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Strategies Adopted by Franchised Restaurants for Achieving Competitive Advantage in Nairobi Central Business District in Kenya

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Abstract

With the increased competition in today's business world, it becomes difficult for organizations to access the opportunities around it. This thus brings about the need for organization to exercise strategies. More companies have entered the Kenyan market and brought about competition which has forced some franchises to close. The researchers' aim was to explore to explore the Environmental factors affecting consumption of hospitality products and services in franchised restaurants in Nairobi Central Business Kenya. The objectives of the study were to explore the extent to which reliability on hospitality products and services affects consumption, the extent to which responsiveness on hospitality products and services affects consumption, the extent to which tangibility on branding affect consumption, the extent to which assurance on service quality was used to achieve competitive advantage in Franchised Restaurants in Nairobi CBD Kenya. The research adopted the SERVQUAL model. This model borrows heavily from the Porters model though it has a bias in hospitality industry. The gap being investigated was why some franchises were performing better and opening more outlets while others were not performing and closing outlets. The study focused on the food and beverage production and service techniques adopted to gain competitive advantage. The research was carried out in the Nairobi CBD in franchised restaurants. The study adopted the descriptive research design. A census study was done on the 15 restaurants and their 15 managers in the CBD while systematic random sampling was done to select 10% of 3250 customers who visited the restaurants on the busy days and special offer days. The data was collected from every 10th customer so as to get a 325 sample as they came into the restaurant by use of questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data, with the help of linear regression model. The analysed data was presented in tables, graphs and pie charts with the assistance of the of SPSS version 21. Findings and discussions guided the summary, conclusion and recommendations which facilitated decision making in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: *Strategies; Food and Beverage; Products and Services; Competitive advantage.*

1.0 Background information

Franchising is one form of managing business enterprises and of expanding into global markets, which permits the adoption of a hybrid marketing mix strategy. Using a hybrid marketing strategy, the franchisor would provide the overall strategy for running the business but may leave aspects of the business to the franchisee to determine (Gikonyo, Berndt, & Wadawi, 2015).

Strategy is the creation of a unique and valuable position, which usually involves different sets of activities. Strategy also refers to the ideas, plans and support that firms employ to compete successfully against their rivals. The main focus of strategic positioning is to choose activities that yield superior profitability and thus create a sustainable competitive advantage against rivals (Munyaka, 2016).

Organizations aiming to survive in a turbulent environment must come up with strategies that guide their decisions. To survive in the market, organizations adopt various strategies in the face of competition and also to ensure success. some organizations strive to improve their performance and market standing by achieving lower costs than rivals, while other pursue product superiority or personalized customer service or development of competencies or capabilities that the rivals cannot match. This sets it apart from rivals, builds customer loyalty and win a sustainable competitive advantage (Wambura, 2012).

The fast-food concept seems to attract franchisees as compared with establishing independent fast-food outlets because of its association with high viability of the business and the positive cash flow that comes faster from franchises than from independent businesses (Mendelsohn, 2004). Quinn and Alexander (2002) observed that the largest fast-food companies are involved with franchising.

The franchise system in the United States, considered home of franchising, has developed to maturity, and it plays a key role in the business activities that contribute significantly to that economy (Gikonyo et al, 2015). Nineteen years ago the first foreign fast food chains Steers and Debonairs Pizza were launched in Nairobi Kenya (Estelle, 2016). Franchises in the food, restaurant and beverages industries are the most successful. Kenyans are spending more time and money eating out or ordering especially during work hours and the fast food industry has benefited greatly as a result (George, 2016).

American franchises such as KFC and Naked Pizza have begun to pop up in Nairobi. Given the establishment of the counties, investment prospects outside of Nairobi are likely to emerge in the coming years (Malinda, 2013). The Kenchic Inn is such a chain. It was the largest fast food chain of franchise fried chicken restaurants and sometimes referred to as Kenya's answer to KFC.

The Kenchic Inn is owned by Kenchic Ltd. which is one of the largest poultry producers and distributors in Africa Michira (2016) sadly narrates that it has stopped its eatery business. This is because due to the current fast food market evolving rapidly in Kenya, there has been a gradual but steady decline in the number of Kenchic Inn-branded outlets. The franchise is now viewed as a small player in a multi-billion-shilling industry that has attracted global companies (Michira, 2016).

In an interview with The Standard Digital, a Kenchic official said "We have not been able to maintain the standards that we desire as a company, so when you have customers complaining of bad food, you can guess what that does to our brand," (Michira, 2016).

Owners of Kenchic Inn outlets have minimum standards they are required to maintain in terms of quality, but the firm has been unable to ensure the specifications are met. As a result, the brand has had to contend with a dwindling image among customers, despite the prices for various fast foods, including its signature chips and chicken, selling at a fraction of the going rate among industry rivals (Michira, 2016).

When US fast-food giant KFC entered the Kenyan market in 2011 Gavin Bell was hired to oversee the setup of the KFC franchisee, but he is stepping aside at the end of this month to go back to rebuild his brand Kengeles Bar and Restaurant, a chain that has fallen from nine outlets to just one. He had built Kengeles brands 16 years ago. However, a change of model led to massive losses which nearly collapsed the business. He now hopes to take the lessons he has acquired running KFC (Mulupi, 2014).

Kengeles was at the height of success when owner Bell decided to franchise his nine restaurants and hired a manager to oversee them. Bell stated that "franchising can be a good business model when done properly but running one's own local business and applying lessons from international franchise systems to professionalise your brand can be effective". Bell cites the case of Kenya's leading coffee chain Java House, the owners run it themselves by copying the principles of a franchise (Mulupi, 2014).

1.1 Problem Statement

Over the recent years there has been an upsurge of fast food franchises setting shop in Nairobi with the aim of bringing international food quality standards (Wanja, 2015). African franchisees are required to maintain adequate supplies of the products that fuel their businesses and those products must also meet the franchisor's particular quality standards. For example, KFC and other fast food brands require adequate supplies of chicken that meet their standards. This may be difficult in certain African countries where the supply of chickens from local chicken farmers fails to meet the franchisor's criteria for not only food safety and security but also quality and quantity (Tyre & Han, 2015).

International chains are still reluctant to franchise, because of the difficulties in maintaining brand standards when they are not in management control. The brand owners can only guarantee standards if they are in control of the management, and the funds are available from the owner to renew or renovate and as when required. The experience should be the same; they not only have to match quality with their other stores but with the other wild wide outlets as well (Samanani, 2013). Despite these issues, more franchised restaurants are rapidly coming up mostly in Nairobi city and most recently in the major cities and performing very well despite the increasing competition.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does reliability on hospitality products and services affect consumption in franchised restaurants in Nairobi Central Business Kenya?
2. To what extent does responsiveness on hospitality products and services affect consumption in franchised restaurants in Nairobi Central Business Kenya?
3. To what extent does tangibility on branding of hospitality products and services affect consumption in franchised restaurants in Nairobi Central Business Kenya?
4. To what extent does assurance on service quality on hospitality products and services affect consumption in franchised restaurants in Nairobi Central Business Kenya?

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Theory of Servqual Model.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) developed service quality model which is named as servqual model. The model has five factors which form the acronym RATER they are; reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. This theory stresses on customer retention, if the quality standards are kept and observed then the customers will not go to the next competitor.

The service quality models assume that customers come into a service encounter with a prior expectation, this expectation is then matched with the actual service experience to determine the service quality of that organisation. Salvador et al. (2006) suggested that price should include value, benefit and cost, and that customer received value when the benefit from a product or service is more than the cost of buying it.

2.1.1 Reliability

This is ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. An employee is supposed to do what he says he's going to do when he said he was going to do it. This assists in customer retention. When an outlet is consistent in the quality of its products and services, there will be repeat customers. A restaurant may use this variable and make its services standout from other outlets; this will make customers visit that particular restaurant to enjoy that service. A customer will pay for good service irrespective of the quality of products, but when good products and excellent service are combined better. This can be achieved by training and retraining the staff on proper customer service, etiquette and delivery.

2.1.2 Assurance

This is knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Service providers are expected to be the experts of the service they're delivering. It's important to communicate that expertise to customers. If a service provider is highly skilled, but customers don't see that, their confidence in that provider will be lower. And their assessment of that provider's service quality will be lower. Service providers must communicate their expertise and competencies before they do the work. This can be done in ways that are repeatedly seen by customers, like display industry certifications on patches, badges or buttons worn by employees, include certification logos on emails, letters & reports, put certifications into posters, newsletters & handouts. By communicating competencies, providers can help manage customer expectations. And influence their service quality assessment in advance (Arlen, 2008).

2.1.3 Tangibles
This is appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials. The restaurant should not concentrate too much on appearances and fail on other factors (Arlen, 2008). This will include the décor, furniture and all that makes a room look and feel great. Customers may go to an outlet simply because it feels good to sit and be served there. The restaurant can provide a product or service their rivals cannot and has power over buyers because they cannot get the same thing from anyone else.

Franchises have products of the same quality, quantity, portion and taste etc. in all similar outlets. The product and service should be the same locally and globally. This can be achieved by coming up with a special food item that the restaurant associated with. It may be a special tasting chicken with a secret recipe or the way they present their food, packaging etc. When Steers came into the Kenyan market, it was known for including a toy with every child pack of food and that attracted many children.

2.1.4 Empathy
This is caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers. Services can be performed completely to specifications, yet customers may not feel employees care about them during delivery. And this hurts customers' assessments of providers' service quality. Service delivery can be as important as how it was done. Employees should be trained how to interact with customers, their end-users. Even a brief session during initial orientation helps anything to help them understand their impact on customers' assessment of service quality (Arlen, 2008). A simple greeting or 'how was your meal' makes the customer happy.

2.1.5 Responsiveness
This is willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. Respond quickly, promptly, rapidly, immediately, instantly. Its important customers feel providers are responsive to their requests not just emergencies, but everyday responses too (Arlen, 2008). The food might not be what the customer ordered and a quick response is very welcome. Informing customers why their meal is taking longer than usual and answering their queries promptly will make customers feel they are important.

2.3 Research variables
The independent variables were reliability on products quality, quantity and price; Tangibility on branding of quality, portion size, taste and presentation; Responsiveness and assurance on excellent service, efficient and speed in service delivery. The dependent variable was competitive advantage whether success of failure.

3.0 Research methodology
The researcher adopted the descriptive research design because the major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present (Kothari & Garg, 2014). The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative research method to determine relationships. The study was conducted in the Nairobi Central Business District (NCBD). The study targeted all the 15 Managers of the 15 restaurants in the Nairobi CBD, the average number of customers were 2,050 for foreign and 1,150 for local franchises.

The study adopted a census sampling method on the restaurants as they were not many in the NCBD. All Managers were respondents because they were a small number in the CBD but 325 customers were selected from the 3,250 by systematic random sampling. The study adopted questionnaires and interview guides as instruments. The respondents were asked to indicate the factors that were important in their opinion along a likert scale

4.0 Data Analysis
Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies, percentages; mean scores, and standard deviation. The results have been presented in table form. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Data respondents were summarized using frequencies and percentages determined mean scores were used to analyze the data. Standard deviation was used to determine whether there were variations in responses of the restaurants being studied.

5.0 Findings and Conclusions of the study
The study sought to establish the information on the respondents employed in the study with regards to the gender, age, the level of education of both the customers and the managers and duration of work in that industry, the number of

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years the restaurant has been operational in Kenya and the number of branches they have in the country.

The results indicate that 62% of the restaurant managers were male while 38% of the restaurant managers were female. The findings therefore indicate that majority of the managers in franchised Restaurants in Nairobi Kenya are male. They also suggest that, 57.54% of the restaurants customers were females while 42.46% of the restaurants customers were males. The findings therefore indicate that majority of the customers in franchised Restaurants in Nairobi Kenya are female.

On age category of managers, the research found that 25% were between the ages of 25 to 35 years, 50% were aged 36-45 years and 25% were aged 45 years and above. From these findings, most of the Managers of restaurants Kenya belong to an age category of 36-45 years. This is the most active age group hence they are actively involved in management. On age category of customers, the research found that 38.77% were between the ages of 18 to 25 years, 16.62% were aged 25-30 years and 32.92% were aged 30-45 years and 11.69% were aged 35-40 years and above. From these findings, most of the customers of franchised Restaurants in Nairobi Kenya belong to an age category of 18-25 years.

The study findings indicate that 7.975% of the managers are form four leavers, 1.53 form six leavers, 7.055% certificate, 63.80% diploma, 12.58% Higher National Diploma, while 4.1% are university graduates and 3.067% represent other levels of education. Most of the Managers are diploma and higher national diploma holders. On the Academic background of Customers, the study findings indicate that 26.15% of the customers are form four leavers, 8% form six leavers 22.46% certificate, 32.31% university graduates, 4.308% Higher National Diploma, while 4% are diplomas and 2.769% represent other levels of education. Most of the customers are university graduates and form four leavers,

On working experience, the findings suggest that 2.5% of the managers have run the business for less than 2 years, while majority of the managers (50%) have run the business for 3-5 years, 25% had worked for a period of 6-8 years while only 12.5% had worked for more than 10 years. The findings therefore indicated that majority of the Managers of franchised Restaurants in Nairobi Central Business District had worked for a considerable period of time and thus were familiar with strategies adopted by restaurants industries in Kenya.

On the duration the restaurant been in operation, results indicate that 37.5% of the restaurants have been in the industry between 0-2 years, 37.5% for 3-5 years, and (25%) had been operational for between 6-8 years. The findings therefore indicated that majority of the Managers of franchised Restaurants in Nairobi Central Business District in Kenya had worked for restaurants that have been in existence in the industry for a considerable period of time.

The study sought to establish the extent to which the adoption of reliability on products as a competitive strategy affects the performance of the franchised restaurant in Nairobi Central Business District.

Table 5.1: Reliability on Products

Reliability on Products	Mean	Standard deviation
The price is better	2.973446	1.276630
The portion size is better	2.773844	1.418964
The food is of good quality	2.873846	1.378660
It's convenient	2.893213	1.245866
It Provides something unique that is valuable to clients beyond simply offering a low price	2.573549	1.478361

From the table above, the price is better, the food is of good quality and is convenient were agreed to a great extent with a mean of 2.973446, 2.873846 and 2.873846 respectively and a standard deviation of 1.276630, 1.378660 and 1.245866 respectively. The portion size is better and it provides something unique that is valuable to clients beyond simply offering a low price, were agreed to a very great extent as factors affecting adoption of reliability of products as a competitive strategy in the restaurant industry in Nairobi Central Business District in Kenya.

Table 5.2: Extent to which responsiveness to service is adopted as a competitive strategy

SERVICE DELIVERY	Mean	Standard deviation
How would you rate the service in this restaurant?	3.427692	1.439816
Meets the needs of different clientele	3.325642	1.711432
How would you rate the waiting time after placing the order?	3.437671	1.392241

Fast response to customer needs	3.528629	1.217739
The capability to develop new products	3.246781	1.864322
The capabilities and skill of the staff to deliver customized service to clients	3.842153	1.773911

From the descriptive statistics presented in the above table, service in the restaurants was agreed to a great extent as a success in responsiveness as a competitive advantage strategy with a mean of 3.427692 and a standard deviation of 1.439816, Meeting the needs of the clientele was agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 3.325642 and a standard deviation of 1.711432. Waiting time after placing the order was agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 3.437671 and a standard deviation of 1.392241. Fast response to customer needs was agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 3.528629 and a standard deviation of 1.217739, Capability to develop new products was agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 3.246781 and a standard deviation of 1.864322 and finally Capability of the staffs and skills to deliver customized services to clients was agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 3.842153 and a standard deviation of 1.773911.

Table 5.3: Extent to which responsiveness to service is adopted as a competitive strategy

Extent	Frequency	Percentage
Highly Agree	48	17.8
Moderately Agree	63	26.1
Agree	84	37.8
Strongly Disagree	38	12.2
Disagree	31	6.1
Total	260	100.0

It can be seen from the above table that majority of the respondents reported that they agreed that their service delivery was core to business as reported by 37.8% of the respondents, 26.1% reported to have moderately agreed that their service delivery was core to business. On the other hand, 17.8% had highly agreed that their service delivery was core to business, 12.2% had strongly disagreed that their service delivery was core to business and 6.1% had disagreed that their service delivery was core to business.

The study sought to establish the extent to which the restaurants use tangibility on branding as a strategy to gain competitive advantage in the market in relation to quality of the food items, taste of the food items, and portion size of the food item, presentation of the meal as they serve you, customer service as they welcome guests, time taken to be served, the décor and maintaining the required standards of the franchiser. The table below shows the study findings.

Table 5.4: Tangibility on branding as a competitive advantage strategy

BRANDING	Mean	Standard deviation
Quality of the food items	4.3700	2.62145
Taste of the food items	4.4300	2.53448
Portion size of the food item	4.1200	2.83242
Presentation of the meal as they serve you	4.2200	2.78343
Customer service in welcoming guests	4.5400	2.23442
Time taken to be served	4.6200	2.12524
The décor	4.5300	2.30741
Maintaining the required standards of the franchiser	4.5100	2.30746

The results indicate that the quality of the food items, taste of the food items and maintaining the required standards of the franchiser were agreed to a great extent with a mean of 4.3700, 4.4300 and 4.5100 and a standard deviation of 2.62145, 2.53448, and 2.30746 respectively. Portion size of the food item and presentation of the meal as they serve you were agreed to a moderate extent with a mean of 4.1200, 4.2200 and a standard deviation of 2.83242, 2.78343 respectively. Customer service as they welcome guests, time taken to be served, and the décor were agreed to a very great extent with a mean of 4.5400, 4.6200 and 4.5300 and a standard deviation of 2.23442, 2.12524 and 2.30741 respectively.

Table 5.5: Assurance on service quality used to achieve competitive advantage

Item	Mean	Standard deviation
The country allows Importation of raw material	4.5	0.50637
The franchiser provides the management support needed to run the business	4.125	0.60712
raw materials available locally	4.375	0.70484

From the descriptive statistics presented in table above shows that the raw materials used in the restaurants are available locally with a mean of 4.3750 and a standard deviation of .70484. The country allows the importation of raw materials was agreed to a large extent with a mean of 4.5000 and a standard deviation of .50637. Moreover, the franchiser provides the management support needed to run the business was also agreed to a great extent with a mean of 4.1250 and a standard deviation of .60712.

Figure 5.1: P-P Plot for Customer Advantage

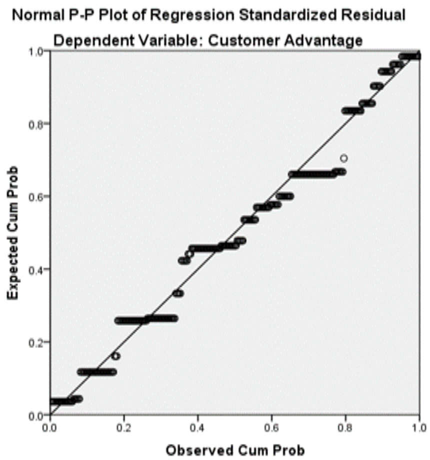

Table 5.6: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	977.772	4	244.443	1872.272	.000b
Residual	41.779	320	.131		
Total	1019.551	324			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Advantage
b. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability on Products, Responsiveness on Service, Tangibility on Branding, Assurance on Service Quality

Table 5.6 above shows the Analysis Variance. In reference to significance level, it is clear that the values are way too low hence less than critical value set during experiment.
The scenario above then implies that the effects are significant.

Table 5.7:Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.979a	.959	.959	.36133	.959	1872272	4	320	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reliability on Products , Responsiveness on Service , Tangibility on Branding , Assurance on Service Quality
b. Dependent Variable: Customer Advantage

Autocorrelation and multi co-linearity were also tested. Autocorrelation is a situation in which the error terms are correlated. If it is violated, the estimates remain biased. In the study, auto correlation was tested using Durbin Watson (D) statistics. A Durbin Watson statistic which is closer to 2 depicts absence of auto correlation. The "D" statistics computed for the relationship between Customer Advantage and the four objectives of the study. The statistics were close to 2 thus, suggesting absence of auto correlation. Multicollinearity was also tested using the Variance of Inflation Factors (VIFs) corresponding to various regression models. A part from the moderated regression model with VIFs ranging from 5.822 to 20.556, all the other models had VIFs less than 10, suggesting absence of multicollinearity. The high VIFs in the moderated regression model are expected because of the product of the moderator variable and the independent variable. The researcher therefore, adopted a "do nothing" approach.

5.1 Recommendations

The research was conducted on a sample of 325 respondents from the selected restaurants to which questionnaires were administered. The study targeted restaurants in the Central Business District in Nairobi Kenya. The study main objective was to investigate on competitive strategies adopted by franchised restaurant businesses in Kenya.

The study shows that in franchised restaurant businesses in Kenya where Reliability on Products, provide very strong competition there was increased marketing. Other factors that are critical in franchised restaurant businesses in Kenya include Responsiveness on Service, Tangibility on Branding, and Assurance on Service Quality. It was established that competitive advantages was in place. These strategies were to ensure the franchised restaurants in Nairobi CBD were able to give quality output, increased quantity production, customers' satisfaction and amount of sales brought, thus the customer advantage in the whole process.

The franchised restaurants in the county are set to grow with many people buying from them because of accessibility. With the few barriers to entry, more players are set to join the industry and thus those who have formulated adequate strategies are the ones who will survive the cut throat competition.

One of the strategies that is set to determine the winners and losers in the industry is price. The price while not too low so that the customers can doubt the quality of the product must be affordable to the target market. The products must be of quality which can survive the test of time. In this case those who want to make a quick buck by compromising quality are set to lose since customers will be in a position to blacklist them and sooner or later they will run out of business.

Customer service is also very important for the survival of a restaurant business in Nairobi CBD. This includes getting recommendations from customers for what they want; ensure that they supply customers with quick service and also the ability to provide after sale service. This is important because when customers are treated well they feel appreciated and will be in a position to come back again as well as bring other customers along.

5.3 Further study

To ensure that comprehensive strategies that are in use in the franchised restaurants, other studies should be done in other sectors such as the fast food restaurants. This will ensure the relevant authorities will be in a position to take the relevant action on the restaurant industry based on this and those other findings.

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