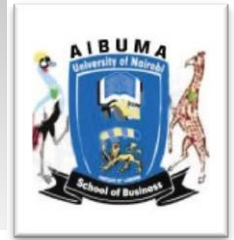




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**EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN MARKETING STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE OF TOUR
OPERATOR FIRMS IN KENYA**

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Abstract

In the current dynamic global environment, for a seeking to implement a marketing strategy, it must cultivate a successful organizational culture. The objective of the study was to establish the influence of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and the performance of tour operator firms in Kenya. The study was anchored by the organizational culture theory. Descriptive cross-sectional and quantitative designs were used for the study. The target population were all the 271 registered tour firms by the KATO as at 31st Dec 2018. The analysis was conducted using SPSS. The Baron and Kenny (1986) moderated regression analyses was employed in determining how organizational culture influenced the relationship between marketing strategies and performance. The findings revealed that organizational culture had a significant impact on the link between marketing strategies and performance of the selected tour companies. From the various empirical studies reviewed it was established that organizational culture can moderate how marketing strategies influence performance. Considering that this study was carried out in a developing country, the study suggests that further studies should be conducted focusing on developed countries to show the relationship between the three study variables.

Keywords: Organization culture, marketing strategies, firm performance, tour operator companies

Introduction

According to Narajo-Valencia et al (2016) organizational culture is the constant shared belief and values within a firm. Schein (1992) posits that culture in a firm is created and through the interactions of people in a firm. Dave and Gabriella (2015), defines culture as the belief patterns and shared expectations by the organizational members. These factors powerfully shape the behaviour of individual groups, leading to production of norms within the organization. Organizational culture covers all shared and learnt values in an organization as is observed by Ubius and Alas (2009). A firm's culture is effective when shared norms and beliefs are incorporated in daily operations. Moreover, a strong organizational culture results in long term, consistency in the behaviour of stakeholders in the firm (Harrower, 2011). Organizational culture influences performance of the firm. It is a powerful element of a firm in guiding a way forward for strategy implementation. Organizational culture dictates how operations are carried out in a firm. The alignment of strategies to organizational culture is vital in improving performance. Organizations, whose aim is to become leaders within their industries, adopt culture by design and not by default.

The behavior and effectiveness of organizational members are significantly influenced by organizational culture. Harrower (2011) asserts that purposeful managerial efforts to create an organizational culture are related to performance improvement. In relation to this, Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) contend that having a good match between

strategy, structure, and culture is essential for organizational success. Kamau (2018), who contends that culture functions as a stabilizer of individual behavior, provides additional support for the relationship between organizational culture and performance.

The culture of a firm cements the standing of the firm with the market. Culture is shaped, disseminated, learnt and changed overtime (Mohamed & Ruth, 2016). Organizational culture is categorized into three; Bureaucratic, supportive and innovative cultures. A bureaucratic organizational culture is based on following strict guidelines and is grounded on authority and power. Organizations practicing bureaucratic culture are driven by power, follows a procedure, mature, and stable (Harrower, 2011). A supportive organizational culture emphasizes on its human resource, the firm is people oriented, sociable, collaborative, and encouraging and promotes teamwork. An innovative organizational culture focuses on creativity, is result oriented and driven by the ambition and vision of the entrepreneur. Additionally, an innovative organizational culture takes major risks. Fraj, Martínez, and Matute (2011) opine that employees are more engaged in the operations of a firm when there is alignment between the organizational culture and objectives. The study adopts the three categories of culture: bureaucratic, supportive and innovative cultures. This is because in order to be competitive, organizations make amendments in line with strategies and build their cultures accordingly. Hence, the type of culture of any tour operator firm must be aligned to its strategies so as to

remain competitive and improve on performance.

The study was anchored by the organizational culture theory by Schein (1982) which posits that a firm must have a culture adaptable with the changing demands and trends in the market. A firm's culture is effective when shared norms and beliefs are incorporated in daily operations. Moreover, a strong organizational culture results in long term, consistency in the behaviour of stakeholders in the firm (Harrower, 2011). Marketing strategies are at the center of daily operations in a firm. Marketing strategies imply that a firm aims at gaining sustainability and better performance for the long term (Moghaddam & Foroughi, 2012).

In Kenya, the tourism industry is the second largest GDP contributor to the economy. In 2018, the sector contributed 8.8% to the GDP of Kenya. Moreover, the tourism industry in 2018 recorded a high growth rate of 5.6%; it surpassed the expected global growth rate of 3.3%. In 2018 the tourism industry contributed Kshs. 790 billion and created approximately 1.1 million jobs (WTTC, 2019). Hence the Kenyan tourism sector cannot be overlooked. Moreover, the industry is incorporated in the nations long term plan; Vision 2030 (Njeru, 2013). Moreover, local tourists have increased in Kenya. Thus, this research seeks to evaluate the effect of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and firm performance.

The global market-place is marked by problems such as fierce competition and evolving consumer needs and preferences. In such an uncertain environment, only

organizations that have capacity to define their organization culture have a chance of surviving and growing in their niches. Currently, any firm seeking to implement a marketing strategy must cultivate a successful organizational culture, which results in long term, consistency in the behaviour of stakeholders in the firm (Harrower, 2011). Therefore, in the light of the increasingly complex business environment, there is a lot of pressure on organizations not only to formulate the right marketing strategies and cultivate a good organizational culture, but also to ensure that the two are aligned. Different firms will have different cultures varying marketing structures. The culture of a firm cements the standing of the firm with the market. In Europe, Fraj, Martínez, and Matute (2011) revealed that culture moderated the correlation between green marketing and organizational performance. The study focused on green marketing only while there are other forms of marketing strategies among which include the use of promotions and advertising. Contrary, in Kenya, Kamau (2018) established that organizational culture an indicator of organizational characteristics does not moderate the connection between holistic marketing strategies and NGOs' performance. The studies did not target tour operator firms in Kenya, presenting a research gap. Moreover, the two studies reported mixed results. Hence, this study aims to find a definitive outcome on the moderating function of organization culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and firm performance.

The tourism sector is vulnerable to changes in across the world such as acts of terrorism or extreme violence. For instance, during the 2007/2008 post-

election violence, the tourism sector suffered since most tourists were restricted from travelling to Kenya. Essentially, the tourism industry affects the Kenyan economy largely (Odiko, 2018); if the sector is affected negatively, the Kenyan economy suffers economically. In the same way, if the tourism industry prospers, the Kenyan economy gains positively. The vulnerability yet importance of the tourism sector with regards economy, makes the industry a focus for this study. It is with respect to this background that this research sought to answer the question; what is the effect of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and performance of tour operator firms in Kenya?

The research objective was to evaluate the effect of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and the performance of tour operator firms in Kenya.

Literature Review

Different concepts of culture emerged in the fields of anthropology and sociology since the early 1980s. The commonly used theory is the Schein's organizational culture theory; developed by Schein (1982). The assumption of the theory is on the concept of artefacts. James and Jones (2005) contend that artifacts assumptions and espoused values are the tangible and visible aspect of culture such as the technology adopted, the physical environment, language, and product. Espoused values include the strategies, objectives, assumptions, norms and perceptions of the firm. James and Jones (2005), posit that organizational culture is represented by the underlying assumption in the theory. The challenge presented by

underlying assumption is that it may result to defensiveness and anxiety. A weakness of the organizational culture theory is Smircich (1983) who explains that organizational culture drives an organization and not the other way round. Smircich (1983) contends that since there is no concrete evidence of how organizational culture shapes behaviour, thus, undermining the effort by Schein (1982) in defining organizational culture. The theory supports that organizational culture should contain the three components to improve performance. The theory supports that an organizational culture should align with the strategies of a firm. The effective implementation of marketing strategies needs to fit with the organizational culture. Moreover, the theory also posits that the physical environment influences the organizational culture. Hence, organizational culture is a moderating factor between strategies in marketing and performance of organization.

In Europe, Fraj, Martínez, and Matute (2011) evaluated how culture moderates the connection between green marketing and performance. The analysis of the study was conducted using Structural equation modelling with EQS software. The research revealed that the implementation of green marketing directly impacts on firm profits and cost reduction in manufacturing firms. Moreover, the study indicated that the connection between green marketing strategy and performance is moderated by culture. The study relied on Structural equation modelling with EQS software while the current study will rely on SPSS version 25.0 for analysis since it is easily available and it generates quantitative data. The research focused on

manufacturing companies, presenting a research gap in other sectors such as the tourism industry which the current study targets. The study was limited since it only focused on green marketing while there are other forms of marketing activities among which include the use of promotions and advertising.

Yarbrough, *et al.*, (2011) found that strategy culture fit moderates the correlation between product marketing strategy and the performance of trucking industry companies in the U.S. The study revealed that since the product market strategy of any firm rely on the inputs by the marketer, the firm culture guides the activities conducted. The study focused on product strategy while the current research will look at all the four components of marketing strategies (price, product, place and promotion). In addition, the study did not adopt any marketing theory; it adopted the organizational theory and the competing value theory. This is despite the independent variable of the research being product marketing. The current study will adopt two marketing theories; service marketing theory and marketing mix theory to explain the importance of strategies of marketing in improving performance.

Hassan, *et al.*, (2013) established that organizational culture indicated by innovation mediates the relationship between marketing strategy creativity and firm performance. The study revealed that firms practicing an innovative culture are able to effectively come up with creative marketing strategies. The study used 9 different sectors in Pakistan to gather data. Hence, the study was not specific to one

field unlike the current study that will focus on the tourism industry.

In addition, Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) revealed that culture is a moderating factor connecting marketing strategies and performance of firms. The research relied on the theory of resource advantage while the main anchorage of this thesis is service marketing theory. The study assessed culture in the form of marketing orientation and established that a firm aligned to its existing market is able to implement the appropriate marketing strategies resulting in improved performance. Further the study focused on non-governmental organizations in the health sector, hence the findings cannot be used for universal generalization and particularly within the tourism sector.

In Kenya, Kamau (2018) established that organizational culture as an indicator of organizational characteristics has no moderating impact on the link between holistic marketing strategies and NGOs' performance. The research rejected the hypothesis that the link between holistic marketing and performance is moderated by the organizational culture. However, the study did accept the hypothesis that the joint relationship between holistic marketing strategy, and culture influences performance. The study, focused on a large population of NGOs which required random sampling to be conducted. This thesis population is relatively small; this study used a large sample to ensure generalization in the tourism sector

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework was derivative of the extant literature. It covers the model of research hypothesis. The model was used in finding solutions for the empirical

gaps identified. Figure 2,1 shows that the study variables were presented on a conceptual model. The model shows the link between the marketing strategies, organizational culture, industry environment and firm performance. Organizational culture and industry environment are the moderating variables in the study conceptualization.

Figure 2,1 is a conceptual framework depicting the link between the marketing strategies, organizational culture and firm performance.

grounded on facts, and reasons collected through observation and empirical information that is analyzed using quantitative and statistical analysis. Positivism approach formulates variables and hypotheses with respect to the current theory under study. The positivism theory guided this research by including a conceptual framework and hypotheses testing. The positivism approach allows for making generalizations of the study findings (Njeru, 2013).

The study applied the use of a descriptive

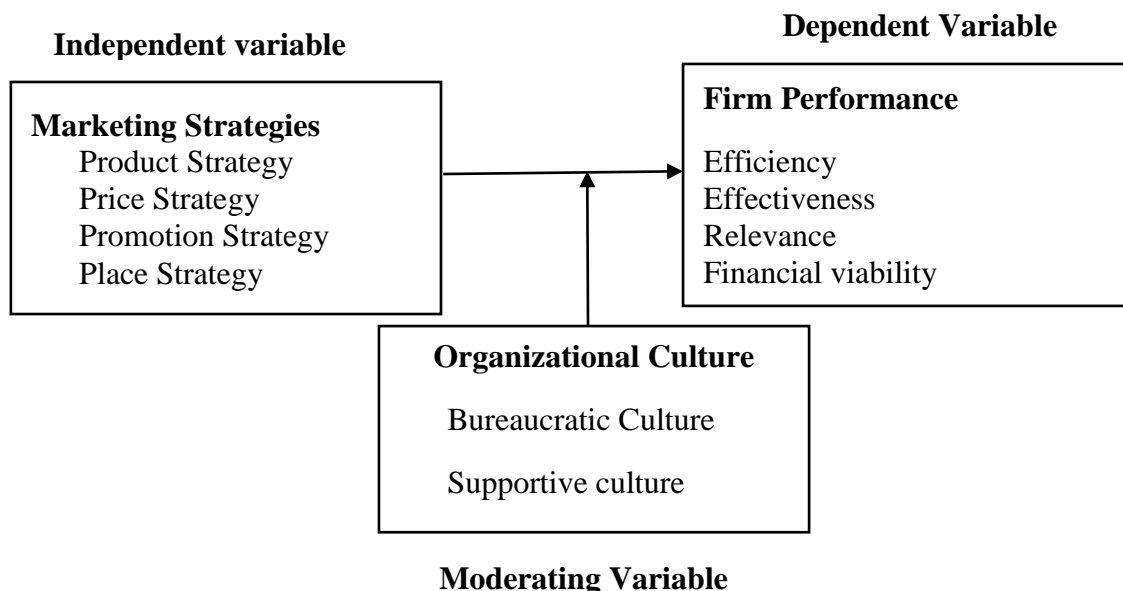


Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher, (2020)

From this conceptual framework, the study sought to test the hypothesis

H₀₁: There is a significant effect of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and firm performance.

Methodology

The positivism approach was applied for the research. The positivism philosophy is

cross-sectional and quantitative designs. The descriptive cross-sectional design was employed since it facilitates a description of the study variables. A cross-sectional design is appropriate as it describes a representative image of a whole population being studies (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Additionally, the design is efficient

in terms of cost and time since it yields sufficient information on the study populations. Further, a mixed-approach of

data collection is applicable when using a cross sectional design. The thesis, adopted a semi- structured questionnaire, implying that both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered. On the other hand, the quantitative design seeks to show the relationship of different variables namely, organizational culture, marketing strategies and performance of tour operator firms

The target population were all the 271 categories A-E registered tour firms by the KATO as at 31st Dec 2018.

To select a sample size the study applied a stratified sampling approach. This sampling technique gives each targeted respondent an equal opportunity to be chosen to take part in the research. The

Table 1: Sample Size of the Study

Category	Target Population	Sample Size
B	6	6
C	11	11
A	38	14
D	40	23
E	176	105
Total	271	159

Source: Researcher, 2020

Primary data was gathered for this study using semi structured questionnaires. The questionnaires were developed with respect to the research questions. 159 questionnaires were distributed to a marketing manager of the sampled tour operator firms. The pick and drop approach were employed. The researcher made phone calls reminding the respondents to fill the questionnaires. Secondary data was gathered using desk review from magazines, company websites, and other available sources to

study used the Krejci and Morgan (1978) formula in the sample size calculation as presented below:

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 * N * P * (1 - P)}{d^2 * (N - 1) + \chi^2 * P * (1 - P)}$$

Where:

n = sample size required.

χ^2 = chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom (3.841).

N = target population.

P = proportion of the population (0 .50).

D = accuracy degree (.05).

Therefore, using the formular, the sample was 159 tour operator firms.

complement the primary data collected using questionnaire.

The study applied descriptive to provide summaries of the variables studied, and inferential analysis for the correlation between the study variables. Mean and standard deviation were employed as measures of the analyzed data. The quantitative findings were exhibited using tables and graphs while qualitative results were exhibited in narration form. The Baron and Kenny (1986) moderated

regression analyses was employed in determining how organizational culture influenced the relationship between marketing strategies and performance.

Findings

Of the 159 distributed research questionnaires, only five (5) were not returned. This resulted in a 96.2% response rate. The response rate was high due to the constant reminders that were made via phone calls to all respondents requesting they answer all the questions.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data collected based on the objective of the study. The measures used were; arithmetic mean, coefficient of variation (CV) and one sample *t*-test. Coefficient of variation was used to measure variability or spread occurring in the scores. The CV is computed as a ratio of Std Dev to arithmetic mean expressed as a percentage.

High values of CV indicate divergence in the views regarding a certain item of the measurement scale; conversely, a low value of CV is indicative of convergence among the respondents on a certain item of a measurement scale.

Another important statistical test during this stage was one sample *t*-test carried out on a fixed test value of 3, representing the midpoint of a 5-point Likert scale. While making inferences from one sample *t* test, *t*-values and *p*-values were indicative of the statistical significance of the study variables. The test was therefore critical in order to illustrate how the participants diverged with regard to the manifestation of variables in their respective tour companies.

Organizational culture was operationalized into Nine (9) dimensions. A Likert scale was applied to gather the responses from the participants. The information generated from this analysis was presented in Table 2

Table 2: Organizational Culture

Statements	N	Mean score	CV %	t- value	Sig (2-tailed)
The culture of the firm is clearly defined	154	2.86	51	-1.19	0.24
We value all of our employees	154	2.94	45	-0.57	0.57
Our culture guides the firm operations	154	2.9	47	-0.92	0.36
All the employees in the firm have a sense of identity	154	2.96	47	-0.36	0.72
We have a mission, vision and objectives	154	2.95	48	-0.44	0.66
We follow clearly stipulated and documented principles and ethics	154	2.84	51	-1.37	0.17
Our rules and regulations are practice	154	2.99	47	-0.09	0.93
We encourage the use of technology	154	3.28	40	2.65	0.01
We have a stable support system for the employees	154	2.87	48	-1.17	0.24
Average Mean Score		2.95			

Source: Field Data, (2021)

The findings show that the average mean for all the items under “organizational culture” was 2.95. The responses of the participants was close to moderate extent with regard to how the organization of cultural processes were applicable to their respective tour operator firms. The results also show that the highest ranked statement was: “We encourage the use of technology”, with 3.28 as the mean. This attests to the company's efforts to ensure adopt technology so as to improve the processes within their respective companies.

The second highly rated statement was: “Our rules and regulations are practice”, with an average score of 2.99; below the moderate extent rating. This was an indication that the private tour firms in Kenya adhered to the rules and regulations to a moderate extent. The third highly rated statement was “All the employees in the firm have a sense of identity” with a mean average score of 2.96. This is an implication that the employees in the tour firms had a sense of belonging in their respective institutions. This shows that the culture in the tour firms is conducive and receptive to accommodate all of its employees.

The findings also indicated that the respondents agreed with the statement “The culture of the firm is clearly defined” with an average mean score of 2.86. This shows that the tour operator firms have clearly defined the essence of the institution with regards to its culture. The findings show that the statement associated with the lowest average score was: “We follow clearly stipulated and documented principles and ethics”, with 2.84 as the mean, which was below the moderate

extent rating suggesting that majority of the tour companies follow the clearly stipulated and documented the principles and ethics to an almost moderate extent.

With regard to the consistency of the statements given by the respondents, the findings show that the highest ranked CV associated with two statements: “The culture of the firm is clearly defined”, and the statement “We follow clearly stipulated and documented principles and ethics”, both of which scored a CV of 51%. The findings suggest that the high disagreement by respondents with regard to how the culture of the tour firms was defined as well as how the companies followed clearly stipulated and documented principles and ethics. The results also indicate that the least CV was associated with the statement: “We encourage the use of technology”. This finding show that majority of the study respondents highly agreed with regard to the use of technology in their respective tour companies. This shows that the tour firms have embraced the modern business environment where technology has become essential for day-to day operation.

The study also conducted one-sample t-test to determine whether variations occurring from the respondents’ ratings in relation to the variable’s manifestation was either or not significant. The findings from this test indicated that except for the statement “We encourage the use of technology”, with $t(154) = 2.65, p < 0.05$, all the other statements had their respective p-values falling outside the recommended threshold, suggesting a lack of statistical significance of the variations between the agreed and disagreed respondents, and therefore occurred by chance.

The hypothesis “There is a significant effect of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing strategies and firm performance” was tested using the Baron and Kenny (1986) technique. Firm performance was treated as the criterion variable while, marketing strategies was the predictor variable and the moderating variable was firm culture. Organizational culture was operationalized into eight (8) dimensions. The procedure entailed three regression stages starting with the predictor variable regressed on the criterion variable, followed by the predictor variable and the moderating

variable predicting the criterion variable, and lastly the predictor variable alongside the moderating variable and the interaction term of the predictor variable and the moderating variable as predictors for the criterion variable. According to this procedure, moderation exists when the model findings are significant and the adjustments in r- squared are also significant. The process involved computation of the composite indices for the variables, followed by conducting moderator regression analysis from which the findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Moderated Regression Results

Model	Criterion	Predictor	B	T	Adj. R2	Change R2	Sig. Change	F
1	Firm performance	Marketing strategies	2.819	12.457	0.002	0.737	0.392	
2	Firm performance	Marketing strategies	0.062	0.819	0.008	0.407	0.666	
		Organizational culture	-0.016	-0.285				
3	Firm performance	Marketing strategies	-0.313	-0.718	0.009	0.525	0.666	
		Organizational culture	-0.398	-0.901				
		Marketing strategies * organizational culture		0.872				

Source: Field Data, (2021)

The three regression stages required to be statistically significant in order to infer that the link between marketing strategies and firm performance was moderated by organizational culture. The results show that introducing organizational culture (moderating construct) provided evidence of statistically significant at the 5% level ($p > 0.05$). The results also indicate that the interaction between marketing strategies and organizational have a statistical

significance at 5% level ($p > 0.05$). The interaction between marketing strategies and organizational culture was able to account for only 0.9% variability in firm performance which is very small thus was not effective in predicting firm performance. As suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), the findings suggest presence of moderation effect. Consequently, H_{01} was accepted.

Discussion of The Findings

The present study evaluated whether organizational culture could have an influence on the association between marketing strategies and tour operator companies' performance in Kenya. The stated hypothesis was analyzed by use of a three-stage regression procedure (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The interaction term between marketing strategies and organizational culture led to R^2 changes that were neither significant nor statistical. This implied that organizational culture was not a significant moderator for the link between marketing strategies and performance of the selected tour operator companies.

Overall, the findings offer proof that performance closely correlates with corporate culture and marketing capability. There has been a lot of research done on the link between organizational culture and performance. In Europe, Fraj, Martínez, and Matute (2011) established that organizational culture moderated the relationship between marketing strategies and performance. Yarbrough, et al., (2011), whose focus was on trucking industry firms in the U.S illustrated how strategy culture fit moderates product marketing strategy and firm performance. The study revealed that since the product market strategy of any firm rely on the inputs by the marketer, the firm culture guides the activities conducted. In addition, Cacciolatti and Lee (2016) also indicated that the impact of marketing strategies on performance of firms is moderated by firm culture. These set of findings therefore explicate how organizational culture moderates how marketing strategies relate with

performance of firms. The outcomes of the present study also affirmed that firm culture facilitated significant improvement on the relationship between marketing strategies and firm performance of the selected tour operator companies. This is attributed to the fact that organizational culture dictates how operations are carried out in a firm. The alignment of strategies to organizational culture is vital in improving performance. Moreover, as indicated by Njeru (2013) for organizations to record higher performance, organizational culture ought to be developed by design and not by default. This implies that organizations and in this case, tour operator firms must develop their organizational culture based on their specific objective. Therefore, based on the findings, it can be drawn that the tour operator firms in Kenya have developed their organizational culture by design to record a positive and significant moderating influence on the relationship between marketing strategies and performance.

Despite the fact that organizational culture and performance are strongly and favorably related, a negative relationship between the two cannot be completely ruled out. For example, a risk-averse mindset can result in missed opportunities for growth and lower performance. Cultural values may promote programmed responses to changes in the business environment after they have been established. Strong organizational rigidity and a resistance to change in the marketing environment may result from strong values. This assertion is consistent with findings by Kamau (2018) who established that holistic marketing strategies and NGOs' performance is not moderated by

firm culture. As such, these findings are in agreement with what was established in the present study, having noted that organizational culture does not significantly moderate the link between marketing strategies and firm performance. However, despite the contrasting findings, the present study emphasizes on the importance of a well-designed organizational culture, since it drives performance and moderates the relationship between marketing strategies and performance as indicated in the findings.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that organizational culture significantly impacted the link between strategies of marketing and performance of the selected tour companies. The study found that adopting technology is one of the key organizational cultural practices that needs to be encouraged among the tour operator companies in Kenya, probably because it was reviewed to favor performance of these organizations. Moreover, the need to ensure that managers effectively implementing rules and regulations is critical for the performance of the tour companies. From the various empirical studies reviewed it was established that organizational culture can moderate how marketing strategies influence performance. The present study corroborated the previous findings by confirming a significant moderating impact of organizational culture on the relationship between marketing and strategies and firm performance. This is important for the practitioners in this industry to ensure various innovative cultural practices that will ensure a

positive impact of different marketing strategies on tour firms' performance.

The study was anchored on Schein's theory of organizational culture. The theory supports that an organizational culture should align with the strategies of a firm. The effective implementation of marketing strategies needs to fit with the organizational culture. Therefore, the study draws a similar conclusion as that of Schein's theory of organizational culture that; culture in any firm is critical in driving the implementation of strategies including marketing strategies and in improving performance.

Recommendations of the Study

The study found that organizational culture significantly impacted the link between strategies of marketing and performance of the selected tour companies. The study therefore recommended that the tour companies need to implement policies that guarantee an organizational culture and an industry environment that stimulates improved organizational performance on the basis of implementation of various marketing strategies. The tour companies should ensure that managers effectively implementing rules and regulations is critical for the performance of the tour companies. The study also recommends that policy makers should provide mechanisms of ensuring cultural practices within organizations that would improve performance.

Suggestions for Further Research

The nexus between marketing strategies, organizational culture and firm performance was successfully explored in the present study. The study however focused on the Kenyan context. Therefore,

the study suggests that further studies should be conducted focusing on other countries to show the relationship between the three study variables.

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