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EFFECT OF IMAGE DIFFERENTIATION ON SALES PERFORMANCE OF SUPERMARKETS IN KENYA: A CASE OF NAIVAS SUPERMARKET

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ABSTRACT

Competition among firms intensifies due to various organizational and environmental factors, including globalization, deregulation, and emerging technologies. These factors are a fast-changing environment that creates high levels of uncertainty in the business environment and makes companies change their positions to achieve competitive advantage. Nonetheless, Naivas supermarket continues to record increased growth and expansion in the Kenyan retail market, positioning it among the most dominant supermarkets in this sub-sector. The study aimed to establish the effect of image differentiation strategy on sales performance of supermarkets in Kenya with a focus on Naivas supermarket. The study used case of study design with a sample of 204 from which the data was collected. The result revealed that image differentiation had an effect on sales performance (χ^2 = 10.030, P-value = 0.002) of Naivas supermarket. It was recommended that business and organizations should consider improving their pricing, customer experience, marketing and business location to help them improve their image hence increase sales performance.

KEY WORDS: *Image differentiation, Sales performance, Competition, Globalization, Image Differentiation, Sales Performance, Customer Experience*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Differentiation in business refers to marketing a detailed product or service to make it stand out in contradiction of other products or facilities (Kadenyeka & Washika, 2023). This includes Market positioning, which entails defining a product or service against competitors' offerings or a firm's portfolio. As described by Omanwa (2020), distinctive marketing competencies are skills that companies can build as the foundation for a competitive edge against competitors. Therefore, this implies that a differentiation strategy can present a certain competitive edge to a firm, resulting in better sales performances. Organizations face relentless competition in today's dynamic business landscape as they vie for customer attention, market dominance, and financial success (Musyoka, 2023). The global marketplace, characterized by fierce competition, has undergone significant technological transformations, driving customer expectations towards higher product quality at more competitive prices (Arasa & Achuora, 2020).

Moreover, globalization has accelerated product life cycles, prompting businesses to prioritize competencies and cultivate competitive advantages. According to Kanano & Wanjira (2021), while enterprises pursue various objectives, achieving competitive advantage and outperforming competitors are paramount goals. Consequently, organizations increasingly focus on strategies to capture market share and enhance performance relative to industry rivals. This strategic orientation reflects a fundamental shift in business paradigms, where sustained success hinges on effectively differentiating products, services, and operational capabilities (Kadenyeka & Washika, 2023). By aligning with customer needs, leveraging technological advancements, and fostering a culture of innovation, companies strive to carve out distinctive positions in highly competitive markets, ultimately driving growth and profitability.

As famously noted by Porter (1980), competition is not merely an incident or unfortunate circumstance but a dynamic force that drives industry progress and innovation. While competition can be intense, it catalyzes market liberalization and economic advancement. In today's modern economy, the retail sector, which includes supermarkets, is a vital indicator of economic growth (Omanwa, 2020). Competitive strategies encompass a broad range of initiatives and maneuvers deployed by firms to attract customers and fortify their market positions against rivals (Musyoka, 2023). In the context of the retail sector, mainly supermarkets, these strategies manifest in various forms, including product displays, packaging innovations, extended operating hours, promotional efforts such as loyalty programs, and enhancing accessibility and proximity to customers. Companies that embrace and effectively implement competitive strategies position themselves for superior market performance relative to their competitors, thereby ensuring sustained growth and profitability in the long term (Musyoka, 2023). As such, competition in the retail landscape fosters a vibrant marketplace and drives continuous improvement and innovation, ultimately benefiting consumers and businesses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Competition among retail firms in Kenya is intensifying due to various organizational and ecological factors, including globalization, deregulation, and emerging technologies. The Kenyan retail industry has evolved over the years now; the following are some threats: operational costs have continued to rise, foreign supermarkets have intensified their entry into the market, inflation has been on the rise, consumers' purchasing power has significantly reduced, and in the process, firms have seen their product margins shrink.

These challenges have led to the closure and downsizing of prominent erstwhile Kenyan Supermarkets such as Uchumi, Nakumatt and Tuskys, which were once regarded as significant players in the industry. These supermarkets have faced operational difficulties that contributed to their decline, as evidenced by reports from various studies. For instance, Wambua (2019) highlights mismanagement and a failure to adapt to market changes as critical factors in closing these supermarkets. Despite these challenges, Naivas supermarket continues to exhibit remarkable growth and expansion in the Kenyan retail sector.

This success can be attributed to significant technological innovations and strategies that have distinguished Naivas from its competitors. The supermarket has undertaken rebranding efforts and has strategically positioned itself by leveraging unique image features and enhanced service offerings to improve performance. However, it remains unclear whether the differentiation strategies implemented by Naivas supermarket significantly influence its sales performance. In addition, previous research on differentiation strategies and performance has not sufficiently explored how these strategies influence or are associated with sales performance, especially for supermarkets. For example, Islami (2020) analyzed the link between differentiation strategy and business performance of manufacturing firms in the European region, based on which the author argued that increased changes in customers' needs could reduce the relevance of dominant competitive forces. Nevertheless, the generalizability of the study to the retail sector remains questionable because the sample consisted of manufacturing firms only. Likewise, Kaluyu (2023) did not consider the retail environment when investigating service differentiation in public hospitals within Nairobi. In particular, research relative to differentiation strategy and its implications on the sales performance of supermarkets is insufficient to justify the need for research to identify Naivas supermarkets in Kenya. To answer this research question, this research examined the impact of differentiation strategy in enhancing the sales performance of Naivas supermarket to improve understanding of competition within the retail industry.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Supermarket managers can utilize the findings of this study to refine their business strategies and optimize their approach to differentiation. Policymakers will benefit from understanding how Image differentiation impact the sales performance of supermarkets within the context of broader economic policies. This knowledge can inform policies related to competition regulation, consumer protection, and market dynamics, ultimately contributing to developing a more competitive and sustainable retail sector.

Regulators tasked with overseeing the retail industry will use the insights from this study to evaluate the competitiveness of supermarket markets and assess the potential impact of different regulatory interventions. By understanding how image differentiation influence sales performance, regulators can make more informed decisions about market structure, anti-trust measures, and consumer welfare. Scholars and researchers, studying the effects of image differentiation strategies on supermarket sales performance contributes to the academic understanding of marketing and strategic management principles.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework was anchored on differentiation theory.

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2.1 Differentiation Theory

According to the Differentiation Theory advanced by Michael Porter, a company's capability to endure a competitive position depends on the ability to accomplish factors in a preventive measure depending on the strengths and drawbacks of the organization (Thompson & Frank, 2004). As indicated by Awino et al. (2021), this theory puts a lot of value on product differentiation to underpin and design competitive strategies. The writer Kamau (2013) pointed out that a differentiation strategy entail developing or providing new products and or services. Porter (1990) identified several forms of differentiation, including product physical; in product differentiation, firms can differentiate themselves regarding the quality of products, choice, variety, placement of products, and variety.

Research supports the argument that successful differentiation can yield substantial benefits. According to Anyim (2012), an advantage is sustainable only if contestants cannot easily replicate a firm's superior product attributes or service delivery. Thompson et al. (2014) note that effective differentiation manifests in three ways: commanding a premium price for products, attracting additional customers due to unique features, and fostering brand loyalty among buyers. Zaribaf (2008) further emphasizes the role of pricing within the marketing mix, stating that while price generates income, the other elements-product, distribution channels, and promotion-incur costs. In international markets, effective pricing strategies are crucial for generating revenue and ensuring a company's survival (Yaprak, 2001). Nevertheless, it was observed that certain scholars have paid little attention to international and export pricing issues, though pricing is a critical element of differentiation strategies (Aulakh & Kotabe, 1993). This theory is instrumental to the study, for it zeroes in on image differentiation and their effects on the sales outcomes of Naivas supermarket. Imagr differentiation variable is the independent variables by which the supermarket's sales performance will be evaluated.

However, Differentiation Theory is not without its criticisms and limitations. One significant drawback is that successful differentiation often requires substantial research, development, and marketing investment, which may not be feasible for smaller firms with limited resources. Additionally, maintaining differentiation over time can be challenging, as competitors may swiftly replicate successful strategies or introduce innovative alternatives, eroding the initial competitive advantage (Liu, 2020). Moreover, the effectiveness of image differentiation can vary across industries and market segments; what proves successful for one firm in a specific context may not yield similar outcomes for another (Buengeler & Locklear, 2021). Furthermore, consumer preferences constantly evolve, complicating firms' ability to predict and adapt effectively to changing demands.

The sustainability of image Differentiation relies on continuous innovation; without ongoing investments in research and development and a keen understanding of customer needs, firms risk stagnation and potential loss of their competitive edge (Shirowzhan et al., 2020). Therefore, while image differentiation can be a potent strategy for success in competitive markets, firms must carefully navigate their limitations and develop strategies to address the accompanying challenges.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual review of independent and dependent variable is obtainable in sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.2

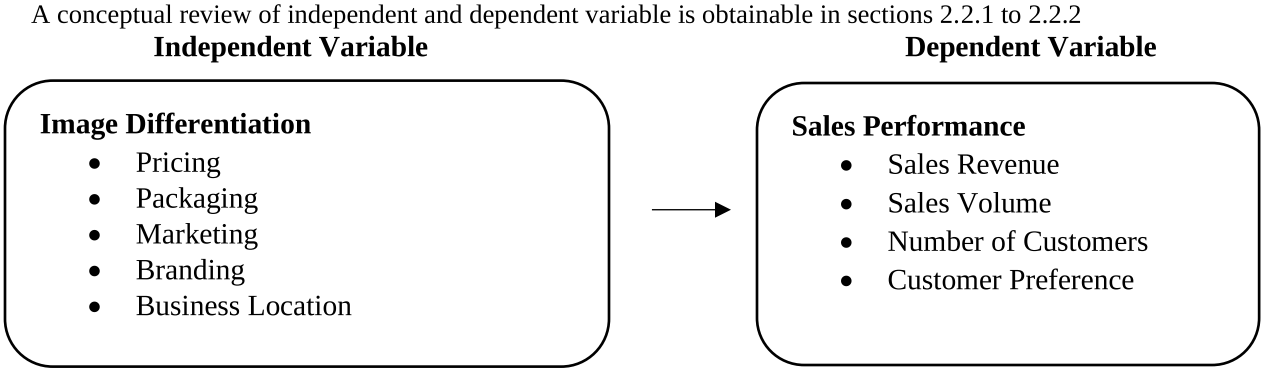

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source (Author, 2023)

2.2.1 Image Differentiation and Sales Performance

Khairuddin, H. M. (2015), defined image differentiation as the multiple differentiation strategies rolled into one. It just means innovating a well-known brand image, is all. Based on the information above, a firm must manage prices, promotional messages, contact with customers, and business location to create a new brand image. For Instance, a search engine website, Google embraced image differentiation at one point. This rebranding positively changes the user and advertiser experience as a whole. According to Hofer (2011), Organizations that have managed to build a positive brand image, that is, charge affordable prices for similar goods, have good customer experience and excellent marking strategies, experience increased sales volume as there is prestige on the part of consumers when they are associated with the brand.

Image differentiation strategy can also be emphasized by defining a business's place; it must be seen, easily accessible, and properly located. The business premise should have a car park lot where clients park their vehicles or a restricted one in which only taxi operators are allowed to drop off their Mobile customers who are physically unable to access such services from the business premise should be in a position to obtain transport means to their respective regions from here. A business location should be decided beforehand; ideally, it should be as close as possible to the customer's traffic (Barone & DeCarlo, 2013). Dependence on an existing location directly impacted other strategies, including targeting, place, and product. If a firm is near the customers or in its convenient access realm, it may enjoy image differentiation compared to the other firms. Other physical differentiation strategies include a convenient parking space. Many people would like a location where they can park their cars and walk into the supermarket. According to Barone and DeCarlo (2013), location is one of the critical factors that customers consider when choosing a supermarket. Every other aspect of a retail premise is flexible, which means merchandise, price, people, and structures. However, location cannot be a flexibility issue because it will cost an arm and leg to change the location.

2.2.2 Sales Performance

As defined by Hofer (2011), the measure of sales activities as a sales team's capability is Sales performance, which is the ability to achieve sales targets. This includes quantitative sales performance metrics such as sales revenue/turnover. Turnover is the total sales or gross revenue the company realized during the period. A higher turnover means a volume of sales increases because of increased quantity or price. Their sales increase because more of the firm’s products are bought, which is the company's growth. Sales performance can also be measured using number of customers and customer preference. This study utilized sales revenue, sales volume, number of customers, and customer preference to measure the sales performance of Naivas supermarket in Kenya.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents research methodology used in the study. The study used descriptive research design. Target population is the total or entire group of objects, events or individuals having a common observable characteristic (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The target population of the study was 204 senior and mid-level management at the Naivas supermarket head office.

Table 1.0: Target Population

No.	Department	Population
1.	Accounts	25
2.	Sales	71
3.	Supervisors	36
4.	Dispatch	72
	Total	**204**

Source: Naivas Record (2023)

3.1 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study used census. This was used because the target population is easily manageable and accessible since it is a closed population. It allowed the researcher to approximate a specific field's values, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

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Table 1.1: Sample Size

No.	Department	Sample Size
1.	Accounts	25
2.	Sales	71
3.	Human resource	36
4.	Dispatch	72
	Total	**204**

Source: Naivas Record (2021)

3.2 Data Type and Research Instrument

In this study, primary data resources were used. Blumberg et al. (2014) described primary data as data collected personally and directly by the researcher for this research study. To gather the primary data, the research used the prepared questionnaires as instruments of data collection (see Appendix I). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), a questionnaire is simply a list of items or questions to which the respondent must, in most cases, provide a written answer. The questions had different questionnaires typed on the Likert scale, including strongly disagree, disagree, Neutral, agree, and agree strongly. The benefit of applying questionnaires is that the prejudice of the interviewer does not influence the outcome (Fowler, 2014).

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

This section describes the data analysis process. The researcher calculated the descriptive and inferential analyses to determine the impact of Image Differentiation on the Sales Performance. The data was pre-coded before analysis to make sure that the collected data was read correctly and put in the correct data categories. In this work, quantitative data was employed and was measured using means and standard deviations.

Spearman rank correlation was employed to test the correlation between the independent and dependent variables. Spearman rank correlation was appropriate because the Likert scale was used to gather information about the superiority of the ordinal scale and give ranks of one to five scores. As preliminary tests, the chi-square test was performed to find whether there is a significant relationship between the two variables under consideration with a 95 % level of confidence. The above-stated null and research hypothesis are stated below:

H_0: There is no significant relationship between image differentiation and sales performance of Naivas supermarket in Kenya ($r = 0$).
H_1: There is a significant relationship between image differentiation and sales performance of Naivas supermarket in Kenya ($r \neq 0$).
Where r is the correlation coefficient.
Through the logistic model, the study's hypotheses were tested using the Wald chi-square test. The test statistic for the coefficients is given:

$$Z = W_j = \frac{\hat{\beta}_i}{S.E(\hat{\beta}_i)} \quad \ldots\ldots 3.1$$

The test statistic follows a *t*-distribution with *n*-1 degrees of freedom.
A sample of dependent variable with independent variable was performed using the simple ordinal logistic regression model. Multiple Ordinal logistic regression analysis was also employed when developing the research model to establish the moderating interactive impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. In the course of data analysis, regression analysis was used to test whether the correct model has been used to fit the data. R-square reduces the level of relatedness of the variables, while R-square celebrates the financial measure of the dependent variable. It shows the extent of the shift in the dependent variable concerning the independent variable.

To test the significance and the level of difference between a regression mean and the error mean, the Fischer distribution test (F-test) was employed. The analysis of this test was conducted at a 5 percent significance level, meaning 95 percent level of confidence. The model contained adjusted coefficients of determination for testing the level of statistical significance by using the Pseudo R-squared (Nagelkerke) statistic. The logistic regression model is described in equation 3.2.

$$Log\ (Odds) = logit(Y) = \ln\left(\frac{y}{1-y}\right) \quad \ldots\ldots 3.2$$

$$Logit\ (Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$

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Where:
Y = Sales Performance
β_0 = The Y-intercept
X_1 = Image differentiation
β_i $i = 1$ is the regression coefficient, which measures the change induced by X_i; i= 1 on Y.

3.4. Parameter Estimates

The interpretation for the parameter (B) and the Exp (B) in logistic regression are discussed in this section. Optimistic estimate: It is hypothesized that a one-unit increase on an independent variable should correspond to a specific increase in the log odds of a fall at a higher level of the dependent variable. This also proves that the probability of a dependent Variable Level will likely go up as the independent Variable values go up. Pessimistic estimate: Holding all other variables constant, it showed that one unit increase on an independent variable was associated with an expected decrease of a particular value in the log odds of falling at a higher level on the dependent variable. This implied that as levels of the independent variable increased, the probability of decline in the higher level of the dependent variable decreased.

Exp(B) interpretation is based on the following three points:
An odds ratio > 1 suggested that as an independent variable was higher, the odds of being at a higher level on the dependent variable were slightly higher. The odds ratio < 1 for the variables says that they have negative signs with the dependent variable when the values of this variable are on the rise. Odds ratio = 1: still does not change the probability of being a higher category as the values of the independent variable increase. The diagnostic test carried out were multicollinearity and normality test.

4.0 RESULTS

This section presents the research findings and discussion.

4.1. Effect of Image Differentiation on Sales Performance of Naivas Supermarket

The respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or otherwise with the various statements on image differentiation on a Likert scale of 1 – 5 as follows: 1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3= Medium, 4 = High, 5 = Very High Table 1 presents the mean, frequency as well as Standard Deviation.

Table 1:2 Descriptive Statistics for Image Differentiation

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
The supermarket Charges affordable prices compared to competitors.	171	4.42	1.115
The supermarket has excellent customer experience.	171	4.43	.830
Product selection and sourcing are based on customer specifications.	171	4.26	1.221
Product selection is demand-driven.	171	4.43	.846
The supermarket adds value to its products through packaging.	171	4.43	.740
The supermarket is mostly located at the bus terminus.	171	4.45	.915
The supermarket is easily accessible by clients.	171	4.44	.903

Source (Field Data, 2024)

The results in Table 1 indicate a consistent trend, with all response means yielding values of 4.0 and above, reflecting a strong positive sentiment towards Naivas supermarket. Specifically, regarding the supermarket's pricing strategy, a mean score of 4.42 suggests that most respondents perceive Naivas as charging affordable prices compared to its competitors. This perception aligns with Kadenyeka and Washika (2023), who highlighted the reputation of competitive pricing in the monetary performance of supermarkets in Kenya. Supporting this view, Kamau et al. (2022) also found that competitive pricing significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty within the supermarket sector. However, Omondi (2021) argued that pricing is not the sole determinant of customer preference, indicating that factors such as service quality and product variety may play a more substantial role in influencing consumer choices.

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Regarding value addition through packaging, respondents agreed, with a mean score of 4.43, that Naivas supermarket enhances its products through effective packaging strategies. This is supported by Mutua and Chuma (2022), who found that attractive packaging significantly impacts consumer perception and buying behavior. Njeri (2023) further noted the role of packaging in differentiating products and enhancing customer satisfaction. In contrast, Karanja (2021) cautioned that while packaging can attract customers, it does not guarantee repeat purchases if the product quality does not meet consumer expectations, suggesting that packaging must align with actual product value.

Finally, the mean response of 4.45 regarding the supermarket's location indicates that respondents largely agree that Naivas supermarket is predominantly situated at bus terminuses. This observation is corroborated by Musyoka (2023), who identified that most grocery shops are strategically located in high-traffic areas like bus terminuses in Eldoret town. Additionally, Ndunda and Muriuki (2022) found that the accessibility of retail outlets significantly influences customer convenience, supporting the positioning of Naivas supermarket. However, Wambua (2021) introduced a nuanced perspective, arguing that being situated in busy locations does not necessarily lead to sales success, as some consumers may prefer quieter shopping environments, highlighting the complexity of customer preferences in the retail landscape.

These findings illustrate the multifaceted nature of consumer perceptions regarding Naivas supermarket, underscoring the importance of competitive pricing, customer experience, product selection, packaging, and strategic location in shaping customer gratification and devotion in the retail part.The findings were further tested using Spearman rank order correlation to test the relationship between image differentiation and sales performance of Naivas supermarket. Table 1.3 contains the summary of the results of the study as outlined in the subsequent sub-sections.

Table 1.3: Correlation Analysis between Image Differentiation and Sales Performance

	Sales Performance	Image Differentiation
Image differentiation	0.689**	1.000

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

Source (Field Data, 2024)

The outcomes in Table 1.3 designate a correlation coefficient of 0.689 between image differentiation and sales performance, revealing a moderate positive relationship. This suggests that a decrease in image differentiation correlates with a decline in sales performance for Naivas supermarket, while an increase in image differentiation corresponds with enhanced sales performance. The statistical test for the validity of this correlation is further backed by a 0.000 p-value below the threshold of 0.05; thus, it is valid. This actual research corresponds with Musyoka (2023), whose study showed a positive relationship between customer orientation and sales productivity for grocery shops in Eldoret town. These studies underscore the need to communicate the image strategies of a supermarket better to optimize performance concerning the RBT argument. RBT, as advanced by Wernerfelt (2016) and extended by Peteraf & Barney (2013), focuses on explaining why firm performance is a function of resources and capabilities and, as such, why firms should look to utilize these resources to offer unique value.

Conversely, some studies argue against the idea that image differentiation alone drives sales performance. For example, Wang and Jiang (2021) contend that while image differentiation can positively influence customer perceptions, it may not necessarily translate to improved sales if other critical factors, such as product quality and customer service, are lacking. Additionally, Aseka and Houghton (2023) argue that an overemphasis on image differentiation could lead firms to neglect the fundamental elements of product delivery and customer satisfaction, potentially diminishing overall sales performance. Thus, while the current study underscores the significance of image differentiation in enhancing sales performance, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making, which encompasses a variety of factors beyond just brand image.
The study sought to create the asset of the association between image differentiation and Naivas supermarket's sales performance. The analysis was conducted using the relevant regression model, established as the ordinal logistic regression model, summarized in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4: Model Fitting

Model	-2 Log likelihood	Chi-square	Df	P value	Pseudo R-square	
Intercept	90.433				Nagelkerke	0.4746
Final	80.403	10.030	1	0.002		

Source (Field Data, 2024)

From Table 1.4. it is clear that the model fits the data well, with the Nagelkerke statistic serving as the equivalent of R-squared in logistic regression analysis. The Nagelkerke value of 0.4746 indicates that image differentiation can explain 47.46% of the disparity in the sales performance of Naivas supermarket. This finding aligns with Baeza-Delgado et al. (2022), who noted that models with p-values less than 0.05 are considered significant, emphasizing that higher Nagelkerke statistics demonstrate the model's effectiveness in elucidating changes in sales performance. Further corroborating these findings, Liu and Zhang (2021) conducted a study highlighting those businesses leveraging unique resources, such as innovative marketing strategies and customer relationship management, demonstrated enhanced sales performance. The current model, therefore, is statistically adequate for predicting the sales performance of Naivas supermarket, supporting the Resource-Based Theory (RBT). As outlined by Peteraf and Barney (2013) and Wernerfelt (2016), RBT posits that a firm's unique resources and capabilities significantly influence its performance, allowing it to create distinctive value propositions. On the contrary, Lee and Yang (2023) argue that while image differentiation can impact sales, it is not the sole factor affecting performance. They contend that operational efficiency and customer service quality must also be prioritized for sustainable sales growth. This perspective underscores the multifaceted nature of sales performance and suggests that overemphasizing image differentiation could lead firms to overlook these critical operational elements.

Moreover, the positive intercept of 90.433 in the logistic regression analysis indicates that Naivas supermarket has been experiencing positive sales performance, reflecting a favorable perception among respondents. This positive sentiment presents an opportunity for the supermarket to further enhance its performance through targeted strategies, which aligns with the Resource-Based Theory's emphasis on optimizing resources to build a competitive advantage.

Table 1.5: Parametric Estimates

Variable	B	Std. Error	Wald Chi-square	Sig (P value)	Exp(B)
Image differentiation	1.2568	0.4012	3.1326	0.002	3.514

Source (Field Data, 2024)

Table 1.5 shows results pointing to an overall p-value of 0.002, less than 0.05; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, meaning that image differentiation is another critical variable to study sales outcomes. According to the above findings, affirming the image differentiation variables, which include pricing, customer experience, marketing, and business location to one unit, are expected to lead to a 1.2568 increase in the likelihood of enhancing sales performances. Therefore, with each unit increase in these image differentiation indicators, the chances of Naivas supermarket achieving a higher level of sales performance improves by a factor of 3.514 (Exp(B) = 3.514). The results align with the Resource-Based Theory, which holds that the possessions and abilities of a firm can advance sales performance.
Supporting this assertion, Khairuddin (2015) articulated that image differentiation comprises various factors, necessitating that companies master elements like pricing, marketing, customer experience, and business location to establish a distinct and unique brand image. This is further corroborated by Hofer (2011), who contends that organizations able to cultivate a positive brand image—characterized by competitive pricing, quality customer experiences, and effective marketing strategies—tend to experience increased sales volume.

Moreover, Liu et al. (2019) echoed similar sentiments, suggesting that firms that integrate robust image differentiation strategies can better position themselves in the market, enhancing customer loyalty and increasing sales. On the contrary, Garcia et al. (2020) argued that an overemphasis on image differentiation without aligning operational efficiency may result in diminished returns, suggesting that organizations must strike a balance between differentiation and effective resource management. This critical perspective underlines the need for Naivas supermarket to not only enhance its image differentiation strategies but also ensure that they are supported by operational capabilities, as advocated by RBT, to achieve sustained competitive advantage and optimal sales performance.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Image differentiation was measured in terms of pricing, customer experience, marketing and business location. The image differentiation component was found to have a significant effect of sales performance. This is because the simple ordinal logistic yield a p value of 0.002 which is less than 0.05, rejecting the null hypothesis leading to a conclusion that image differentiation has a significant effect on sales performance.

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5.1 Recommendations

Image differentiation itself can explain 47.46% of sales performance. It's recommended the organization to improve on their pricing standards, marketing, customer experience and business location to help them increase their sales volume.

5.2 Areas for Further Study

This study opens various avenues for future research. Firstly, researchers are encouraged to adopt a purely quantitative approach to measure sales performance indicators more precisely, aiding organizations in developing strategies to increase sales and profits effectively. Additionally, exploring external factors that may significantly influence sales performance—such as taxation and fuel prices—could provide a broader context for understanding sales dynamics in the supermarket sector.

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