

SERVICE POSITIONING STRATEGIES AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF HOTELS IN ASABA DELTA STATE**Asiagwu, Catherine Ekene and Idenedo, Otite Wisdom****^{1 2}Department of Marketing, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba Delta State****ABSTRACT**

The association between Asaba Hotels' competitive advantage and its service positioning strategies was investigated in this study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the 90 respondents who were purposively sampled for the study. Using Pearson's Correlation, the data was examined and the hypotheses were tested. The results showed a strong and positive association between the study's variables. Thus, the researchers conclude that; there is a positive and strong relationship between service positioning strategies and the competitive advantage of hotels in Asaba. Derived from the study's conclusion, the researchers recommended that; hotels in Asaba should consider service positioning as an important strategy to improve competitive advantage and also focus on cost leadership and differentiation to create a distinctive market position that leverages local strengths and meets the evolving expectations of travelers, ultimately leading to a sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: Service Positioning Strategies, Cost leadership strategy, Differentiation Strategy and Competitive Advantage

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry in Nigeria is experiencing significant growth, driven by increased tourism, and rising business activities. Asaba, the capital city of Delta State, is no exception. Its strategic location, growing infrastructure, and increasing prominence as a peaceful city, business, and leisure destination make it a focal point for hotel development. This backdrop presents a fertile ground for examining the service positioning strategies and competitive advantages of hotels in Asaba.

Asaba has seen substantial economic growth over recent years, as a result of being the State's administrative hub and is a peaceful city compared to Warri, Sapele, and Ugheli in Delta State and Onisha, Owerre, and other nearby State cities that are always on a rampage with activities of unknown gunmen and terrorists. The city's economic expansion has been accompanied by immigrants from Anambra, Imo, and other nearby States, domestic, and international travelers, and "Yahoo Boys" spurring demand for diverse hospitality services. The local economy, which includes government institutions, corporate offices, and educational institutions, further drives the need for varied accommodation options. The city's infrastructure development, including improved road networks and transportation facilities, has enhanced its attractiveness as a destination.

Service positioning is crucial for hotels in Asaba and other cities in Nigeria and globally to carve out a niche in the competitive market by defining and understanding their target audiences, whether they are business travelers, tourists, or event organizers, differentiating their services through unique features such as specialized amenities, exceptional customer service, or local cultural experiences and incorporating modern technologies and innovations to enhance guest experiences and streamline operations. Understanding service positioning strategies and competitive advantages is essential for hotel operators and investors, especially in Asaba, Nigeria, and globally. This study provides insights into how hotels can effectively position themselves in the market, leverage their unique strengths, and address challenges. By exploring these aspects, the study contributes to the strategic planning and operational success of hotels in the region, ultimately enhancing their ability to compete and thrive in a dynamic environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

This research on the association between service positioning strategy and Asaba hotels' competitive advantage is based on the resource-based theory (Wernerfelt, 1984) and the core competencies theory (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). According to this theory, an organization's success is linked to its resource profile, which explains why certain organizations perform better than others and have a dominant position in the market (Winnie & Francis, 2016; Didia & Idenedo, 2017).

Resource-Based Theory: This idea was created by Wernerfelt (1984) to determine the resources that a firm can employ effectively and efficiently to gain and preserve a competitive edge over other companies or brands (Maxwell et al., 2014; Igwe et al., 2020). As to the hypothesis, the performance of an organization is determined by its resource profile. It also explains why some businesses perform better than others and hold a dominant market position (Winnie & Francis, 2016; Didia & Idenedo, 2017). Because resources may not be transferred between companies, the idea suggests that there may be persistent variations in the resource profiles of firms within a certain industry. (Barney, 1991).

Resources are characterized by Maxwell et al. (2014) as "all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, and knowledge, controlled by a firm that enables the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that bestow on the firm a competitive advantage". Businesses must therefore possess significant resources, abilities, and traits that are unique, valuable, difficult to duplicate, and non-replaceable to sustain a competitive edge over time. These attributes must also be successfully implemented in the intended markets (Baker & Sinkula, 2005; Barney, 1991). The resource-based theory was modified for the current study as a baseline theory, taking into consideration the hospitality sectors where the study is based. A strategized service positioning will develop and improve the hotel's efficiency, effectiveness, and competitive advantage. To gain and maintain a prominent position in the market, hotel investors and operators can employ unique strategies and marketing skills, such as cost leadership and differentiation service positioning strategies, which are valuable, uncommon, and difficult to replicate.

The Core Competencies Theory: The thesis of Prahalad and Hamel (1990) states that companies compete not just when their products are on the market but also when they are honing their core capabilities. According to Lavina (2014), the authors recommended that a company should be structured around a limited number of core talents rather than having a variety of businesses and end products. This is because core competencies are difficult to duplicate and can be easily adapted to diverse industries. According to Prahalad and Hamel (1990), referenced in Idenedo and Ebinuwa (2022), "Core competencies allow a company to be flexible, respond to a rapidly evolving environment, and be prepared for the future." Hirindu (2017) defines core competencies as the skills, resources, and abilities of an organization. Although they are a test program to obtain a competitive advantage, their efficacy has not yet been shown through empirical research. A hotel's region competencies might be considered to be effective service positioning strategies like differentiation and cost leadership.

Conceptual Framework

The following assumptions serve as the foundation for this investigation.

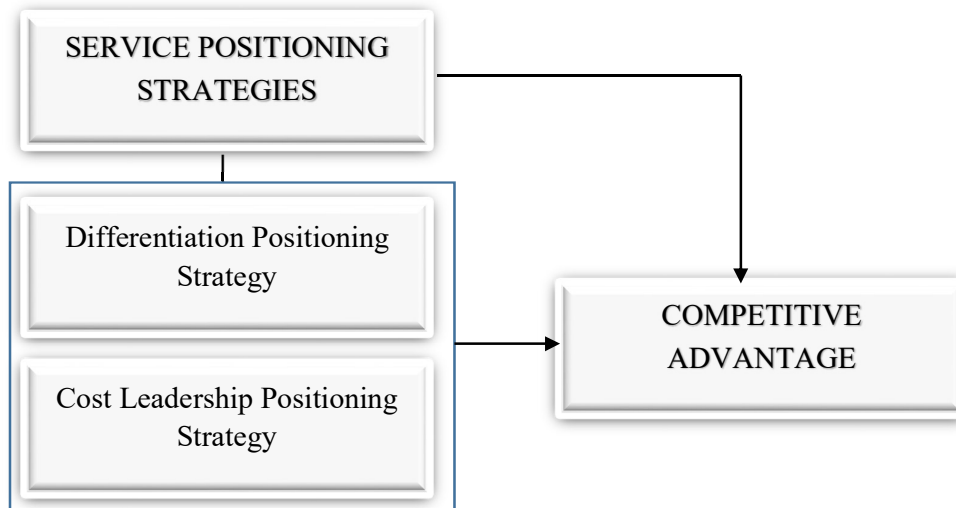


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Service Positioning Strategies and Competitive Advantage

Source: Desk Review, 2024.

Service Positioning Strategies

An organization's strategy consists of the moves and approaches devised by management to produce successful organizational performance. A strategy is thus a management game plan for the business (Kugun et al., 2016) or long-term direction, meeting challenges from the firm's business environment such as competitors and changing needs of customers using the organizational internal resources and competencies effectively, and building on its strengths to meet environmental challenges (Tharamba et al., 2018). Targeting, positioning, and segmenting are the first steps in a marketing strategy. A company recognizes the various categories and needs in consumer markets, seeks out clients who can be delighted in a superior manner, and then positions its product or service so that the target market recognizes the distinctive goods, services, and images (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Robert et al. (2017), positioning enables consumers to identify the true differences between competing goods and services so they can select the one that best suits their needs. The difficulties surrounding the allocation of resources are significantly eased when an organization defines its perceptual stance. Strategic positioning offers a means of establishing organizational direction and an approach to thinking through these issues (Tharamba et al., 2018). As a result, service positioning strategies can be characterized as the different approaches a company uses to set itself apart from rivals, create a distinctive perception of the offering in the eyes of the target market, and obtain a competitive edge. Wickham (2011) states that it is focused on how the corporation as a whole adds value to individual customers and sets itself apart from its rivals.

Effective service positioning, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2006), starts with differentiating a business's product such that it offers customers greater value. Next, actions are taken to supply this value and convey this position to the target customers. To create a buyer-focused value scheme that would facilitate client purchases, positioning entails developing a company's image and offering to occupy a special place in the target consumer market's consciousness (Asikhia, 2010; Kotler & Keller, 2012). The successful development of a buyer-focused value offer—a compelling argument

for the target market to accept or utilize a service—is the result of employing a service positioning strategy (Kotler, 2003). Additionally, a company's positioning efforts result in its long-term competitive advantage (Blankson & Crawford, 2012). One may argue that hotels should think about using proactive service positioning strategies if they wish to stay competitive.

Dimensions of Service Positioning Strategies

Businesses can use a variety of tactics to position their goods and services. Low cost, focus, and differentiation (Porter, 1980), variety-based, need-based, and access-based (Beckman & Rosenfield, 2008), and strategic positioning approaches include positioning based on the product's attributes or benefits to customers, positioning based on pricing, positioning based on the product's class, positioning based on use or application, positioning based on the product's process, positioning based on competitors, and positioning based on cultural symbols (Ng'oo, 2016). This research employs a differentiation, and cost leadership approach (Porter, 1980; Ng'oo, 2016).

Cost Leadership Positioning Strategy

A company can become a cost leader through experience through production investment, conservation, and careful monitoring of operating costs to optimize organizational performance (Faith, 2017). Cost leadership, according to Idenedo et al. (2020), allows firms to gain a competitive edge by increasing sales growth. Therefore, hotels that aim to achieve cost leadership should continuously benchmark themselves against competitors with an unambiguous end goal to examine their relative cost and position in the business (Idenedo et al., 2020). Cost leadership is centered on gaining a competitive advantage by having the lowest cost in the industry (Irene, 2014).

"Cost-leadership is based on lower overall costs than competitors." "Hotels with a sustainable cost advantage over competitors use that lower cost as a basis for either under-pricing the competitors and gaining a larger market share at their expense or earning a higher profit margin by selling at the going price." "This also requires the hotel to be better than its rivals in efficiency and cost control and continuously seek out creative and innovative ways of cutting costs." "Successful low-cost hotels achieve cost advantages by diligently pursuing cost savings throughout the activity cost chain" (Brooks, 2010; Irene, 2014).

Differentiation

Positioning a brand to set it apart from the competition and create a distinctive image is known as differentiation (David 2011; Irene, 2014). According to Idenedo et al. (2020), differentiation is a business strategy meant to raise the perceived worth of the company's products in comparison to rivals to generate customer preference because of their unique qualities (Porter, 1980). Customers' views always determine whether a product or service is differentiated, but businesses can affect these perceptions in several ways. According to Kamau (2013) and Faith (2017), differentiation can be done specifically for a product to make it appealing or for a service by using after-sales services like quality consideration, reward programs, extended operation hours, and so on. Physical characteristics like location, size, layout, presentation, and retail environment can all be used to differentiate a product. One important component of a company's image that makes the purchasing process more sensitive for customers is differentiation. In a particular market, hotels may employ this strategy to build an established identity, brand relevance, and reputation.

Concept of Competitive Advantage

If managers want to gain a competitive edge in the modern corporate world, they must figure out how to provide customers with better value (Mäntymaa, 2013). Competitive advantage, as defined by Matt et al. (2008) and Idenedo et al. (2020), is a state that allows a nation or business to function more effectively or in a higher-quality manner than its rivals, and from which positive outcomes follow. Competitive advantage, according to Wang (2014), referenced in Pawel (2017), is a collection

of attributes (core competency) that enable a business to outperform its rivals and signify the attainment of higher market share, product quality, or technical advancement in comparison to rivals.

"The core of a firm's performance in competitive markets," according to Porter (1980), "competitive advantage grows fundamentally out of the value a firm can create for its buyers that exceeds the firm's cost of creating it." According to Porter (1985), referenced in Dirisu et al. (2013), competitive advantage is the advantage over rivals obtained by providing customers with more value, either through lower prices or by offering goods and services that are more beneficial to the customer and warrant a higher price. According to Christos et al. (2018), the best way to characterize competitive advantage is as the above-average manifestation of market opportunity exploitation and competitive threat neutralization.

Accordingly, this study views competitive advantage as an advantage that a business obtains by providing unique goods or services that are more valuable to both current and potential clients at a reduced price.

Service Positioning Strategies and Competitive Advantage

According to Tabitha (2016), positioning strategies have an impact on Kenyan insurance companies' competitive advantage. Two theories served as the foundation for the study: the Network approach and the Resource-based View theory. The results showed that positioning strategies had a major impact on Kenyan insurance companies' competitive advantage. Additionally, it was discovered that the cost leadership approach, product differentiation, product utilization, competitor-based positioning strategy, corporate objectives, positioning, and competitive advantage of Kenyan insurance firms are all significantly correlated.

A study by Munene (2013) examined the organizational performance and strategic positioning of Kenya's top five oil companies. According to the survey study, the leading oil companies do position themselves in the market and employ a variety of positioning techniques, particularly competitive positioning, since petroleum prices are controlled to give them a competitive edge over rivals and allow them to generate large profits regardless of the energy sector's average profitability. The impact of Unilever's product differentiation strategy as a competitive advantage was investigated by Dirisu et al. (2013). The study's findings demonstrated that innovative product development, distinctive product features, and product design all have a positive and significant correlation with business performance.

Velea and Ciobota (2015) examined financial banking firms' strategic positioning, which is crucial for gaining a competitive edge. The study's findings showed that gaining competitive advantages and financial banking organizations' strategic positioning were positively and significantly correlated. Aliqah (2012) investigated the empirical data about the relationship between Jordanian manufacturing enterprises' performance and differentiation strategy. The study's findings showed a strong and favorable correlation between organizational success and differentiation strategy. In a case study on how strategic positioning gives Safaricom Limited a competitive edge, Kasyoka (2011) discovered that the company was able to get a competitive edge because of advanced technology. According to the study, Safaricom Limited's resource-based strategy had a significant impact in gaining a competitive edge. Technology, human capital, expertise, financial resources, and assets are among Safaricom Limited's primary resources. Muriet (2011) investigated the connection between Kenyan commercial banks' performance and their strategic orientation. Through performance measurement, the study found that strategic positioning improves organizational performance. Therefore, it is advised that banks employ strategic positioning to increase stability and profitability.

Blankson and Julian (2012) investigated how cost leadership positioning strategies affected the performance of service firms. The variables in the study were found to be significantly correlated. The present investigation postulated, in light of this empirical review, that;

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between cost leadership strategy and competitive advantage

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between differentiation strategy and competitive advantage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An ex-post-facto research design was used for this investigation. Forty-five (45) three-star hotels in Asaba make up the study's population at the corporate level (Expedia, 2024). The study purposefully examined each of Asaba's thirty-one (31) three-star hotels. However, the researcher arrived at sixty-two (62) as the sample size by using the proportional allocation approach, which assigns two staff members—marketing and operational managers—to each hotel. Both primary and secondary data were employed in this investigation. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data. The methodology and results of this investigation were supported by a thorough validity and reliability test. To determine how well a group of entries fit together, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was employed. A validity test that demonstrates how well a scale can ascertain the suggested concept and how closely a measurement or observation matches the construct that it was intended to measure or observe is conducted. We used both face validity and content validity. The degree of the association between the study's variables was ascertained by presenting and analyzing the data gathered from the respondents and testing the hypotheses using Pearson's Correlation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Data Presentation

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution

Numbers	Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
No. Sent out	62	100%
No. Returned	59	95.2%
No. Not Returned	3	04.8%

Source: field survey, 2024.

Sixty-two (90) respondents, or 100 percent of the sample, were handed questionnaires. Of the total number of questionnaires, fifty-nine (59) were completed and successfully returned, accounting for 95.2% of the total, while three (3) were not returned, representing 4.8%. It should be noted that the analysis is predicated on the fifty-nine (59) questionnaires that the study participants returned.

Reliability Analysis

As previously mentioned in the research methodology, reliability measures were initially used to gauge the concepts examined in the study to accept the results produced by the questionnaire. The variables had a Cronbach's alpha value of ≥ 0.8 , which is recognized as a trustworthy metric, according to the reliability analysis in Table 2 below. Therefore, it can be presumed that the research tool measured the variables under investigation.

Table 2: Result of Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Cost Leadership Positioning Strategy	0.857
Differentiation Positioning Strategy	0.883
Competitive Advantage	0.855

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output (based on 2024 field survey data)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics All Variables

		Cost Positioning Strategy	Leadership Positioning Strategy	Differentiation Positioning Strategy	Competitive Advantage
N	Valid	59	59	59	59
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.0986	3.8404		3.5931
Std. Deviation		1.07407	1.10964		1.13170
Sum		291.00	272.67		255.11

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output (based on 2024 field survey data)

The information provided in Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for both the criterion variable (competitive advantage) and the components of the predictor variables (cost leadership positioning strategy and differentiation positioning strategy). The cost leadership positioning approach had a mean of (4.0986) and a standard deviation of (1.07407), as shown in Table 3 above. The standard deviation of the differential positioning approach was 1.10964, while the mean was 3.8404. The standard deviation of competitive advantage was 1.13170, and the mean was 3.5931. Since all of the variables' mean values were higher than 3, it follows that the necessary average on a five-point Likert scale is $1+2+3+4+5 = 15$ divided by $5 = 3$. As a result, the researchers maintained the study variables.

Data Analysis

The Pearson's Correlation was used in this section to test the assumptions that were developed. To determine the degree or strength of the relationship between the variables under consideration, this study used Evans' (1996) categorization key, which states that if the significant probability value (PV) < 0.05 (level of significance) = reject the null and conclude significant relationship, and if the significant probability value (PV) > 0.05 (level of significance) = accept the null and conclude the insignificant relationship. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0.

Table 4: Description of Range of correlation (r) values and the corresponding Level of Association

Range of r with positive and negative sign values	Descriptive level of Association	Remark of
0.00 - 0.19	Very Low	Very Weak
0.20 - 0.39	Low	Weak
0.40 - 0.59	Moderate	Moderate
0.60 - 0.79	High	Strong
0.80 - 1.0	Very High	Very Strong

The correlation coefficient's sign denotes the direction of a relationship or association between the variables; a positive relationship is represented by a (+) sign, whereas a negative one is represented by a (-). The magnitude of the correlation coefficient (r) determines the strength of the association; a value of zero (0) denotes no relationship, while a value of one (1) denotes a perfect relationship.

Therefore, the closer the value is to 1, the stronger the association; the closer the value is to zero (0), the weaker the relationship.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of Service Positioning Strategies and Competitive Advantage

		Service Positioning Strategies	Competitive Advantage
Service Positioning Strategies	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.821**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	59	59
Competitive advantage	Pearson Correlation	.821**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	59	59

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

Source: SPSS 21.0 Output (based on 2024 field survey data)

The correlation analysis between the independent variable of service positioning strategies and the dependent variable of competitive advantage is shown in Table 5 above. According to Table 4's classification, Pearson's correlation between service positioning strategies and competitive advantage is 0.821**. This r-value denotes a very strong positive association. Increased competitive advantage is linked to service positioning strategies, as indicated by the correlation coefficient, which shows a strong positive association between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis Cost Leadership Positioning Strategy and Competitive Advantage

		Cost Leadership Strategy	Positioning Competitive Advantage
Cost Leadership Positioning Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.606**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	59	59
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.606**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	59	59

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

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output (based on 2024 field survey data)

The association between competitive advantage and cost leadership positioning approach is shown in Table 6 above. According to the classification in Table 4, the Pearson Correlation between cost leadership positioning strategy and competitive advantage is 0.606**. This r-value denotes a strong positive link which inevitably indicates that a cost leadership positioning strategy increases competitive advantage.

Test of hypothesis 1

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between cost leadership positioning strategy and competitive advantage.

The researchers accept a significant association between cost leadership positioning strategy and competitive advantage and reject the null hypothesis because, as Table 6 explains, the significant/probability value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 7: Correlation Analysis of Differentiation Positioning Strategy and Competitive Advantage

Correlations		Differentiation Positioning Strategy	Competitive Advantage
Differentiation Positioning Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.698**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	59	59
Competitive Advantage	Correlation Coefficient	.698**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	59	59

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

Source: SPSS 22.0 Output (based on 2024 field survey data)

Competitive advantage and differentiation positioning strategy are correlated, as seen in Table 7 above. The table showed that, according to the classification in Table 4, the Pearson Correlation between the variables is 0.698**. This r-value denotes a strong positive link which implies that an increase in competitive advantage is a function of a differentiation positioning strategy, as indicated by the correlation coefficient.

Test of hypothesis 2

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between differentiation positioning strategy and competitive advantage.

The researchers accept a significant association between differentiation positioning strategy and competitive advantage and reject the null hypothesis because, as Table 7 explains, the significant/probability value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Discussion of Findings

The researchers concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between service positioning strategies and the competitive advantage of eateries in Asaba, Delta State, after putting the hypotheses through a statistical test using the data gathered from the respondents. The results showed that: There is a positive and strong relationship between service positioning strategies and the competitive advantage of hotels in Asaba. As shown in Table 5, the correlation coefficient on the relationship between service positioning strategies and competitive advantage is 0.821** based on the categorization in Table 4, the r-value indicates a very strong positive relationship. The PV of (0.000) is less comparable to the (0.05) levels of significance.

This result is consistent with Muriel's (2011) investigation of the connection between Kenyan commercial banks' performance and strategic positioning. Through performance measurement, the study found that strategic positioning improves organizational performance. Blankson et al. (2008), who looked at how positioning strategies affected corporate performance in US-based companies, also support this finding. They discovered that the firms' success is greatly impacted by the achievement of positioning strategies. They also pointed out that as marketing has grown in importance within the framework of strategic management, positioning has additionally emerged as a concept that appears to be essential to the success of businesses' marketing plans.

The cost leadership positioning approach and Asaba Hotels' competitive advantage are significantly correlated. The high Spearman's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.606^{**}$ in Table 6 suggests a substantial association between competitive advantage and cost leadership positioning approach. This result aligns with Kalafatis's (2000) conclusion that a firm's performance is positively correlated with its cost leadership positioning approach. High-quality placement is associated with improved performance, according to Hooley (2001). Furthermore, Blankson (2013) recognized that a cost

leadership stance is advantageous to a company. In the hotel industry, cost leadership positioning is also said to be a major factor in success (Brady, 2005; Hanson, 2009).

The competitive advantage of hotels in Asaba is significantly correlated with their differentiation positioning strategy. The Spearman's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.698^{**}$), as shown in Table 7, is high, suggesting that differentiated positioning strategy and competitive advantage are strongly correlated. Aliqah (2012), who looked at the empirical data relating to organizational performance and differentiation strategy among Jordanian manufacturing enterprises, supports this finding. The study's findings demonstrated a strong and favorable correlation between organizational performance and differentiation strategy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers consequently conclude that, in light of the study's findings, service positioning strategies and competitive advantage of hotels in Asaba are positively and strongly correlated. There is also a strong and positive association between cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and competitive advantage of hotels in Asaba. Derived from the study's conclusion, the researchers recommended that; hotels in Asaba should consider service positioning as an important strategy to improve competitive advantage and also focus on cost leadership and differentiation to create a distinctive market position that leverages local strengths and meets the evolving expectations of travelers, ultimately leading to a sustainable competitive advantage.

REFERENCES

- Baker, W.E., & Sinkula, J.M. (2005). Environmental marketing strategy and firm performance: Effects on new product performance and market share. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(4), 461-475.
- Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(6), 99–120.
- Barney, J.B. (2007) *Gaining and sustaining competitive advantage*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education, New Jersey, U.S.A.
- Brooks, M.R. (2010). International competitiveness: assessing and exploring competitive advantage by ocean container carriers, *Logistics, and Transportation Review*, 23 (3), 275-93.
- Beckman, Sara L. & Rosen Field, D. B. (2008). *Operations strategy competing in the 21st century*. New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Blankson, C. & Crawford, J.C., (2012). Impact of cost leadership positioning strategies on service firm performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 65 (3), 311-316.
- Christos, S., Victoria P. E., & Nikolaos, B. G. (2018). Developing a measure of competitive advantage. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, 6(4), 320-342.
- Ciobota, G., & Velea, A. (2015). The strategic positioning of the financial banking companies – key factor for achieving competitive advantages. *Knowledge Horizons - Economics*, 7 (1), 103–106.
- David, F.R. (2011). *Strategic Management: Concepts*; Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc.

- Dirisu, J. I., Iyiola, O. & Ibidunni, O. S. (2013). Product differentiation: A tool of competitive advantage and optimal organizational performance (A study of Unilever Nigeria plc). *European Scientific Journal*, 9(34), 1-12.
- ERaslan, İ. H. (2008). *The effects of competitive strategies on firm performance: A study in Turkish textile and apparel industry considering the mediating role of value chain activities* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Boğaziçi University Social Sciences Institute, İstanbul.
- Faith M., (2017). Effect of competitive strategies on the performance of insurance companies in Kenya. *MBA project*. United States International University-Africa.
- Hanson, B., Mattila, A.S., O'Neill, J.W. & Kim, Y. (2009). Hotel rebranding and rescaling effects on financial performance. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 50 (3), 360-370.
- Hassan, S. S., George, T., & Craft, S. H. (2005). *Linking global market segmentation decisions with strategic positioning options*. The George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA. <http://doi.org/10.1108/07363760510589244>.
- Hirindu, K. (2017). Theorizing the concept of core competencies: an integrative model beyond identification. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 7(2), 252-256.
- Idenedo, O. W., & Ebebuwa, A., Sunny, Igwe, S. R. (2020). Customer involvement practice and competitive advantage of apparel designers in Port Harcourt. *Journal of Contemporary Marketing*, 5(1), 11-25
- Idenedo, W.O. & Ebebuwa, A. (2022). Internal marketing practices and customer loyalty of healthcare firms in South-South, Nigeria: The moderating role of industry policy. *International Academic Journal of Management and Marketing*, 7(2), 1-28.
- Idenedo, O. W. & Didia J.U.D, (2017). Customer orientation and loyalty behavior of users of a global system of mobile telecommunication services. *International Journal of Marketing and Management*, 7(3), 38-48.
- Irene N. S., (2014). Effect of competitive strategies on the performance of Public Universities in Kenya. *M.BA Thesis*, University of Kenya.
- John, R. D., (2001). Successful competitive positioning: the key for entry into the European consumer market. *European Business Review*, 13, (4), 209-220.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2012). *Marketing management*, 14th ed., Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Kotler, P. & Armstrong, G. (2010). *Principles of marketing*, Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 217-218.
- Kotler P. & Kevin L. K., (2006). *Marketing management (12 ed.)*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Kugun, G., Wanyonyi, K. W., & Sangoro, O. (2016). Analysis of strategic positioning on organization performance. *IJRDO - Journal of Business Management*, 2(11), 26–56.

- Kyengo, J. (2016). Influence of competitive strategies on the performance of telecommunication companies in Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Human Resource and Business Administration*, 2 (1), 1–16.
- Lavina, M. (2014). Competitive strategies and customer retention among commercial banks in Kenya. *Unpublished MBA Project*, University of Nairobi.
- Mas B.B. & Muhammad-Madi B. A. (2011). *The application of cost, differentiation, and hybrid strategy in business operations: will hybrid strategy become the new competitive strategy?* 2nd International Conference on Business and Economic Research (2nd ICBER 2011) Proceeding.
- Muriel (2011). *Strategic positioning and performance of commercial banks in Kenya*. Unpublished MBA Project, School of Business, University of Nairobi.
- Ng'oo Rose K., (2012). Positioning strategies adopted by large audit firms in Kenya. *Unpublished MBA Project*, School of Business, University of Nairobi.
- Ng'oo, K. T., (2016). The influence of positioning strategies on the competitive advantage of the insurance firms in Kenya. *Unpublished MBA Project*, School of Business, University of Nairobi.
- Noreen, S. (2015). Relationship among strategic positioning, strategic customer relationship management, and organization's performance. *International Journal of Management Research and Emerging Sciences*, 5(1), 47–63.
- Nyauncho M. J.& Nyamweya I. N., (2015). Assessment of the effect of Cost Leadership Strategy on the performance of Liquefied Petroleum Gas Companies in Eldoret town, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention* 4 (4), 2319-8028.
- Paweł, C. (2017). The concept of competitive advantages. Logic, sources, and durability. *Journal of Positive Management*, 7 (3), 57-70.
- Prahalad, C. K., & Hamel, G. (1990). The core competence of the corporation. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(3), 79-92.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage: Creating and sustaining superior performance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive strategy*. The Free Press, New York
- Robert E. H., Ibn. A-H. & Ellis L.C. O. (2017). Investigating market orientation and positioning in star-rated hotels in Ghana. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29 (10), 2629-2646
- Rugman, A. & Hodgetts, R., (2000). *International business: A strategic management approach* (2nd ed.). New York and London: Prentice Hall.

Tharamba, T. M., Rotich, G., & Anyango, W., (2018). Effect of strategic positioning on the firm's performance in the telecommunications firms in Kenya: a case of Safaricom limited. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 5 (2), 83– 105.

Wang, H. L. (2014). *Theories for competitive advantage*, in Hasan, H. (Ed.), *Being Practical with Theory: A Window into Business Research*, Wollongong, Australia: Theory, Australia, 33-43.

Wernerfelt, B. (1984). A resource-based view of the firm. *Strategic Management Journal*, 5(6), 159-180.

Winnie, G. N., & Francis, N. K. (2016). Marketing practices, market orientation, and performance of tour firms in Kenya: a mediated approach. *DBA Africa Management Review*, 6(4), 33-49.