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# Influence of Marketing Strategy as a Turnaround Strategy on Performance of Four-Star-Rated Hotels in Coastal Region, Kenya

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## Abstract

Globalization, dynamic shifts in customer preferences, and rapid technological advancements pose formidable challenges to the global hospitality sector, exerting adverse effects on sales, productivity, and market share. Faced with these complex uncertainties, Kenyan hotels are navigating difficult circumstances, prompting a thorough examination of turnaround strategies and their impact on the marketing strategies of four-star hotels in the coastal region. This study adopts a method of descriptive research, rooted in Brand Equity Theory, to scrutinize the nuanced influence of marketing strategy implementation on hotel performance. The target population includes 319 managers, out of which 177 were randomly selected through a meticulous stratified random selection process. Data collection utilized questionnaires employing the drop-and-pick method, and subsequent analysis was conducted using the advanced statistical tool SPSS 27. Findings revealed a strong, positive linear relationship existed between hotel performance and marketing strategy ( $R=0.668$ ). Furthermore, the model indicated that approximately 44.6% of the variation in the dependent variable could be directly accounted for by variations in the contingent variable ( $R^2= 0.446$ ). This study provides valuable insights for navigating challenges in the Four-Star Rated Hotels in the Coastal Region of Kenya.

**Keywords:** *Marketing Strategy, Turnaround Strategy, Performance, Four-Star-Rated Hotels, Coastal Region*

## 1.1 Introduction

The global hospitality sector faces numerous challenges due to the complexity of globalization, rapid technological advancements, and shifting consumer preferences (Sima, 2020). To address operational inefficiencies and capitalize on new opportunities, hotels implement strategic turnaround strategies. However, regional dynamics further complicate the landscape, influenced by economic situations, cultural nuances, and legal frameworks (Ramesh, 2023). Local elements like seasonality, community activities, and partnerships necessitate strategies aligned with community preferences (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020). Successful turnaround strategies can prevent performance declines, and effective strategic management requires anticipating and responding to global developments (Askarova, 2021). While existing research primarily focuses on experiences in the US and UK (Baruah et al., 2019), studies from other international contexts remain scarce. The African hospitality industry, despite its economic growth, faces obstacles demanding quick solutions (Khan et al., 2020). The region experiences a demand-supply gap due to the lack of high-quality hotel options, despite its growing potential (Mehta, Kumar & Ramkumar, 2023). Moreover, research on leadership during transformation in the public sector and turnaround strategies within the African hotel business is limited (Nyatsumba & David Pooe, 2023; Kumalo & Scheepers, 2021).

Kenya, with its diverse lodging options, faces challenges like electoral violence, pandemics, and terrorism, adversely impacting the hotel industry (Mensah, 2022). The National Tourism Strategy (2023) links hotel success to room capacity, with Kenya ranking second-highest in Africa. To enhance their global standing, hotels adopt turnaround strategies, pursuing certifications, awards, star ratings, and professional affiliations (Mwamba, 2021). Recent studies highlight Kenya's success in applying turnaround strategies, with hotels demonstrating resilience through negotiation, internal reconfiguration, and structural adjustments (Nduta & Deya, 2020; Mutavi & Gichinga, 2019). Despite these achievements, Kenyan businesses still encounter obstacles when implementing turnaround methods, warranting further investigation (Nduta & Deya, 2020). It is recognized that businesses must first stabilize to achieve profitability, requiring a comprehensive and rigorous strategy (Mwikya & Khamah, 2020).

## 1.2 Research Problem

The hospitality industry has undergone a profound transformation due to technological advancements, reshaping business operations. Platforms like Airbnb, as Coita and Ban (2023) highlight, have revolutionized lodging options, emphasizing sustainability and providing diverse choices for consumers. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated changes, prompting hotels to re-evaluate their designs and incorporate technology to create unique guest experiences (Li, Zhou & Huang, 2023). Turnaround strategies, as explored by Nyagiloh and Kilika (2020), encompass a variety of approaches and decisions aimed at restoring struggling organizations to solvency and fostering growth. This concept has a history spanning over four decades, initially developing in the 1980s and gaining momentum in the third wave of research after the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy. This wave emphasizes the importance of effective implementation (Lioudis, 2019). The current era of research responds to ongoing disruptions in organizations driven by accelerated change and systemic crises (Castello & Roger, 2023).

An analysis of existing literature reveals research gaps in the field of turnaround strategies. Conceptual gaps suggest exploring the intersections with leadership and considering cross-cultural differences Alanazi (2022), Ghasemy et al. (2022), Kumalo and Scheepers (2021), and Sengupta (2021). Studies focusing on turnaround within an entrepreneurship context, as noted

by Ebere and Onuoha (2022) and Reger (2017), underscore the need to broaden the scope for universal applicability. Methodological gaps, identified by Mwikya and Khamah (2020) and Oduor et al. (2021), arise from limitations in research methods such as case studies, qualitative research, and interviews. Contextual gaps, highlighted by Mutavi and Gichinga (2019), relate to challenges in generalizing findings to diverse contexts, emphasizing the complexity of the subject. Furthermore, this research presents a unique opportunity to identify organizational restructuring as a particularly effective turnaround strategy for enhancing the performance of four-star-rated hotels in the coastal region of Kenya.

### **1.3 Research Objective**

To establish the influence of marketing strategy on performance of four-star-rated hotels in the Coast region of Kenya.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

This section presents the theoretical review, conceptual framework and the empirical review.

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

This section presents the theory that informs the study's objective, which is brand equity theory.

#### **2.1.1 Brand Equity Theory**

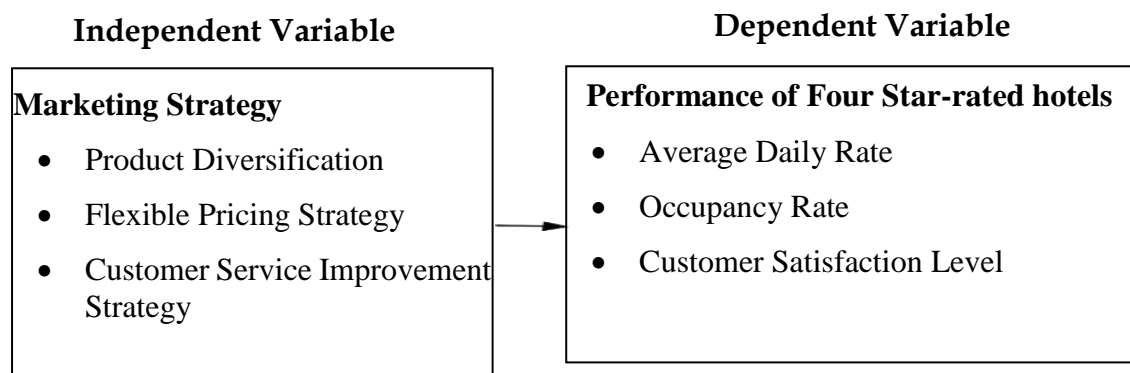
Brand equity theory, shaped through collaboration among marketing and branding experts, has evolved significantly. David Aaker, a distinguished marketing scholar, played a key role in this development (Mekuriya, 2023). His influential 1991 book, "Managing Brand Equity," remains a seminal contribution, leaving a lasting impact on marketing and branding (Ruiz, Uribe, & Gazquez, 2020). In the competitive hotel business, brand equity theory assumes a pivotal role. It acts as a framework for evaluating a brand's perceived strength and value, guiding strategic efforts to enhance brand recognition and recall among potential guests. Hotels employ tools such as targeted marketing campaigns, a robust social media presence, and partnerships with local businesses to bolster their market position (Jeong et al., 2023). Brand equity theory assists hotels in identifying key attributes they want customers to associate with their brand (Fernando & Aw, 2023). This involves emphasizing distinctive features, tailoring marketing strategies accordingly (Wolfe, 2021). Brand loyalty, a critical aspect, is measured through surveys, feedback, and reviews. Hotels focus on retaining loyal patrons and turning them into brand advocates through loyalty programs and special offers (Dobrokhотов, 2023). Hotels leverage brand equity theory for thorough market research to reshape customer perceptions positively (Dang-Van, 2023).

Consistent brand messaging is crucial, emphasizing unified branding across websites, brochures, social media, and in-person interactions (Quesenberry, 2020). In regions like the coastal area of Kenya, hotels apply brand equity theory by integrating local culture, traditions, and heritage for a unique brand identity, offering authentic experiences (Wahome & Gathungu, 2021). Perceived value, a key assumption, significantly influences pricing strategy (Hamzah & Pontes, 2022). Hotels align pricing with perceived value, considering service quality and location. Collaborations with local businesses enhance brand equity, providing opportunities for cross-promotion and enriched guest experiences (Dowin Kennedy et al., 2023). Customer experience remains central in brand equity theory, necessitating proactive collection of feedback for continuous improvement (Olorunsola, Saydam, Lasisi, & Eluwole, 2023). **During** crises, the theory guides reputation rebuilding through public relations strategies and transparent communication (Ketter & Avraham, 2021).



## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The relationship between marketing strategy and Turnaround Strategy on performance of Four-Star-Rated Hotels in Coast Region, Kenya as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## 2.3 Empirical Literature

In the ever-changing business landscape, highlighted by Malinao and Ebi (2022), this study underscores the crucial role of effective turnaround strategies for corporate survival. This empirical synthesis integrates insights from various investigations, with a specific focus on turnaround strategy literature, providing valuable insights. Mutavi and Gichinga (2019) suggest considering new market entrants and technology adoption to enhance turnaround efforts. Grant (2021) emphasizes the dynamic nature of turnaround strategies in addressing evolving business challenges. Despite existing gaps, the study explores marketing strategies, contributing valuable insights for organizational improvement. Shifting the focus to marketing strategy, it functions as a meticulously planned roadmap for a company to achieve its marketing goals and objectives, as outlined by Tabuena et al. (2022). This comprehensive plan details the overall course of action and specific strategies a company will employ to sell its products, engage with its target audience, and fortify its market position, as suggested by Gonçalves (2023). The enduring significance of a marketing strategy lies in its pivotal role in an organization's success and its adaptability to the ever-evolving market dynamics, as emphasized by Ismail et al. (2023). Significantly, it influences customers' purchasing decisions, compelling them to choose a company's products or services over competitors' offerings (Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020). In today's fiercely competitive market, the role of a marketer has evolved into a strategic function, extending beyond product attributes to include persuading and engaging potential clients, establishing meaningful connections, and delivering resonant value.

At its core, a marketing strategy involves creating awareness and positioning a company to differentiate itself from competitors, often based on a unique value proposition such as product quality, customer experience, or sustainability. To further enhance organizational performance, implementing a turnaround strategy necessitates a comprehensive reassessment of market positioning (Muriithi, 2022). This involves strategic activities like product diversification, offering flexible pricing, and improving customer service. Product diversification, expanding the range of goods and services, can attract new clientele and boost income for hotels (Rodrigues et al., 2022). Flexible pricing, adjusting rates based on demand, seasonal factors, and loyalty programs, helps optimize occupancy and revenue (Zaki, 2022). Customer service improvement, through staff training and proactive feedback seeking, enhances overall guest satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth (Alam, 2023). Integrating product

diversification, flexible pricing, and customer service improvement into a hotel's marketing strategy can substantially influence performance. Enhanced customer service contributes to heightened satisfaction, loyalty, and recurring business, creating a distinctive value proposition that attracts and retains customers (Uyar, et al., 2023). The synergy of these strategies establishes a compelling competitive edge for hotels (Kieanwatana, 2023).

### 3.0 Research Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive research design to examine managers in four-star hotels in the coastal region of Kenya. The target population consisted of 319 CEOs, DCEOs, departmental managers, and supervisors across 13 four-star hotels. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 177 respondents from the managerial levels of the hotels. To analyse the data, a linear regression model was employed to determine the level of marketing strategy as a turnaround tactic on four-star hotel performance. The regression equation was  $y=f(\beta_0, + \beta_3X_3+ \epsilon)$ , with the dependent variable (y) being hotel performance, the independent variable (X3) as marketing strategy, plus a constant and error term. This enabled testing the hypothesis regarding marketing strategy and hotel performance.

### 4.0 Findings and Discussion

The section present results of descriptive statistics and regression analysis.

#### 4.1 Descriptive Test Results

##### 4.1.1 Marketing Strategy Descriptive Test

The study assessed the influence of marketing strategy on the performance of four-star-rated hotels in the Coast region of Kenya. The results are shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Marketing Strategy**

|  | Mean         | Std. Dev.    |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Our hotel has introduced new products or services to expand its offerings and improve performance.   | 3.97         | .824         |
| Our hotel has identified and targeted new customer segments as part of its product diversification strategy and performance.   | 4.01         | .837         |
| Our hotel's new products or services offer unique features or benefits compared to its competitors to improve performance.   | 4.01         | .753         |
| Our hotel has implemented effective marketing and promotional strategies to raise awareness and generate demand for new products or services to enhance performance.     | 4.12         | .791         |
| Our hotel adjusts its prices based on demand levels and market conditions to enhance performance   | 4.03         | .711         |
| Our hotel utilizes dynamic pricing to optimize revenue and occupancy rates to enhance performance.   | 3.99         | .663         |
| Our hotel offers different pricing tiers or categories to cater to different customer preferences and improve performance.   | 3.94         | .723         |
| Our hotel ensures transparency in pricing by clearly communicating factors that influence price variations and performance.  | 3.81         | .882         |
| Our hotel has clear service standards and guidelines in place to ensure consistent and high-quality customer service and performance.                                    | 4.11         | .735         |
| Our hotel invests in comprehensive training programs to equip employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver exceptional customer service and performance. | 4.15         | .697         |
| Our hotel personalizes the guest experience based on individual preferences and needs to enhance performance.  | 4.11         | .659         |
| The hotel has effective procedures for handling customer complaints and resolving issues to ensure customer satisfaction and performance.                                | 3.95         | .700         |
| <b>Average</b>   | <b>4.021</b> | <b>0.741</b> |

From Table 1, the descriptive results revealed that study respondents showed a general agreement with the implementation of marketing strategy in their hotels, with an overall mean

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score of 4.01. Similarly, all of the sub-variables that were used to assess for marketing strategy also yielded general agreement levels. Specifically, the study respondents generally confirmed there being customer service improvement strategy (mean score= 4.08), product diversification (mean score= 4.03), and flexible pricing strategy (mean score= 3.94). Such general agreeability among the study respondents was also supported by the respondents' positive confirmation of every statement used to assess for marketing strategy. Table 1 captures a detailed outlook of these descriptive outcomes.

#### 4.1.2 Performance of Four star-rated Hotels Descriptive Test

The performance of Four-Star Rated Hotels was assessed. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Performance of Four-star –Hated Hotels**

|  | Mean         | Std. Dev.    |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| The Average daily rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly higher during the weekdays                          | 4.15         | .615         |
| The Average daily rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly high during the weekends.                           | 4.05         | .657         |
| The Average daily rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly high during the holidays                            | 3.99         | .739         |
| The occupancy rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly higher during weekdays                                  | 3.97         | .711         |
| The occupancy rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly higher during weekends                                  | 3.92         | .762         |
| The occupancy rate in our hotel during the 2021 to 2022 period was significantly high during holidays.                                   | 4.03         | .692         |
| Our hotel's overall performance has a direct impact on customer satisfaction to improve performance                                      | 4.13         | .686         |
| In our hotel Customer input is actively sought out and leveraged to boost organizational effectiveness.                                  | 4.09         | .673         |
| In our hotel, there is a significant link between organizational effectiveness and client happiness, which helps to improve performance. | 4.01         | .658         |
| <b>Average</b>   | <b>4.038</b> | <b>0.688</b> |

From Table 2, the study respondents showed a general agreement with the performance in their hotels, with an overall mean score of 4.04. Similarly, all of the sub-variables that were used to assess for organizational learning strategy also yielded general agreement levels. Specifically, the study respondents generally confirmed their positive customer satisfaction (mean score 4.08), average daily rate (mean score 4.06), and occupancy rate (mean score 3.97). Such general agreeability among the study respondents was also supported by the respondents' positive confirmation of every statement used to assess.

#### 4.2 Regression Analysis

The successful completion of the study indicated an impressive 95% response rate,

underscoring a noteworthy level of engagement and cooperation within the studied group. This robust response rate not only signifies a high level of participation but also enhances the credibility and reliability of the study findings. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between marketing strategy and performance of four-Star Rated Hotels in the Coastal Region of Kenya. In Table 5, the study revealed a strong, positive linear relationship between Performance of Four-Star Rated Hotels and marketing strategy ( $R=0.668$ ). Furthermore, the model indicated that approximately 44.6% of the variation in the dependent variable could be directly accounted for by variations in the contingent variable ( $R^2=0.446$ ). This meant that almost half of the change observed in Hotel Performance was explained by the variations in this specific factor under scrutiny.

**Table 3: Model Summary for Marketing Strategy and Hotel Performance**

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted Square | R Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1     | .668 <sup>a</sup> | .446     | .435            | .22981                       |

Successively, the ANOVA results as captured in Table 3 revealed that this regression model was significant. The model yielded a p-value that fell below the 0.05 threshold score (p-value= 0.000). Besides, the F-score of 39.424 suggested that there was a notable difference between the variables being compared.

**Table 4: ANOVA Results for Marketing Strategy and Hotel Performance**

| Model      | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F      | Sig.              |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|--------|-------------------|
| Regression | 6.246          | 3   | 2.082       | 39.424 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Residual   | 7.763          | 147 | .053        |        |                   |
| Total      | 14.009         | 150 |             |        |                   |

The regression coefficients results captured the individual influence of each sub-variable of Marketing Strategy on Performance of Hotel Performance. The specific sub-variables under study included product diversification, flexible pricing strategy, and customer service improvement strategy. Notably, all of the three sub-variables were found to individually have a significant influence on the dependent variable. The significance of influence was determined at a 95% confidence interval. Specifically, the significantly influential sub variables were product diversification (p-value= 0.000), flexible pricing strategy (p-value= 0.000), and customer service improvement strategy (p-value= 0.000).



**Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Marketing Strategy**

| Model             | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients |       |      | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B |             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
|                   | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      | t     | Sig. | Lower Bound                     | Upper Bound |
| <b>(Constant)</b> | 1.184                       | .265       |                           | 4.471 | .000 | .661                            | 1.708       |
| <b>MeanPD</b>     | .195                        | .031       | .388                      | 6.233 | .000 | .133                            | .257        |
| <b>MeanFP</b>     | .199                        | .034       | .367                      | 5.902 | .000 | .132                            | .266        |
| <b>MeanCSI</b>    | .314                        | .038       | .518                      | 8.354 | .000 | .240                            | .388        |

In light of the aforementioned regression coefficient outcomes, a refined model has been developed to better encapsulate the influence of the Marketing strategy on the performance of Four-Star Rated Hotels. More specifically, the Beta coefficients associated with Product Diversification, Flexible Pricing, and Customer Service Improvement Strategy have played a pivotal role in shaping and informing this revised model. The revised model is as follows:

$$Y = 1.184 + 0.195 PD + 0.199FP + 0.314CSI + \varepsilon$$

Where:

*Y* = Hotel Performance

*PD* = Product Diversification

*FP* = Flexible Pricing Strategy

*CSI* = Customer Service Improvement

$\varepsilon$  = Error term

In addition, the hypothesis test results on; *H<sub>0</sub>* There is no significant influence of marketing strategy on the Performance of Four Star-Rated Hotels in the coastal region of Kenya.

The null hypothesis, which posited no significant effect, was not supported at a 95 percent confidence level, indicated by an extremely low p-value of 0.000 ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ). Additionally, marketing strategy produced a t-value of 8.177, significantly above the critical benchmark score of 1.96 ( $|t| > 1.96$ ), suggesting high confidence in this coefficient as a predictor variable. Remarkably, marketing strategy possessed the highest Beta coefficient among the predictors, indicating it was the most influential variable ( $\beta = 0.584$ ). Due to these results, the hypothesis was rejected. The high confidence in the coefficient and its influential nature among the variables, the overall analysis led to the conclusion that marketing strategy exerted a significant effect on performance of four-star rated hotels based on this study's findings.

## 5.0 Conclusion

This study aimed to establish the influence of marketing strategy on the performance of four-star-rated hotels in Kenya's Coast region. The research uncovered a substantial influence of marketing strategy on hotel performance in the specified area, ultimately leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. The findings suggest that a well-crafted marketing strategy plays a crucial role in enhancing the overall performance of four-star hotels in this region. This information is valuable for hotel management, helping them make informed decisions and refine their marketing approaches to achieve better results and stay competitive in the

hospitality industry. The research provides strong evidence of the critical significance that marketing strategy plays as a turnaround strategy in greatly influencing the performance of four-star hotels in Kenya's coastal region. There is little doubt that the use of marketing strategies for turnaround targets and the higher performance levels shown in these hotels are positively correlated. This highlights the strategic importance of successful marketing campaigns and confirms their vital role in four-star establishments' success and profitability in the competitive and dynamic hospitality business along Kenya's coast.

## 6.0 Recommendation

Building upon the research study's positive findings regarding the influence of marketing strategies as a turnaround strategy on the performance of four-star-rated hotels in the coastal region of Kenya, several industry-level recommendations emerge. Primarily, hotels are advised to amplify their strategic emphasis on turnaround strategies, recognizing the substantial influence of marketing strategies in adapting to changing market demands. Implementing cost-effective measures without compromising service quality can significantly enhance profitability and ensure long-term sustainability. In addition, a crucial aspect for these hotels is to continuously assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. Regularly collecting feedback, analyzing performance metrics, and adapting strategies to evolving market dynamics and customer needs are paramount. Simultaneously, maintaining flexibility to swiftly adjust strategies based on changing circumstances is essential. This agility in responding to market shifts is a key determinant for sustained success in the dynamic landscape of the hospitality industry.

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