The Influence of Selected Positioning Strategies on the Growth of Local Sales among Tea Manufacturers in Kenya

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Abstract

This study analysed the influence of selected positioning strategies on the growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya, within the framework of sustainable development and innovative business leadership. Tea plays a critical role in Kenya's socio-economic development, yet the majority, over 90% of the tea produced in the country is exported leaving only 10% for domestic sales. The implication is excessive reliance on external markets which exposes the industry to global price volatility. As such, strengthening the local market is vital for the sustainability of the industry. The research focused on four positioning strategies; product attributes, product user-based positioning, quality, and competitor-based positioning. The anchoring theory was the Resource Based View Theory. The study was guided by the positivist paradigm utilizing the descriptive survey design to analyse quantitative data. The population comprised 319 tea manufacturers registered with the Tea Board of Kenya (TBK), encompassing 98 tea factories and 221 tea packers. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was applied to select a sample size of sample size of 175 participants. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect primary data which was analysed using SPSS to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Simple linear regression evaluated the influence positioning strategy, while multiple regression tested their combined effects. The findings showed that the selected positioning strategies collectively explained 25.9% of the variance in the growth of local tea sales (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.259$). The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 11.230$, $df = 4,113$, $p < 0.001$), and each of the four positioning strategies had a significant positive effect on local sales. From the above findings, positioning strategies that focus on quality and beating competition were found to be most effective in boosting local tea sales. These findings reiterate the need to focus on innovative marketing, strategic brand positioning, and market-responsive leadership in the agricultural sector.

Keywords: Strategic Marketing, Local Sales Growth, Tea Industry, Business Innovation, Sustainable Development, SDGs, Kenya

1.0 Introduction

Saqib (2020) defines positioning as a strategy to shape consumer perceptions of a brand in order to bridge gaps in customer perception and differentiate from competitors. Effective product positioning creates a competitive market edge through brand differentiation (Cristea, 2014). Positioning is as a vital practice that involves differentiation, assigning a unique identity to a product to meet the requirements of the target consumers within a competitive market (Okeyo & Lewa, 2020). Firms apply different strategies based on product attributes, pricing, quality and demographics (Chowdhury, 2013). Strategic positioning enables firms to gain sustainable

competitive advantage (Tharamba et al., 2018). Growth can be quantitative, focussing on increase in output, product diversity, profitability, sales revenue, resources, and investment or qualitative, emphasizing on improvements in structure and management (Durmaz et al., 2015).

1.1 Kenya's Tea Industry

The world tea production is valued at over USD 17 billion annually, while the global tea trade is estimated to be USD 9.5 billion, making it a vital source of foreign exchange to producing countries, United Nations Conference On Trade and Development (UNITAD, 2019). Food and Agriculture organization, FAO (2022), states that a key characteristic amongst tea producing countries is that smallholder farmers account for 60 percent of the global production. Tea is a source of employment in rural areas which empower communities and households to attain food security. ITC (International Tea Committee) 2024, states that Kenya ranks as the third largest tea producer globally, contributing 8.5% to the world's tea supply. The other top tea producers are China (49.6%), India (20.7%), Turkiye (3.9%), and Sri Lanka (3.8%). Kenya is the world's leading tea exporter. The industry is regulated by the Tea Board of Kenya (TBK). One of the key challenge to Kenya's tea industry is fluctuation of global auction prices, occasionally putting pressure on manufacturers and smallholder farmers' earnings. This is attributed to erratic global tea demand, tea production fluctuations, climate change, foreign exchange fluctuations and political instability in some of the leading tea importing countries.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Tea is a cornerstone of Kenya's socio-economic development and supports livelihoods of over five million Kenyans along the value chain according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, (MOALF, 2020). In 2024, Kenya's tea industry earned KES181.7 billion from export earnings and only KES 18.0 billion from local tea sales, a trend observed in previous years. This translates to KES 305.6 per kilogram for export sales and KES 480.00 per Kg for sales in the local market. The sales trend has been the same for previous years. Kenya exports over 90% of the total tea production with less than 10% being sold in the local market. This overdependence on external markets exposes the industry to global tea prices volatility. Strengthening the local market is thus crucial for long-term sustainability (Omari, 2015). In 2016, a government task force constituted to review emerging challenges in the industry reported that domestic sales were relatively lower than

other main tea producing countries. This finding was attributed to low tea consumption per capita, lack of product awareness due to market knowledge gaps and promotions (MOALF, 2016). The task force recommended tea manufacturers to conduct vigorous promotion campaigns to enhance awareness, product diversification and value addition. In 2023, Kenya's per capita tea consumption was recorded at 0.690 kilograms, a decline from 0.720 kilograms in 2016. This was way below the consumption of other significant tea-producing nations such as China at 1.94 kilograms, India at 0.820 kilograms, Turkey at 3.10 kilograms and Sri Lanka at 1.25 kilograms (ITC, 2024). Ngumo (2015) asserts that despite being the third largest tea producer in the world, Kenya ranks low in per capital tea consumption unlike China and India, which sell most of their tea in local markets.

Wanjiru et al. (2015) indicates that the domestic tea market is going through decline due to unfavourable marketing strategies, with efforts predominantly directed towards foreign markets. It is essential for the tea export business to be sustained and expanded. Concurrently, tea manufacturers should also focus on growth of local sales to ensure the long-term stability of Kenya's tea industry.

Growth in local market sales would protect tea manufacturers, by extension small holder farmers and those employed along the value chain from global tea market volatilities. Therefore, there is need to study how selected positioning marketing strategies of product attributes, quality, product user-based, and competitor-based influence growth of local sales. Higher local sales would put Kenya at parity with other major tea producing countries like China and India, who sell most of their tea in their local markets.

Past studies on tea industry centred on the growth of export markets through various strategies and research methodologies, overlooking the growth of local sales. This study focused on a least investigated area influence of selected positioning marketing strategies of product attributes, positioning by quality, product user-based positioning, and competitor-based positioning on growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya. No known study has statistically analysed the direct impact of selected positioning strategies of product attributes, positioning by quality, product user-based positioning, and competitor-based positioning on growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya.

1.3 Research Objective

The broad objective of this study was to analyse influence of key positioning strategies in growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya and more specifically, product attributes positioning strategy, quality positioning strategy, product user positioning strategy and competitor positioning.

2.1 Resource Based View Theory (RBV)

The RBV analyses, interprets the organization's resources and appreciates how firms realize competitive advantage. Valuable resources should drive an entity to do things in a manner that results to higher sales, high margins, low costs or ways that generate more value to the firm (Barney, 1991). The RBV is inclined towards those attributes of the firm that are difficult to imitate hence a source of performance and consequently competitive advantage. Resources that are hard to transfer or purchase and that demand an extended learning curve and a major shift in the organizational climate are unique to the firm hence hard to be imitated by the competitors hence provide competitive advantage (Madhani, 2010).

Madhani (2010) highlights the wide spectrum of resources and capabilities that firms possess, including tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources include financial, physical, technological, and organizational resources. Intangible resources include human talents, innovation capabilities, and reputational resources such as perceptions of product quality, reliability and durability, product positioning, product branding and customer loyalty. These resources are considered strategic assets and contribute to a company's overall success. (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993). According to RBV, the ownership and control of strategic assets to a large extent determine the firm's profitability and competitive advantage over others. Kamboj et al., (2015), states that for a company to gain superior performance and competitive advantage, it is important to invest in their functional capabilities of operations and marketing. Marketing capabilities significantly affect competitive advantage, which positively influence financial performance.

RBV has been criticised due to vagueness of terminology. Collins, (1994) states there is lack of commonality of terms among others as many divergent definitions have been put forth by different scholars. As such, comparison of results of various studies is difficult. Porte, (1991), indicates the resource based view is circular meaning it assumes what it intends to explain. RBV is also

criticised in that it lacks of commonality of terms limiting the usefulness of results of RBV research to strategic thinking. Terms like "resources," "competencies," and "capabilities" are often used interchangeably, leading to confusion and limiting the usefulness of RBV.

This study analyses influence of selected positioning strategies on growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya. Tea manufacturers possess various capabilities that are the primary drivers of superior long-term performance. These include tangible capabilities like financial resources to invest in positioning strategies, product strategies and building a competitive distribution strategy; physical resources of distribution channels and infrastructure, accessibility to raw material like tea and packaging materials; technological resources that include trade secrets like tea blending formulae, registered copyrights and trademarks of tea brands. Intangible capabilities include marketing strategies of positioning which may enable growth in sales. Tea manufacturers are anticipated to possess capabilities that influence selected growth of local sales. Resource based view theory is pertinent to this study as it illustrates how tea manufacturers' available capabilities are crucial while pursuing selected strategies of positioning (product attributes positioning strategy, quality positioning strategy, product user positioning strategy and competitor positioning) to influence growth of local sales.

2.2 Empirical Review

Odhiambo (2016) explored the positioning strategies employed by the local airlines to remain competitive. The target population for the study was local airlines. It adopted a descriptive approach and used survey approach. Data was collected through questionnaires from marketing managers of the airlines. Odhiambo (2016), established that product positioning strategies enhance local airlines' performance in the air transport industry and help them maintain a competitive edge. A positive nexus was documented between product positioning strategies and competitive advantage implying that the strategies improved performance and consequently sustainable competitive advantage.

Kiviti (2018) sought to investigate the impact of market positioning strategies on performance of Kenya Commercial Bank. This was a case study, making it an in-depth investigation. Interview guides targeting senior managers of KCB Group Limited were used to collect primary data. This study indicates there are three key market-positioning approaches. First, the brand strategy creating a distinct impression allowing clients to interact with the firm on a one to one basis. Secondly,

product positioning strategy which is based on initiatives likely to impact the image of the product. Thirdly, the price positioning strategies. Kiviti (2018) concluded that product, price and brand positioning strategy were noted to have positive effect on the bank's performance. The research recommended that banks should adopt positioning to ensure rapid growth of the firm, enhance profitability and improve sales of new products.

Gichuki (2022) carried a study on effect of positioning strategies on competitiveness of health insurance providers in Kenya. The purpose of this research was determining how positioning strategy affect the competitiveness of Kenyan health insurance companies. This study used a census survey and embraced a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. Primary data was used through a structured questionnaire targeting management staff. Gichuki (2022) concluded that the effect of positioning strategies on competitiveness is not statistically significant.

Syokau and Kavale (2023) investigated how various strategic positioning factors influence the performance of long-distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County, Kenya. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of cost positioning, competitive positioning, quality positioning and value positioning on organizational performance of long distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County. The study employed the descriptive research design. Data was collected via structured questionnaires. Purposive sampling technique was utilized to select the respondents. Syokau & Kavale, (2023) noted that strategic positioning, competitive positioning, and quality positioning positively and significantly impact the performance of long-distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County. On the other cost positioning demonstrated a negative but significant influence performance of long-distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County. The study was confined to long-distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County, Kenya which restricted scope constrains and generalization of the findings to other contexts. Extending the research to encompass additional counties or transportation sectors would yield a more comprehensive perspective.

Khosla (2023) examined the effect of brand positioning techniques on attain profitability and competitive advantage. The study sought to examine the distinction between brand and product positioning as well as the distinctions within brand positioning. Khosla, (2023) retrieved secondary data from published research, journals among others. The examined positioning strategies encompassed quality-based, price-based, customer service, convenience-based positioning, social

media, and product attributes. Khosla (2023) established that robust brand positioning is essential for attaining profitability and competitive advantage.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study utilized the positivist research philosophy and adopts descriptive design survey with a quantitative data approach. The population of this study were entities in the tea industry. The target population was Kenya's tea manufacturers as it is expected they have the relevant and accurate information needed for the study. Target population comprised 319 manufacturers registered by Tea Board of Kenya and comprised 221 tea packers and 98 tea factories. The study primarily selected top management as respondents from the tea manufacturer, since they are more knowledgeable about strategic issues and hold strategic roles in the firms. Krejcie and Morgan, (1970) table was used to calculate the ideal sample size of 175 from the target population. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure a representative sample from each sub population of tea packers and factories. The sample comprised of 121 tea packers and 54 tea factories. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, where 5 represents strongly agree, 4 signifies agree, 3 indicated neither agree nor disagree, 2 denoted disagree, and 1 reflected strongly disagree.

The pilot study, selects participants from the target population and replicates the designed procedures for data collection (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). They establish content validity which ascertain the internal consistency of the research instrument, improve the questionnaire questions, format, and instructions. For this study, a pilot test was carried out to ascertain the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument using 10 participants. It was subjected to 5 subjects from the tea factories and another 5 subjects from tea packers. The subjects that participated in the pilot study were not factored into the final study.

4.0 Research Results

Overall response rate was 80.0 percent. The composition percentages for packers and factories were 79.3 percent and 81.5 percent, respectively. 84.3 percent of the respondents indicated that their tea firms had a positioning strategy whereas 15.7 percent were not sure.

4.1 Positioning Strategy Implemented in the Local Market

The study explored on the positioning strategies that tea manufacturers applied in the local market as summarized.

Positioning Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Positioning by product attributes	8	5.7
Positioning by quality	30	21.4
Positioning against competitors	4	2.9
Positioning by product attributes & quality	40	28.6
Positioning by product attributes & against competitors	16	11.4
Positioning by quality & Product User	4	2.9
Positioning by quality & against competitors	2	1.4
Positioning by product attributes, quality & Product User	2	1.4
Positioning by product attributes, quality & against competitors	32	22.9
Positioning by product attributes, quality, product user & against competitors	2	1.4
Total	**140**	**100**

Source: Study Data (2025)

The findings presented above show that tea manufacturers in the local market employ a variety of positioning strategies, with the most common being a combination of product attributes and quality, adopted by 28.6 percent of the firms. This indicates that these manufacturers recognize the importance of emphasizing both the specific features of their tea and the level of quality in order to attract customers and boost sales. This was followed by 22.9 per cent of firms which combine product attributes, quality, and a competitive positioning strategy. This speaks to the growing awareness of market competition, where companies aspire to not only demonstrate their strengths but also distinguish themselves exclusively from rivals.

According to the respondents, 21.4 percent of manufacturers differentiate by quality implying that quality remains an exclusive differentiator in the tea industry. However, only 2.9 percent combine quality and product positioning to beat the rivals without including product attributes, suggesting that these elements on their own are too weak to support the brand positioning. On the other hand, 5.7 percent of manufacturers position themselves through product attributes or merely against

competitors (2.9 percent) was less dominant each reported by only a negligible number of companies suggesting limited effectiveness or appeal in implementing those strategies.

Overall, the findings suggest that tea manufacturers employ diverse positioning strategies, combining product attributes with quality and competitive awareness to advance stronger market linkages. This diversified positioning trend may be triggered by the need to appeal to a more discerning and competitive customer base, where single-focus strategies might not offer enough differentiation. The minimal use of simplistic or single-trait strategies highlights an increasingly strategic and nuanced marketing orientation among tea manufacturers in the local market.

4.2 Positioning Strategies and Local Sales

The study explored whether positioning strategies are linked to local tea sales by tea manufacturers in Kenya. The research provided statements linking positioning strategies to growth in local sales on a Likert scale where 5= Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree. The research used means and standard deviations to analyse the responses.

Positioning Strategies and Local Sales

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Kenya tea manufacturers influence growth of local tea sales amongst themselves through positioning by product attributes.	4.16	.642
Positioning by quality, influence growth of local sales among tea manufacturers Kenya tea manufacturers.	4.59	.587
Positioning by product users influence growth of local sales among tea manufacturers Kenya tea manufacturers.	3.17	.749
Positioning by against competition influence growth of local sales among tea manufacturers.	3.59	.830
Positioning strategies, influences growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya	4.36	.590
Variable aggregate	3.97	0.680

Source: Study Data (2025)

The study findings indicate that Kenyan tea manufacturers generally perceive that positioning strategies significantly influence the growth of local tea sales. Among the different positioning approaches, the highest rated was positioning by quality, with a 4.59 mean and 0.587 Standard

Deviation (SD), suggesting strong consensus among respondents. This underscores the importance of quality perception in enhancing local sales.

Positioning by product attributes also received a 4.16 mean, with a 0.642 SD This shows that highlighting specific product features, such as flavour, aroma, or packaging, contributes positively to sales growth. Meanwhile, general positioning strategies recorded a 4.36 mean, alluding that, overall, manufacturers view positioning as a critical accelerator of market performance. The relatively low variability in these responses points to a consistent understanding across the industry regarding the effectiveness of these strategic approaches.

However, positioning by product users and against rivals generated a mean of 3.17 and 3.59 respectively, suggesting weaker consensus on their effectiveness. The results suggest that developing positioning strategies based on the competitive positioning of the target user may not be as impactful for growth of local sales as exclusively focusing on intrinsic product qualities. The overall mean of 3.97 demonstrates an overall favorable perspectives of positioning strategies. The overall standard standard deviation of 0.680 suggests variation in how different strategies are perceived in their contribution to sales performance.

The results were in tandem with previous studies such as Kiviti (2018) who established that market positioning strategies (brand positioning, product positioning, and pricing positioning) improve KCB Bank Group Ltd's performance. Similarly, Odhiambo (2016) examined the positioning strategies employed by the local airlines to remain competitive and established that product positioning strategies boost local airlines' performance and help them maintain a competitive edge. However, this study's outcome negated the findings by Gichuki (2022) who concluded that the effect of positioning strategies on competitiveness is not statistically significant in a study on the effect of positioning strategies on competitiveness of health insurance providers in Kenya.

4.3. Influence of Positioning Strategies on Growth of Local Sales

The study sought to establish the influence of positioning strategies on growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya. The relationship was determined using the simple linear regression model demonstrated in the section below, which includes the correlation coefficient (R), R-square, and the standard error of the estimate. ANOVA findings as well as the significance of the coefficients, are also outlined.

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.437a	.191	.185	.73597

a. Predictors: (Constant), Positioning Strategies

ANOVA[a]

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	17.653	1	17.653	32.591	.000b
Residual	74.747	138	.542		
Total	92.400	139			

a. Dependent Variable: Local Sales

b. Predictors: (Constant), Positioning Strategies

Coefficients[a]

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-1.373	.559		-2.455	.015
Positioning Strategies	.798	.140	.437	5.709	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Local Sales

Source: Study Data (2025)

The regression analysis findings in Table 4.31 provides the model summary which produced a R value is 0.437, suggesting a moderate positive correlation between positioning strategies and local sales. The R-square value of 0.191 suggests that approximately 19.1 percent are attributable to changes in positioning strategies employed. Although the percentage indicates that positioning strategies have a significant impact it also implies that a most of the changes in sales growth is attributable to other factors not factored in this model.

The ANOVA output show that the regression model is statistically significant, with an F-statistic of 32.591 and a p-value of .000. This indicates that the association between positioning strategies and local sales is statistically significant hence positioning strategies play a fundamental role in increasing sales outcomes. The model's statistical strength is reinforced by the calculated F value. The coefficients offer a deeper understanding of the relationship where the unstandardized coefficient for positioning strategies is 0.798 with a standard error of 0.140, and a t-value of 5.709, which is statistically significant at the 0.000 level. This means that for every unit increase in positioning strategy effectiveness, local sales are expected to increase by 0.798 units, holding other factors constant. The negative constant (-1.373) suggests that in the absence of positioning

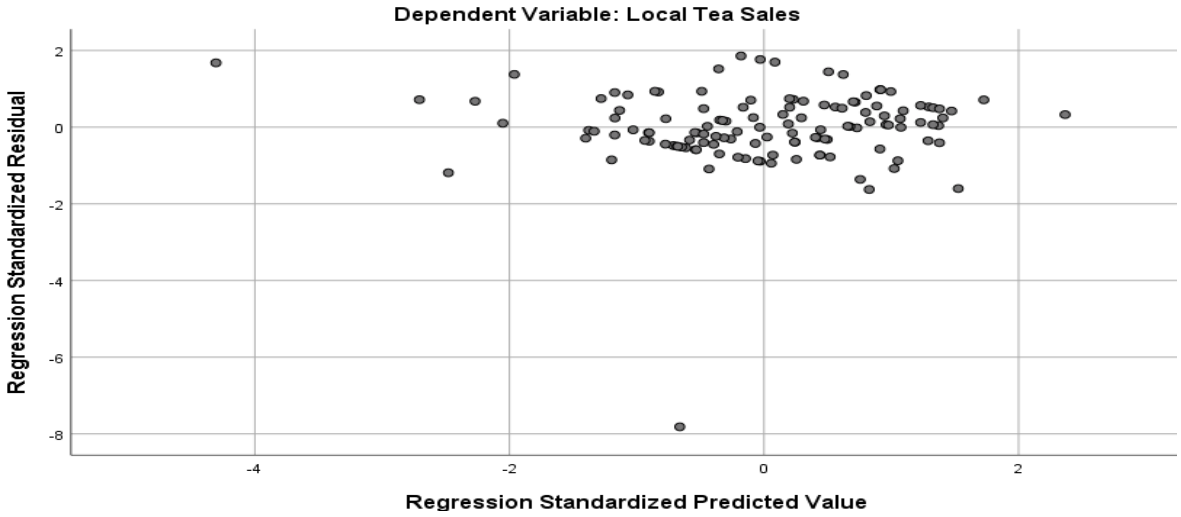
strategies, local sales would be significantly lower. These findings affirm that effective positioning strategies have a positive and statistically significant impact on the growth of local sales.

Positioning strategies demonstrate a significant and moderately strong relationship with local sales ($\beta = 0.798$, $t = 5.709$, $p < 0.05$; $r = .437$, $p < 0.05$), and the high mean for quality driven positioning ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 0587$) indicating that buyers in the Kenyan tea market base decisions on intrinsic value believes that reduce risk and justify repeat purchase, including safety, taste consistency and source. Therefore, marketing resources should prioritize quality proof points through rigorous quality control, clear packaging cues, credible certification marks in market sampling, retailer education as well as evidence-based storytelling. Shallower strategies that focus solely on competition are considered to be less effective since rival centric claims are easy to imitate, push comparison on price, and fail to create enduring differentiation in a fragmented demand landscape where accessibility and product experience dominate choice. As such, firms should integrate a quality led core with segment specific benefits such as convenience, freshness or sustainability, allocating budget to the channels and touchpoints that effectively translate verified quality into perceived value and willingness to pay.

The findings conform to the Resource Based View RBV, which evaluates resources and company competitiveness. Valuable resources should boost sales, profits, expenditures, or value. The RBV favours company characteristics that are hard to copy, resulting in performance and competitive advantage. Intangible resources and capabilities include product innovation, reputational resources such as product quality, reliability, and durability, product positioning, branding, and customer loyalty. For a company to perform well and obtain a competitive edge, Kamboj et al. (2015) recommend investing in operations and marketing. The theory is further supported by the study as 84.3% of tea manufacturers in the local market employ a variety of positioning strategies, with the most common being a combination of product attributes and quality, adopted by 28.6 percent of the firms. While others combine product attributes, quality, and a competitive positioning focus, used by 22.9 percent of the respondents. Positioning strategies correlate positively with local tea sales ($r = .437$ $p < 0.05$).

Overall, tea manufacturers view positioning as a critical driver of market performance ($M=4.36$, $SD = 0.590$).

4.4 Heteroscedasticity



Heteroscedasticity of Regression Residuals of Positioning Strategies on local tea sales

The plot of the regression residuals for positioning strategies against local tea sales reveals a distinct fan-shaped dispersion, with error variance widening as the fitted values rise; this pattern signals heteroscedasticity, meaning the assumption of constant error variance is violated. Such non-constant variance can bias the ordinary least-squares estimates of standard errors, leading to unreliable t and p statistics and, by extension, potentially misleading inferences about how different positioning dimensions' influence sales. Practically, the heteroscedasticity implies that the strength of unexplained variation is smaller among low-selling outlets and progressively larger among high-selling ones, suggesting that unobserved factors affecting sales become more volatile as positioning becomes more effective. Addressing heteroscedasticity required applying robust standard errors.

4.5 Test of Normality of Regression Residuals

The study conducted the normality tests to determine whether the regression residuals after fitting the regression model followed a normal distribution. Normality test for residuals in regression analysis is vital as it helps to validate regression assumptions. Linear regression assumes that residuals are normally distributed. Violating this assumption compromises the reliability of statistical inferences such as p-values and confidence intervals. Therefore, testing the normality of residuals validates the model's outputs thus enhancing the credibility of the regression analysis.

This study tested normality of residuals by their skewness and kurtosis statistics. The results are provided in Table 4.26.

		Statistic	Std. Error
Standardized Residual	Skewness	.587	.205
	Kurtosis	.956	.407

Source: Study Data (2025)

Above table displays the results of the normality test conducted on the residuals of the model. The findings assess the normality of regression residuals using skewness and kurtosis statistics. The skewness value is 0.587 with a standard error of 0.205, while the kurtosis is 0.956 with a standard error of 0.407. Both skewness and kurtosis values are relatively close to zero and fall within the conventional ±2 threshold, indicating that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. This suggests that the assumption of normality in the residuals is reasonably satisfied, supporting the validity of parametric statistical tests and regression inferences based on these residuals.

4.5 Multiple Linear Regression of Positioning Strategies

Multiple regression model was used to test the influence of the predictor variables (product attributes, Quality, product user, competitors) on the dependent variable (growth of sales). Simple regression was used to analyse each predictor variable on the dependent variable.

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.533[a]	.284	.259	.679

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competition, Quality, Product attributes., Product users

b. Dependent Variable: Local tea sales

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.714	4	5.178	11.230	.000[b]
	Residual	52.108	113	.461		
	Total	72.822	117			

a. Dependent Variable: Local tea sales

b. Predictors: (Constant), Competition, Quality, Product attributes., Product users

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.469	.600		2.448	.016
	Product attributes.	.181	.113	.149	1.601	.112
	Quality	.630	.118	.484	5.314	.000
	Product users	.010	.115	.010	.089	.929
	Competition	.307	.105	.320	2.912	.004

LS = 1.469 + 0.630 Quality + 0.307 Competition

The multiple regression model relating positioning strategies and local tea sales demonstrates a moderate explanatory power. The correlation between the four positioning strategies and observed sales is R = 0.533, yielding R squared = 0.284 and adjusted R squared = 0.259, so about 24 percent of the variance in sales is explained after adjusting for model complexity. An overall F statistic of 11.230 with four and one hundred thirteen degrees of freedom and a p value below 0.001 confirms that the set of positioning predictors jointly improves model fit beyond the intercept only specification.

Analysis of individual coefficients identifies two statistically salient drivers of local tea sales. Positioning by perceived quality exerts the strongest standardized influence (Beta = 0.484) with an unstandardized coefficient of 0.630, t = 5.314, and $p < 0.001$, indicating that a one-unit gain in positioning by perceived quality corresponds to an expected rise of roughly 0.63 units in sales, controlling for other variables. Positioning by competition also shows a positive and significant effect (Beta = 0.320; B = 0.307; t = 2.912; p = 0.004). By contrast, positioning by product attributes (Beta = 0.149; t = 1.601; p = 0.112) and the product users (Beta = 0.010; t = 0.089; p = 0.929) do not reach conventional significance thresholds in this sample.

These results suggest that the managerial interventions aimed at increasing local tea sales should focus on shaping positioning by intrinsic product quality and maintaining strong competitive positioning since these factors reflect both statistical and substantive importance in the present market. Improvements captured under the product characteristics construct are less clear cut unless they simultaneously enhance perceived quality, and the demographic or behavioural composition of existing users exerts negligible direct influence on sales. As such, market expansion approaches should focus on creating value proposition as opposed to altering user mix. Future studies could

explore interaction effects or non-linear relationships to determine whether product characteristics or user segments gain salience under particular competitive conditions.

4.6 Pearson Correlation Coefficient

		Product attributes	Quality	Product users	Competition	Local tea sales
Product attributes.	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	118				
Quality	Pearson Correlation	.454**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	118	118			
Product users	Pearson Correlation	.086	-.133	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	.153			
	N	118	118	118		
Competition	Pearson Correlation	.278**	.047	.653**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.611	.000		
	N	118	118	118	118	
Local tea sales.	Pearson Correlation	.160	.430**	.142	.308**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.083	.000	.126	.001	
	N	118	118	118	118	118

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

The correlation results reveal that of the four positioning constructs examined, perceived product quality exerts the most significant impact on local tea sales, demonstrating a moderate positive association ($r = 0.430$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 118$); this implies that customers pay attention to brands that emphasise on superior quality with higher purchase volumes. The findings further underscore the importance of competitive positioning . The degree to which a brand positions itself relative to competitors is positively and significantly related to sales ($r = 0.308$, $p = 0.001$), suggesting that clear differentiation translates into tangible demand gains. On the contrary, positioning by product attributes demonstrates a weak and statistically marginal nexus to sales ($r = 0.160$, $p = 0.083$),

suggesting that simply enhancing intrinsic attributes without boosting quality or competitive edge yields limited returns. Finally, tailoring messages to specific market segments seems to be ineffective in this context, as the correlation between perceived product–user fit and sales is negligible and not statistically significant ($r = 0.142$, $p = 0.126$). Overall, the evidence underscores that positioning strategies anchored in conveying high quality and competitive distinctiveness, as opposed to generic attribute enhancements or narrow user targeting, are most effective to boosting local tea sales.

4.7 Conclusion and Summary of Findings

The study sought to analyse the influence of positioning strategies on the growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya. The findings determined that positioning strategies have a significant influence on growth of local sales among tea manufacturers in Kenya ($\beta = 0.798$, $t = 5.709$, $p < 0.05$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed that of the four positioning facets examined, perceived product quality carries the strongest and most reliable influence on local tea sales, exhibiting a moderate positive association ($r = 0.430$, $p < 0.001$, $n = 118$); competitive positioning also matters, this is the extent to which a brand frames itself relative to rivals is positively and significantly related to sales ($r = 0.308$, $p = 0.001$). Product attributes positioning showed a weak and statistically marginal link to sales ($r = 0.160$, $p = 0.083$). Positioning by product users as the correlation between perceived product–user fit and sales is small and non-significant ($r = 0.142$, $p = 0.126$). The findings imply that positioning strategies focusing on competitive distinctiveness and high quality, rather than generic attribute or narrow user targeting, are highly effective in increasing local tea sales. The findings further established that most participants (84.3%) confirmed that their companies deployed the positioning strategy, reiterating its crucial role in defining a tea brand identity the highly competitive market. The strategies implemented were distinct with the most popular being a combination of product attributes and quality, followed by a combination of competitiveness and quality. This indicate that firms leverage on a combination of strategies that underscore product performance and uniqueness to optimize on local sales. Fewer firms employed narrow strategies that focus on single elements such as product attributes or competition, suggesting a preference towards more elaborate positioning approaches.

The findings also demonstrated that positioning via quality had the most significant impact on local sales, as evidenced by a mean of 4.59, suggesting general acceptance on its effectiveness.

General strategic positioning and product attributes were also ranked highly emphasizing their role in driving sales growth. On the other hand, strategies focusing on direct competition or product users were considered to be less effective, meaning intrinsic product qualities are more impactful in the local market. The results suggest a shared industry outlook that robust competitor positioning strategies are crucial in boosting local tea sales. The results are in tandem with previous empirical studies including Syokau and Kavale (2023) who concluded that strategic positioning, competitive positioning, and quality positioning exert a positive and significant impact on performance of long-distance public service vehicles in Mombasa County. The results further concur with Khosla (2023) who documented robust brand positioning as a crucial driver of profitability and competitive advantage.

This research enhances the discussion on positioning strategies by affirming their influence on sales and demonstrating a moderate positive association. It details how tea manufacturers combine product quality and competitive strategies to attain competitive advantage. The findings distinguish product quality' strategies from user type or competition in terms of impact terming the prior as most impactful. This prompts firms to concentrate on quality and distinctiveness in product attributes to drive sales.

5.0 Recommendations and Policy Implications

The influence of positioning strategies on sales performance, tea firms should articulate clear brand identities that emphasize quality and unique product attributes. Policymakers can play a facilitative role by supporting geographical indication certifications and national branding campaigns that enhance the identity of Kenyan tea in local markets. Additionally, educational programs on strategic positioning could be introduced to help firms align their marketing strategies with consumer expectations, ultimately reinforcing brand strength and driving sustained sales growth.

The aim of vision 2030 was to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized country by the year 2030 (Government of Kenya, 2007). Agriculture, livestock and fisheries is one of the priority growth drivers anticipated to generate an addition KES 80 to 90 billion to the GDP. Among the key initiatives to achieve is this by processing and adding value before products reach the market. Hence the government and other relevant policy makers can use these findings to formulate guiding policies and framework on positioning strategies, with a long term objective of supporting

small and medium agro processing firms to grow, hence a drive towards achieving the vision 2030 through processing and value addition.

The study's findings support the view that strategic business innovation, local value chain strengthening, and market diversification are essential to advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The growth of local sales will improve and grow the per capital economic growth for the over five million Kenyans a relying on tea along the value chain. The growth in local tea sales would also spur industrialization and create employment opportunities thereby reducing the 5.43% unemployment rate.

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