PROMOTION STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Pharmaceutical manufacturers play significant role in supporting the government's health objectives. However, 53% of the firms are under performing as witnessed in reduced export sales and revenue loss by 27% which has affected their profitability. This study examined the effect of promotion strategies on pharmaceutical firms' performance in Nairobi. Grounded in contingency, cognitive response, and balanced scorecard theories, the study used an explanatory approach targeting 100 managers across 10 pharmaceutical firms in Nairobi. Stratified sampling grouped staff by role, while purposive sampling selected 65 participants. Data came from closed-ended questionnaires. A pilot involving four Kiambu firms (10% of the sample) tested the tool. Expert review, face validation, and content checks upheld validity, while internal consistency confirmed reliability. Descriptive statistics explored demographic trends, with data shown through tables, means, percentages, and deviations. Pearson's correlation assessed associations; regression tested causality. Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality was observed. The findings showed that promotion has a significant effect on firm performance. It was concluded that promotion strategy including personal selling and exhibitions should be used to improve product awareness and enhance performance. The companies may need to adopt personal selling and exhibition for more product awareness, using distribution to improve product access. Future studies may explore strategies like growth, diversification, expansion, and market penetration. Other studies may also consider new locations and incorporate other population to confirm the difference in the findings.

Key words: Promotion, Performance, Marketing Strategies, Pharmaceutical Companies.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The purpose of a marketing strategy is to meet organizational objectives (Kotler, 2017). In more advanced companies, marketing strategy is used to create, promote and deliver value to customers (Kotler, 2017). Marketing strategy supports management's activities by providing clear direction which may be used as a benchmark in measuring progress and enabling the coordination of organizational activities for enhanced performance (Kotler, 2013). Pharmaceutical manufacturers ensure access to quality drugs, boosting public health, life quality, and global health efforts. Performance of the sector is therefore significant in the development of market value and growth of the industry necessary in the realization of socio-economic objectives of any country (Wawire, 2019).

A critical analysis on the pharmaceutical sector reveals how the European pharmaceutical firms are experiencing challenges in regulation, high costs of research and development and fiscal austerity measures thereby impacting their performance (European Federation of

Pharmaceutival Industries and Associations, 2022). In Nigeria, pharmaceutical industry is experiencing performance challenges evidenced in low employee productivity, reduced innovation, poor market share, reduced marginal sales and low profitability. Additionally, reports indicate that pharmaceuticals have poor performance as a result of market structure, limited and substandard product portfolio that have added to the challenges hindering the industry to match the local needs (Ajike et al., 2023). Even though Kenyan pharmaceuticals have competitive incentive based on ease of doing business, the industry is faced with high cost of packaging, increased workforce expenses and low average revenue (International Finance Corporation, 2020). Additionally, Kenya Pharmaceutical Association (2020) notes that from 2017 to 2019, the sector recorded reduced revenue by 27% (Ngaruiya *et al.,* 2023).

Shtal (2018) notes how marketing strategy may help improve enterprise performance through enhanced cost reduction and effective pricing. Hyder (2021) also makes observation that successful marketing strategy in new product development may lead to enhanced premium in the local market thus improve performance (Panchenko et al., 2023). Even though pharmaceutical firms are not left behind in the utilization of marketing strategies, the sector has not fully utilized marketing strategies to improve their performance (Bello, 2022).

Statement of the Problem

Kenyan drug manufacturers drive sector growth within COMESA and locally through healthcare provision (Raheem et al., 2016). Despite the benefits derived from the industry, 53% of the firms are not effectively performing (Pharmacy and Poisons Board, 2018) due to decline in sales (Olow *et al.,* 2020) and revenue reduction by 27% (Ngaruiya *et al.,* 2023) thereby affecting pharmaceutical manufacturers profitability.

There are diverse studies that have focused on performance improvement such as Nosike and Okerekeoti (2022) who determined performance enhancement using employee productivity within the pharmaceutical firms in Nigeria. Wekesa (2022) studied how innovation affected financial results in Nairobi's pharmaceutical firms, while Ochieng (2022) explored strategic planning's role in shaping firm performance across Kenya. Ngugi (2021) also used generic strategies to improve performance of pharmaceutical manufacturers in Kenya.

Marketing strategy plays critical role in the enhancement of organizational performance (Kapoor, 2018) through effective pricing, cost reduction (Shtal, 2018) and high premium (Hyder, 2021). However, previous empirical studies on organizational performance have less research on the incorporation of marketing strategies as they focused on; employee productivity, innovation, strategic planning and generic strategies.

Kortana *et al.* (2020) reported how place was significant to service orientation among community pharmacies in Thailand. This study however, had a different target population and geographical location. Lebbo (2020) study, however, was based in Nairobi City County targeting pharmacies with findings that HIV testing kits were essential in purchase intention of customers. These studies had different dependent variable, target population and used case study method that could not allow generalization of the results into other contexts.

General Objectives

The study sought to investigate the effect of promotional strategies on performance of selected pharmaceutical firms in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

H_{01} Promotional strategies have no significant effect on performance of selected pharmaceutical firms in Nairobi City County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical literature Review

Cognitive Response Theory

Greenwald (1968) introduced cognitive response theory to explain how individuals interpret and respond to persuasive communication. The theory focuses on the cognitive processes that occur in response to persuasive communication, such as thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. These cognitive responses are grouped into two types which are favorable and unfavorable. Favorable cognitive responses refer to thoughts that support the persuasive message, while unfavorable cognitive responses refer to thoughts that are against the persuasive messages (Decolongon, 2018). The theory was used in the current study to analyze promotion marketing strategy through the development of persuasive messages that are favorable and therefore influencing increased preference of pharmaceutical products and services.

Push and Pull Theory

During his study on reasons for migration between rural and urban areas, Heberle (1938) founded the push and pull theory. The theory states that the desire for certain outcomes is influenced by different directional forces which can be a push or a pull towards the end result. A push-pull theory defines motivators as external forces that influence individuals toward desired results while pushing them away from unwanted outcomes (Ngobeni, 2020). By applying the pull strategy, this study examined the strategies pharmaceutical manufacturers in Kenya adopt to improve their performance by attracting customers.

Contingency Theory

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) proposed contingency theory arguing that management approaches vary depending on external factors as no single method fits all organizations. According to Borisov (2014), contingency theory views organizations as an open system that is influenced by external events which have impacts on its internal activities. Adhikara *et al.* (2022) add that contingency theory may have impacts on strategy development thereby affect organizational performance. The theory guided analysis of marketing strategy as the key variable to demonstrate how pharmaceutical firms incorporate different marketing strategies to enhance their performance.

Balanced Score Card Theory

Kaplan and Norton (1992) developed the balanced scorecard to measure performance across four areas: finance, customer focus, internal processes, and learning (Lewis, 2015). Financial metrics focus on profitability, ROI, and shareholder value (Zyznarska-Dworczak, 2012; Bochenek, 2019), while customer metrics examine satisfaction, service quality, and market segments (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). The internal perspective measures internal processes

which are critical for organizational strategy needed to meet customer expectation and satisfy shareholder needs of enhanced financial returns. Learning and growth are the fourth perspectives, which examine the organization's capacity to maintain comparative advantage through innovation and continuous improvement. The theory supported a balanced evaluation of firm performance using both financial and non-financial metrics. The theory supported the development of questionnaire using BSC perspectives.

Empirical Literature Review

Promotion Strategy and Firm Performance

Promotion encourages trade effectiveness including exposition and shows, demonstrations, displays, diverse marketing efforts and customer purchasing. Yusto and Oloko (2022) found advertising strongly influenced supermarket performance in Kisii, based on 265 respondents across nine outlets. Unlike their descriptive study, the current Nairobi-based research focused on a different population reported no significant link between promotion and performance.

Through sales promotion, businesses are able to provide additional incentive and value to their products with an aim of encouraging instant sales. Benumolo (2021), studied how promotional campaign determined performance of Nigerian Bottling Company. Descriptive survey design was incorporated targeting the marketing and sales department personnel together with 100 consumers. It was found that sales promotion was adopted as a means of maximizing sales volume and to increase consumer patronage. Despite including promotional tactics like advertising, the study found no notable impact on the performance of Nairobi's pharmaceutical companies.

The increasing competitive business environment has forced marketers across the globe to adopt variety of sales promotion strategies. Mbwambo (2019) aimed to examine how exhibitions and credit influenced Portland Cement's sales in Tanzania. Using cluster sampling techniques with a sample size of 30 wholesale distributors, the study found a relationship between exhibitions performance with recommendations on exhibition to boost sales. However, the sample was capped at 30. The current study increased the number of respondents to over 30 for more valid and reliable

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive design to guide data collection and analysis (Sharma et al., 2023) with a target population consisting of 100 managers from 10 Nairobi-based pharmaceutical manufacturers (Kenya Association of Manufacturers, 2023). Stratified and purposive sampling aided in the identification of respondents (Sharma, 2017). Primary data was collected through closed ended questionnaires for standardization and easy analysis. A pilot study involving 5 respondents (10% of the sample) was conducted in Kiambu County. Content validity was applied by aligning literature with objectives and integrating expert feedback to refine the instrument. Face validity was used to evaluate readability of the instrument (Taherdoost, 2016). Cronbach alpha values were used to determine the strength of reliability with value of 0.7 considered acceptable. Descriptive statistics enabled the identification of patterns among variables through tables, graphs, means, percentages, and deviations (Kaur et al., 2018). To

generalize findings, multiple linear regression was applied (Hade, 2019). Informed consent was sought from respondents to enable voluntary participation without any victimization. (Kaewkungwal & Adams, 2019).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Response Rate

Response rate consists of subjects who give their feedback in a survey divided by the study's sample. Response rate informs any potential biasness that may exist in the study and demonstrates research quality which can be used for generalization of the findings and to show the extent of representation of the target population (Booker, Austin & Balasubramanian, 2021). As indicated in Table 1, 65 questionnaires were issued across 10 pharmaceutical firms.

Table 1. Response Rate

Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage
Marketing	13	13	100%
Operations	13	13	100%
Customer care	13	13	100%
Production	13	11	84.6%
Finance	13	10	76.9%
Total	**65**	**60**	**92.3%**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

Table 1 shows full responses from marketing, operations, and customer care (13 each), with production at 11 (84.6%) and finance at 10 (76.9%). The average response rate for the study was 60(92.3%). Booker *et al.* (2021) suggest that 80% response rate may be considered excellent for analysis hence, this study's response rate was deemed excellent in undertaking analysis for generalization of the findings to the main population. It also demonstrated that the researcher did follow-up during data collection that ensured high participation of respondents.

Promotion Strategy and Firm Performance

Promotion is a persuasive communication about an organization's products and services aimed at customers. Promotion is used to create awareness, drive short term sales and build a positive image (Nguyen, Anderson & Banerjee, 2021). Table 2 presents findings on how publicity, exhibitions, ads, and personal selling shaped performance in Nairobi's pharmaceutical sector.

Table 2. Promotion Strategy and Firm Performance

Promotion Strategy	N	Mean	Std. D
Publicity has enhanced awareness of our products and services.	60	2.47	1.21
My organization is engaged in more personal selling to reach our customers.	60	4.6	0.67
Advertisement has enhanced our sales in new markets.	60	2.53	1.19
My organization participates in exhibitions to reach our target markets.	60	3.57	0.79
Aggregate Mean		**3.29**	**0.92**

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The study's finding in Table 2, shows a disagreement among respondents that publicity was used to enhance awareness of pharmaceutical products and services where the statement was ranked with a 2.47 mean score, standard deviation of 1.21. This implies that publicity is not highly preferred by selected pharmaceutical firms to improve their performance.

The results show that pharmaceutical companies were engaging in more personal selling to reach targeted customers. The statement was rated 4.6 mean score with a standard deviation of 0.67. This shows that companies considered personal selling as an important strategy in the improvement of firm performance. The study revealed a disagreement that advertisement was used to enhance sales in new pharmaceutical markets with a mean score rating of 2.53, standard deviation of 1.19. Khoso, Ahmed and Ahmed (2014) argue that the pharmaceutical companies are not allowed to use mass media for product advertisement. This relates to the findings on the adoption of advertisement to enhance firm performance evidenced in low mean score, an indication of minimal usage by selected pharmaceutical manufacturers in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

However, Rahman, Rodriguez and Lambkin (2020) report that after the US deregulation of the pharmaceutical market, promotional activities targeted at direct to end users are improving efficiency of advertisement for more profitability. The findings therefore demonstrated that the more efficiency is improved, the more sales are realized leading to increase in profitability. This finding however, does not align with the current research where selected pharmaceutical manufacturers are using less advertisement to enhance firm performance. Nanteza (2020) targeted Ugandan pharmaceutical distribution companies using personal selling to determine how it improved sales performance. This research found that the use of medical sales representatives, continuous medical education and regular visits improve performance of sales. Distributors indicated how visits enhanced their understanding of products and found information as useful in making purchase decisions and hence improving performance. This finding matches with the present results where promotional strategy through personal selling is recognized as one of the effective strategies adopted by selected pharmaceutical manufacturers to improve firm performance.

Respondents further noted an agreement that pharmaceutical companies were involved in exhibitions to reach the target markets for purposes of improving performance. The mean score recorded to the statement was 3.57, standard deviation of 0.79. Overall, respondents agreed that promotion strategy was used in the enhancement of firm performance.

An investigation by Negash (2017) analysed promotional strategies used by Ethiopian pharmaceuticals and reported how personal selling was placed in second position after sales promotion. The findings revealed that advertisement was considered in third position where medical text books, journal publication and product posters were used to establish any performance. The results also indicated that pharmaceutical firms were using less of public relations. Findings from this study align with Nagash (2017), confirming widespread use of personal selling among Nairobi's pharmaceutical manufacturers. Public relations and advertising showed minimal uptake, reflected by low mean scores.

Benumolo (2021) studied Nigerian bottling firms and recognized increased consumer adoption due to more sales campaign which aligns with the present research where personal selling is being used to improve performance of Kenyan pharmaceutical firms. The findings align with Mbwambo (2019) who considered exhibition as one of the important strategies used by Tanzanian Portland Cement Company to improve performance.

The push and pull theory proposed by Heberle (1938) shows how individuals are motivated by push and pull factors from external environment which prompts them towards certain desired outcome (Ngobeni, 2020). The push aims to create demand through promotion while pull prompts customers to seek for organization hence building long-term customer loyalty. Pharmaceutical firms use different strategies to either push their messages to customers or pull the target market towards the firms. From the results, customers prefer personal selling where sales representatives are able to provide more information to customers thereby pull the customers to some favourable outcome by asking questions and samples. Respondents also noted preference for exhibition that creates a platform where customers are able to sample different products and ask questions thereby improve value in decision making. However, the advertisement and publicity do not appear to work effectively as a push and pull strategies thereby reducing their impact in improving firm performance.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation assesses how two variables relate, indicating strength and direction on a scale from -1 to +1 (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017). Using Karl Pearson's method, the study examined links between marketing strategies and performance in Nairobi's pharmaceutical firms, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

		Promotion	**Performance**
Promotion	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	60	
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.723**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	60	60

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The outcome in Table 3 demonstrates a strong and positive relationship of promotion strategy ($r=0.723$, p value<0.05) to firm performance. This implies a positive improvement in firm performance when promotion strategy is adopted by pharmaceutical companies in Nairobi City County. The outcome matches with Myint (2018) who reported a positive correlation of sales promotion to performance. The findings agree with Damtew (2023) research who recorded a strong correlation ($r=0.967$, $p<0.05$) between Promotion strategy and business performance of pharmaceutical firms in Ethiopia.

Regression Analysis

The researcher used multiple regression analysis to establish any causal relationship between marketing mix strategy and firm performance. A model summary, analysis of variance and regression coefficient were used in the analysis.

Model Summary

The study aimed to provide summary of the model was to analyse the change in the dependent variable due to marketing strategy and to establish the quality of the model in predicting the response variable as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Model Summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.723a	0.522	0.514	0.26537

a. Predictors: (Constant) Promotion

Source: Survey Data (2025)

From the findings in Table 4, R was 0.723, which demonstrates high quality of the model in predicting firm performance. The Adjusted R Square of 0.514 showed that 51.4% of marketing strategies which include; product, price, promotion and place accounted for changes in firm performance of pharmaceutical companies in Nairobi City County. The other 48.6% of factors were however, outside the scope of the study. Abiodun and Kolade (2020) revealed that marketing strategy accounted for 53.8% of changes in SMEs performance. The results also showed that marketing strategies had a positive effect on profitability of SMEs thereby leading to improved performance. The current research confirms previous findings where marketing strategy accounts for a higher variation in firm performance when selected pharmaceutical manufacturing firms were investigated.

Analysis of Variance

The researcher used ANOVA to establish any significance difference in the data set for making prediction to the dependent variable as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.469	1	4.469	63.457	.000b
	Residual	4.084	58	0.070		
	Total	8.553	59			

Source: Survey Data (2025)

The revelation in Table 5 shows that F (1,58), 63.457, p=0.000 and therefore, the data demonstrated a good quality in making prediction to firm performance. Amin (2021) study demonstrated how the regression model was a good fit for the data for predicting performance which concurs with the present findings where the model may be used to make predictions for firm performance using marketing strategy data from selected pharmaceutical manufacturers in Nairobi City County, Kenya.

Regression Coefficients

The researcher used regression coefficient to detect variable significance with a model reflected as $Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\varepsilon$; where Y was the dependent variable, firm performance, β_1-regression coefficients, β_0-constants, X_1 Promotion Strategy. Table 6 was the findings of regression coefficients.

Table 6, Regression Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.62012987	0.255554447		6.33967	0.000
	Promotion	0.66233766	0.083145617	0.722817482	7.966	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

From the findings in Table 6, the constant was 0.712, Promotion Strategy recorded a regression coefficient was 0.662, p-value of 0.000 hence;
Y=1.6201+0.662Promotion Strategy +0.2555

Testing of Hypothesis

The study's hypothesis was that Promotion Strategy does not have any significant effect on firm performance. However, the findings in Table 6 showed that an addition of Promotion Strategy in the model lead to an increase (β=0.662, p=0.000) in firm performance. The p value was less than the 0.05 threshold leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis as Promotion strategy show ed significant effect of firm performance. The findings agree with Sapuro (2016) research in Kajiado County which established a significant effect of promotion on the performance of SMEs. A similar investigation by Tesfaye (2022) also proved that promotion strategy had a positive and significant effect on physician's prescribing behaviour which aligned with the present outcome. The findings agree with Yasa *et al.* (2020) who targeted SMEs in Tenun Ikat sector and established a positive and significant contribution to marketing performance. The revelation therefore demonstrates increased usage of promotion strategy to increase awareness of pharmaceutical products and services. The findings also show that there are specific promotion strategies that are used by pharmaceutical firms as the sector is regulated which hinders it from adoption promotion strategy in a similar way other industry use promotion.

Summary and Conclusion

The study's objective was to analyse promotion strategy and firm performance of pharmaceutical manufacturers in Nairobi City County. From the findings, pharmaceutical manufacturers are engaged in more personal selling to reach their customers. The firms are also involved in exhibitions to expand their reach to wide markets. Pharmaceutical manufacturers are minimally using advertisement and publicity to enhance sales in new markets for purposes of creating awareness about their products and services. Promotion Strategy demonstrates a

positive and strong relationship with firm performance. The strategy has significant effect on firm performance.

The findings conclude that pharmaceutical manufacturers are using more personal selling strategies to reach their customers. This helps in providing more explanations about the products leading to increased uptake and enhancement of firm performance. It is concluded that pharmaceutical firms are using exhibitions to reach new markets and incorporating advertisements to enhance sales in new areas of business. However, there is low usage of publicity to create awareness of products and services. Promotion strategy has a strong relationship with firm performance. However, the strategy does not have significant effect on firm performance.

The study recommends policy areas in promotion strategy to allow flexibility on certain areas of advertisement and publicity to improve awareness and enhance the reach of pharmaceutical products and services thereby improve performance. Future research may focus on other strategies such as growth strategies; market penetration, market expansion and diversification strategies.

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