

Customer Acquisition Strategy and the Performance of Roofing Sheet Manufacturers in Kenya

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Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been a consistent and concerning decline in the production and consumption of locally manufactured roofing sheets, resulting in a substantial reduction in both revenue and employment within the industry. Notably, Kenya's roofing sheet production experienced a decline exceeding 8 percent in 2019, marking the culmination of a downward trend that was initiated by a weakened demand in 2010. This protracted slump has raised critical questions about the sustainability and competitiveness of the domestic roofing sheet manufacturing sector. Customer acquisition strategy prescribes a path to positively sustaining performance by shifting firms from cut-throat market competition (the red ocean) to a wide-open new uncontested market space (the blue ocean). It argues that operating in "cutthroat and saturated markets" results in a "red ocean of rivals fighting over a shrinking profit pool." The main purpose of this study was to establish the effect of customer acquisition strategy on the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya. The study adopted a mixed research method and employed a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of 241 employees drawn from all the fifteen (15) roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya registered with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM), from whom a sample size of one hundred and twenty-seven (127) employees was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan table formula. The findings of this study have illuminated a statistically significant positive effect of customer acquisition on firm performance, as evidenced by R-squared values of 0.623 (62.3%), with p-value of 0.00, way below the significance threshold of 0.05. The statistics imply that 62.3% of the variance in the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers can be attributed to the adoption of the customer acquisition strategy. Consequently, the study recommends that roofing sheet manufacturers must prioritize the adoption of need-based customer acquisition to ensure sustainable performance.

Keywords: Customer acquisition, firm performance, and blue ocean

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1. Introduction

Today, businesses operate in an intensely competitive and turbulent environment, and in the presence of powerful competitors. Firms are therefore expected to find strategies that promote sustainable and optimal performance (Smith, 2020). There is also an increasing need arising from consumer preferences, requiring firms to focus on innovations and seek new directions geared towards delivering value at an affordable cost to niche markets (Tasmin, 2015). In the field of management, business strategy refers to a set of techniques an organization uses to meet its business goals, respond to threats and outrightly attain sustainable performance (Muller, 2015). Customer acquisition strategy is a technique of converting non-customers into loyal consumers within a niche market through targeted marketing, rewarded referrals and timely response to inquiries with sufficient feedback systems that were non-existent (Barney, 2010). Firm performance is a measure of the health of a firm as indicated by its market share as well as production expansion in terms of change in product quantity and portfolio. Market share is one of the most significant indicators of firm performance, and according to Porters generic model (1980) and affirmed by Staron (2018) it is a portion of the market segment that can be accounted for by the products of a certain firm. As firms create demand through low cost of production, differentiation and focus, market share tends to grow which is a positive indicator of performance. Production expansion is an elaborate indicator of firm performance exhibited through increased quantity of production over time, increased product yields and increased capacity to produce through additional plant and equipment. According to Porters generic model (1980) and affirmed by Smith (2020) firms pursue low cost of production with plan to dominate the market through economies of scale and scope. As such, they increase their production output in response to

increased demand thus registering significant positive change in performance.

1.1 Background of the study

An investigation on the performance of Gallop Roofing company in Asia at a time when the industry was experiencing a downturn across the globe in 1982 and 1991, the researchers noted a significant increase in customer base and quantity of roofing sheets produced annually. According to Gill (2021) the firm's market share increased exponentially, of which the management attributes to its dynamic customer acquisition strategies where they regard the customer as "king". Customer acquisition at Gallop Roofing is founded on the constructs of rewarded customer referrals, automated prompt response to inquiries, and continuous target marketing especially in the age of the computer and internet. Pioneer roofing was also keen on rewarding referrals with great discounts at a time when competition did not focus on reconstructing industry boundaries which is an epitome of the customer acquisition strategy. Ando Roofing Sheet Manufacturing Company in Tanzania is a leading brand that continues to revolutionize the construction sector by capitalizing on referrals and offering up to 50% discount to referees within East Africa (Confederation of Tanzania Industries, 2014). The company offers the right on-time response to inquiries as well as their significant referral and target marketing techniques. As such it is evident that Ando Roofing presents an epitome of stringent adherence to customer acquisition strategy. Under the auspices of the overarching Vision 2030 economic development plan, industrialization remains a top priority for the Government of Kenya. Manufacturing is one of the key pillars to attaining this vision. According to the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (2016) the roofing sheets manufacturing industry has existed for over 60 years. Kenya's roofing sheets product portfolio comprises galvanized aluminum, plastic, and corrugated sheets. A boom in real estate investment uptake beginning 2003, accompanied by changes in consumer tastes and needs has left Kenya roofing sheet manufacturers to adopt customer acquisition strategies to guarantee growth in performance and sustainability over the years (Kariuki, 2020). According to an investigative study by Njoroge (2016) Kenyan roofing sheet manufacturers attribute their performance solely to their aggressive pursuit of customer acquisition strategies. As of today all the manufacturers are now offering free fitting services and warranties of up to 200 years as part of their aggressive customer acquisition strategy, and this has not been exploited by importers. According to an investigative study by Njoroge (2016) Kenyan roofing sheet manufacturers attribute their performance solely to their aggressive pursuit of customer acquisition strategy. Despite this, the firms' production output declined in 20019 compared to a similar period in 2018.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Over the past decade, Kenya's roofing sheet manufacturers have witnessed a consistent decline in their performance, resulting in substantial reductions in revenue, production output, and market share within the sector. This downward trend was evident in the data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2017), which indicated a decline in production from 290,283 metric tonnes in 2015 to 262,700 metric tonnes in 2017, reflecting a 10.5% decrease. Furthermore, a collaborative report by the Kenya Business Guide and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM, 2018) highlighted a staggering 40% drop in Kenya's roofing sheet manufacturing revenue in 2019, which commenced with declining demand in 2010, causing the revenue to plummet from Kshs. 38 billion to 16 billion.

Notably, wholesalers have resorted to importing more affordable roofing sheets from other countries, a phenomenon substantiated by both KAM's annual report (2017) and affirmed by National Construction Authority Chairperson Oundo in 2018. These reports highlighted that the cost of producing galvanized roofing sheets in Kenya exceeds the cost of production in countries like China, Nigeria, Uganda, Turkey, and Italy by more than 50%. This cost differential has made locally manufactured roofing sheets less competitive. To address these pressing issues, it is essential to explore innovative strategies. However, as noted by Hui et al. (2013) and Mohammad et al. (2014), there is a noticeable gap in the existing literature regarding the application of customer acquisition strategies by roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya. Addressing this gap may offer a potential solution to the sector's challenges and help restore its growth and competitiveness.

1.3 Purpose of the study

- i. To establish the effect of customer acquisition strategy on the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya

1.4 Research Hypothesis

- i. There is no statistically significant effect of customer acquisition strategy on the performance of

roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical review

2.1.1 Blue ocean theory

According to the proponents Kim and Mauborgne (2004) Blue Ocean theory proposes an array of strategies that manufacturers can use to exploit untapped market spaces and create new demand within industry boundaries. In pursuit of a blue ocean, roofing sheet manufacturers restructure existing industry boundaries and market segments to fit their agenda. Blue ocean theory prescribes shifting roofing sheet manufacturers from competing in a cut-throat market to creating a niche; a new haven where the rules of the game have not yet been set, and where the firm is in absolute control. Blue ocean theory illustrates how roofing sheet manufacturers can diligently exploit customer acquisition strategies to create new demand, capture new market spaces and dominate their restructured industry boundaries (Smith, 2020). The Blue Ocean theory's customer acquisition strategy, as detailed by Aithal and Kumar (2015), offers a dynamic and proactive approach to customer expansion. It involves the utilization of target marketing that adapts in real-time, the implementation of responsive systems for customer inquiries, and the introduction of referral programs to incentivize loyal customers. Through this strategy, organizations can access unexplored customer segments and non-customers who possess the potential to transition into loyal patrons. The approach focuses on creating a bond with customers that goes beyond mere transactions, nurturing long-term relationships that contribute to sustainable business growth. However, over time significant gaps and criticisms have erupted on the direct association of customer acquisition strategy on firm performance with researchers attributing current performance in creating niche markets among roofing sheet manufacturers to other extraneous strategies and factors, and not necessarily customer acquisition strategies (Pearce and Robinson, 2016). There exists a significant literature deficit to substantiate the sustainability and credibility of customer acquisition strategies in the manufacturing industry with researchers arguing that any strategy can be discovered and imitated over time. That notwithstanding, the justification for this is yet to be confirmed.

2.2 Empirical review

2.2.1 Customer acquisition strategy on firm performance

In a study by Oseghale (2016), during the Nigeria economic crisis of 2016 in Lagos state, it was found that strategic customer acquisition practices, particularly through enhanced target marketing and rewarded referrals, significantly contributed to increased market share and production expansion. Zainurossalamia (2016) conducted a descriptive longitudinal research focusing on the effect of innovation on the competitive edge of roofing sheet manufacturers in Abuja state, Nigeria. The study revealed a significant direct logical association between customer acquisition strategies, such as rewarded referrals, target-based marketing, and automated in-time e-mail response to inquiries, with sustainable firm performance. These recommended strategies demonstrated a statistically substantial relationship with a p-value of less than 0.000. A study by Wright (2019) delved into customer acquisition strategies used by family-based roofing sheet manufacturers in Britain. The study established a statistically significant logical link between the use of a system based on time automatic response to inquiries in target market areas and the performance and sustainability of family-based roofing sheet manufacturers. This research contributes to the understanding of how innovative customer acquisition strategies can positively affect the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers. Keinan's research (2018) on roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya further confirmed the validity of customer acquisition in sustaining firm performance and expanding market share. Customer Acquisition Strategy: Effective customer acquisition strategies play a vital role in firm performance. Studies reveal that strategies like enhanced target marketing and rewarded referrals lead to increased market share and production expansion. Automatic response systems also contribute significantly to performance and sustainability. The North Central Nigeria case underscores the importance of location and pricing in enhancing manufacturing enterprise performance

2.2.1 Conceptual framework



Source: Mutua et al. (2023)

3. Research methodology

The research method used a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, based on the positivist philosophical paradigm, as explained by Mutua and Kibe (2022). The data collected was presented in numerical form using a Likert scale, and the study employed quantitative methods to analyze it. The present investigation relied on a positivist philosophical perspective and deductive reasoning to explore the truth and causation of social phenomena in the roofing sheet manufacturing sector. It aimed to quantify the constructs of customer acquisition strategies and firm performance. The philosophical foundation of the research determined the study's methodology and structure. Positivism guided the research methods, data collection, and analysis procedures (Mutua and Kibe, 2022). Positivism is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the objective, empirical, and scientific examination of phenomena, focusing on observable facts and cause-and-effect relationships. The study adopted a mixed research method and employed a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of 241 employees drawn from all the fifteen (15) roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya registered with the Kenya Association of Manufactures (KAM), from whom a sample size of one hundred and twenty-seven (127) employees was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan table formula. Data collection was done using semi-structured questionnaires which were administered via a drop and pick technique. Pilot testing to confirm the reliability and validity of the research instruments was done on two roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya. Data was analysed descriptively (mean, standard deviation, and variance) and inferentially (correlation, chi-square, ANOVA, and multiple regression).

4. Data Analysis and Findings

2.1 Assessment of normality, linearity and homogeneity

All key assumptions of parametric tests were evaluated using the appropriate data. All data was collected and subjected to a normality test utilizing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) one sample test. According to Amphora and Dash (2019) stated that the analysis evaluates and compares growing distribution significance for parameters within a given distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test determines whether the measurements of a provided set might have a specific distribution origin. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov for the parameters revealed that data was not typically distributed. Additionally, (ANOVA) was utilized to perform a linearity test. Customer acquisition strategies and firm performance's linearity was investigated along its metrics. The outcome demonstrated a positive statistical significance, p-value > 0.05, demonstrating that there was indeed a linkage between customer acquisition strategies and firm performance.

Table 1: Results of Tests of Statistical Assumptions

variable	Normality Shapiro-wilk test	Linearity (ANOVA test)	Homogeneity
Threshold assumption	p > 0.05	p > 0.05	p > 0.05
Customer acquisition strategies	0.33	0.15	0.42
Firm performance	0.25	0.21	0.34

Source: Researcher (2022)

A homogeneity of variance too was examined. A Levine test (1960) was utilized, and variance equivalency was derived utilizing one-way ANOVA approach. Levine's probability estimates surpassed the significance threshold of 0.05 for indices of firm performance (dependent variable). It thus implies that perhaps the deviations are the same.

2.1 Customer acquisition strategy

Customer acquisition strategy frequencies were used to describe how many times respondents agreed or disagreed with the supposed state of affairs about customer acquisition strategy. Table 2 highlights the relevant results for all customer acquisition strategy constructs, that were quantified using a 5-point Likert - type scale, wherein 1 = Strongly Disagrees, 2 = Disagrees, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agrees, and 5 = Strongly Agrees.

Table 2: Customer Acquisition strategy

	N	Mean	Std. Dev
Our firm offers rewards to customers when they enrol new customers	107	3.93	1.00
Our firm offers a loyalty program for customers who refer new buyers	107	4.00	0.81
Our rewarded referral program has contributed to increased customers	107	3.71	1.13
Our firm produces roofing sheets for a specific market segments	107	3.93	1.00
Our firm has adopted search engine optimization for specific customers	107	4.04	0.98
Our firm provides personalised customer experience	107	4.14	1.02
Our firm runs a customised automated e-mail response system	107	3.57	1.13
Our automated response system has increased customer base	107	3.93	1.00
Our automated email response system has advanced analytics to make it easy to track leads and convert inquiries into sales	107	3.72	1.23

Source: Researcher (2022)

Many participants agree that the manufacturer provides personalised customer experience in a very strong way, with the ability to relate the strength of their customer experience with a mean score of 4.14, and that "our firm has adopted search engine optimization for specific customers" follows with a mean score of 4.04. Further scores are indicated as follows: Our firm offers a loyalty program for customers who refer new buyers (mean score of 4.0), our firm produces roofing sheets for a specific market segments (mean score of 3.9), our firm offers rewards to customers when they enrol new customers (mean score of 3.9), our automated email response system is equipped with sophisticated analytics that simplify the process of monitoring and analyzing data and convert inquiries into sales (mean score of 3.7), our rewarded referral program has contributed to increased customers (mean score of 3.7). Nevertheless, our firm runs a customised automated e-mail response system (mean score of 3.5) had a moderate intensity. As such, target marketing as an indicator of customer acquisition posted the highest mean score followed by rewarded referrals and automated response to inquiries respectively. This result corresponds with the outcome in a study by Otieno (2016) that indicated customer acquisition having a significantly positive influence on the performance of Community Based Organizations in Kenya.

2.1 Customer acquisition strategy

Table 3: Customer Acquisition strategy and the Performance of Roofing Sheet Manufacturers'

		Roofing Sheet Manufacturers' Performance	Rewarded referrals	Target marketing	Automated response
Roofing Sheet Manufacturers' Performance	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig.(2-tailed)				
Rewarded referrals	Pearson Correlation	0.11*	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.00			
Target marketing	Pearson Correlation	0.12*	0.32**	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.00	0.00		
Automated response	Pearson Correlation	0.33**	0.19*	0.22*	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.00	0.00	0.00	

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 3 displays presence of a statistically meaningful correlation between the measures of Customer Acquisition strategy and the Performance of Roofing Sheet Manufacturers. Both Target Marketing and Automated Response showed statistically significant relationships with the Performance of Roofing Sheet Manufacturers (r equals 0.12, p is less than 0.05) and (r = 0.33, $p < 0.01$) respectively. Rewarded Referrals were also positively correlated with the Performance of Roofing Sheet Manufacturers and the correlation was statistically meaningful (r equals 0.11, probability < 0.01). Additionally, Target Marketing and Rewarded Referrals showed a statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), while Automated Response and Rewarded Referrals were significantly correlated ($p < 0.05$, $r = 0.19$). A positive and meaningful association between Automated Response and Target Marketing as well ($r = 0.22$, $p < .05$) was noted. However, these results contradict those of Khaled's (2017) research on the effect of Customer Acquisition strategies on the structural performance of manufacturing businesses registered under Amman Stock Exchange. The previous study found no statistically significant link between Customer Acquisition and structural performance by comparing the indicators of Customer Acquisition strategy with those of structural performance. The correlation results are consistent with Mohammed (2019), who conducted research to determine the strategies utilized by the EAPC.

2.1 Customer acquisition strategy

Table 4: Customer acquisition strategy measures and performance of the roofing sheet manufacturers'

Goodness of fit analysis			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.79 ^a	0.62	0.54	0.57

Predictors: (Constant), Customer Acquisition strategy (rewarded referrals, target marketing and automated response)

Dependent variable: performance of roofing sheet manufacturers'

Source: Researcher (2022)

Goodness of Fit Model results (Table 4) also showed that customer acquisition approaches had a significant effect on roofing sheet manufacturers performance ($R = 0.79$). These strategies had a strong explanatory power on their performance, as they account for 62 percent of the changes in their performance (R square = 0.62). The study findings are consistent with Ndubi (2018) research done in Nairobi County located at Kenya on the effect of customer acquisition strategies on mattress manufacturing firms. Descriptive study

model was employed and probability sampling was utilized to pick 70 respondents. The customer acquisition strategies evaluated were customized products, fresh products, rapid reaction to rivals' product innovations, and dependence on research.

Table 5: Customer Acquisition strategy measures and performance of roofing sheet manufacturers'

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	35.36	3	11.78	7.41	0.00
Residual	165.35	104	1.58		
Total	200.71	7			

- Predictors: (Constant), Customer Acquisition strategy (rewarded referrals, target marketing and automated response).
- Dependent variable: performance of roofing sheet manufacturers' (market share, growth rate, production expansion)

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 5's results show that overall, customer acquisition strategy measures provide a significant, linear influence on the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers', which is statistically significant given the probability value is lower than 0.05 (p value equals 0.00). The ANOVA analysis of 7.41 indicates that the general design is substantial and further substantiated by its respective probability value of < 0.05. This proves that the design can accurately predict changes in roofing sheet manufacturers' performance. The analysis findings are consistent with results of Mohammed (2019).

Table 6 displays the product regression coefficient findings.

Table 6: Customer Acquisition strategy measures and performance of roofing sheet manufacturers'

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.83	0.24		7.38	0.00
product rewarded referrals	0.49	0.21	0.29	2.32	0.00
target marketing	0.65	0.23	0.23	2.78	0.00
automated response	0.64	0.28	0.63	2.28	0.00

Dependent variable: performance of roofing sheet manufacturers' (market share, growth rate, production expansion)

Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 6 displays that all customer acquisition approaches had a significant effect on the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers' (t=7.38, p<0.05). Target marketing had the highest effect on the model (t(1.96)=2.78, p<0.05), followed by rewarded referrals (t(1.96)=2.32, p<0.05), and automated response (t(1.96)=2.28, p<0.05). At the individual level, all customer acquisition approaches provided a significant effect on the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers', with rewarded referrals (B equals 0.49, p equals 0.00), target marketing (B equals 0.65, p equals 0.00), and automated response (B equals 0.64, p equals 0.00) having the highest effect. These findings are consistent with those of Aliqah (2020) research on the effect of customer acquisition strategies on the operation efficiency of Jordanian manufacturing firms, which used closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires to collect data. However, both studies found a significant correlation between customer acquisition strategies and firm performance. Drawing from the findings in Table 6, the following statistical model can be used to predict the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers' based on a one standard deviation increase in customer acquisition strategy measures:

$$PoRSM = 1.83 + 0.29RR + 0.23TM + 0.63AR + \epsilon$$

Where:

$$PoRSM = \text{Performance of the Roofing Sheet Manufacturers'}$$

1.83 is the y-intercept; constant

0.29, 0.23, 0.63 = an estimate of the expected increase in the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers' corresponding to an increase in use of rewarded referrals, target marketing and automated response respectively.

RR is the rewarded referrals

TM is the target marketing

AR is the automated response

ϵ = Error term

Table 2: Framework for test of hypothesis

Hypothesis	Test criteria	Decision	Findings
H ₀₂ : There is no statistically significant effect of customer acquisition strategy on the performance roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya	H ₀₂ : $\beta=0$ H ₂ : $\beta\neq 0$	Accept H ₀₂ if P-value >0.05 Reject H ₀₂ if P-value <0.05	p-value = 0.03 Reject H ₀₂

Source: Mutua et al. (2023)

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The customer acquisition strategy findings from factor analysis revealed that it had a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index exceeding the typical minimal threshold value of 0.5. This demonstrates that customer acquisition strategies helped boost performance of roofing sheet manufacturers more. The relationship between all customer acquisition strategy metrics and the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers was statistically significant. Target marketing and automated response with performance of roofing sheet manufacturers were also major considerations. Research results revealed a direct correlation between rewarded referrals and performance of roofing sheet manufacturers, which was deemed to be significant.

Overall regression analysis outcomes revealed that the effect of customer acquisition strategies on performance of roofing sheet manufacturers was arithmetically significant, with a significance level of 0.05. The study's findings suggest that customer acquisition strategies had reasonable descriptive control over performance of roofing sheet manufacturers since it clarified performance of roofing sheet manufacturers change. Research findings show that there is a significant linear effect of customer acquisition strategies measures on performance of roofing sheet manufacturers, and the correlation is arithmetically substantial since the probability value is less threshold value of 0.05. Individually, all customer acquisition strategies initiatives had a favourable and considerable positive effect on performance of roofing sheet manufacturers. Correlation study results showed a strong, statistically substantial direct correlation between all customer acquisition indicators and the performance of roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya. Based on the research findings, the study proposes that roofing sheet manufacturers in Kenya should prioritize and invest in customer acquisition strategies. Implementing and enhancing these strategies can contribute positively to their performance, as demonstrated by improvements in sales volume, production expansion, and overall growth. This recommendation underscores the significance of customer acquisition strategies in the context of roofing sheet manufacturing in Kenya, highlighting their potential to drive competitiveness and sustainable growth in this industry. Researchers embarking on a PhD thesis could consider delving deeper into the specific mechanisms and best practices for implementing these strategies effectively, as well as exploring potential challenges and limitations in their application. A nuanced analysis of customer acquisition strategies in the short, medium, and long term should be coupled with a commitment to aligning these strategies with broader development goals. This approach not only enhances business sustainability but also contributes to national and international objectives, such as Kenya Vision 2030 and Millennium Development Goals, thereby fostering comprehensive and enduring growth.

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