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## Influence of Generic Strategies on Organizations' Competitiveness of Sugar Firms' in Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*Sugar firms in Kenya have been subjected into stiff competition mainly from low cost producer of sugar in the world. In order to be more competitive, sugar firms have engaged generic strategies to advance on their competitiveness. Study purpose was to assess generic strategies influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. The study used descriptive cross-sectional research design and study was carried out in Kenya sugar sector. Target population was all the twelve sugar firms with one hundred and ninety managers. The sampling procedure was done using a formula developed by Krejcie & Morgan table to come up with a sample of 127. Questionnaires were the data collection instrument of this study mainly to collect primary data and they were administered to respondents by the researcher. Piloting of the research instruments was done where two sugar firms were selected for the piloting and the respondents from these firms who were not included in the actual study. The researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient as a tool of defining dependability of research tool. The study results indicated that correlation between all measures of between generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was a statistical significant and positive ( $p < .05$ ). results also revealed that generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had a positive and significant influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' ( $R = .715$ ). Generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had explanatory power over organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' because it accounts for 51.1 percent of organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' change ( $R\text{-square} = .511$ ). The study therefore concluded that there was statistically significant influence of generic strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms in Kenya ( $p < .05$ ). The study recommended that sugar firms in Kenya need to consider an upsurge in the usage of generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) in their operations since this study has found out that they have significant and positive influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms'.*

**Keywords:** *Generic strategies, organizations' competitiveness, sugar firms, Kenya*

### **1. Background to the Study**

According to Pearce and Robinson (2016), the concept of generic strategies is very important to firms in that their aim is to make maximum profits. Pearce and Robinson (2016), states that the big questions in business firm is why business organizations succeed while others don't. Pearce & Robinson (2016) assert that strategic management involves strategy formulating, strategy implementing and strategy evaluating in facilitating an organization to achieve its objectives. Sugar firms have employed generic strategies in an attempt to be more competitive than their rivals. In this study, generic strategies are used to refer to management practices which are used by sugar firms in their effort to build competitiveness. These three generic strategies have been chosen based on the fact that they are the main strategic management strategies that the sugar firms use in their effort to remain competitive.

Porter (2008) is of the opinion that markets with buyers who are price sensitive make organizations to use low cost strategy in acquiring more customers. The strategy is aimed at creating a competitive advantage. Thompson (2011) states that strategist argue that the broad intention of undertaking trade which is stated in firm's undertaking declaration ought to be converted to a key statement of strategic direction prior to more defining into specific long-term strategy. Thompson (2011) argues that product differentiation is making efforts to come up with market exceptional products or service for each and every group of customers. Thompson (2011) asserts that differentiation tends to safeguard firms from competitive and rivalry because it helps in creating client trustworthiness. When a business firm attains competitive advantage, it will lead to more and more customers becoming less concerned with high price of product. Pearce and Robinson (2016) are of the opinion that market focus is where firms struggle to plead to different groups of customers by addressing their differentiated tastes and preferences.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Organizations have different institutional characteristics which are all geared toward enabling better operations in the organization and sugar firms in Kenya are no exception. The sugar firms have employed institutional characteristics which include size of the firm, firms' ownership and structure of management. The study had the assumption that institutional characteristics had an influence on relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. This study was geared toward investigating the influence of institutional characteristics on the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms.

### 1.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this research was to assess influence of generic strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms in Kenya.

### 1.3. Hypothesis of the Study

The study tested the null hypothesis:

- **H<sub>01</sub>**: Influence of generic strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' is not statistically significant.

## 2. Literature Review

A theory is a logical explanation of an association that exists among phenomena according to Ngumi (2013). In the real sense, theories offer a general explanation to an existence thus offering the researcher a framework for doing the study. The study was grounded on generic framework. This study used a combined theoretical approach instead of one theoretical viewpoint in order to give an improved understanding of influence of generic competitive strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. The following section offers discussion on these models. According to Porter (1980) this theory gives ways to analyse industries and competitors. The theory may be used to come up with a best position for a firm in the sugar manufacturing and contributing factors to a firm's prosperity are said to be pleasant appearance of atmosphere in which firms operates. The framework is not industry dependent hence it is called generic. A firm ought to do an analysis of the firms' strengths as well as weaknesses in an effort to identifying its competitive advantage. Porter (1980) suggests that a business's strength should be on cost reduction advantage. Porter (1980) suggests that there are mainly three aggressive spirited road maps which firms should implement in order to be able to handle their rivals which are low cost, differentiation and market focus strategies.

There are various forces that influence competition in an industry in business operating environment. Porter (1980) endeavoured to summarize these forces as rivalry between existing firms, new contestants' risk, alternative goods, increasing negotiating command of suppliers and negotiating muscle of buyers. An organization's goods are influence by its providers, alternates, consumers, possible contestants and business contenders. Providers and consumers have a negotiating influence on a company's products hence there is a possibility of new entrants whose alternatives pose a threat to the company's products. Porters additionally derived generic competitive strategies in order to counter attack these competitive forces (Barney, 2010).

A research which was conducted by Lillestol, Timothy and Goodman (2015) on generic competitive strategies in United States music part business indicated that CL characteristics included attainment of low working costs, refining product competence, refining service management costs, better use of obtainable resources and equipment. The research gathered prime data by the usage of letters and correspondences. Regression examination displayed cost leadership influences both innovation and organization performance. Additionally, innovation had an important moderating influence among firms' performance and cost leadership.

### 2.1. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework refers to a graphic presentation that clarifies the chief variables to be studied according to Sekaran, (2014). A conceptual framework is a diagrammatical presentation of how the researcher conceptualizes the interaction between the study variables of the problem under investigation as proposed by Kasomo, (2009). Every single research must have variables that are independent and dependent of each other. It is the connection between study literature, methodology and the study findings. An independent variable is a stand-alone variable and the researcher can manipulate it to suit the study being done. This is the variable which the researcher feels it will have some influence on the dependent variable. Generic strategies were identified by the researcher in the current study to have an influence on organizations' competitiveness. This present research had assumed that generic strategies (Independent Variable) had linear and direct influences on organizations' competitiveness (Dependent Variable) of sugar firms in Kenya. The study had also assumed that the linear and direct relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness was to be modified by firm size, firm ownership and management structure of the sugar firm.

The influence of generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) on organizations' competitiveness (market share, growth rate and production expansion) of sugar firms was the main objective of this study. In this study, generic strategies were the sovereign variable whereas organizations' competitiveness (market share, growth rate and production expansion) was dependent variable as exhibited in figure 1.

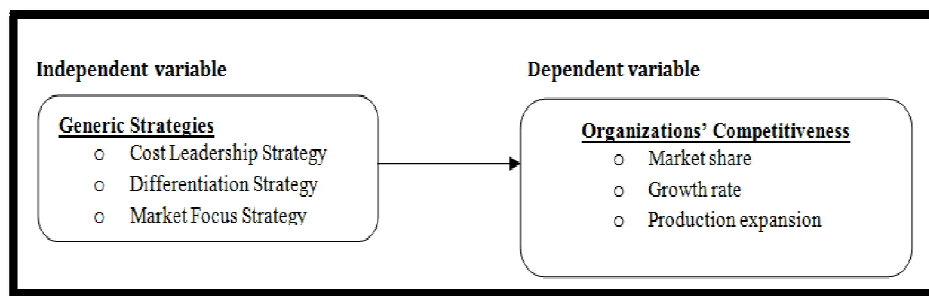


Figure 1: Conceptualization Framework  
Source; Researcher, 2020

### 3. Methodology and Design

Study objective was essentially to establish the connotation between the different variables associated with the study variables. To achieve this, the study employed descriptive cross-sectional research design in its methodology. Cooper and Schindler (2014) are of the opinion that a cross-sectional study is a study which is done at once and picks out parameters of a certain phenomenon at a precise point in time. The purpose is to obtain an exact means of grasping a population's features within a given point in time. Descriptive cross-sectional research design enables scrutiny for significant relationships amongst study variables to come up with generalities concerning the target population. The description of the relationship between generic strategies, institutional characteristics and organizations' competitiveness will be the outcome of the correlational descriptive research. This kind of research design has in the past been used by researchers in social science studies.

#### 3.1. Target Population

This study focus was on all sugar firms which were functional in Kenya and all production, marketing, finance and general managers and all assistant managers from each sugar firm as well as the farmers' out-grower firms. According to Kenya Sugar Board (2019), there were twelve (12) sugar companies in Kenya and twelve associated farmers' out-grower firms. The target population was 240 managers as exhibited in Table 1.

Managers	Population
Marketing Manager	21
Production Manager	38
Finance Manager	19
General Manger	19
Assistant Marketing Manager	19
Assistant Production Manager	36
Assistant Finance Manager	19
Assistant general Manager	19
Total	190

Table 1: Target Population  
Source: Kenya Sugar Board, 2020: Ministry of Cooperative Development & Marketing 2020

#### 3.2. Sampling Procedure and Techniques

The sample size determination was done using a table developed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). According to the table, when population is 190, the sample size ought to be 127. Hence, the sample size of this study was 148 as presented in table 2.

Managers	Population	Sample Size
Marketing Manager	21	14
Production Manager	38	25
Finance Manager	19	13
General Manger	19	13
Assistant Marketing Manager	19	13
Assistant Production Manager	36	23
Assistant Finance Manager	19	13
Assistant general Manager	19	13
Total	190	127

Table 2: Sample Size Determination  
Source: Researcher, 2020

### 3.3. Data Analysis Techniques and Procedure

To determine the significance between the generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) and organizations' competitiveness, F-test was done while T-test gave individual level of significance of their relationship. The study findings were offered in tables, correlation and regression results tables. Relationship between research variables was expected to pursue linear regression of the nature;  $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \epsilon$ ; which can also be stated as follows using the study variables:

$$OC = \beta_0 + \beta_1CL_1 + \beta_2PDS_2 + \beta_3MFS_3 + \epsilon$$

Where:

OC	= Organizations' Competitiveness (Dependent variable)
$\beta_0$	= Constants or the value of Y when X variables are at zero.
$\beta_{1-3}$	= Regression coefficients
CLS	= Cost Leadership Strategies
PDS	= Product Differentiation Strategies
MFS	= Market Focus Strategies
$\epsilon$	= Error term.

## 4. Study Findings

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

The combination of all the three generic strategies engaged by sugar firms was evaluated by the use of six statements and Table 3 offers the relevant outcomes which are shown on the scale of 1 to 5 (where 5= the greatest extent and 1= the lowest extent).

	Mean	Std. Dev.
Costs leadership is often used more seriously than other strategies in our sugar firm	3.9907	.99523
The more predominant strategy used in our firm is differentiation strategy	3.5981	1.15628
Market focus strategy is more predominantly used in our firm than other strategies	3.8505	1.00755
The combination of costs leadership and differentiations strategies is more practiced than any other combination	4.0374	.76387
The combination of costs leadership and market strategies is more practiced than any other combination	4.3804	.71102
The combination of market focus and differentiations strategies is more practiced than any other combination	4.1804	.67004
Mean score	4.006	

Table 3: Combination of Generic Strategies

Key: SD = Strongly Disagrees, D = Disagrees, N = Not sure, A = Agrees, SA = Strongly Agrees

Source: Primary Data, 2020

Respondents were to a great extent of the opinion that the combination of costs leadership and market strategies is more practiced than any other combination with a mean score of 4.3804 which was the highest mean score. The combination of market focus and differentiations strategies is more practiced than any other combination with a mean score of 4.180. However, the more predominant strategy used in our firm is differentiation strategy had a mean score of 3.598 and Market focus strategy is more predominantly used in our firm than other strategies with a mean of 3.850 had the lowest mean score. Generally, the strength of combination of generic strategies was moderately high having a mean of 4.006.

### 4.2. Factor Analysis for Generic Strategies

All measures of generic strategies were subjected in factor analysis in an effort to decide on their suitability for correlation and regression analysis. The results are shown in Tables 4. From the results, KMO has an index of .648 which is greater than the conventional minimum probability value of .5, implying that factor analysis is good and hence appropriate for the data set.

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and</b>		<b>.648</b>
Bertlet's tests of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	108.426
	Degrees of freedom	86
	Significance(p-value)	.000

Table 4: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bertlet's Tests for Generic Strategies

Source: Primary Data, 2018

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.716	51.462	51.462	3.602	51.462	51.462
2	3.602	28.583	80.045	3.716	28.585	80.045
3	.852	12.178	92.223			

Table 5: Total Variance Explained for Generic Strategies

Source: Primary Data, 2018

The study results show that the initial portion of factor abstraction process was to regulate the linear mechanisms inside the data set. The initial Eigen values associated with each factor have been extracted and explain the variance specific to a particular linear component. From the study results, factor one accounts for 51.462% while 28.583% for factors two respectively of the total variance. Cumulatively, 80.045% of the variance is accounted for by the two factors.

	Component	
	1	2
Cost leadership strategy	.218	.887
Product differentiation strategy	.214	.772
Market focus strategy	.936	.221

Table 6: Component Matrix (a) for Generic Strategies

Source: Primary Data, 2018

As exposed in table 6, the rotation component matrix has an enhancing influence on factor construction and conditions the comparative significance of the aspect. This advocated that from research outcomes, the scheme had recognized only 2 vital factors to be loaded in examination. From the rotated matrix results (Table 6), factor one has is highly and positively correlated with market segmentation (.936) while factor two was highly and positively correlated with customer and competitor focus .887 and .772 respectively.

#### 4.3. Correlation Analyses

The researcher also conducted a correlation analysis between generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms and results offered in Table 7.

	Organizational competitiveness	Cost leadership	Product differentiation	Market focus
Organizations' competitiveness	1			
Cost leadership	.704*	1		
Product differentiation	.649**	.631*	1	
Market focus	.462*	.623**	.486*	1

Table 7: Market Focus Strategy and Organizations' Competitiveness

Source: Primary Data, 2020

The study results indicated that correlation between all measures of between generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was a statistical significant and positive ( $p < .05$ ). The correlation between cost leadership strategy and organizations' competitiveness was positive and statistically significant ( $r = .704$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), product differentiation strategy and market focus strategy were correlated positively with organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' ( $r = .649$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and ( $r = .462$ ,  $p < .05$ ) respectively. Correlation between market focus strategy and cost leadership was positive and statistical significant ( $r = .623$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The study findings showed a statistically significant positive correlation between product differentiation and cost leadership ( $r = .631$ ,  $p < .05$ ) while market focus strategy and product differentiation strategy were positively and significantly correlated ( $r = .486$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The study results also demonstrated that although the correlation coefficients are statistically significant at even one percent level, the problem of multicollinearity does not exist since none of these

coefficients is greater than  $r = 0.8$ . This implies that the cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies all had important role of association with organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya.

#### 4.4. Regression Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

In an effort to analyse generic strategies influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms', the individual generic strategies agencies were regressed against aggregate mean mark of organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. Table 8 presents the regression examination results of generic strategies against organizations' competitiveness.

Model Summary			
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.715	.511	.316	.040

Table 8: Regression Results of Generic Strategies against Competitiveness  
 Predictors: (Constant), Cost Leadership Strategies, Differentiation Strategies, Market Focus Strategies  
 Dependent Variable: Organizations' Competitiveness  
 Source: Primary Data, 2020

Model summary or goodness of fit model (Table 8) results also revealed that generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had a positive and significant influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' ( $R = .715$ ). Generic strategies had explanatory power over organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' because it accounts for 51.1 percent of organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' change ( $R$ -square = .511). An F statistic of 3.273 indicated that the overall model was significant and it was supported by a p-value = .008 since its p-value was  $< .05$ . This concurs with Mohammed (2014) who carried out a research work to establish the strategies which were being used by the EAPC. The study found out that East African Portland Cement Company used product differentiation, cost leadership strategy and market focus strategy to be more competitive. The study also found out that the company was facing various challenges in implementing the strategies. The study was on competitive strategies in the cement manufacturing industry but the current study will be on generic strategies measures and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. The ANOVA Results of generic strategies against organizations' competitiveness are offered in table 9.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign. (p-value)
Regression	2.081	2	1.041	49.571	.008
Residual	2.230	105	.021		
Total	4.311	107			

Table 9: Generic Strategies against Organizations' Competitiveness  
 Predictors: (Constant), Cost Leadership Strategies, Differentiation Strategies, Market Focus Strategies  
 Dependent Variable: Organizations' Competitiveness  
 Source: Primary Data, 2020

From the ANOVA results, the study results reveal that generic strategies measures (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) overall effect on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was statistically significant (p-value = .008). Study results in Table 6 reveal that generic strategies measures have an overall significant influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms since the overall p-value = .008 which is less than .05). The ANOVA results show that the F-ratio was more than one ( $F = 49.571$ ) shows the prediction capacity of the model contribution of generic strategies measures to organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was significant. This means that this model can significantly predict the change in organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. At individual level, ANOVA results (Table 9) showed that the overall influence of generic strategies measures (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was significant in that p-value was  $< 0.05$  (p - value = .008). The coefficients results or the individual significance for generic strategies measures against organizations' competitiveness are exposed in Table 10.

Coefficients					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sign. (p-value)
	Beta	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	2.347	.299		7.849	.042
Cost leadership	.540	.187	.241	2.888	.037
Product differentiation	.365	.179	.154	2.039	.028
Market focus	.246	.183	.122	1.344	.000

Table 10: Coefficient Results of Generic Strategies Measures and Competitiveness  
 Dependent Variable: Organizations' Competitiveness  
 Source: Primary Data, 2020

The model factor in table 10 indications that generic strategies measures (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) all had important contributor to the coefficient model of organizations' competitiveness ( $t = 7.849$ ,  $\rho < .05$ ). The model parameters in table 10 had the indication that when cost leadership strategy is used as a forecaster, its influence to model is significantly higher than other measures ( $t(1.96) = 2.888$ ,  $\rho < .05$ ). Additionally, the predictive strength of product differentiation strategy contribution in the coefficient model was similarly significant ( $t(1.96) = 2.039$ ,  $\rho < .05$ ). On the other hand, when market focus is used as a predictor, its contribution to the model is significantly important ( $t(1.96) = 1.344$ ,  $\rho < .05$ ).

At the individual level, coefficients results (Table 10) showed that all the generic strategies measures (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had positive and significant influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' as follows; Cost leadership had positively influenced organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms ( $\beta = 0.381$  and  $p\text{-value} = 0.037$ ). Product differentiation strategies also positively influenced organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms ( $\beta = .266$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .028$ ). Market focus on the other hand had a positive influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' ( $\beta = .135$ ,  $p\text{-value} = .040$ ).

Arising from the results in Table 10, the resulting single regression equation that can be used to predict the level of organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms for a one standard deviation improvement in generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) can be expressed as:

$$OC = 2.347 + .540CLS + .365PDS + .246MFS + \varepsilon$$

Where:

OC = Organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms

2.347 = the y- intercept constant

.540, .365, .246 = slope coefficient

CLS= Cost leadership strategy

PDS= Product differentiation strategy

MFS= Market focus strategy

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

Regression results in Table 7 show that a unit change in cost leadership strategy results in .241 enhancement in organizations' competitiveness while an item change in product differentiation strategy, results into .154 enhancement in organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms in Kenya and an item change in market focus strategy would result into .122 improvement in organizations' competitiveness. On the other hand, generic strategies if implemented will affect organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya by 51.1 percent ( $R^2 = .511$ ).

#### 4.5. Discussion on the Study Results

The correlation study results indicate that correlation between all measures of between generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was significant and positive ( $p < .05$ ). The study results also demonstrated that although the correlation coefficients are statistically significant at even one percent level, the problem of multicollinearity does not exist since none of these coefficients is greater than  $r = 0.8$ . This implies that the cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies all had significant role of relationship with organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya.

The regression analysis results exposed that generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had a significant and positive influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' ( $R = .715$ ). This implies that one-unit variation in generic strategies results into .755 improvements in organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. Generic strategies were found to have explanatory power over organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' because it accounts for 51.1 percent of organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' change ( $R\text{-square} = 0.511$ ). An F statistic of 3.273 indicated that the overall model was significant and it was supported by a  $p\text{-value} = .008$  since its  $p\text{-value}$  was  $< .05$ . This show that a 51.1 percent of sugar firm competitiveness is accounted for by generic strategies employed by the sugar firms.

### 5. Summary of the Findings

The factor analysis results indicated that the system had identified the three important factors to be loaded in the analysis. The study results indicate that correlation between all measures of between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was a statistically significant and positive ( $p < .05$ ). The study regression analysis results revealed that generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had significant and positive influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' and they accounted for over fifty one percent of sugar firms' competitiveness. The study found out the generic strategies had statistically significant influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya. The results agreed with Mohammed (2014) carried out a research work to establish the strategies which were being used by the EAPC. The study found out that East African Portland Cement Company used differentiation, cost leadership strategy and focus strategy to be more competitive. The study also found out that the company was more competitive and successful when it uses a combination of differentiation and cost leadership strategy. The study also found out a strong association amongst company success and product differentiation strategy. The study recommended that East African Portland Cement Company used differentiation; cost leadership and focus strategies need to make more efforts in the usage of these strategies in order to remain competitive.

### 5.1. Conclusion

The study had purposed to analyse extent the influence of generic strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. The study regression results publicized that generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) had an explanatory power over organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms and study therefore concluded that there was statistically significant influence of generic strategies on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms in Kenya ( $p < .05$ ).

### 5.2. Recommendation

The study concluded that extent to which the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness was statistically significant. The study recommends that sugar firms in Kenya need to consider an upsurge in the usage of generic strategies (cost leadership, product differentiation and market focus strategies) in their operations since this study has found out that they have significant and positive influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms'.

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