survey research design method. The target population was 224 employees of selected FMCG firms from different locations in Abraka Delta State. The study adopted a semi-structured questionnaire to collect primary data. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation and frequency distribution were used to analyze the data. Qualitative data, which was mainly gathered from open and close ended questions. The data was consolidated, interpreted and then analyzed through content analysis. Regression analysis helped the study to establish the statistical significance of differentiation strategy in achieving marketing performance. Data analyzed revealed that The study's findings from the test of hypothesis one indicate product differentiation has a significant effect on marketing performance (0.024 < 0.05). The result of distribution channel differentiation have significant effect on marketing performance (0.030 < 0.05), the result of market differentiation and marketing performance (0.020 < 0.05) and the result of hypothesis four revealed that there is a significant effect of process differentiation and marketing performance (0.033 < 0.05). The study concluded that differentiation strategy had significant effects on marketing performance of fast moving consumer goods. This research recommends that FMCG firms should enhance their sector by increasing its market penetration through introduction of Field days in the remote areas. Further,

the study recommends that companies adopt effective process delivery. They should have effectively distribution channels, as well as alternative channels in terms of service away from the factory.

Key words: *Differentiation strategy, Marketing performance, fast food moving consumer goods, product differentiation, distribution channels differentiation, market differentiation.*

INTRODUCTION

Differentiation strategy is a competitive business strategy whereby firms attempt to gain a competitive advantage by increasing the perceived value of their products and services relative to the perceived value of other firm's products and services (Rahman, 2021; Agbogun, and Ehiedu, 2022; Anuku, and Ehiedu, 2007; Eboh, Afinotan, Okonji, & Edeme, 2022).). Differentiation strategy is prevalent throughout the financial world. Within most production zones, a wide range of differentiated products are available in the market place. This is evident when one walks into a store. One encounter different products for instance milk which comes in different varieties like fresh milk, mala and yoghurt all being sold by different companies. A seed sale unit for example a seed agent has different seed types which come from different companies. Differentiation is a business strategy where firms attempt to gain competitive advantage by increasing the perceived value of their products or services relative to the perceived value of other firms' products or services. To implement these strategies successfully, organizations need to have an accurate view about the current competitive situation to persuade costumers about the features of the sustainable products (Pondeville, Swaen & de Rongé, 2023).

Differentiation strategy that seeks to build competitive advantage with its product or service by having it "different" from other available competitive products based on features, performance, or other factors not directly related to cost and price. To be effective, the message of differentiation must reach the clients, as the customers' perceptions of the company are important (Rahman et al., 2021). There are numerous ways to differentiate brands; identifying meaningful product driven differentiators can be especially fruitful in gaining and sustaining a competitive advantage. It is the ability to sell its differentiated product at a price that exceeds what was spent to create it that allows the firm to outperform its rivals and earn above-average returns (Ehiedu, 2018; Ehiedu and Imoagwu, 2022; Ehiedu,2022; Ehiedu, 2022; Ehiedu, 2022; Dirisu et al. 2023). In effect, differentiation builds competitive advantage by making customers more loyal - and less price-sensitive-to a given firms product/service. Additionally, consumers are less likely to search for other alternative products once they are satisfied (Hernant, Mikael & Thomas, 2017).

Some of the differentiation strategies adopted by organizations to foster marketing performance evolve around interplay of various elements of the retail mix. These include: offering quality products, wide selection, assortment, strategic positioning, after-sales-service, quality service, convenient location, parking space, attractive design and layout, conducive atmosphere, sales incentives, convenient operating hours, own branding/value addition and a one-stop-shop (Carpenter & Moore, 2016). A product can be differentiated in various ways. Unusual features, responsive customer service, rapid product innovations and technological leadership, perceived

prestige and status, different tastes, and engineering design and performance are examples of approaches to differentiation (Porter, 1980; Edeme, 2022).

The success and survival of any firm depends largely on its value creation capacity. Customers define and patronize what they perceive as value and this patronage translates to benefits of many kinds which can be viewed as the firm's marketing performance (Dirisu, 2023). Marketing performance is viewed as the effectiveness of firms in achieving their purpose. Dirisu (2023) describes marketing performance as a business verbiage or construct that is applied to ascertain the wellness status of an organization. Nadube (2019) posits that marketing performance is an aspect or part of business parameter that seeks to ascertain the relationship between marketing activities and marketing outcome. Since marketing deals with business functions aimed at facilitating, ascertaining and stimulating sales, effective marketing must result in identifying customer needs and wants, winning and retaining customer preferences geared towards improvement of overall performance (Baraza, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Differentiation Strategy

Differentiation strategy entails the use of unique services or products by a company (Dani, 2017). It involves the capability of a firm to product some product lines or many variations in a line. Differentiation strategies are all-encompassing in market economies and are a prevailing means of getting competitive advantages (Pehrsson, 2016). Demba, Ogal and Muli (2018) averred that differentiation strategy is resourcefully executed when the businesses gives exclusive or better significance to the buyer with the direction of product quality, features, or follow up support. Hence, business adopting differentiation strategy can allege higher cost for goods or services based on features, allocation system, quality of service, or delivery channels. The value possibly will be valid or apparent in line with fashion, brand name, or imaged, (Ehiedu. and Brume-Ezewu, 2022; Ehiedu and Okorie, 2022; Ehiedu and Okorie, 2022; Ehiedu, 2021; Ehiedu, 2021).

Product Differentiation

Product differentiation is found throughout the economy. Within most supermarkets, one may find a wide range of differentiated products. Dozens of different products have many small and sometimes large differences. Product differentiation is often employed in many business firms where buyers often appreciate the ability to select from a wide variety of product offerings in order to be better able to select that particular product that best suits their preferences (Ellis & Kelley, 2012). This concept entails measures taken to distinguish a product from other competing products or from other products offered by same firm; which involves distinguishing the quality of such products in terms of its physical features, functions or durability for an identified market segment (Anderson, De Palma & Thisse, 2022). Product differentiation also involves strategies adopted by firms to sway consumers' product choice (Dirisu, 2023), which are perceived to have value added and attributes needed by consumers (Amar, 2016); hence, considered to be of value and unique compared to other similar products (Porter 1985). Differentiating products as a firm strategy enhances the ability of firms to self-insulate from fierce competitive rivals within the industry (Jeff, 2029). This implies that product differentiation excludes firms from possible adverse price wars with industry competitors (Adewale, Adesola & Oyewale, 2023), but supports the carving

out of a niche within same industry by the firm (Ardjouman & Asma, 2015). Furthermore, differentiating product quality strengthens the brand's loyalty base (Ardjouman & Asma, 2015), which becomes a barrier for likely new industry entrants, as they will fiercely compete with reputable brands for market share (Dzisi & Ofosu, 2014).

Market differentiation involve the breaking down of the total market for a product or service into distinct sub-groups or segments, where each may conceivably represent a distinct target market to be reached with a distinctive marketing mix with the aim of meeting the customer's needs and wants. The purpose of market segmentation is to leverage scarce resources. In other words, to ensure that the elements of the marketing mix, price, distribution, products and promotion, are designed to meet particular needs of different customer groups (Myers, 2016). According to Etzel et al (2021), the central focus of the concept of market differentiation is based on the issue of identifying and clustering heterogeneous consumers into a group of one or more meaningful, viable and accessible homogeneous consumers.

Distribution Channel Differentiation

Distribution channels employed by firms entail strategies to ensure better positioning, maintain market visibility and support improved sales, considering that firm's marketing channels are characterized by different related costs (Soe, Moritaka & Fukuda, 2015). However, distinguishing those dynamics influencing firm channel decisions along with easing of related constraints is also significant in efforts of channel differentiation to more importantly achieve visibility of its products in the market (Aremu & Akinwamide, 2018). Channel differentiation has been variously described as different methods organisations offer their products, sell and deliver to their customers across various geographical locations (Bardhan, Sharma & Saxena, 2012), which includes the uniqueness of the adopted channels distinctiveness in managing customers' orders (Filipe, Easingwood & Coelho, 2003 Ehiedu, (2020).

Ehiedu, (2020), also, as the decision and planned design of diverse channels of distribution taken to boost the presence of the firm's brand and competitive advantage (Kalubanga, et al., 2012). In adopting channel differentiation, firms consider diverse distribution strategies comprising of multiple actors, and which can broadly comprise distribution through wholesalers/ middlemen to product retailers and finally to consumers Ehiedu, (2020); Bardhan, et al., (2012), of which they all have obligations to fulfil, which is a basis for the effective functioning of the distribution system. The differentiation of distribution channels supports firms in ensuring products are made available to specific customer demography (Ehiedu, (2020; Soe, et al., 2015); position brands in the market (Kotler & Keller, 2014), and ensure customer loyalty towards the brand (Friedman & Furley, 2019). A properly designed channel differentiation bridges gaps in availability of product information and firms' communication, Ehiedu, (2020); Kamau, (2023), time and geographical gaps between manufactures and product end-users (Friedman & Furley, 2019), regardless of the distance between manufacturers and consumers (Xaba & Masuku, 2012).

Benefits accruable to firms for strategic channel differentiation include enlarging customer base, supporting growth in product sales and firm performance (Friedman & Furley, 2009), creation of multiple points from where products and services can be easily accessed (Abrahamsson & Berge, 2015), with convenience to customers (McCalley, 2016), while firms are provided with

opportunities to penetrate deeper into existing markets and expanding into new markets (Soe, et al., 2015).

Process Differentiation

Faith and Simon (2023) defined process differentiation as the process of enhancing an organization's production and logistics methods in order to dramatically enhance all of its supporting activities, such as purchasing, accounting, computing, and maintenance. This definition matched that of Rogers (2022), who believed that process differentiation encompassed any major enhancements made to the entire process of production and delivery, regardless of the tools, technologies or software utilized. They also underlined the need for businesses to innovate their business practices in order to increase their productivity across the board. The term "process innovation" typically refers to a completely new approach that has not yet been adopted or implemented by the company. The process may have been created by the business itself or with outside assistance (Namusonge, Muturi & Olaniran, 2016). There are three dimension of process differentiation and they include the following: Production process differentiation, delivery process differentiation and support service process differentiation (Namusonge, Muturi & Olaniran, 2016).

Production Process Differentiation

According to ElKassar and Singh (2019), entails a constant re-invention of an organization's manufacturing process in terms of the production processes, technology and equipment. In their study, Hari, Fredi and Eneng (2020) noted that this process differentiation dimension necessitates all required components for maintaining an effective output to be continuously monitored and evaluated. This will enable the company to reduce costs associated with the manufacturing process, increase production efficiency generally and manufacture more high-quality products more quickly, all of which will help it establish and maintain its competitive advantage. Rajapathirana and Hui (2018) noted in their study that the employment of more efficient techniques, technologies and materials allows an organization to cut costs while improving effectiveness and efficiency throughout the entire manufacturing process. According to Azar and Ciabuschi, (2017), Obi, and Ehiedu, (2020).

Okolie, and Ehiedu, (2023).

this procedure enables an organization to acquire the best and most modern equipment to facilitate their entire production process, and by implementing this in the organization, it will result as an improvement in the organization's performance in terms of quality of its products and services.

Support Services Differentiation

In their study, Hari, Fredi and Eneng (2020); Obi and Ehiedu, (2020), Okolie, and Ehiedu, (2023), emphasized that when a company provides excellent customer support, particularly after a particular conversation or deal is made, customers are more satisfied and perceive this as a high-quality service from the company. This will encourage them to continue or complete a conversation with the company, and there is a high likelihood that they will return after the first or subsequent purchases. When this happens, it is believed that a company can benefit from an innovative support system to increase sales and improve performance. Ebuzoeme (2022), argues that without an effective innovation strategy, a company is vulnerable to failure and has little

choice but to be inventive in order to succeed. Support process innovation is a crucial component of process differentiation that also affects an organization's performance and success.

Differentiation Strategy and Marketing Performance

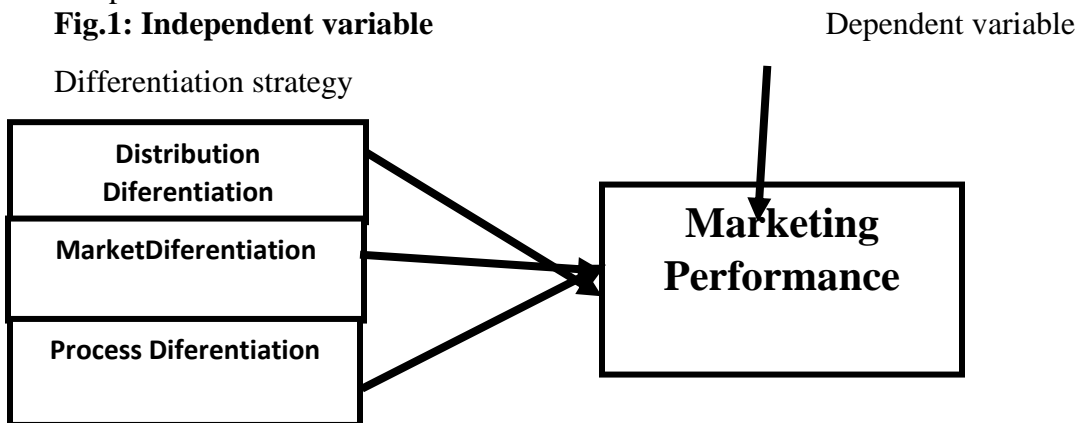
Studies have reported positive connection between differentiation strategy and marketing performance. Adinan and Abukari (2013) probed the effects of product differentiation on profitability of firms in the petroleum industry in Ghana; and reported a differentiation strategy significantly impacted profitability in the petroleum industry. Similarly, Dirisu (2023) studied the impact of product differentiation on competitive advantages and performance of manufacturers in Nigeria. The study found that a strong positive relationship between product differentiation and organizational performance. Relatedly, Rukia (2015) explored differentiation strategy and performance of manufacturing firms in Kenya, using Porter's competitive strategy typology. Findings of the study showed that differentiation significantly relates to performance of manufacturing firms.

More so, Violinda (2016), examined the connection between differentiation strategy and organizational performance, and found that differentiation strategy significantly relates to organizational performance. In the study of Ju (2017) which focused on determinants and consequences of differentiation strategy of Chinese indigenous exporters; it was found that differentiation strategy significantly relates to export performance positively. In addition, Adegbite (2019) sought to find out whether service differentiation relates to competitive advantage. Their results of the study showed that service differentiation had significant impact on competitive advantage of firms. Ghahroudi and Sagheb (2018) explored effects of differentiation on performance of women's fashion clothing industry. The results of the study showed that differentiation had significant effect on performance of firms in the women's clothing industry.

Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a figure that shows the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable. In this study the dependent variable is marketing performance, while the independent variables are product differentiation strategy; product differentiation, distribution channel differentiation, market differentiation and process differentiation. A conceptual framework has been drawn to show the relationship of the dependent variable and the independent variables.

Fig.1: Independent variable



Source: Researcher's Model (2024).

Theoretical Review

Resource Based Theory

While resource based theory has its roots in Edith Penrose's work in the late 1950s, the resource-based view (RBV) model was largely introduced to the field of strategic management in the 1980s (Wernerfelt, 1984). In the RBV of the firm, a firm's performance is affected by firm-specific resources and capabilities (Barney, 1996). This implies that, in the RBV, resources are allocated heterogeneously (unevenly) within an industry (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). Organizations therefore must be aware of their strengths and weaknesses, as they have to develop strategies on how to outperform competitors with the given resources bundles and capabilities (Wernerfelt, 1984). A firm can practice differentiation to avoid direct competition with other competing firms. It achieves these benefits by designing a business system within the value chain that is different from that of other exporters in several key respects: size, more locations, and narrower product lines. Customers, however, are generally willing to pay a premium in exchange for the greater convenience it provides. In many industries traditional markets and hierarchical organizations are partly being replaced by networks of inter-organizational relationships (Kotler, 1999). Various business interdependence arrangements such as strategic alliances and joint ventures, but also networks of multiple actors, such as supplier and subsidiary networks, are formed by organizations to compete effectively in the dynamic business environment. Håkansson and Snehota (1995) aver that even though the future role, development and performance of a company can be largely explained by its ability to manage relationships with other organizations, still there seems to be only a handful of strategic management researchers on inter-organizational relationship and networks. The Resource Based view is relevant to the project as it focuses directly on operating procedures and distribution network both of which constitute independent variables of the project. The main emphasis of the model is strategy, internal resources, internal management structures, processes, procedures and inter-organizational network, all of which are among the sub variables to be measured against market share

Empirical Review

Adiele, Amasi and Wegina (2023) investigated service differentiation and marketing performance of domestic airlines in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Primary data collection for the study was obtained from respondents using structured questionnaire. The study population comprised 7 major domestic airlines in Nigeria, with operating offices in Port Harcourt. The study took a census. 7 copies of structured questionnaire were administered to top management staff of each of the 7 domestic airlines, making it a total of 49 respondents. After data cleaning, only 47 copies of questionnaire were used for final analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses formulated for the study, relying on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The study found the existence of strong positive and statistically significant relationship between service differentiation and marketing performance of domestic airlines in Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that service differentiation significantly relates to marketing performance of domestic airlines in Nigeria; and recommends that managers of domestic airlines in Nigeria should adopt service differentiation strategy, if they intend to improve their marketing performance.

Iherobiem and Sanusi (2023) investigated how process innovation might be used as a strategic tool to improve organizational performance in the context of Nigerian manufacturing companies. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology and population of the study consisted 7.533 employees from specifically 3 chosen manufacturing companies in Nigeria: Lafarge Africa Plc, Flour Mill Nigeria PLC and PZ Cussons. The sample size for the study was estimated using Andrew Fisher's Formula to be 366 and the distributed questionnaire was designed on a five-point Likert scale. Out of the 366 questionnaires that were distributed, 340 were returned, giving the study a response rate of 93%. SPSS was used to examine the data that were obtained. The study found a substantial correlation between the two variables and it was determined that process innovation is important for improving organizational performance. As a result, it was therefore recommended that manufacturing companies should constantly innovate their processes to increase competitive advantage in the market.

Adimo (2018) examined the influence of product differentiation and organizational performance based on a study of Sameer Africa Ltd in Nairobi, Kenya. The study targeted 112 employees of Sameer Africa (K) Limited, comprising senior management, HODs and junior staff and 90 dealers based in Nairobi. A sample of 134 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The study was guided by Strategic Balance Theory. Primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaires. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of tables and inferential statistics in the form of Pearson correlation and regression analysis with significance level of 0.05 to test the hypothesis. The study was significant and provided an empirical evaluation of the relationship between differentiation strategy and organization performance. The study found that product differentiation had a positive relationship with organizational performance. The study concluded that integrating product differentiation strategies through specific product attributes relevant to competitors and variety of products to match the need of various customers would result to improved performance. The study therefore recommends that product differentiation should be adopted because they have the highest relationship with organisational performance.

Chege (2018) analyzed the effectiveness of differentiation strategy on business performance of Kenyan Betting Companies. The study used a survey research design. The study targeted 90 employees in the various 7 betting business. These are Sport pesa, Betway, Mcheza, Betin Kenya, Bet yetu, Betika and Elite bet. Data were collected using questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data with the help of Statistics Package of Social Science (SPSS) in determining the extent of implemented competitive strategies on Kenya's betting firms. Chi square (X^2) was computed in determining the interdependency of variables. This involved the use of expected frequencies and observed frequencies at 5% significance levels for which its value is available in the statistical tables. The studies found out that differentiation strategy on business performance were significant ($p \leq .05$). Managers need to ensure that the message of differentiation reaches the clients, as the customer's perceptions. The betting companies may adopt Niche market may result in changing a product in order to improve differentiation; the changes themselves are not differentiation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a cross sectional survey research design was adopted in this study. This design focused at a subset of the population at a particular point in time. Cross-sectional research takes a

representative sample of its target group and bases its overall findings on the views of those targeted; assuming them to be typical representative of the whole group therefore allowing for generalizations (Olannye, 2017). The method was useful in identifying practices in FMCG firms in Abraka, Delta State. Cross sectional research design method is concerned with finding out about how, who, when and where of a phenomenon so as to build a profile (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008; Olannye 2017). Their search design was preferred because it has the ability to build a profile.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Selected FMCG Outlets in Delta State

Firm	Frequency	Percentage (%)
King Aslem	07	0.3
Yahoo Mama Super Mart	05	2.2
Coast Water Services Board	10	4.4
Danar Ltd	11	4.9
Iyke Supermarket	08	3.6
Fam Circle Supermarket	09	4.0
Timmis Supermarket	09	4.0
Godstime Stores	07	0.3
Ultimate Supermarket	07	0.3
Delight Public Supermarket	05	2.2
Charles Exclusive Supermarket	10	4.4
XEKO Supermarket	11	4.9
Papa Nel Stores	08	3.6
Iroromegatech EnterpriseSuperstore	07	0.3
Mens's Supermarket	05	2.2
Mummy P Supermarket	06	3.6
Fame Circle Mart	09	4.0
Bright Shop Hope	05	2.2
Buchi Royal	08	3.6
Sunny Supermarket	07	0.3
Dot-Pay Fame Circle Mart	05	2.2
Rixmary Enterprise	10	4.4
Oma Venture	11	4.9
Zenith Superstore	08	3.6
Vic's Mini Mart	07	0.3
Ovie Supermarket	11	4.9
Assurance Super Mart	08	3.6
Trust Gold Supermarket	07	0.3
Este Joy Global	05	2.2
Ezechima & Sons Supermarket	06	2.6
Total	224	100

Source: Field Survey Analysis (2024)
Sample Size

The sample size is the proportion of the population that a particular research intends to study. As sample size is determined, the researcher needs to examine out if the population at hand is a finite population whose size is known or infinite population whose size is unknown. This helps in choosing the appropriate formula to be used when determining sample size. In this case the population for the study is known. The total sample size for this study is obtained using the formulae developed by Taro Yamane cited in (Kothari, 2014). Stated that;

$$n = N / 1 + N (\alpha)^2$$

Where: n= the sample size; N= the sample frame (population=224); α = the margin of error (0.05%); $n = 224 / 1+0.56(0.05)^2 = 143$

The sample size of this study is 143 members.

Data Collection Instrument

The study used a questionnaire to collect primary data. Questionnaire was appropriate for studies since it collected information that were not directly observable as they inquired about feelings, motivations, attitudes, accomplishments as well as experiences of individuals, (Mellenbergh, 2008; Ohia & Iyadi, 2023). The questionnaire comprised of closed end questions. Franker (2016) stated that a questionnaire was useful in obtaining objective data because participants are not manipulated in any way by the researcher. The data instrument was developed in line with the objectives of the study and divided into two sections. Section “A” had general background questions and section “B” had questions on effect of differentiation strategy on marketing performance.

Data Analysis Technique

After data collection, a thorough check was done to the copies of questionnaire before coding and entering the data in software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics i.e. Percentages, standard deviations and frequencies. The information was presented using frequency tables and in prose-form. In addition, the researcher conducted a regression analysis in order to establish the effect of differentiation strategy on marketing performance.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Presentation of Data

The analysis from the field survey is presented in tabular form below:

Table 2: Analysis of the field survey

Focused Audience	N0 of administered Questionnaire	N0 of returned Questionnaire and Usable	Percentage of Questionnaire use
Employees of selected FMCG firms	143	126	88.1%

Source: Distributed Questionnaire (2024).

A total of 143 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and 126 copies which were properly filled and analyzed for the study.

Analysis of Respondents Profile

Table 3: Respondents Profile

S/N	EVENT	RESPONSE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	Gender	Male	59	46.8
		Female	67	53.1
		Total	126	100
2	Marital Status	Married	95	73.3
		Single	31	24.6
3	Educational Level	SSCE/NECO	10	7.9
		HND/B.Sc.	85	67.4
		Others	31	24.6
		Total	126	100

Source; Field Survey, 2024

At the demographic portion of the questionnaire, a total of three (3) questions pertaining to the respondents' private information were asked. The questions were designed to ascertain information such as gender, marital status, level of education,. Table 4.1 above reveals that of the respondents, 46.8% (59) were men and 53.1% (67) were female. 10.3% (13) respondents were between the ages of 20 and 25. The table also shows that 73.3%(95) respondents were married, while 24.6%(31) respondents were single. 7.9%(10) respondents had SSCE/NECO certifications, 67.4%(85), respondents had HND/B.Sc. degrees and 24.6%(31) respondents had other degrees

Presentation of Research Questions

Table 4: Product Differentiation and Marketing Performance

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
4	Your interest is stimulated based on how a product is presented	90 (71.4)	19 (15)	10 (7.9)	3 (2.3)	4 (3.1)
5.	product differentiation offers you the opportunity to select commodities closely tailored to your individual preferences	84 (66.6)	31 (24.6)	8 (6.3)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.7)
6.	The greater the variety of products offered, the more likely it is that a consumer will find available a commodity with the attributes you finds particularly desirable	30 (23.8)	73 (57.9)	10 (7.9)	8 (6.3)	5 (3.9)
7	Product differentiation has create a unique buying proposition for you	70 (55.5)	52 (41)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.7)

Source: Field Survey (2024).

Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

The replies of the responders to research question 4 are displayed in the table above. It was found that 109 respondents (86.5%) agree that their interest is stimulated based on how a product is presented, 10 respondents (7.9%), respondents were unsure, 7(5.4%) respondents disagree to the statement. Additionally, it was found that 114(90.4%) respondents agree product differentiation offers you the opportunity to select commodities closely tailored to your individual preferences, whereas 8(6.3%) respondents were unsure, while 3(2.3%) respondents disagree to the statement. 103 (81.7%) of respondents strongly agreed that the greater the variety of products offered, the more likely it is that a consumer will find available a commodity with the attributes you finds particularly desirable. 10(7.9%) were indecisive and 3(2.3%) disagreed to the statement. In addition, 122(96.8%) respondents agreed that Product differentiation has create a unique buying proposition for you, 1(0.7%) respondent was unsure and 3(2.3%) respondents disagreed.

Table 5: Distribution Channel and Marketing Performance

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
8	Our distribution tactics are unique to ensure that our products are recognizable in the market	79 (62.6)	29 (23)	10 (7.9)	3 (2.3)	3 (2.3)
9.	Our product has maintained a consistent engagement points to ensure familiarity with our products within the market	74 (58.7)	41 (32.5)	6 (4.7)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.5)
10.	There is continuously channel review our product and service to identify areas for value creation	50 (39.6)	53 (42)	8 (6.3)	10 (7.9)	5 (3.9)
11	Our product and service have accessed strong delivery trust	60 (47.6)	62 (49.2)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.7)

Source: Field Survey (2024).

Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

The replies of the responders to research question 5 are displayed in the table above. It was found that 108 respondents (85.7%) agreed that their distribution tactics are unique to ensure that our products are recognizable in the market, 10 respondents (7.9%), were unsure, 6(4.7%) respondents disagree to the statement. Additionally, it was found that 115(91.2%) respondents agree that their product has maintained a consistent engagement points to ensure familiarity with our products within the market, whereas 6(4.7%) respondents were unsure, while 3(2.3%) respondents disagree to the statement. 103 (81.7%) of respondents strongly agreed that there is continuously channel review our product and service to identify areas for value creation. 8(6.3%) respondent were indecisive and 15(11.9%) disagreed to the statement. In addition, 122(96.8%) respondents agreed that their product and service have accessed strong delivery trust, 1(0.7%) respondent was unsure and 3(2.3%) respondents disagreed.

Table 6: Market Differentiation and Marketing Performance

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
13	There is established competitive strategies to differentiate from competitors	88 (71.4)	19 (15)	10 (7.9)	5 (3.9)	4 (3.1)
14	Our firm increased product placement over digital channels to access new markets and customers	64 (66.6)	51 (24.6)	3 (2.3)	2 (1.5)	4 (3)

15	We ensures that brand offering are reliable through strict compliance to our service delivery policies	40 (23.8)	63 (57.9)	10 (7.9)	4 (3.1)	9 (3.9)
16	We improves sophistication in our brand through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering	50 (55.5)	62 (4.1)	1 (0.7)	1 (1.5)	12 (0.7)

Source: Field Survey (2024).

Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

The replies of the responders to research question 12 are displayed in the table above. It was found that 107 respondents (84.9%) agree that there is established competitive strategies to differentiate from competitors, 10 respondents (7.9%), respondents were unsure, 9(7.1%) respondents disagree to the statement. it was found that 114(90.4%) respondents agree that their firms increased product placement over digital channels to access new markets and customers, 3(6.3%) respondents were unsure, while 6(4.7%) respondents disagree to the statement. 103 (81.7%) of respondents strongly agreed they ensures that brand offering are reliable through strict compliance to our service delivery policies. 10(7.9%) were indecisive and 13(10.3%) disagreed to the statement. 112(88.8%) respondents agreed that they improves sophistication in our brand through trendy, daring and contemporary service offering, 1(0.7%) respondent was unsure and 13(10.3%) respondents disagreed.

Table 7: Process Differentiation and Marketing Performance

S/N	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
17	Your firm offers various choices of delivery to our customers	90 (71.4)	19 (15)	10 (7.9)	3 (2.3)	4 (3.1)
18	The process of attending to customers are error free and friendly	84 (66.6)	31 (24.6)	8 (6.3)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.7)
19	The process of packaging your products has helped to uncover unnecessary task	30 (23.8)	73 (57.9)	10 (7.9)	8 (6.3)	5 (3.9)
20	The mode of business operation of your firm have reduced cost of service	70 (55.5)	52 (41)	1 (0.7)	2 (1.5)	1 (0.7)

Source: Field Survey (2024).

Figure in Parenthesis indicates percentage

The replies of the responders to research question 12 are displayed in the table above. It was found that 109 respondents (86.5%) agreed that their firms offers various choices of delivery to our customers constantly. 10 respondents (7.9%), respondents were unsure, 7(5.4%) respondents disagree to the statement. Additionally, it was found that 114(90.4%) respondents agree that ensure that the process of attending to customers are error free and friendly, 8(6.3%) respondents were unsure, while 3(2.3%) respondents disagree to the statement. 103 (81.7%) of respondents strongly agreed that the process of packaging your products has helped to uncover unnecessary task. 10(7.9%) were indecisive and 3(2.3%) disagreed to the statement. In addition, 122(96.8%) respondents agreed that the mode of business operation of your firm have reduced cost of service, 1(0.7%) respondent was unsure and 3(2.3%) respondents disagreed.

Analysis of other Research Data

The questionnaires were examined using multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation using SPSS version 23.0. Multiple regression models are used in statistical analysis to make predictions about the value of a given dependent variable based on the values of two or more independent variables.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation analysis

		PDD	DD	MD	PRD
PDD	Pearson Correlation				
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N				
DD	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	169			
MD	Pearson Correlation	.473	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	169	169		
PRD	Pearson Correlation	.345	.688	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	169	169	169	
	Pearson Correlation	.093	.141	.157	1

Source: Analysis of field survey, 2024.

In Table 4.3, the correlation analysis involved the indicators of Differentiation strategy. Among the variables, it showed sixteen (16) positive values. The results of the correlation study reveal a significant effect between product differentiation and marketing performance ($r = 0.473$, $p < 0.01$). Similar to this, distribution channel differentiation have a positive connection with marketing performance ($r = 0.345$, $p M < 0.01$). Additionally, it has been shown that market Differentiation have a positive association with marketing performance ($r = 0.169$, $p < 0.01$). Consequently, process differentiation have a positive effect with marketing performance ($r = 0.93$, $p M < 0.01$).

Model Summary

Table 8: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	Sig. F Change	
1	.206 ^a	.042	.673	1.27496	.042	.212	.506

a. Predictors: (Constant), product differentiation, Distribution channel differentiation, market differentiation and process differentiation

b. Dependent Variable: Marketing Performance Performance

Table 8 above shows the extent to which the independent variable accounted for change on the dependent variable as shown on the model summary. It shows that change in marketing performance is brought about by the sub variables of brand positioning indicators as indicated by the adjusted R² value of 67% (0.673).

Table 9: ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.727	5	2.345	68.443	.212 ^b
	Residual	264.959	163	1.626		
	Total	276.686	168			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing Performance

b. Predictors: product differentiation, Distribution channel differentiation, market differentiation and process differentiation

The F-ratio in Table 4.5 above shows if the overall regression model is a good fit for the data or not. The Table shows that distribution strategy significantly predict sales performance, $F(5, 163) = 68.443$, $p(0.004) < 0.05$. This implies that the regression model is a good fit for the data.

Table 10: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	3.462	.746		4.640	.000
	Product Differentiation	.109	.093	.092	1.176	.024
	Distribution Channel Differentiation	.091	.090	.082	1.020	.030
	Market Differentiation	.058	.111	.059	.519	.033
	Process Differentiation	.078	.212	0.60	.477	0.20

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing Performance

Table 4.6 above shows the multiple regression analysis result for differentiation strategy and marketing Performance. The table shows that product differentiation which is the first variable has positive effect on marketing Performance ($\beta = 0.092$, $P = 0.024 < 0.050$). It can also be seen that Distribution channel differentiation which is the second variable has positive effect on marketing Performance ($\beta = 0.82$, $P = 0.030 < 0.050$). The third variable which is market differentiation has positive effect on marketing performance ($\beta = 0.059$, $P = 0.033 < 0.050$). The fourth variable which is process differentiation has positive effect on marketing Performance ($\beta = 0.060$, $P = 0.020 < 0.050$).

Test of Hypotheses:

Regression analysis was employed as an analytical tool for test of the hypotheses formulated for the study.

Decision Rule

Decision rule is a function which maps an observation to an appropriate action. It is used to accept or reject the null hypothesis. If the probability value calculated is greater than the critical value, then the null

hypothesis is accepted and the alternate hypothesis is rejected. If the value of P (0.00) is less than the critical value of 5% (i.e. $0.000 < 0.05$) we reject the null hypothesis.

Test of Hypothesis One: product differentiation does not have significant effect on marketing performance

The value of P that was calculated in table 4.6 is less than the established P-value ($0.024 < 0.05$), therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, product differentiation does have significant effect on marketing performance

Test of Hypothesis Two: distribution channel differentiation does not have significant effect on marketing performance. The value of P that was calculated in table 4.6 is less than the established P-value ($0.030 < 0.05$). Similarly, the null hypothesis was rejected implying that distribution channel differentiation does have significant effect on marketing performance

Test of Hypothesis Three:

Market differentiation does not have significant effect on marketing performance. The value of P that was calculated in table 4.6 is less than the established P-value ($0.033 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected, implying market differentiation does have significant effect on marketing performance

Test of Hypothesis Four:

Process differentiation does not have significant effect on marketing performance. The value of P that was calculated in table 4.6 is less than the established P-value ($0.020 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis was rejected, implying process differentiation does have significant effect on marketing performance

Discussion of Results

The outcome of the reviewed literature and the findings of the various data analysis show that the sub variables of differentiation strategy as indicated by the adjusted R^2 value of 68% (0.68) can trigger a change in the output of marketing performance. The F-ratio in table 4.5 shows that differentiation strategy significantly predict marketing performance, $F(5, 163) = 68.339, p < 0.05$. This implies that the regression model is a good fit of the data.

Product Differentiation and Marketing Performance

The correlation analysis in Table 4.3 indicates the correlation analysis shows that product differentiation affects exhibited significant positive correlation with sales performance ($r = 0.076, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, in Table 4.6 it was reported that that product differentiation has positive effects on sales performance ($\beta = 0.092, P < 0.01$). Furthermore, the test of hypothesis depicted in table 4.6 shows that that product differentiation has a significant effect on sales performance ($0.024 < 0.05$). This result supports the claims made by Adimo (2018) examined the influence of product differentiation and organizational performance based on a study of Sameer Africa Ltd in Nairobi, Kenya. The study targeted 112 employees of Sameer Africa (K) Limited, comprising senior management, HODs and junior staff and 90 dealers based in Nairobi. A sample of 134 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The study was guided by Strategic Balance Theory. The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of tables and inferential statistics in the form of Pearson correlation and regression analysis with significance level of 0.05 to test the hypothesis. The study was significant and provided an empirical evaluation of the relationship between differentiation strategy and organization performance. The study found that product differentiation had a positive relationship with organizational performance.

Distribution Channel Differentiation and Marketing Performance

The correlation analysis exhibited in Table 4.3 shows a positive and significant effect of distribution channel differentiation and marketing performance ($r = 0.006, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, in table 4.6 it

can be seen that distribution channel differentiation has a positive effect on marketing performance ($\beta = 0.82$, $P < 0.01$). The test of hypothesis in Table 4.6 shows that distribution channel differentiation has a significant influence on sales performance ($0.030 < 0.05$). The study's results are in line with Chege (2018) analyzed the effectiveness of differentiation strategy on business performance of Kenyan Betting Companies. The study used a survey research design. The study targeted 90 employees in the various 7 betting business. These are Sport pesa, Betway, Mcheza, Betin Kenya, Bet yetu, Betika and Elite bet. Data were collected using questionnaires. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data with the help of Statistics Package of Social Science (SPSS) in determining the extent of implemented competitive strategies on Kenya's betting firms. Chi square (X^2) was computed in determining the interdependency of variables. This involved the use of expected frequencies and observed frequencies at 5% significance levels for which its value is available in the statistical tables. The studies found out that differentiation strategy on business performance were significant ($p \leq .05$). Managers need to ensure that the message of differentiation reaches the clients, as the customer's perceptions. The betting companies may adopt Niche market may result in changing a product in order to improve differentiation; the changes themselves are not differentiation.

Market Differentiation and Marketing Performance

The correlation analysis as shown in Table 4.3 indicated that market differentiation exhibits significant correlation with marketing performance ($r = 0.133$, $p < 0.01$). And also, Table 4.6 shows that market differentiation has a significant positive effect on marketing performance ($\beta = 0.60$, $P < 0.01$). The test of hypothesis in table 4.6 also shows that market differentiation has a significant relationship with marketing performance ($0.020 < 0.05$). The results are consistent with Fatawu and Ahmed (2014) established the relevant consumer characteristics necessary for market differentiation of the hotel industry. The researchers used descriptive survey as research design with purposive and accidental sampling techniques to select the respondents for the study. Questionnaire was used as research instrument and the data analysed using quantitative and qualitative data analytical methods. The study revealed that the measurability and actionability featured more prominently as criteria for market differentiation of hotels in Tamale Metropolis. It concludes that market segmentation promotes competition and enhances performance of hotels in the Tamale Metropolis. The Researchers recommend that market differentiation as a marketing strategy is taken seriously by hotels since it promotes quality service delivery and can serve as a competitive edge among hotels.

Process Differentiation and Marketing Performance

The correlation analysis as shown in Table 4.3 indicated that process differentiation exhibits significant correlation with marketing performance ($r = 0.133$, $p < 0.01$). And also, Table 4.6 shows that process differentiation has a significant positive effect on marketing performance ($\beta = 0.059$, $P < 0.01$). The test of hypothesis in table 4.6 also shows that process differentiation has a significant effect with marketing performance ($0.033 < 0.05$). The results are consistent with Iherobiem and Sanusi (2023) investigated how process innovation might be used as a strategic tool to improve organizational performance in the context of Nigerian manufacturing companies. The study employed a descriptive survey methodology and population of the study consist 7.533 employees from specifically 3 chosen manufacturing companies in Nigeria: Lafarge Africa Plc, Flour Mill Nigeria PLC and PZ Cussons. The sample size for the study was estimated using Andrew Fisher's Formula to be 366 and the distributed questionnaire was designed on a five-point Likert scale. Out of the 366 questionnaires that were distributed, 340 were returned, giving the study a response rate of 93%. SPSS was used to examine the data that were obtained. The study found a substantial correlation between the two variables and it was determined that process

innovation is important for improving organizational performance. As a result, it was therefore recommended that manufacturing companies should constantly innovate their processes to increase competitive advantage in the market.

Conclusion

Based on the survey, the study concluded that product differentiation is key element of a successful business and that the businesses struggle to improve products so as to retain customers. The company adopts product differentiation strategies to deliver the best products at competitive prices to the customers. Focus product differentiation are better positioned to use pricing as a competitive advantage across the market and customers segments, as well as the entire portfolio. Product differentiation prices play a central role in the consideration to switch to competitors. Firm put in use the information technology which has eased communication during transactions, fostered customer-firm relationships, increased customer satisfaction, improved operational efficiency, reduced running costs, reduced transaction time, provided security to investors and promote marketing performance. Market differentiation had significant effect on marketing performance. It was clear the company adopted product marketing strategies and promotion strategies to a very great extent. The study also revealed that firms segment the market based on the products offered in the market to a very great extent the study concluded that process differentiation had significant effect on marketing performance. From the findings, the different products offered by the firms have led to production of reliable service delivery types, products being designed as per customer needs, thus reducing failure costs and that the company has reasonable charges. This increase customer base, thus enhance market share, the value of company product led to superior marketing performance.

Recommendations

1. This research encourages that FMCG firms should enhance their sector by increasing its market penetration through introduction of Field days in the remote areas.
2. The firm should focus on differentiating its products based on segmentation. Marketing lead to increased sales, as well as giving the firm a competitive advantage.
3. As regards product process differentiation, the company should adopt technology in an attempt to ease communication during transaction, fostered customer-company relationship, which would increase marketing performance, improved operational efficiency, reduced operational costs and transaction time. This will provide security to investors from the long term profits earned as a result of continuously giving customers' satisfaction which in turn increases sales.
4. The study recommends that companies adopt effective process delivery. They should have effectively distribution channels, as well as alternative channels in terms of service away from the factory.

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