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THE EFFECT OF MARKETING MIX STRATEGY ON SALES PERFORMANCE OF BREWERY FACTORIES IN ETHIOPIA: DOES COMPETITIVE INTENSITY MODERATES THE RELATIONSHIP?

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Abstract: *The aim of the study was to examine the effect of marketing mix strategy on sales performance and explain how competitive intensity moderates the relationship in the Ethiopian beer manufacturing industry. We measured marketing mix strategy in terms of the beer companies' product, pricing, distribution, and promotion strategies. The study followed a quantitative survey approach. A total of 232 questionnaires were distributed to randomly selected employees in two beer companies (i.e. Dashen and Habesha Beer) and 220 usable questionnaires were used for analysis. The correlation and regression analysis revealed that marketing mix strategies (i.e. product, pricing, distribution, and promotion strategies) have a positive and significant effect on the sales performance of companies in the Ethiopian beer industry. In addition, we found out that competitive intensity significantly moderates the effect of marketing mix strategies on sales performance. This implies that designing and implementing sound marketing strategies can provide beer manufacturing businesses with a competitive advantage in an environment where the competitive intensity is high. Based on this, we suggested that beer companies should have sound marketing strategies in order to achieve success in the Ethiopian beer industry where the competition is becoming intense.*

Keywords: *Marketing, Strategy, Marketing Strategy, Competition, competitive Intensity, Sales Performance, Beer Industry, Ethiopia*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Marketing strategy is a long-term, forward-looking approach and an overall game plan of any organization or any business with the fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage by understanding the needs and wants of customers (Baker & Hart, 2008). Strategic marketing management implements a company's mission through focused processes to get the most out of the existing marketing plan. Strategic marketing management help discovers marketing opportunities and provides a framework to translate the plan of exploiting opportunities into practice (Marty, 2017).

Product, price, place, and promotion are marketing mix strategies in which the organizations used to react on the market and internal forces in order to achieve their objectives (Lee & Kotler 2015). According to the study conducted on the performance of small-scale businesses in Nigeria, a marketing strategy helps the organizations to provide quality products to the customers at an affordable price, effective distribution, and value-adding communication programs (Mustapha, 2017). The marketing strategy also contributes to the attainment of sustainable competitive strategy through optimal utilization of resources and increasing market share (Amin, 2021; Ghouri, Khan et al., 2011).

The present study aimed at investigating the effect of marketing mix strategy on the sales performance of beer manufacturing companies in Ethiopia. The study is unique among similar prior studies in many ways. For example, the recent study by Maseresha (2020) on the relationship between marketing mix strategies and sales performance in the Beer industry was a case study where the sample did not represent the population. In addition, the study did not examine the influence of contextual issues like competitive intensity on the relationship between strategies and sales performance.

Hence, unlike the past studies, the present study collects data from the two giant beer companies (i.e. Dashen & Habesha

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Beer) to examine the influence of marketing strategies on sales performance. Based on this, the study addressed the following five basic research questions: 1) What is the effect of product strategy on the sales performance of brewery factories? 2) What is the effect of pricing strategy on the sales performance of brewery factories? 3) What is the effect of promotional strategies on the sales performance of brewery factories? 4) What is the effect of place/distribution strategy on the sales performance of Brewery factories? 5) To what extent does competitive intensity moderate the relationship between marketing mix strategy and sales performance?

Dashen Brewery Ltd (Dashen), currently, the largest brewery company in Ethiopia. It has two branches which are located in Gonder and North Shewa. The Gonder brewery was first built in 1996 and is located 700 km far from Addis Ababa in north–west Ethiopia. And the second factory was established at Debrebrehan in 2012. It has a total of 12 departments and 281 employers in the Debrebrehan factories. It is the only brewery factory in Ethiopia which fulfills the GMP specification of German purity law.

Habesha Brewery Ltd (Habesha) was established in 2014 in Debrebrehan town. From this, there is no other branch of this factory in Ethiopia. It has a total of 12 departments but my respondents are from nine departments and 224 employers in the Debrebrehan factories. The reason for selecting this study was the presence of these two competitive factories in the area of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

According to Porter's (1985) theory, firms can achieve a competitive advantage by creating superior values for customers. Marketing strategies and programs are capabilities that create superior value for customers because they provide reliable bases for resource configuration and utilization (Jeng & Pak, 2016). The present study also takes the view that marketing strategies (i.e. product, pricing, distribution, and promotion strategy) are capabilities used to configure resources and design sound marketing programs; and sound marketing programs ultimately determine financial performance and competitiveness of businesses.

Empirical Review

Product Strategy and Sales Performance

Kotler and Armstrong (2013) noted that a product is anything that can be offered to a market for consideration, acquisition, usage, or consumption in order to meet a customer's want or need. Ferrell (2015) asserts that product is a marketing mix strategy in which organizations offers consumers symbolic and experiential attributes to differentiate products from competitors. Gbolagade, Adesol and Oyewale (2013) established that there was a significant influence between product and business performance. They revealed that the product has an influence on customer loyalty hence an increase in performance.

The different attributes of a product such as a package and brand have a significant effect on customers' preferences. A product package is an attribute of a product which is used for protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use (Yang & Raghubir, 2005; Simmonds & Spence, 2019). Similarly, according to Orth et al., (2004), beer brands have functional, value for money, social, and negative and positive emotional benefits. The findings of such studies imply that sales of beer products can be influenced by the quality of the product itself as well as packaging, brands, and other attributes.

Ha1: Product strategy positively and significantly affects the sales performance of beer manufacturers in Ethiopia.

Price Mix Strategy and Sales Performance

According to Kotler (2015), price is the amount of money that the firm charges for its activities of producing and delivering a product. According to Jain (2004), pricing is the process of determining what customers should pay for a product given the costs of production, competitive situations, and other factors. According to Kotler (2015), companies use pricing strategies such as; premium pricing, value pricing, penetration pricing, cost plus pricing, competitive pricing, price skimming, going rate pricing, geographical pricing, segmented pricing, product mix pricing, psychological pricing and discriminatory pricing.

Price plays a critical role to ensure the sustainability, profitability, and competitiveness of businesses. The identification and implementation of effective pricing strategies (e.g. premium pricing, value-based pricing, etc.) are needed as consumers of beer products are price sensitive (Heng et al., 2018).

Value-based pricing, i.e. setting prices based on a consumers' perceived value, is a strategy which enhances the sales and profit of businesses (Piercy, Cravens & Lane, 2010). Value-based pricing is product driven and the price is based on perceived product value (Stephan M. Liozu, 2017). The positive contribution of value-based pricing to performance has gotten wider acceptance in pricing literature (e.g. Andreas, 2008).

The other commonly applied pricing strategy, penetration pricing, has a mixed effect (i.e. positive and negative) on

the performance of businesses (Harmon & Raffo, 2007). The strategy positively contributes to competitive advantage through increasing sales volume and market share. On the negative side, the reducing price might affect brand image.

Noble (2019) reveals that a cost-plus pricing strategy does not affect sales performance of consumable goods. This is because the relationship between cost-plus pricing strategy and sales performance of consumable goods has been found to be negative at –0.656 which signifies that, the more an organization or entrepreneur depends on this pricing strategy, the lesser the chances of high sales of consumer goods and vice versa. This is in agreement with the findings of Mohsen and Sahar (2015), which say that a cost-inclusive pricing strategy does not affect the performance of SMEs neither does it give leverage over competitors. They also found that the mark-up pricing strategy has no influence on sales performance of consumable goods.

Victor (2014) also uncovered among others that, mark-up and skimming pricing strategy, has no positive effect on sales of export products. Testing a hypothesis on this particular subject, the study found that, competitors-oriented pricing strategy influence sales performance of consumable goods. The extent of the relationship between competitors-oriented pricing strategy and sales performance was found to be positive at 0.792 which implies that, a more dependence on this pricing strategy would result in higher sales of consumable goods. This is in consonance with the study of Kevin et al. (2017), who found out that competitors' line price setting is a significant predictor of organizations sales performance.

Ha2: Pricing strategy has a significant positive effect on the sales performance of beer manufacturers.

The Relationship between Promotion Strategy and Sales Performance

Promotion refers to the activities of firms to communicate and promote their products and services (Brrassington & Pettitt, 2010; Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). Organizations apply combinations of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing while communicating their products to customers (Kotler, 2015).

A promotion mix, a strategic blend of many promotional techniques, enhances sales and profit (Kamba, 2010). Aliata, Odondo, Aila, Ojera, Abong and Odera (2012) found out that promotion strategy has a positive effect on performance. Sales promotion is a strategy that is used by companies to promote sales, usage or trial of a product or service. Sales promotion is providing incentives to consumers, channel partners, and/or sales people. It can be used in combination with other communication techniques to stimulate immediate sales and achieve a competitive advantage.

According to Njawa (2015), advertising is a non-personal paid form of "communication technique aimed at informing, reminding and persuading customers to purchase a product. Advertising, unlike sales promotion, has a long-term effect on behaviours of customers. In other words, advertising positively influence customers to make a decision and improve sales performance.

Ha3: Promotion strategy has a significant positive effect on the sales performance of beer manufacturers in Ethiopia.

Distribution Strategy and Sales Performance

Distribution is the process of making the product or service available for consumption. It involves such activities as physical movement, warehousing, ownership of the product, presale transaction, post-sale activities; order processing, credit and collections; and other different types of support activities (Gorchels et al., 2014).

The effect of distribution on business performance is widely acknowledged in the marketing literature. For example, Afzal (2009) and Nashwan (2015) confirmed that standardizing distribution and other marketing mix elements results in an increase in sales volume or market share.

Study conducted by Nguyen, McCracken, Casavant and Jessup (2011) on the distribution attributes of location, ownership, and profitability revealed that ownership and geographic location have a significant influence on the profitability of the log trucking firm under study.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2013), retailers are very close to customers in order to make the product or service conveniently available. If retailers are far away from customers, it reduces the frequency of customers visiting a store or retail shop. In addition to proximity, the consumer purchase decision is influenced by the store design (Wang, 2014).

Ha4: Distribution strategy has a significant positive effect on the sales performance of beer manufacturers in Ethiopia.

Competitive Intensity as a Moderating Variable

As it is repeatedly indicated above the objective of the current study is to examine the effect of marketing mix strategies on the sales performance of the two breweries factory in Deberberhan. There are moderating factors between marketing strategy and marketing performance, which are important to acknowledging and fully understanding the context of the topic of this study. The effect of marketing mix strategies on sales performance is influenced by those moderating factors. Based on previous research, it seems that there are various factors between marketing strategy and market performance, which also moderate the outcome

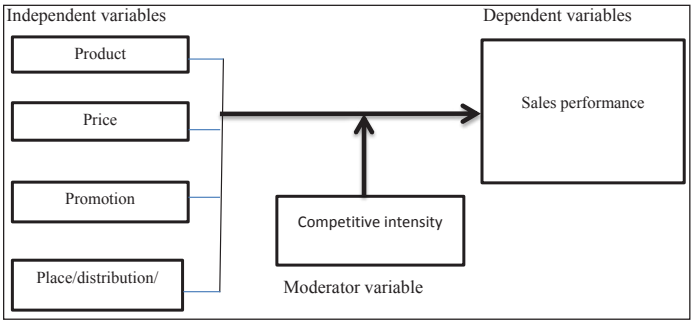
whether the marketing interface has a positive effect on sales performance.

Rouziès et al. (2005) presented the three context variables and Homburg, Jensen and Krohmer (2008) included them in their conceptualization. These were internal change, environmental dynamism and industry. Also, other moderating factors have been discussed in the literature including at least customers, competitors and company (Rouziès et al., 2005). Also, more specific moderating factors are suggested. These include environmental complexity, customer sophistication, competitive structure, and company acquisition propensity (Rouzies et al., 2005).

Literature on the subject (Rouziès et al., 2005; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990) reveals that competitors and specifically the competitive intensity are supposed to have a moderating influence between the marketing strategy and marketing performance more than any factors mentioned above. The justification for this is that when the competitive intensity is high, the impact of the Marketing Strategy on Marketing performance is more significant (Rouziès et al., 2005). That is, competitive intensity increases the need for marketing mix strategies to succeed in improving the sales performance of a firm/business. This is argued so because when there is high competition, a company has to serve its customers even better and deliver superior value to them (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), which is possible only through having good marketing mix strategies. As such the current study will make effort to examine the moderating role of competitive intensity in the effort to find out the effect of marketing mix strategies on sales performance.

Ha5: Competitive intensity has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between marketing mix strategy and sales performance.

Conceptual Framework



Source: Porter (1985); Jaworski and Kohli (1990); and Wahyuntari, Sutarma and Antara (2020).

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The present study applies the quantitative research approach in order to examine the effect of marketing mix strategies on sales performances and how competitive intensity moderates the relationship.

Research Design

The study employed descriptive and explanatory research designs. First, descriptive statistical techniques such as number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were applied to describe the demographic profile of respondents and respondent's perceptions of study variables. Second, the explanatory design was used to explain the relationship between marketing mix elements (i.e. the dependent variable) and sales performance (i.e. dependent variable).

Data Sources and Data Collection Instrument

Since the aim of the study was to investigate the association between marketing mix elements and sales performance, primary data were collected from employees of beer companies using a questionnaire. While preparing the questionnaire, measurement items were taken from strategic marketing literature. Items related to marketing mix elements and sales performance were taken from Gituma (2017); and items used to measure competitive intensity were adopted from Andrevski et al. (2014). The questionnaire was designed in a Likert format and it contains closed-ended five-point Likert scale questions where the response ranges between "Strongly Disagree" = 1 to "Strongly Agree" = 5 and it was administered by well-trained and experienced enumerators. Employees of Dashen and Habesha brewery factories were taken to serve as the main source of primary data.

Population and Sampling Procedure

Dashen and Habesha brewery factories, located around Debre Berhan town, were considered in the study. The two manufacturers were selected as targets of the study because the two companies have wider distribution coverage and growing market share. In addition, of the six major beer manufacturers in Ethiopia, Dashen and Habesha beer companies are investing aggressively on expansion projects given the rising demands of consumers for these two brands. The total number of employees in the two factories

is determined to be 505 employees. The total number of employees in each department and the sample allocation are presented in Table 1.

Of the total 505 employees in the two companies, the study involves a sample size of 232 respondents. The size was determined using Yamane (1967) sample size determination formula. Accordingly, assuming 95% confidence level, the sample size was determined as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2},$$

Where n = the sample size; N = the population size; 1 = probability of the event occurring; and e = the level of precision (5%)

$$n = \frac{505}{1 + 505(0.05)^2}$$

n = 223.

Then, the sample was distributed proportionately to different departments (strata) and simple random sampling (lottery method) was used to select actual respondents from each department. The allocation of sample to different departments is presented as follows:

Table 1: Sample Size of Each Department

Sr. No.	Department	Dashen Brewery		Habesha Brewery	
1.	Brewing	30	13	36	16
2.	Engineering	57	25	49	22
3.	Finance	15	7	4	2
4.	Human resource	17	8	1	0
5.	Packaging	85	38	70	30
6.	Production general	3	1	2	1
7.	Quality	26	11	0	0
8.	Sales	13	6	8	4
9.	Souring and supply	11	5	18	8
10.	Trade marketing	1	0	4	2
11.	Internal auditor	1	0	0	0
12.	Warehousing	22	10	32	14
	Total	281	124	224	99

Source: Authors' computation based on the information from the two companies.

Data Analysis

The study applied descriptive analysis to describe the variables of interest; and inferential statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis using the econometrics approach, to explain the relationships between marketing strategies and sales performance.

Model Specification

We developed the regression equation around two sets of variables: dependent variables (sales performance) and independent variables (marketing mix strategies). The general formula for a multiple linear regression models of p-explanatory variables is defined to be

$Y = \beta0 + \beta1X1 + \beta2X2 + \beta3X3 + \beta4\ X4 + e$ (Model 1),

$Y = \beta0 + \beta5MMS + e$ (Model 2),

$Y = \beta0 + \beta5MMS + \beta6CI + e$ (Model 3),

$Y = \beta0 + \beta5MMS + \beta7MMS*CI + e$ (Model 4),

where: Y = firm performance,

β0 = Constant,

βi = Regression coefficient,

XiM = Product term/ interaction term of the moderating variable, and

e = disturbance term.

Validity and Reliability of Measures

The content validity was ensured through a thorough review of past related studies, getting feedback from relevant academics and experienced managers in the beer industry, and conducting a pilot survey. The reliability of measures, and the consistency of the scores overtime, was checked using Cronbach's α coefficient.

Ethical Consideration

Primarily, we disclose the legitimacy of the research purpose to the respondents in order to gain their consent. Next, we excluded the possible issues that would possible be a cause for pressure, anxiety, or stress in submitting answers or detailed responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Respondent Profile

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of respondents.

Table 2: Tabulation of Demographic Profile

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cum.
Male	81	36.82	36.82
Female	139	63.18	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	
Age			
21–25	20	9.09	9.09
26–30	107	48.64	57.73
31–35	57	25.91	83.64
36–39	26	11.82	95.45
>=40	10	4.55	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	
Education			
Certificate	38	17.27	17.27
Diploma	137	62.27	79.55
BA/BSc degree	45	20.45	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	
Tabulation of Experience			
<1 year	28	12.73	12.73
2–5 year	129	58.64	71.36
6–10 year	48	21.82	93.18
>11 years	15	6.82	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	
Marital Status			
Single	103	46.82	46.82
Married	101	45.91	92.73
Widowed	10	4.55	97.27
Divorced	6	2.73	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	
Department			
Brewing	29	13.18	13.18
Engineering	47	21.36	34.55
Finance	9	4.09	38.64
Human resource	8	3.64	42.27
Packaging	72	32.73	75.00
Production general	2	0.91	75.91
Quality	11	5.00	80.91
Sales	6	2.73	83.64
Souring and supply	13	5.91	89.55
trade marketing	2	0.91	90.45
Warehousing	21	9.55	100.00
Total	**220**	**100.00**	

Source: Authors computation based on survey data, 2021.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of the independent, moderating, and dependent variables.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Items	Mean	Standard Dev.
Product	2.99	0.66
Price	2.72	0.75
Place	2.79	0.34
Promotion	2.61	0.73
Competitive intensity	2.88	0.55
Sales performance	3.15	0.67

Product strategy, the first marketing strategy, was measured using six product attributes or dimensions and the companies are rated lower with Mean = 2.99, SD = 0.66. This implies that the strategies of the case companies gave little attention to the above-mentioned product attributes. Similarly, price strategy, the second marketing strategy, scored lower with Mean = 2.72, SD = 0.75 implying that price decisions are not as per market requirements. The third strategy, the promotion strategy, has the lowest score with Mean = 2.61, SD = 0.73 which indicates that promotional activities of beer companies cannot create informational values for customers. Finally, the distribution strategy scored lower with mean = 2.79, SD = 0.34 where the firm creates unsatisfactory utilities through its distribution strategy.

Descriptive results of the competitive intensity items revealed that competition in the Ethiopian beer industry is less competitive with a mean value of 2.88 and SD = 0.55. The implication is that the marketing strategies of beer companies in Ethiopia do not give a unique competitive position.

Inferential Analysis

Test of Statistical Assumptions

Assessment of Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity was checked using VIF tests and the Tolerance (TOL). The decision rule for the VIF tests and Tolerance is a variable whose VIF greater than 10 or TOL value less than 0.1 shows the possible existence of multicollinearity problem (Hair et al., 2013). Accordingly, in this study, the VIF value is less than 10 and the Tolerance value is greater than 0.1.

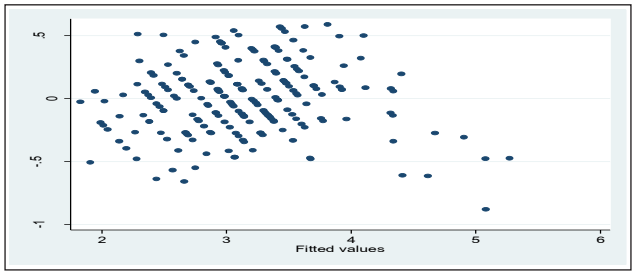
Table 4: Variance Inflation Factor

	VIF	1/VIF
Product	3.76	0.265723
Promotion	3.57	0.27979
Price	1.7	0.589747
Place	1.51	0.660144
Mean VIF	2.64	.

Source: authors' computation based on survey data, 2021.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Heteroscedasticity tests whether the variance of the error term or the residual is constant or not. Hence, Heteroscedasticity was checked using the graphic method as follows:

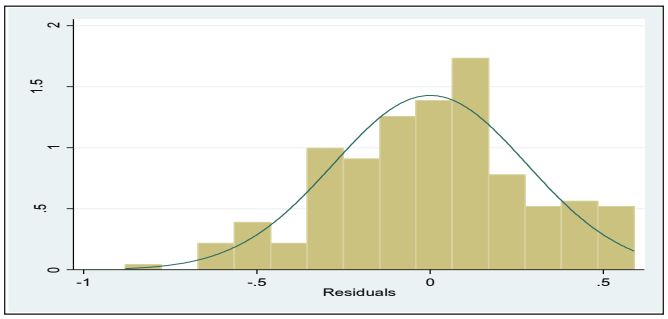


Source: Authors' computation based on survey data, 2021.

Fig. 2: Heteroscedasticity Test

Normality Test

Normality examines the distribution of scores in a given data set. Visual inspection of the distribution may be used for assessing normality.



Source: Survey data, 2021.

Fig. 3: Normality Test

Linearity Test

Linearity test aims to determine the relationship between the independent variables (i.e. product, price, place, and promotion strategies) and dependent variable (i.e. sales performance). The interpretation is that the predictor variables in the regression have a straight-line relationship with the outcome variable.

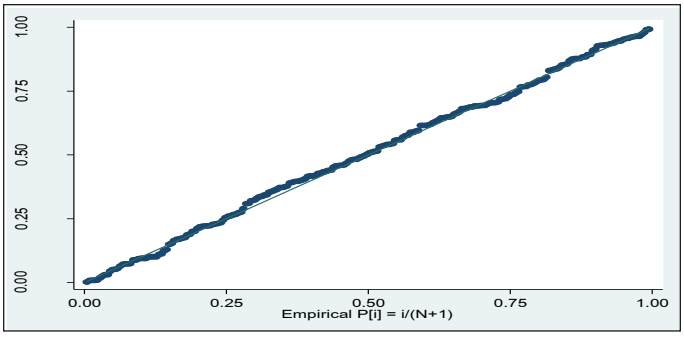


Fig. 4: Linearity Test

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted following McDaniel and Gates (2006) criteria where correlation coefficient values 0.10–0.29, 0.30–0.49, and > 0.5 are interpreted as poor, moderate, and strong, respectively. As it is indicated in Table 5, the independent variables (i.e, product, price, promotion, and place) have a significant positive correlation with dependent variable (i.e. sales performance) with correlation coefficient values of 0.792, 0.541, 0.792 and 0.347, respectively.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Correlations					
	Sales Performance	Product	Price	Promotion	Place
Sales performance	1	0.792**	0.541**	0.792**	0.374**
Product	0.792**	1	0.347**	0.845**	0.060
Price	0.541**	0.347**	1	0.250**	0.558**
Promotion	0.792**	0.845**	0.250**	1	–0.022
Place	0.374**	0.060	0.558**	–0.022	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Regression Analysis

To examine the effect of the marketing mix strategy on sales performance, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression analysis also shows how much variation exists among variables. The study tested the entire five hypotheses using multiple regression analysis, and the result was interpreted according to the values of t, R^2, and F-values at 95% of the level of significance.

Model Summary

Table 6: Regression Model Summary

Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.908[a]	0.825	0.821	0.2.817

[a]Predictors: (Constant), place, promo, price, prod.

Source: Authors computation based on survey data, 2021.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

ANOVA is used to analyse the differences among group means in a sample. In the ANOVA Table 7, *F*-value (F 4, 215) = 252.915 p = 0.000) was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. This indicates that the marketing mix elements have a statistically significant effect on sales performance. Therefore, the regression model is suitable for explaining the effect of the marketing mix strategy on the sales performance.

Table 7: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	80.334	4	20.084	252.915	0.000[b]
	Residual	17.073	215	0.079		
	Total	97.407	219			

Source: authors computation based on survey data, 2021.

a. Dependent Variable: saleper.

b. Predictors: (Constant), place, promo, price, prod.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients[a]						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Standard Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	–0.874	0.184		–4.740	0.000
	Prod	0.282	0.056	0.278	5.018	0.000
	Price	0.139	0.033	0.156	4.190	0.000
	Promo	0.480	0.049	0.524	9.709	0.000
	Place	0.553	0.069	0.282	8.016	0.000

Source: Authors' computation based on survey data, 2021.

[a]Dependent Variable: saleper.

In terms of the regression model specified in chapter three, the result in Table 8 can be given as

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3\,X3 + \beta 4X4 + e.$$

Model, (1)

where Y*: the dependent variable (sales performance);* β0: The regression constant*;* β1, β2, β3 and β4 = the *regression coefficients; X1 = product factor, X2 = price factor, X3 = promotion factor, X4 = place/distribution factor, and e = disturbance term.*

The regression result can be represented as

$$Y = -0.874 + 0.282\,(X1) + 0.139(X2) + 0.480\,X3) + 0.553\,(X4) + e,$$

$$Sales\ performance = -0.874 + 0.282\,(product) + 0.139(price) + 0.480\,(promotion) + 0.553\,(place) + e.$$

Table 8 presented a regression coefficient which shows the relative effect of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. According to George and Mallery (2003), a high beta value (β) and a small *p*-value (< 0.05) indicate the predictor variable has made a statistically significant contribution to the model. On the other hand, a small beta value (β) and a high *p*-value ($p > 0.05$) indicate the predictor variable has little or no significant contribution to the model.

Accordingly, the results show that if all independent variables are constant at the value of zero, sales performance account –0.874. The beta values for product, price, place, and promotion are 0.282, 0.139, 0.480, and 0.553, respectively. It means that an increase in each marketing mix element by 1 unit results in a corresponding increase on sales performance by the respective beta value of the marketing mix element.

Regression Result with Moderating Variable

Previous studies also found that the strength of association between marketing mix elements and sales performance can be affected by order of entry (Bowman & Gatignon, 1996), competitive strategy (Kwasi & Moses, 2008), competitive intensity (Hoque, 2017) and brands and customer choice (Ganesh & Aithal, 2020). Because of the changing competitive landscape in the beverage industry, we expected that competitive intensity, the extent to which companies in the beverage industry exert pressure on one another, could moderate the relationship between marketing mix and sales performance (Hoque, 2017).

For this purpose, three regression results were generated: Model 1 – regression of sales performance on composite marketing mix strategies; Model 2 – regression of sales performance on composite marketing mix strategies and competitive intensity or the moderating variable; and Model 3 – regression of sales performance on composite marketing mix strategies and on the interaction between composite marketing mix strategies and the moderating variable.

Composite Marketing Strategy Scale

The composite marketing mix strategy is calculated as follows:

$$MMS = \frac{W1X1+W2X2+W3X3+W4X4}{4}$$ Model (2),

where MMS is the marketing mix strategy; W is the relative weight; and X is the independent variables.

Table 9: The Composite Interaction Effect

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			R^2	Adj. R^2
		B	Stdard Error	Beta	t	Sig		
1	Constant	–0.451	0.0452		–3.538	0.000	0.790	0.789
	Marketing mix strategy	1.294	0.011	0.889	28.624	0.000		
2	Constant	–0.559	0.119		–4.700	0.000	0.821	0.820
	Marketing mix strategy	0.989	0.065	0.679	15.291	0.000		
	Competitive intensity	0.332	0.054	0.275	6.187	0.000		
3	Constant	0.135	0.186		0.728	0.467	0.806	0.804
	Marketing mix strategy	0.857	0.113	0.589	7.621	0.000		
	Marketing mix strategy *Competitive intensity	0.019	0.005	0.325	4.208	0.000		

Source: Authors computation based on survey data, 2021.

Model 1: Regression of marketing mix strategy on the sales performance (without moderating factor)

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 5MMS + e$$ (model 2)

where: MMS = composite index of product, price, promotion and place; Y = Sales performance; and = the error term.

Model 1 examined the effect of marketing mix strategy on sales performance. The result revealed that the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.790 shows that 79 per cent of industries sales performance variation is explained by marketing mix strategies (see Table 9). The adjusted *R* is found to be 0.789, which means that 78.9 per cent of the variation in sales performance is explained by the change in marketing mix strategies. The ANOVA indicated that the *f* statistics is highly significant at 5 per cent level of significance implying the model has got better goodness of fit.

Model 2: Regression of marketing mix strategy and competitive intensity on sales performance (Moderating variable as a covariate)

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 5MMS + \beta 6CI + e$$ (model 3)

where MMS = composite index of product, price, promotion and place; Y = Sales performance; CI = competitive intensity factor; and B6 = coefficient terms.

To test the moderating effect of competitive intensity on the relationship between marketing mix strategy and sales performance of brewery factories, moderated multiple regression was conducted. That is, in Model 2 sale performances are regressed on marketing mix strategy and competitive intensity. From the result presented in Table 9, it can be seen that the R^2 increased from 79 to 82.1 per cent which implies that competitive intensity enhanced the relationship between marketing mix strategy and the factories sales performance. The adjusted R^2 also observed a significant increase from 78.9 to 82 per cent clearly indicating the competitive intensity increased the predictive power of the model. The *F*-statistics was used to determine the validity of the model, in Table 9 (F = 498.845, *p*-value = 0.000) shows that there is a significant relationship between sales performance and the two variables in the model.

Results in Table 9 show that there was a positive significant relationship between marketing mix strategy and sales performance (β = 0.989 and *p*-value = 0.000). That is, a unit improvement in the implementation of the marketing mix strategy led to an increase in sales performance by 0.989. The result in Table 9 also shows that there is a significant positive relationship between competitive intensity and sales performance (β = 0.332 and *p*-value = 0.000). That is, units change in competitive intensity increase sales performance by 0.332 units. A closer analysis of the marketing mix strategy beta coefficient depicts that competitive intensity weakens the relationship (β value decreased from = 1.294 to β = 0.989) between marketing mix strategy and sales performance.

Model 3: Regression of sales performance of marketing mix strategies and marketing mix strategies–competitive intensity interaction

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 5MMS + \beta 7MMS * CI + e$$ (model 4)

where MMS = composite index of product, price, promotion and place; Y = Sales performance; CI = competitive intensity factor; and B7= coefficient terms.

The third model presented in Table 9 predicted the effect of marketing mix strategies and the interaction between marketing mix strategies and competitive intensity on sales performance. As it can be observed from the table the R^2 has increased from 78.9 to 80.6 per cent implying that the marketing mix – competitive intensity interaction increased the predictive power of the model. The same hold looking at the change in the value of adjusted R^2. The F-statistics (F = 449.913, *p*-value = 0.000) shows that there was a significant relationship between sales performance and the covariates under consideration justifying the combined significant effect of the two variables on sales performance.

The third model depicted a significant relationship between moderated marketing mix strategy and sales performance (β = 0.019, *p*-value = 0.000) and the relationship between marketing mix strategy and sales performance weakened from (β = 1.294, *p*-value < 0.001) to (β = 0.857, *p*-value < 0.001). The fact that the coefficient of the interaction term is significant at 5 per cent level of significance (β = 0.019, p-value = 0.000) and the coefficient of the marketing mix strategies decreased following the inclusion of the interaction term into the model implies the extent of influence of marketing mix strategies on sales performance highly dependent on the moderating role of competitive intensity.

Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses testing results are summarized as follows:

Table 10: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Results	Decision
Ha1	Product → Sales performance	β = 0.28; *p* = 0.000	Accepted
Ha2	Price → Sales performance	β = 0.16; *p* = 0.000	Accepted
Ha3	Promotion → Sales Performance	β = 52; *p* = 0.000	Accepted
Ha4	Distribution → Sales Performance	β = 0.28; *p* = 0.000	Accepted
Ha5	Promotion mix→ Sales Performance ↑ Competitive Intensity	β = 0.019, *p* = 0.000	Accepted

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Prior studies widely acknowledge the positive effect of marketing mix strategies on sales performance (Gituma, 2017). The product strategy is crucial because, customers increasingly expect products to be of high quality (Hitt & Hoskisson, 2017). Product quality enables a product succeeds to meet the needs of its customer (Kasper & Lemmink, 1989). A product package and container have a direct contact with the product, protect, preserve and identifie the product and as such customers value it highly. Customers can easily identify a product from other competing products by looking at the colour, design, and other attributes of a package. This claim supports the idea that improvements in product packaging and other product attributes revitalize brands leading to increase in sales. This finding is consistent with Eshetu (2018) and Gbolagade, Adesol and Oyewale (2013), who found a significant positive influence of the product marketing mix strategy on sales performance.

Similar to past studies, the present study also confirmed that pricing strategy has a positive effect on performance (e.g. Obioma, Sule & Christian, 2019; Micheal, 2017). In line with this, companies use strategies such as premium pricing, value pricing, penetration pricing, cost plus pricing, competitive pricing, price skimming, going rate pricing, geographical pricing, segmented pricing, product mix pricing, psychological pricing, and discriminatory pricing (Kotler, 2015).

Promotion strategy, the third promotion mix element, has also a positive effect on performance. It is claimed that promotions, in which companies communicate their products or services to their target customers, help improve sales performance (Brrassington & Pettitt, 2010). Studies in different contexts such as the beer industry (Andnet, 2018), the pharmaceutical industry (Kamba, 2010), and in the banking industry (Gituma, 2017), confirmed the positive contributions of promotional strategy on performance.

Finally, distribution strategy has a positive effect on sales performance. Distribution is one of the key marketing activities the focus of which is ensuring products reach target customers (Bergestuen, Thompson & Strutton, 2021). Consistent with the prior studies (e.g. Bergestuen et al., 2021; Nashwan, 2015; Nguyen et al., 2011), the present study found that distribution strategy has a positive effect on performance. Accordingly, the distribution strategy of companies should be designed in a way that offers a variety of utilities to customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013).

Despite the strong literature support with regard to the positive effect of marketing mix strategies on performance, contextual factors such as competitive intensity moderate the relationship (Asdi & Putra, 2020; Huang, Jin & Huang, 2021). Similar to past study findings, the present study also proved that competitive intensity moderates the effect of marketing strategies on sales performance. It means that the effect of marketing strategies on sales performance increases in an environment where competition is intense.

CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study confirmed that marketing mix strategies are helpful in achieving superior sales performance in the beer industry. In addition, the study proved the positive contributions of marketing mix strategies when the environment is getting competitive.

The study, therefore, has the following managerial implications:

- The study revealed that marketing mix elements have impact on consumers' responses. Hence, managers of beer manufacturers in particular and beverage companies, in general, need to consider the values created by each marketing mix element and blending of the marketing mix elements.
- Consumers of beverage products are price sensitive (Heng et al., 2018). Hence, to gain a positive response from consumers, managers should check the affordability of prices; they need to also consider price adaptation based on customer segments and other situational factors.
- Similar to most low-priced consumer products, beverage products, including beer, need to be accessible. Hence, managers of beer companies need to work on the intense distribution of beer products. In addition to accessibility, managers should also consider the services at the retail end.
- In order to attract new customers and ensure brand loyalty, managers of beer companies need to have a creative promotional strategy and activities. Hence, it is essential to systematically apply the traditional communication tools together with social media and other technological platforms.

DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study focused on how marketing mix strategies affect sales performance of beer manufacturers. Hence, its generalizability is limited to manufacturers' beer products alone. Based on this, future studies can investigate the relationship in the beverage industry at large by taking representative samples from the industry. Secondly, the present study considered only one contextual factor (i.e. competitive intensity) as the factor that moderates the relationship between marketing mix strategies and sales performance. However, other pertinent moderating factors such as the effect of substitute products, social issues, culture, and demographic factors need to be investigated by future researchers.

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