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Moderating Influence of institutional characteristics on the Relationship between Generic Strategies and Organizations' Competitiveness of Sugar Firms in Kenya

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Abstract:
Firms employ numerous types of strategies in an effort to attain their organizational objectives and also improve the organizations' performance and sugar firms are not exclusion. The main objective of study was to assess institutional characteristics influence on affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya. The study tested the null hypothesis that the influence of institutional characteristics on affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' is not statistically significant. The institutional theory backed the study and it argues that within an institution there are structures within which the actions within the organization operate. Descriptive cross-sectional research design was used in this study. The study was done on sugar firms which were operating in Kenya and all the production, marketing, finance and general managers as well as their assistants of every sugar firm and its affiliated farmers out grower firms. Kenya Sugar Board (2019) states that there are twelve sugar firms in Kenya and twelve affiliated farmers out grower firms; hence the target population was all the twelve sugar firms with 240 managers. The sample size of this study was 148 arrived at by the use of Krejcie& Morgan (1970) sample determination table. The study results indicated that the influence of generic strategies and institutional characteristics on organizational competitiveness of sugar firms' was significant and positive (p< .05). The change in R^2 because of the interface term was .014 (.396 - .382) and the interaction term was significant (p < .05). The hypothesis criterion was that reject the null hypothesis if p-value is less than .05 and β ≠ 0 or else don't reject, in case p-value > 0.05. Based on the study results, β ≠ 0 and p-value< 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis and stated that generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship was moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) of sugar firms. The study therefore concludes that the institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) influence on affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was important and was moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure). This study recommends that sugar firms in Kenya need to consider incorporating institutional characteristics in their operations since this study has found out that institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) moderates the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness.

Keywords: Moderating effect, generic strategies, organizations' competitiveness, sugar firms, Kenya, institutional characteristics

1. Background to the Study

Within an institution there are structures within which the actions within the organization operate according to Amenta and Ramsey (2010). Some authors are of the opinion that institutions such as sugar firms establish the theorized substructures through which organizational structure aspects apply their influence. The role of institutional environments has become more and more significant mainly because the institutions provide the rules and regulations of the game to govern the operations in the organization as proposed by Ketema (2015). Cai, Jun and Yang (2010) are for the proposition that institutional theory considers economic, social, cultural, and political forces within the organizations' areas as a significant operating environmental component that affects a firms' decisions and practice. Sugar firms' operating environment in Kenya is very unstable and unpredictable due to inadequate formal market that may support the institutions. It is upon this proposition that Dung (2012) claims that sugar firms' strategy should be predicted early enough by the use of institutional based view then followed by resource grounded opinion of sugar firms.

Institutional theory takes great consideration to processes through which an organization's structures are well established as commanding procedures for social behaviour as argued by Kraft (2007). Additionally, Dung (2012) is of the view that institutional theory tends to explain the existence of borders and their internal organizational structures. As a result of, institutional factors must be considered in any organization together with other critical possessions, because

there are numerous forces that influence a firms' decision. This means that some changes are likely to take place within the sugar firms' system when the functional contributions of prearranged structural arrangements are surpassed by dysfunctions connected to that arrangement.

Amenta and Ramsey (2010) argue that there exists a different view of dominant role of path dependent manufacturing process might be. In their argument, the strongest version of their argument suggests that the paths dependent processes are infrequent and significant in an institution while weak version of this theory and which is concerned with contingency issues argues that the path dependent is omnipresent and probably not very influential. Despite of the dispute between the two views, majority of the authors seem to support the strong version although there are still some equal disagreements within the supporting group. Based on the different views of the institutional theory, this study was of the view that the structural components of the sugar manufacturing system need to be integrated in an effort of making the system to survive as a whole hence the study adopted the institutional theory. This theory was adopted in evaluating the extent to which sugar firms' internal forces affect the organizations' competitiveness in order to identify the dysfunctions and functional outcomes of given structural arrangements within each given sugar manufacturing firm.

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 main objective of study was to assess institutional characteristics influence on the affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' in Kenya.

1.3. Hypothesis of the Study

The study tested the null hypothesis: Influence of institutional characteristics on the affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms'is not statistically significant.

2. Literature Review

The moderating variables in this study are the institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) which are the size of the firm, management style and ownership. According to Pearce and Robinson (2016), size of sugar firm tends to influence the extent to which generic strategies will affect the said firm's competitiveness. Size of the firm was measured in terms of firm's human resources a firm has compared to other firms. In case the rival firm has more employees than its rivals, it is assumed that generic strategies will have more influence on competitiveness because size tends to favor generic strategies in terms of resources in the operations. Spencer *et, al.* (2010) did a study on moderating influence of non-monetary and monetary performance indicators amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies. Using primary data collected from Australian manufacturing firms was analyzed using path-analytical model. The study findings indicated that the relationship amongst differentiation strategy and organizations performance among the Australian manufacturing firms was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures. The study also found out that there exists a positive correlation amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies' which was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures.

Luliya*et, al.* (2013) study results on how performance dimensions moderate association amongst competitive strategies and performance which was done in Thailand listed companies and a total of 101 executives, where each of them was representing each company. Data collection was done using mails collected from Thailand listed companies and was analyzed using path-analytical model and SPSS version 11.5 was used. The study results indicate that competitive strategies had a positively and significantly effect on performance when performance dimensions. Precisely, differentiations strategy had a direct and important influence on performance and it also had an important moderating influence on performance over financial dimensions. The research results showed that cost leadership strategy pursued by the firms did not directly affect performance but has an indirectly and meaningfully effect through performance dimensions.

Kabare (2014) did a study on managerial focus moderating influence on association amongst quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi. The study used descriptive cross-sectional research design and the study targeted a population of fourteen flour mills in Nairobi. The study results indicated that managerial focus had a significant moderating effect on association between quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Moderating variables are those that usually affect association amongst sovereign and reliant variables. 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. In this study, generic strategies were the sovereign variable whereas organizations' competitiveness was reliant on variable; institutional characteristics (size, management structure and ownership) were the moderating factors of the study as revealed in figure 1.
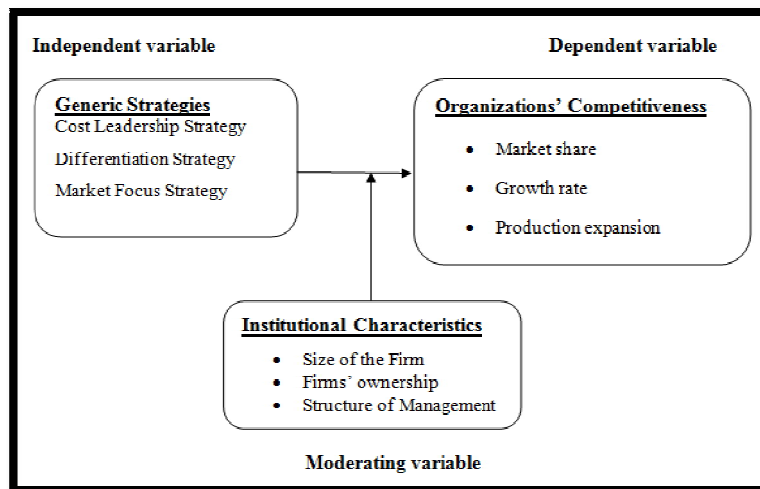

Figure 1: Conceptualization Framework
Source; Researcher, 2020

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 obtainan exact means from 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 240managers a sexhibited in Table 1.

Managers	Population
Marketing Manager	24
Production Manager	48
Finance Manager	24
General Manger	24
Assistant Marketing Manager	24
Assistant Production Manager	48
Assistant Finance Manager	24
Assistant general Manager	24
Total	240

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 240, the sample size ought to be 148. Hence, the sample size of this study was 148 as presented in table 2.

Managers	Population	Sample Size
Marketing Manager	24	15
Production Manager	48	29
Finance Manager	24	15
General Manger	24	15
Assistant Marketing Manager	24	15
Assistant Production Manager	48	29
Assistant Finance Manager	24	15
Assistant general Manager	24	15
Total	**240**	**148**

Table 2: Sample Size Determination
Source: Researcher, 2020

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques and Procedure

Moderation effect was expected to follow the procedures described by the use of Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009). Figure 1 displays the moderation trail diagrams where X is the self-determining variable (Generic strategies); Z is moderating variable (Institutional characteristics) and Y is dependent variable (Organizations; competitiveness). From Figure 1, β_1 is coefficient relating to self-governing variable X (Generic strategies) while Y is dependent variable (Organizations; competitiveness), once variable Z = 0, β_2 is coefficient of moderating variable Z to Y, when variable X = 0. β is regression coefficient for interaction term and if it is statistically different from zero then Z moderates the relationship between X and Y.
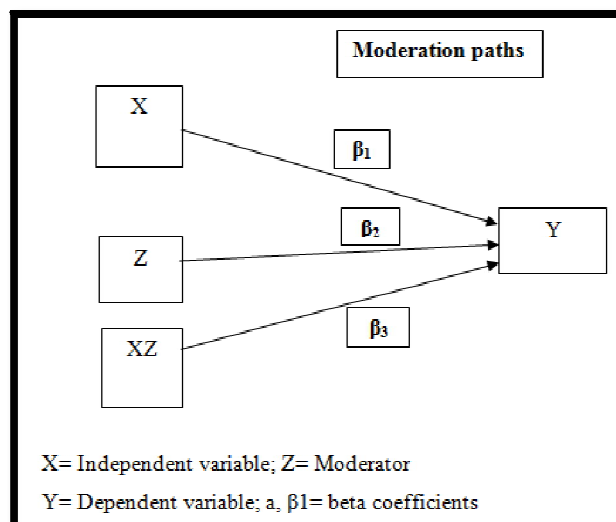

Figure 2: General Model for Testing Mediation and Moderation Effects
Source: Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009)

4. Study Findings

4.1. Correlation Analyses

The study was geared towards assessing generic strategies influence on organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. Using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient technique, correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship among study variables. The following sub section presents the correlation analysis based on the study variables.

4.2. Correlation for Institutional Characteristics and Competitiveness

The correlation analysis between institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' measures and organizations' competitiveness was prepared and outcomes are offered in Table 4.

	Organizational Competitiveness	Firm size	Firm ownership	Management Structure
Organizations' Competitiveness	1			
Firm size	.103**	1		
Firm ownership	-.243*	.032**	1	
Management structure	.482*	.264*	.521*	1

Table 3: Institutional Characteristics and Organizations' Competitiveness
Source: Primary Data 2020

The study finding showed a positive correlation between institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was found out. Size of the firm and firm management structure with organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms which was statistically significant (r = .103, p < .01) & (r = .482, p < .05) respectively. Research findings also showed that present of a negative correlation between firm ownership and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms which was statistically significant (r = -.243, p< .05). Firm ownership and firm size were positively, statistically and significantly correlated (r = .032, p< .05) while firm size and firm management structure had (r = .264, p< .05) and firm management structure and firm ownership (r = .521, p< .05) all had positive and significant relationship between them.

4.3. Regression Analysis and Hypotheses Testing

The objective was to analyze extent to which generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship is moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure); the study framed the following null hypothesis;

- $H_{04:}$ *Generic strategies and organizational competitiveness of sugar firms'relationship was not moderated by institutional characteristics.*

Moderation checks if the dependent variable responds to changes in the independent variable when a third variable is introduced that affect their relationship according to Fairchild and Mac Kinnon (2009). Predictor variables and their interaction term were used in a single regression equation. Moderation is present if the coefficient for interaction term is significant (.05). This procedure of testing the moderating effect was followed in the current study. The predictor variable which was institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) was cantered by subtracting the mean scores, standardized and their interaction term calculated as a product of the independent and moderator variable. The change in coefficient of determinant (R^2) and significance level caused by the interaction of the third variable was used in testing for the moderation effect.

Significance of generic strategies and institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) is not predominantly pertinent in deciding the moderation. Moderation effect is said to exist if interface between generic strategies and institutional characteristics is significant. To test the interaction, generic strategies and institutional characteristics measures (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) were centered and a sole pointer which represents an outcome or product of two indicators which have been calculated. This is followed by a creation of a new variable by multiplying the marks of generic strategies and institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) which created a multicollinearity problem. Multicollinearity problem occurs in case correlation coefficient between two self-governing variables is greater than .8. In order to find an answer to multicollinearity problematic, which mostly affects the approximation of regression coefficients, the variables were changed to standardized (Z) scores with a mean of zero and standard deviation of 1. The two consistent variables (generic strategies and institutional characteristics) were reproduced to come up with interface variable. The results agree with Spencer *et, al.* (2010) who did a study on moderating influence of non-monetary and monetary performance indicators amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies. Using primary data collected from Australian manufacturing firms was analyzed using path-analytical model. The study findings indicated that association amongst differentiations strategy and organizations performance among Australian manufacturing firms was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures. The study also found out that there exists a positive correlation amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies' which was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures.

This is consistent with Kabare (2014) who did a study on managerial focus moderating influence on association between quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi. The study used descriptive cross-sectional research design and the study targeted a population of fourteen flour mills in Nairobi. The study results indicated that managerial focus had a significant moderating effect on association between quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi. The relevant results are presented in Table 4.

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.485	.235	.229	.218	.235	7.849	1	106	.006
.492	.242	.256	.334	.241	7.321	1	105	.014

Table 4: Generic Strategies and Competitiveness Moderation Goodness of Fit
a. Predictors: (Constant), Generic strategies
b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional characteristics
Source: Primary Data, 2020

Table 5, shows effect of generic strategies and institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) on organizational competitiveness of sugar firms was significant and positive ($p < .05$). The change in R^2 because of the interface term was .006 (.241 - .235) and the interaction term was significant ($p < .05$). This research result concurs with Atikiya (2015) study results on how performance dimensions moderate association amongst competitive strategies and performance which was done in Thailand listed companies and a total of 101 executives, where each of them was representing each company. Data collection was done using mails collected from Thailand listed companies was analyzed using path-analytical model and SPSS version 11.5 was used. The study results indicate that competitive strategies had a positively and significantly effect on performance when performance dimensions. Precisely, differentiations strategy had a direct and important influence on performance and it also had an important moderating influence on performance over financial dimensions. The research results showed that cost leadership strategy pursued by the firms did not directly affect performance but has an indirectly and meaningfully effect through performance dimensions.

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sign.
1	Regression	12.018	1	12.018	801.200	.006
	Residual	1.640	106	.015		
	Total	13.658	107			
2	Regression	13.018	2	6.829	162.595	.002
	Residual	4.442	105	.042		
	Total	14.460	107			

Table 5: ANOVA OF Generic Strategies and Competitiveness Moderation
a. Predictors: (Constant), Generic strategies
b. Predictors: (Constant), Institutional characteristics
Source: Primary Data, 2020

Coefficients						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sign.
1		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)		
	(Constant)	4.446	.482		9.224	.038
	Generic strategies	.451	.402	.385	1.121	.004
	Institutional characteristics	.152	.039	.277	3.897	.002
2	(Constant)	5.642	.382		14.769	.038
	Generic strategies	.432	.257	.342	1.680	.004
	Organizations' competitiveness	.284	.112	.132	2.535	.000
	Product of Generic strategies and Institutional characteristics	.036	.034	.045	1.058	.000

Table 6: Coefficient of Generic Strategies and Competitiveness Moderation
Model 1: Predictors: (Constant), Generic strategies, Institutional characteristics
Model 2: Predictors: (Constant), Generic strategies, Institutional characteristics
Dependent Variable: Organizations' Competitiveness
Source: Primary Data, 2020

The hypothesis criteria were that reject Hypothesis four if p-value is less than .05 and $\beta \neq 0$ or else don't reject H_{03} in case p-value > 0.05. Based on the study results, $\beta \neq 0$ and p-value< 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis and stated that generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship is moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) of sugar firms. The resultant single moderation regression equation is:

OC = 4.446 + 0.342GS + 0.132IC +ε

Where; OC = Organizations' Competitiveness
       GS = Generic strategies
       4.446 = y-intercept; constant
       0.132 = is the beta or the slope coefficient
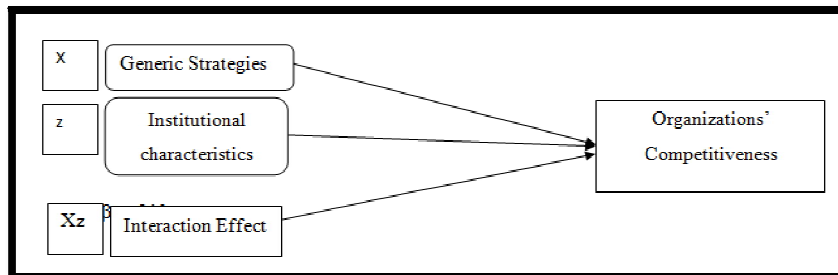   IC = Institutional characteristics
       ε = Error term

Figure 3: Summary Results of Moderation Testing

Figure 3 represents a summary of the results for moderation testing. It shows the regression coefficients along the tested variable associations and the change in coefficient of determination (R^2) due to the interaction term and indicates the significance levels obtained. The null hypothesis that the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness is moderated by institutional characteristics was rejected by this study. The results also agree with Spencer *et, al.* (2010) who did a study on moderating influence of non-monetary and monetary performance indicators amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies. Using primary data collected from Australian manufacturing firms was analyzed using path-analytical model. The study findings indicated that the relationship amongst differentiation strategy and organizations performance among the Australian manufacturing firms was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures. The study also found out that there exists a positive correlation amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies which was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures.

4.4. Discussion on the Study Results

The fourth and final objective was to analyze extent to which generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship is moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure). To analyze extent to which generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship is moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure), the researcher used hierarchical regression analysis. Results indicate that there was change in R^2 when interaction of green marketing practices and organizational demographics is introduced. Further the F change and significance of F change is .000 indicating that the interaction is significant. These results imply that as a moderator, institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure) affected the generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness relationship of sugar firms' in Kenya. These results concur with the findings of a research by done by Atikiya (2015) study results on how performance dimensions moderate association amongst competitive strategies and performance which was done in Thailand listed companies and a total of 101 executives, where each of them was representing each company. Data collection was done using mails collected from Thailand listed companies was analyzed using path-analytical model and SPSS version 11.5 was used. The study results indicate that competitive strategies had a positively and significantly effect on performance when performance dimensions. Precisely, differentiations strategy had a direct and important influence on performance and it also had an important moderating influence on performance over financial dimensions. The research results showed that cost leadership strategy pursued by the firms did not directly affect performance but has an indirectly and meaningfully effect through performance dimensions.

The results also agree with Spencer *et, al.* (2010) who did a study on moderating influence of non-monetary and monetary performance indicators amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies. Using primary data collected from Australian manufacturing firms was analyzed using path-analytical model. The study findings indicated that the relationship amongst differentiation strategy and organizations performance among the Australian manufacturing firms was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures. The study also found out that there exists a positive correlation amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies' which was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures.

5. Summary of the Findings

Fourth and final objective of study was to assess extent to which association amongst GS and organizations' competitiveness was moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure). The researcher employed association and regression examination. There was a positive and important association amid institutional characteristics and organizations' competitiveness was found out. The size and management structure of sugar firm association with organizations' competitiveness which was found to be statistically important. Noticeably, there was a negative association between firm ownership and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms' which is statistically significant (r = -.243, p< .05). Firm ownership and firm size were positively and meaningfully connected (r = .032, p< .05) while firm size and firm management structure had (r = .264, p< .05) and firm management structure and firm ownership (r = .521, p< .05) all had positive and important association.

The regression analysis results indicated that there was change in R^2 when interaction of generic strategies and institutional characteristics is introduced. Further the F change and significance of F change is 0.000 indicating that the interaction is significant. These results imply that association amid generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness is moderated by institutional characteristics (firm size, firm ownership and management structure). The results also agree with Spencer *et. Al.,* (2010) who conducted a study on moderating influence of non-monetary and monetary performance indicators amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies. Using primary data collected from Australian manufacturing firms was analyzed using path-analytical model. The study findings indicated that the relationship amongst differentiation strategy and organizations performance among the Australian manufacturing firms was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures. The study also found out that there exists a positive correlation amidst differentiation strategy and organizations' performance of Australian manufacturing companies' which was moderated by non- monetary and monetary performance measures.

It also concurs with Atikiya (2015) study results on how performance dimensions moderate association amongst competitive strategies and performance which was done in Thailand listed companies and a total of 101 executives, where each of them was representing each company. Data collection was done using mails collected from Thailand listed companies was analyzed using path-analytical model and SPSS version 11.5 was used. The study results indicate that competitive strategies had a positively and significantly effect on performance when performance dimensions. Precisely, differentiations strategy had a direct and important influence on performance and it also had an important moderating influence on performance dimensions. The research results showed that cost leadership strategy pursued by the firms did not directly affect performance but has an indirectly and meaningfully effect through performance dimensions.

Another study results that concurs with the results of the current study is a study done by Kabare (2014) on managerial focus moderating influence on association between quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi. The study used descriptive cross-sectional research design and the study targeted a population of fourteen flour mills in Nairobi. The study results indicated that managerial focus had a significant moderating effect on association between quality drivers and customer satisfaction of maize flour mills in Nairobi.

6. Conclusion

The study objective of study was to analyze institutional characteristics influence on affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms. The study had hypothesized that the extent to which institutional characteristics influences the affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was arithmetically important. The regression results revealed that GS and organizations' competitiveness affiliation was moderated by IC (p < 0.05). The study therefore concludes that the institutional characteristics influence on affiliation between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness of sugar firms was important. The study therefore concludes that affiliation amid generic strategies and OC is moderated by institutional characteristics.

7. Recommendation

The study concluded that extent to which the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness is moderated by institutional characteristics was statistically significant. This study recommends that sugar firms in Kenya need to consider incorporating institutional characteristics in their operations since this study has found out that institutional characteristics moderates the relationship between generic strategies and organizations' competitiveness.

8. Acknowledgment

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