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SERVICES FOR SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

The Joint Effect of Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values, And Corporate Reputation on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

Cecilia Wacuka Gathitu
Faculty of Business and Management Science, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Peter k'Obonyo
Faculty of Business and Management Science, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Vincent N. Machuki
Faculty of Business and Management Science, University of Nairobi, Kenya

James M. Njihia
Faculty of Business and Management Science, University of Nairobi, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The broad objective of the study was to determine the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya. The corresponding null hypothesis stated that the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya is not significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables. This study was anchored on Industrial (Economics) organization theory, Stakeholders' theory, Resource-based theory and Virtue's ethics theory. Descriptive cross-sectional survey was used. The population of the study comprised 53 accredited universities. To collect data, semi structured questionnaires were used due to the covid-19 situation while a few were dropped and picked back. Data analysis used regression models. Findings from the test of hypotheses showed that the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance is significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables. The significant findings implied that the null hypothesis was rejected. The study outcomes contributed to theory, policy and management practice. The four theories validated outcomes of the study. Policy makers in the Ministry of higher education, Commission for University Education and university managers were recommended to establish a policy framework that observes ethical practices; quality programs and reliable training and research and adoption of competitive strategies such a market penetration, strategic alliances, product development focus strategy, differentiation and cost leadership in that order. A single respondent who was deemed to introduce bias in choosing suitable responses was said to limit the study. Questionnaires reduced subjectivism in statement responses. Longitudinal design for generalizability of results was suggested for future studies.

Keywords: Competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values, corporate reputation and performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Universities in Kenya, with the mandate of developing Kenya's human resource, have recently received increasing attention due to rising concerns regarding their competitiveness and sustained performance. These concerns have been triggered by environmental shocks such as the recent covid-19 pandemic which caused disruptions in the global market, the Russia-Ukraine conflict that affected the country's dollar liquidity and in turn caused runaway inflation, global oil price shocks, extreme weather conditions that caused drought in most of the arid and semi-arid areas of the country, declines in real gross domestic and declining Kenya's government's capacity to fund university education. These issues have raised concerns on quality and relevance of university education in Kenya. Against this backdrop, this study sort to test the hypothesis on the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya. The study was anchored on four theories: IO (economics) theory, Resource based theory, Stakeholder's theory and Virtue ethics theory. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design targeting a population of 53 accredited universities in Kenya was used. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires. The response rate from completed questionnaires was 66.6%. Data was analysed using multiple regression analysis. Findings of the study stated that, the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities was significantly different than the individual effects of predictor variables. Thus, all the joint variables were recommended to improve performance. This study could be replicated in other countries to test for generalization.

Competitive Strategies

Competitive strategies have been described as the deliberate selection of various sets of activities that would deliver a unique mix of value over competitors or taking offensive or defensive actions in order to develop a defendable position in an industry to manage successfully with the Porter's five competitive forces and thereby yield a superior return on investment for the company [21]. [22] posited that competitive strategies are engaged by businesses to achieve or improve competitive advantage and superior performance in their industry. Consequently, the goal of competitive strategies is to come up with innovative ways to gain market and industry supremacy by satisfying consumers' needs and preferences and responding to stakeholders' sensitive needs. Competitive strategies in this study comprised: Cost-leadership strategy, Differentiation strategy, Focus strategy, Market penetration, Market production and Product development, and Strategic alliances.

Industrial Organization Theory contends that companies achieve above average performance based on fit between their strategic approaches and their particular business or industry structure. In the current study, IO (economics) theory postulated the association between competitive strategies and performance of accredited universities in Kenya while focusing on the external environment to determine appropriate strategic approaches that universities could pursue.

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage has been conceptualized variously by different authors in its connection with performance. [23] posited there were two streams for gaining competitive advantage. The first stream defined competitive advantage in terms of achieving higher profitability [2; 4; 5] while the other stream described competitive advantage in terms of sources such as differentiation, technologies, capabilities or cost leadership [21;22]. This study conceptualized competitive advantage as an antecedent to performance, where competitive advantage was said to stem from a firm's capability to create superior value for its buyers by offering a much lower price than competitors or offering superior attributes for a higher price [22]. Porter's perspective was referred to as industry structure. Competitive advantage emerged when firms responded to the structural characteristics of the five forces model by Porter and external environment [23] to get a defendable position in the market. In this study, competitive advantage was manifested by the following measures, namely competitive fees, delivery dependability, innovative programs and timely completion of programs towards achieving superior profitability. These were adopted from studies by [8; 33].

Ethical Values:
Ethical values have been described as an individual's or organization's moral values and principles [30]. These are also said to be a guide for ethical behavior [32;13]. Ethical values have also been cited as a valuable intangible asset that causes competitive advantage that can be used to segregate one firm from others while enhancing performance. This informs why ethical values has been proposed as a moderating variable in the relationship between competitive strategies and performance of accredited universities in Kenya. The objective was anchored on Stakeholder's theory, under normative approach. It described how businesses ought to function especially regarding ethical values. Under normative approach, ethical values take center stage where the expectation is that if managers treat their stakeholders ethically, then organizations may become a success with their managers committing to apply ethical values such as responsibility, honesty and fairness [15].

Corporate Reputation:
Corporate reputation is defined as a key intangible asset that has been created on the basis of collective perception of an organization past activities and expectations concerning future actions, in view of their efficiency in relation to the main competitors [35]. Corporate reputation is a multidimensional concept whose definition is drawn from various academic disciplines such in economics, strategy, marketing, organizational behaviour, sociology, and accountancy. In this study, corporate reputation is anchored on resource-based theory (RBT) and categorizes it as an intangible asset, difficult to replicate and generates competitive advantage that also explains performance heterogeneity and variance [29]. Contrary findings stated that investing in corporate reputation did not guarantee improved performance. Other authors stated, the reverse is possible with performance promoting a good reputation [9].

Performance:
Organizational performance is an important measure of an organization's success. **It** is the extent to which an organization's mission and goals are achieved [32]. The assessment of organizational performance is an important aspect in strategic management. It enables executives know how their organization is performing as well us get informed which strategic changes need to be made. Organizational performance is also said to be multidimensional concept which explains why there is variation in indicators of performance among different organizations hence the different performance measures used by different organisations [25]. There are two approaches used to measure performance, namely, financial and non-financial

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[28]. University performance was captured using dimensions which achieved university goals, namely financial resources, teaching effectiveness, research effectiveness and community outreach. Similar measures were adopted from scholars who had done studies on universities [38;19]

Research Problem

The strategy-performance relationship has been recognized as a key concept in the strategic management discourse. There is no consensus among researchers on the influence of competitive strategies on organizational performance [18;20]. [18] in their study on state corporations in Kenya, established those competitive strategies had a positive but not strongly correlated to performance. Also,[20] revealed in their study on manufacturing firms in Uk, that Porter's Strategy types had a weak correlation with financial performance hence, were limited in explaining the performance heterogeneity in organizations. To address this gap, scholars in strategic management have argued for consideration of contingent factors that may influence performance and enhance the strategy-performance linkage. Among factors suggested are ethical values and corporate reputation. Thus, this study conceptualized to determine the joint role of competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation in the relationship between competitive strategies and organizational performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

Research Objective

To determine whether the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values, corporate reputation is significantly different from individual predictor variables on performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the following theories: Industrial (IO) Economics Theory. Industrial Economics theory was advocated by [17] and advanced by [3] then was adopted by [21] based on the Structure-Conduct-Performance paradigm. The paradigm analyzed empirically the influence of the market structure on performance of the industry where it was stated to offer direct insights as to how companies could gain superior performance basing on the industry structure and strategic approaches that suit that structure. The S-C-P framework made assumptions that there was a linear one way starting from structure through conduct to performance with the market being perfect.

The Industrial (IO) Economics theory has received criticism despite its widespread acceptance in research. The assumption that the market was perfect, was found to be non-existent in the real sense [3] Market structures in the real case may have structures comprising a few large firms, yielding less competition and may charge high prices resulting in higher revenues [26]. Porter [22] applied the SCP model to design the industry analysis model to find strategic approaches that businesses could apply where there is industry rivalry. Further assumptions made, are that resources in the firms are all identical leading to identical strategies in all businesses, yet that is not the reality in real life as different firms possess different resources, for example, intangible assets. Thus, other perspectives for explaining the relationship between competitive strategies and organizational performance included; Resource Based theory and Stakeholder's theory which was complemented by Virtue ethics theory. Resource based theory

(RBT), supported corporate reputation; an intangible asset, residing internally inside universities. This theory was advanced by [39;24; 3; 4]. RBT perspective takes a shift from industry analysis which assumes resources are homogenous within a given industry hence transferable across firms in that industry; to focusing on firm analysis which posits that a firm can distinguish itself from its rivalry by strategically developing and deploying specific resources. At the same time, an effective differentiation develops competitive advantage over rivals [38; 3].

Critiques of RBT stated that intangible resources may not always link with performance, the reason being some resources require combinations with other resources for reasons of gaining strength to contribute to performance. RBT theory contributed to growth and development of analysis from industry to firm analysis. Stakeholders Theory, under normative approach supported Ethical values. It was advanced by [10;12]. The assumption made was that if a manager treated its stakeholders ethically, the organization may become successful in the long run by managers developing a positive ethical culture through applying ethical values. Critiques of this theory argued that use of stakeholder's theory did not necessarily lead to ethical behavior as it was dependent on the behavior of managers. The final theory that complemented stakeholder's theory was virtue ethics theory. This was advanced by Plato and Aristotle in the 1911's. The theory placed emphasis on importance of a person's character and values to influencing decision making [14]. Critiques argued one could not become virtuous through training or reading ethics books [7].

Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values, Corporate Reputation and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

Performance variation is said to be a product of an organization capabilities and business strategy [16]. Researches in the past have revealed a mixed outcome from studies based on the relationship between competitive strategies and organizational performance [1]. This study sort to apply ethical values and corporate reputation as the enduring intangible assets combined with competitive strategies, were proposed to provide superior organizational performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study applied a positivist philosophy orientation which relies heavily on objectivity from researchers, separation from the values of researchers or research participants, hence value free and verification of hypotheses scientifically that are often stated quantitatively [17]. Descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used and the target population was 53 accredited universities both private and public [6]. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The response rate was 66.6%. The data was analyzed using inferential statistics, specifically, multiple regression analysis.

RESULTS

The objective was to determine the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values, corporate reputation and performance of accredited universities in Kenya. The hypothesis was stated as follows: H_{05} The joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values, corporate reputation was significantly different from the individual predictor variables on performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

Various tables were used to display the results below as follows: The multiple regression analysis on the combined effect the predictor variables in the study on performance of accredited universities; the regression analysis on individual predictor variables on performance of accredited universities in Kenya and a table making comparisons between the individual predictor variables vis a viz the joint effect of the combined predictor variables on performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Outcomes for the Joint Effect of Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values and Corporate Reputation on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.856	0.733	0.693	0.3458		
ANOVA						
Model		df	Mean Square	F		Sig.
1	Regression	4	1.772	18.53		0.000
	Residual	27	0.328			
	Total	31				
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.870	0.630	1.393	1.380	0.179
	CS	0.395	0.172	0.632	2.290	0.030
	CA	0.099	0.131	0.159	0.756	0.456
	EV	-0.103	0.180	-0.165	-0.572	0.572
	CR	0.389	0.131	0.622	2.966	0.006
a. Predictors: (Constant), competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values, corporate reputation						
b. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance						

Source: Research Findings (2022).

Table 2, presented the regression outcome on the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya where a coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.733, F = 18.53, P < 0.05$) indicated that the combined variables of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation accounted for 73.3% of performance variation. The overall model of regression was significant (F=18.53, P <0.05; a unit increase in ethical values resulted in decrease of performance by 0.1031 units, and further, a unit increase in corporate reputation (β=0.389, t=2.966 P=0.006<0.05) resulted to increase in performance by 0.389 units. Equally, the overall regression model was significant (F=18.53, P < 0.05), which indicated that the model was a good fit for the analysis of data and therefore the hypothesis which stated that the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya was not significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables, was rejected. The linear regression expression for the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities Kenya was expressed as follows:

$$OP = 0.870 + 0.395CS + 0.099CA - 0.1031EV + 0.389CR + 0.122$$

Where,

- OP is the Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya,
- CS is the Competitive Strategies,
- CA is the Competitive Advantage
- EV are ethical Values and
- CR is Corporate Reputation,
- ε is the error term

The Individual Effect Each Predictor Variable on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

These effects were hypothesized and tested as explained below

- Ho_1a: Competitive Strategies have no significant influence on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.

Hypothesis Ho_1a was tested using simple linear regression analysis. The findings are presented below in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Regression Outcomes for the Effect of Competitive Strategies on Performance of Accredited Universities of Kenya

Model Summary						
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.803	0.6454	0.6336	0.378		
ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.8013	1	7.8013	54.605	0.000b
	Residual	4.2860	30	0.1429		
	Total	12.0873	31			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.432	0.306		4.674	0.000
	Competitive strategies (CS)	0.673	0.091	0.803	7.389	0.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), CS						
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya						

Source: Research findings (2022)

Regression of performance of accredited universities in Kenya (P) on competitive strategies (CS) yielded a model with reasonable fit to the data as evidenced by the R^2 value of 0.6454 and R^2 indicates that 64.54% of the variance in performance was attributed to the variation in competitive strategies. But when compared to the joint effect of Competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation on performance, the R^2 was 0.733 which indicates that 73.3 % of the variance on performance was attributed to the joint effect of predictor variables. This means that the joint effect of predictor variables is significantly different from individual effect of the first variable in the first objective.

Competitive Advantage and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

- Ho$_1$b: Competitive Advantage has no significant influence on performance of accredited universities in Kenya**.**

The hypothesis: Ho$_1$b was tested using simple linear regression analysis with corporate reputation as a predictor and performance as the criterion variable. The outcomes are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Outcomes for the Effect of Competitive Advantage on Performance of Accredited Universities of Kenya

Model Summary						
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.529	0.2798	0.2559	0.8426		
ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.2783	1	8.2783	11.66	0.002
	Residual	21.2994	30	0.7100		
	Total	29.5777	31			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.000	0.306		4.674	0.000
	Competitive Advantage (CS)	0.5123	0.15	0.525	0.5123	3.415
a. Predictors: (Constant), Competitive advantage						
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya						

Source: Research findings (2022)

The regression of performance on competitive advantage (CA) yielded the outcomes presented in table 4.16. As depicted in the table, coefficient of determination is substantial (R^2 = 0.2799, F = 11.66, P>0.05). The results showed regression model attained goodness of fit. They also suggested that 27.99% of variation in performance is explained by cost leadership strategy, while the remainder of 72.01 % is due to factors outside the scope of this study.

Ethical Values and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.

- Ho$_1$c: Ethical Values have no significant influence on performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

The hypothesis: Ho$_1$c was tested using simple linear regression analysis with ethical values as a predictor and performance as the criterion variable. The outcomes are displayed in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Regression Outcomes for the effect of Ethical Values on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

Model Summary						
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.484	0.235	0.209	0.869		
ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.937	1	6.937	9.191	0.005
	Residual	22.6412	30	0.7747		
	Total	29.5777	31			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.000	0.1536	0.000	0.000	1.000
	Ethical values (EV)	0.5003	0.1650	0.512	3.032	0.005
a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical values						
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya						

Source: Research findings (2022)

The regression of performance on ethical values (EV) yielded the outcomes presented in table 5. As depicted in the table, coefficient of determination is substantial ($R^2 = 0.2345$, $F = 9.191$, $P<0.05$). The results showed regression model attained goodness of fit. They also suggested that 23.45% of variation in performance is explained by ethical values, while the remainder of 76.55 % is due to factors outside the scope of this study.

Corporate Reputation and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

- Ho_1d: Corporate Reputation has no significant influence on performance of accredited universities in Kenya.

The hypothesis: Ho_1d was tested using simple linear regression analysis with corporate reputation as a predictor and performance as the criterion variable. The outcomes are displayed in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Regression Outcomes for the effect of Corporate Reputation on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.

Model Summary						
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	0.726	0.5279	0.5121	0.6823		
ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15.614	1	15.614	33.544	0.000
	Residual	13.964	30	0.4655		
	Total	29.5777	31			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.

		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.000	0.1206	0.000	0.000	1.000
	Corporate Reputation (CR)	0.733	0.1266	0.750	5.792	0.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical values						
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya						

Source: Research findings (2022).

The regression of performance on corporate reputation (CL) yielded the outcomes presented in table 6. As depicted in the table, coefficient of determination is substantial ($R^2 = 0.5279$, F = 33.54, $P<0.05$). The results showed regression model attained goodness of fit. They also suggested that 33.54% of variation in performance is explained by corporate reputation, while the remainder of 66.46 % is due to factors outside the scope of this study.

Summary of Regression Outcomes for The Difference Between the Joint Effect of Predictor Variables (Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values and Corporate Reputation and The Effect of Each Individual Variable on The Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya

Table 7: R^2 and Beta outcomes for individual and joint effect of all variables

Individual Predictor Variables	R^2	Beta	Joint effect of Predictor variables	R^2	Beta
Competitive Strategies	0.6336	0.673	(CS, CA, EV, CR)	0.6993	0.395
Competitive Advantage	0.2559	0.150	(CS, CA, EV, CR)	0.6993	0.099
Ethical Values	0.2090	0.165	(CS, CA, EV, CR)	0.6993	-0.103
Corporate Reputation	0.5121	0.127	(CS, CA, EV, CR)	0.6993	0.389

Table 7 shows a summary of the regression outcomes for the joint effects of all the study variables as depicted by the coefficient of determination ($R^2 =0.6933$) and were compared with the individual effects of the predictor variables, namely competitive strategies, competitive advantage, ethical values and corporate reputation. The overall effect of the joint effects of all study variables on performance ($R^2=0.6993$) was found to be significantly higher than that from the individual predictors. Thus, this study confirmed that all the study variables contributed significantly towards influencing the performance of accredited universities in Kenya. Competitive strategies displayed a robust explanatory influence on performance of accredited universities in Kenya, followed by corporate reputation, then competitive advantage and the least was ethical values.

Table 8: Summary of Research Objectives, Hypotheses and Conclusions

Objective	**Hypothesis**	**Conclusion**	**Decision**
To determine effect of Competitive Strategies on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_1: Competitive Strategies have no significant influence on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Competitive Strategies had a robust and significant influence on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_1 was rejected
To determine the effect of Competitive Advantage on	Ho_2: Competitive advantage does not mediate in the	Competitive advantage partially mediates the	Ho_2 was rejected

Objective	Hypothesis	Conclusion	Decision
the connection amid Competitive Strategies and Organizational Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	association among Competitive Strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	connection among competitive strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya	
To examine the effect of Ethical Values on the connection among Competitive Strategies and Organizational Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_3: Ethical Values do not moderate the connection among Competitive Strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ethical values do not moderate significantly the relationship among competitive strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_3 was not rejected
To determine the influence of Corporate Reputation on the association among Competitive Strategies and Organizational Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_4: Corporate Reputation does not moderate the association amid Competitive Strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Corporate reputation does not significantly moderate the association among competitive strategies and Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_4 was not rejected
To determine the joint influence of Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values and Corporate Reputation on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya.	Ho_5: The joint effect of Competitive strategies, Competitive advantage, Ethical Values and Corporate Reputation on Performance of Accredited Universities in Kenya is not significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables.	The joint effect of Competitive Strategies, Competitive Advantage, Ethical Values and Corporate Reputation on Performance is significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables.	Ho_5 was rejected

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of regressing the joint variables on performance of accredited universities in Kenya was found out to be positive and significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables. Hence the hypothesis was rejected. On the individual effects, competitive strategies had the highest explanatory power followed by corporate reputation then competitive advantage and the least of these was, ethical values. The results supporting the fifth objective confirmed that competitive strategies are critical for organizations such as accredited universities in keeping with their need to pursue competitive strategies for attaining a defensible position in order to achieve superior performance as they compete among their competitors. This study confirmed that9when accredited universities adopted certain competitive9strategies, namely, Market Penetration, Strategic alliances and Focus strategy, their9performance improved. Thus, policy makers in accredited universities, agencies such as CUE and the ministry of education could be guided by results from this research to come up with a framework that places emphasize on offering programs that are in keeping with CUE standards, provide strong management and leadership or offer reliable training and research in order to safe guard their reputation in tandem with current scenario in university education so as to sustain competitiveness in accredited universities. With regard to practice; university managers could be advised to pursue competitive strategies with emphasis to market penetration strategy, followed by strategic alliances then focus strategy in support of findings. Additionally, accredited universities may be encouraged to promote their corporate reputation while observing ethical values in their processes so as to improve university performance. To promote ethical values, accredited universities should be encouraged employ competent staff, cut down on gender or social class biasness, curb plagiarism in academia research, and establish rules and regulations. Similarly, accredited universities should be encouraged to offer professional and quality programs subject to CUE standards, promote the perception of being reliable and strong management and leadership to promote their reputation. Overall, the joint effect of competitive strategies, competitive advantage, and ethical values, corporate reputation on performance of accredited universities in Kenya was significantly different from the independent effects of predictor variables. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. Researches with similar outcomes on the strategy-performance linkage were done by [37;19]. The current study made an added contribution to extant literature.

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