

**EFFECT OF INNOVATION STRATEGIES ON
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF MWALIMU NATIONAL
SACCO IN NAIROBI**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
DEGREE OF THE MASTER OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

AUGUST, 2023

DECLARATION

The research endeavour I am currently undertaking represents my own intellectual contribution and has not been previously submitted as part of an academic pursuit at any other institution.

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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as university supervisor

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my sincere gratitude to the divine entity for blessing me with the opportunity, strength, and resilience to accomplish this academic milestone. It is with utmost honor that I extend my appreciation to Prof. Florence Muindi, my esteemed supervisor, for her unwavering support, invaluable guidance, and motivation, which have played a pivotal role in enabling me to successfully conclude this project. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Prof. Evans Aosa, my moderator, for his exceptional mentorship and profound direction throughout this endeavor. I would also like to sincerely acknowledge Mr. Peter Kiiluf for his insightful guidance and direction he accorded to me. His assistance was so timely. Finally, may I acknowledge my respondents at Mwalimu National SACCO for their cooperation during data collection.

May God bless you all.

DEDICATION

I would like to extend my heartfelt dedication of this Research Project to my beloved spouse, Mary, and our children, Elias, Elvis, and little Elsie, for their unwavering encouragement and support throughout this academic endeavor. I am deeply grateful for their constant motivation, which has propelled me forward. Moreover, I would like to express a special dedication to my mother, Joyce, as well as my late father, Elias, and the Irungus, for their significant contributions and steadfast presence throughout my educational journey, ensuring its successful completion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	vii
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.1.1 Concept of Innovation Strategies.....	3
1.1.2. Competitive Advantage.....	5
1.1.3. SACCOS in Kenya	5
1.2 Research Problem.....	7
1.3 Research Objective.....	10
1.4 Value of the Study.....	10
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
2.1 Introduction.....	11
2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study	11
2.2.1 Resource-Based View of Strategy	11
2.2.2 Schumpeter Theory of Innovation	12
2.3 Innovation Strategies.....	13
2.4 Empirical Review.....	14
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
3.1 Introduction.....	20
3.2 Research Design	20
3.3 Data Collection	20
3.4 Data Analysis	20
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	22
4.1 Introduction.....	22
4.2 Demographic Information	22
4.2.1 Respondents' Designation.....	22
4.2.3 Respondents' Highest Education Level.....	23
4.2.4 Respondents' Working Experience	23
4.3 Innovative Strategies	24
4.3.1 Product Innovations Strategies	24
4.3.2 Pricing and Organizational Innovation Strategies	25
4.3.3 Process Innovation Strategies.....	27

4.3.4 MarketingInnovationStrategies	28
4.4. Competitive Advantage	29
4.5 Innovation Strategies and Competitive Advantage.....	30
CHAPTERFIVE: SUMMARY,CONCLUSIONSANDRECOMMENDATIONS.....	33
5.1 Introduction.....	33
5.2 Summaryof the Study.....	33
5.3 Conclusionsof the Study.....	34
5.4 Recommendationsofthe Study	35
5.5 Suggestionfor further Research.....	35
REFERENCES.....	36
APPENDICES.....	41
Appendix I: Interview Guide	41
SectionB: InnovationStrategies	41
Pricing Innovations	43
MarketingInnovation	43
Process Innovation	45
Sectionc: Competitive Advantage.....	47

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Respondents' Position.....	22
Table 4.2	Respondents' Highest Educational Level.....	23
Table 4.3	Respondents' Working Experience.....	23

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ATM..... Automated Teller machine

ADM.....Annual Delegates meeting

DT – SACCO.....Deposit – Taking SACCO

FMCG.....Fast-moving Consumer Goods

RBV.....Resource-based View

SACCO.....Savings And Credit Cooperative Society

SASRA.....SACCOSocieties Regulatory Authority

TSC..... Teachers Service Commission

BSC.....Balanced score card

PMA..... Performance management system

MAM.....Mwalimu Asset Management

MIS..... Management Information System

ABSTRACT

In the recent past financial market has become quite competitive. Firms within the financial industry have increased as they wrestle for the same market. Both commercial banks and deposit taking SACCOs have flooded the markets. The recent entry within the market is the communication companies such as Safaricom and Airtel that have come up with their own micro money lending applications to cater for small scale lenders. This has created immense pressure financial institutions as they strive to advance their market share. Deposit taking SACCOs as well as other financial institutions have resulted to innovations to remain afloat as well as surviving this highly competitive field. The study focuses on the effects of innovation strategies adopted by Mwalimu National Sacco on competitive advantage. The researcher adopted case study research design since the study is on one firm. The data collected was analysed using content analysis. Respondents were drawn from various departments in various managerial positions such as branch managers, departmental heads as well as general staff of Mwalimu National Sacco were interviewed. The results of the study shows that innovation strategies adopted by Mwalimu National Sacco resulted to sustainable competitive advantage, this measured by the SACCOs market dominance as well as updated products that respond to the needs of the customers. New products have been created and introduced for the last 5 years, the findings of this study shows that MNS's continued innovation has led to great performance both in expanded market share as well as the reduced cost of production which in turn leads to increased profit margin.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Many firms face different challenges in their operations and adoption of unique plans and programs such as innovation strategies is imperative in their major operations (Urbancova, 2013). According to Owino (2011), when joining a new market or in order to grow the company's market dominance, innovation performs an essential role in creating a competitive advantage. As we advance globally on innovations, the innovation process control also advances. Institutions have recognized the benefits innovation has on commercial enterprise improvement and maximization of business possibilities provided by the ever-changing market to attain competitive advantage. Drucker (1985) defined innovation as a tool utilized by entrepreneurs to make the most opportunities brought approximately with the resource of change for distinctive services or groups, capable of being practiced. Porter (1985) alluded that once corporations maintain earnings exceeding the same sector, it is said to have attained competitive advantage. D'Cruz and Rugman (1992) competitiveness of an organization takes place while a firm designs, produces and markets its merchandise more than those provided by their competitors. Modern market changes that are taking place all over the world serve as a reminder of why it is so important for all business operators to stay current and develop appropriately. Finding a player within the company that rejects innovation is quite difficult (Hurley and Hult, 1998). Innovation should be a necessity rather than an extravagance (Kaplan and Waren, 2007). By improving profitability and group performance which in turn results in competitive advantage, we will achieve innovation in the integration of technological know-how into commercial enterprise.

Schumpeter's theory and Resource - Based View (RBV) theory of innovation are the focus theories in this study. Schumpeter (1934) alluded that an entrepreneur can earn financial

profits by introducing successful innovations. The innovation theory of income posits that the entrepreneur gains earnings if his innovation is a success both in reducing the overall production cost or increasing the call for his product. The vision 2030 comprises of three main pillars ranging from social, economic and political factors. Credit Cooperative societies and Deposit –Taking Savings (DT-SACCOs) have a share in imposing the vision as they have a goal to build a vibrant economy by riding on massive saving; this can later be used for investments. Moreover, DT-SACCO’s play a critical role in mobilizing resources. DT-SACCOs have embraced the latest generation in presenting their products and services including cash deposits, withdrawals and establishing accounts to the unbanked in the public which places them in a higher aggressive position (Moki, et al., 2019). Financial innovation has contributed to simple and speedy access of services, information and services to clientele as well as reducing the continuous sky rocketing of operation expenses of the DT-SACCOs. Thus, DT-SACCOs that embrace financial innovation have better chances of being financially sustainable than those that are not (Njenga, et al., 2015).

The sector affects quite a number of people. The subsector subsequently covers strategic positions of the country. It creates job opportunities, wealth creation and food security. Cooperatives provide an infrastructure that caters for all groups from low to middle class. Gitman & McDaniel (2008) indicates that cooperatives are always prevalent across industries, with telecommunications, healthcare, finance, housing, and agriculture being the sectors with the highest concentration. This study will target Mwalimu National SACCO, one of the DT-SACCOs in Nairobi County’. There are no many research on the impact of innovation strategies on DT-SACCOs' ability to preserve competitive advantage.

1.1.1 Innovation Strategies

Schumpeter's 1934 noted that the concept of innovation served as the foundation for Cole's 1959 study of firm innovation. Schumpeter (1934) claims that innovation strategy is the process through which business action integrates the intellectual originality of invention. In his research on entrepreneurial transformation in enterprises, Cole (2010) broadened the study of innovation by focusing on businesses. Many studies on business innovation have been published after Cole's study. Researchers have done research on the internal logic of the innovation manner, the revolutionary behaviours of corporations, and the size of technological innovations through patents. Scholars also noted that corporations in solid industries had more special organizational strategies to innovation than those in newly created industries (Owino, 2011).

Muller and Välikangas (2002) argued that innovation strategy refers to a deliberate and systematic approach employed by organizations to foster and manage innovation within their operations, products, services, or business models. It involves the establishment and implementation of plans, and processes aimed at promoting and sustaining innovation as a core element of the organization's overall strategy.

According to the book "Entrepreneurship and Innovation: Principles and Practice" by Peter F. Drucker (2007), innovation strategy involves setting clear objectives and direction for innovation initiatives within an organization. It encompasses identifying opportunities for innovation, allocating resources, establishing innovation processes, and creating a supportive organizational culture that encourages experimentation and learning.

Another valuable resource on innovation strategy is the article "The Innovation Strategy Journey" by Nancy Tennant Snyder and Deborah L. Duarte (2007) published in the Harvard Business Review. The authors define innovation strategy as a comprehensive plan that integrates innovation initiatives with the organization's overall strategic goals. It involves

making choices and trade-offs regarding focus areas, target markets, technologies, and resource allocation to drive innovation and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Dodgson (2001) noted that that innovation contributes to an employer's success by enabling it to enter markets more aggressively. Companies may ensure a long-term profitable business for future generations by establishing a beneficial relationship with entrepreneurs and start-ups. However, innovation is described by Thompsons (2007) as the development, application, and adoption of innovative approaches, concepts, goods, or services. There is a diverse degree in to how corporations convert ideas into products or services and develop them to develop profitability in the market (Damanpour, 1996). There are many innovations that have been examined by many researchers, but five of them stand out above the rest, they include business model, organizational structure, advertising and marketing, process, and product and service (Weiermar, 2006). The three innovations that will form the basis of this study are marketing innovation, process, and product. The introduction of a service or good that is modern or considerably altered in terms of its functional characteristics, integrated software program, user-friendliness, specification, usage, materials, and other practical components is referred to as product innovation (OECD, 2005). The word "product" can be used to describe both services and goods.

From the views of Onduku(2013), process innovations are consciously used for a variety of purposes, including to create newer, better-quality goods, lower delivery or production costs, expand supply, or boost quality products (OECD, 2005). Utilizing modern advertising techniques that significantly alter promotion, packaging, layout, price and product positioning is a specialty of marketing innovation (OECD, 2005). The main goals of advertising innovations are to put a company's product on the market, open up new markets, or better serve customer requirements with the intention of boosting the firm's revenue.

1.1.2 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage, as defined by Porter (1985), refers to a company's capability to surpass its competitors. It represents the distinctive qualities or advantages that set a company apart and allow it to achieve superior performance, profitability, and market share. In his analysis, Porter (1985) emphasizes the significance of establishing and maintaining a distinct market position through the provision of products or services that are perceived as superior in terms of quality, differentiation, cost, or niche targeting.

Another influential author in the field of competitive advantage is Jay Barney. Barney defines competitive advantage as a firm's ability to generate a sustainable, positive difference from its competitors (Barney, 1991, p. 99). He emphasizes the importance of capabilities and resources that possess immutability, rarity, value, and lack of easy substitutes. When an organization acquires surplus that outstrips the competitors, it is said to be competitive (Porter, 1985). It is the advantage that it holds over the rest of its rivals. Several strategic decisions are necessary if a firm is to acquire the competitive advantage it deserves (Porter, 1998). The business environment is dynamically changing and imposing revolutionary strategies is vital for an organization to stay afloat. Competitiveness can therefore be addressed as a continuous reward to the application of certain unique and benefit generating strategies. When a company is able to produce similar products or services at a lesser price it is considered to have an upper hand over the rival. Competitive leads enable companies to gain higher profits and additionally create superior value to their clients (Barney, 1991).

1.1.3. SACCOs in Kenya

SACCOs, which stands for Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations, play a significant role in the financial sector of Kenya. These cooperatives are member-owned and member-operated financial institutions that aim to provide a range of financial services to their members. SACCOs in Kenya have a long history and have become an essential part of the country's financial landscape (SASRA, 2023).

In Kenya, SACCOs accept deposits and also provide loans to customers. However, SACCOs are not only in business to make a profit but they mostly support the needs of their members. The primary aim of the SACCOs is to serve their members (SASRA, 2023). The members of

the SACCOs gain benefits through lower loan interest rates and supportive working environment. SACCOs in Kenya operate on a cooperative model, where individuals with a common bond, such as employees of the same organization or residents of a particular area, come together to form a SACCO. Members of a SACCO are also owners and have voting rights in decision-making processes.

SACCOs offer a variety of financial services to their members, including savings accounts, loans, insurance, and investment opportunities (SASRA, 2023). Members can save their money in the SACCO, and these savings form a pool of funds that can be used to provide loans to members at affordable interest rates. One of the primary benefits of SACCO membership is access to credit. SACCOs in Kenya provide loans for various purposes, such as business development, education, housing, and emergency needs. The interest rates charged by SACCOs are typically lower compared to those offered by commercial banks, making credit more accessible and affordable for members. It should also be noted that SACCOs play a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion in Kenya. They cater to individuals who may have limited access to formal banking services and offer an avenue for them to save, borrow, and build financial stability. SACCOs often provide financial literacy and education programs to empower their members in managing their finances effectively. SACCOs in Kenya are regulated by the Ministry of Industrialization, Trade, and Cooperatives through the SACCO Societies Regulatory Authority (SASRA). SASRA oversees the licensing, supervision, and regulation of SACCOs to ensure compliance with established guidelines and safeguard the interests of members (SASRA, 2023).

The SACCO sector in Kenya has experienced significant growth over the years. SACCOs have expanded their services beyond the traditional savings and credit functions, offering investment opportunities, mobile banking services, and other innovative financial products (SASRA, 2023). The sector has become an integral part of Kenya's financial system and

contributes to the country's economic development. SACCOs in Kenya provide an important avenue for financial services and empowerment, particularly for individuals and communities with limited access to formal banking. They promote a culture of savings, provide affordable credit, and contribute to the economic well-being of their members (SASRA, 2023).

1.1.4 Mwalimu National SACCO

The Mwalimu National SACCO was rebranded in 2010 and changed from its former name Mwalimu SACCO registered in 1974 under the co-operatives Societies Act. It majorly focuses on mobilizing savings and offers credit services to its members (Mwalimu National SACCO, 2023). The SACCO membership is drawn from Teachers Service Commission (T.S.C) employees, public secondary school teachers and some public primary school teachers. The SACCO's main income is drawn from the interest paid on credit offered to the members (Mwalimu National SACCO, 2023).

The Sacco has a schedule of marketing days that happens in all their forty branches (Mwalimu National SACCO, 2023). This is done for annual foundation when the Sacco employees meet with current or potential contributors of a branch with an aim of educating them on modern-day happenings on the Sacco at some point of the Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM). The positions of the members of the Board as well as the Supervisory Committee are elective through the delegates system during the ADM but one has to be elected as a delegate in their respective branches (Mwalimu National SACCO, 2023).

1.2 Research Problem

Innovation is tied up to the creation, development, and implementation of recent products, strategies or services, to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, or competitive advantage. It specializes in the firm abilities to change new ideas to private values (Onduku, 2013). The firm's micro and macro- economic factors sparks need for change and progressive reaction to

complement the organizations performance, assets as well as its surroundings. Innovations may be in piecemeal, radical or descriptive, consequently the corporation need to be adaptive if it's to maintain its maximum performance. Several revolutionary reactions face opposition and limitations which obstruct the corporation's functioning and performance, successful execution of the revolutionary approach is the hardest method for success of a corporation (Jones & Hill, 1977).

Mwalimu National Sacco is under pressure to further innovate their services to be at par with other related organizations which provide related or the same products or services, strain from their consumer who demand higher and extra capabilities. Mwalimu National SACCO has in the current past partnered with INTRASOFT to control their innovation strategies and approaches to compete in the market. However, there has been challenges on this region in which individuals are experiencing long queues all through end months due to common downtimes of the electronic services (Mwalimu National SACCO, 2023). Some of the problems associated with ATM card issuance. Other challenges include loss of connectivity on the mobile services due to application failures.

Despite the fact that there is preceding research carried out on this sector, there exists a remarkable research gaps along theoretical, dependent and scholarly domains; this might be what the study is centred on. Research on innovation and organizational structure within the Indian bulk medicine sector was conducted in 2015 by Sahay, Yamini Prakash, and Gupta. The research team used a survey research approach to collect information from 15 bulk medication companies. They discovered that innovation often contributes positively to the bottom line and is necessary for survival. Innovative businesses also get the biggest financial rewards. Gaining competitive advantage through innovation techniques was the subject of a study conducted in 2017 by Ergeneli, Goksoy, & Vayvay. A qualitative investigative method

was used in the investigation. They concluded that innovation is the key to achieving sustained competitive advantage in today's economic system.

In his study, Muzaffer (2019) investigated how technology advancement and function affect a company's profitability and competitiveness. Descriptive and inferential information were employed in the investigation. He recognized that the micro- and macroeconomics of an organization must be taken into consideration while managing technological innovation. Additionally, a crucial element in sustaining a competitive edge in today's competitive global economic environment is technological innovation.

A case study on the innovative tactics used by Equity Bank Ltd. was conducted regionally by Gathai (2019). It was found that senior management has to be concerned and allocate resources to the department tasked with using innovative strategies if an organization is to embrace it. The case study on innovation initiatives at Standard Chartered (OK) Ltd. was handled by Odhiambo in 2018. He came to the conclusion that creativity is a must for an innovative business. As a result, a higher standard of quality and a creative attitude are established. Studies conducted by Mwikali (2016) should be aware of how to foster creativity in innovation processes.

In a research, Karanja (2011) sought to determine if United Bank of Africa Limited might gain a competitive edge through innovative strategies. According to the study, United Bank of Africa's innovation methods helped the financial organization thrive in an unsettling and competitive economic environment, giving it a competitive advantage. Thus, it is clear that earlier studies of a similar sort have been conducted, but none have focused on the effects of innovative strategies on aggressive gain used by SACCOs, particularly in Nairobi County. As such, this study will address the research gaps by answering the research question-What is the impact of innovation strategies on Mwalimu National SACCO's competitive advantage?

1.3 Research Objective

This study's objective was to ascertain how innovation strategies affected Mwalimu National Sacco's competitive advantage in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.4 Value of the Study

SACCOs and financial institutions may find value in the study's results since they may employ innovative methods to differentiate themselves from rivals and tap into the progressive techniques that lead to competitive advantage. The results may also provide insight into how SACCOs might forge competitive advantages and capitalize on them.

The findings from the study on the impact of innovative strategies on competitive advantage in the SACCO industry will provide valuable insights for policymakers in the country. It will also be beneficial to Kenya's SACCO regulator, (SASRA), as they would support the effects of contemporary techniques on achieving SACCOs' competitive advantage.

Future researchers on this context will gain from the study's addition of new knowledge to the body of existing literature. Future research can be based on the conclusions from this study. Researchers will be able to connect their theoretical frameworks using the previously published work related to this study topic.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study's theoretical literature covered two theories; the resource-based view and Schumpeter innovation theories. The empirical literature in addition illustrates the previous studies by numerous scholars that relate to this study. In addition, this chapter summarizes the literature and knowledge gaps which create a basis for this research.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation of the Study

This section primarily addresses the relevant theories, namely the Schumpeter's theory and Resource-Based View (RBV) of innovation. It delves into their application to the study at hand.

2.2.1 Resource-Based View of Strategy

Penrose created this concept in 1959. It advocates for businesses to develop priceless and unique resources and combine them in a dynamic and unusual way that are geared towards the firm's success. Onduku(2013) noted that the idea that a company's ability to compete hinges on factors like technology level, scale economies, or natural resources is unfounded because these resources are unquestionably tradable. Instead, according to RBV, competitive advantage is founded on the organization's unique, prized, and infrequently imitated assets. Human capital is an example of an invisible asset (Itami, 2007).

The company's RBV emphasizes the widely held belief that people are a company's most valuable resource from the perspective of strategic human resource management. According to Porras & Collins (2004), it is crucial to foster and grow employees within a solid and encouraging tradition. A new finding contends that talent acquisition and sharing are the means by which the organization's needs and progress within the personnel's competence capacities are attained in order to get a competitive edge. According to the RBV, competing

businesses compete on the basis of their immobility as well as their variety of skills and resources (Bergen & Peteraf, 2003). Resources may be used to expand value-creating approaches and can be of a human, organizational, or physical nature. According to Barney (1991), resources that possess value, rarity, lack of substitutes, and are inimitable contribute to a firm's ability to achieve a competitive advantage that can be sustained over time.

The existing literature on competitive advantage has shown a different dimension even as it also acknowledges the firm's internal assets impact on the company's overall performance to a great extent (Wright, 2009). The RBV of the firm places importance on developing difficult-to-imitate, priceless, and unique resources as well as a dynamic method to integrate them for organizational success. The firm's RBV demonstrates the benefits of growing and improving the competency of the company's employees through systematic expertise acquisition, education and engagement to gain competitive advantage. This is applicable to the goals of employee engagement because it acknowledges how acquisition of human assets which can be rare, inimitable and non-substitutable can provide companies with a resource that can enhance employee retention.

The RBV theory, however, has some limitations. Some of the critics of the theory argue that it could be difficult to determine the appropriate level of analysis due to the wide definition of resources. Furthermore, a resource that is seen as inimitable, valuable and unique today may not remain so in the future. Thus, the firm must come up with ways of ensuring that these resources are further developed and exploited to remain relevant.

2.2.2 Schumpeter Theory of Innovation

The theory of innovation, initiated by Joseph Schumpeter (1928), describes innovation as a continuous process that drives growth in economic systems through a series of events. Schumpeter (1928) argues that the disruptive and wobbling nature of technological

changes in capitalism brings about an inseparable merge between short- and long-term rate of growth. A prime critique of the Schumpeter's work is that though Schumpeter clearly emphasised on the advantages realized as a result of innovation through his insights, he didn't pay attention to the source of the innovation.

Porter (1992) refers to Schumpeter's work by arguing that innovation is vital to a growth of the country in the long run. The country through its financial sector ought to therefore invest greater on improvements to reap competitive advantage and be able to correctly compete in the global economic markets. To date, the work of innovation which originated from the muse laid by way of Schumpeter has been targeted to the introduction of innovation amongst organizations. The Schumpeter concept therefore stays relevant to date thinking about that new era executed replaces vintage generation that is of properly really worth as the brand-new era brings cost addition to the adopter.

Some critics of Schumpeter's theory of innovation view innovation as one of the many factors that lead to economic development of a country. Therefore, a firm cannot depend on innovation alone for its economic development.

2.3 Innovation Strategies and competitive advantage

Within this section, various strategies related to product, process, and marketing innovation are discussed. Product innovation involves the creation of contemporary products using competitive materials to meet the ever-changing needs effectively (Damanpour, 1996). Additionally, it focuses on the advent of modern services and products to the current market or alteration of existing commodities to satisfy consumers (Wang & Ahmed, 2004). Innovation complements quality that is critical to firm's success and eventually results in an organisation achieving a competitive advantage (Garvin, 1987). Product development was divided into critical and accidental innovations by Meyer (1996).

Incidental improvements are organization or alternate-focused and they usually encompass enhancements on the prevailing market. Product changes can employ advanced information or technology, or a combination of both present proficiencies and technology. Product revolution is driven by the translation of needs, technology, competition and the minimization of product lifecycles. Upgrading and reengineering exchange processes' internal functioning is known as system innovation (Cumming, 1998). It encompasses a number of a corporation's initiatives, including manufacturing, business management, technical design, studies and improvement, and technical design (Freeman, 1982). Process innovation, as noted by Oke et al. (2007), is focused on the improvement or creation of craftsmanship as well as the development of systems or processes. The application of modernized or improved delivery or production techniques is a suitable definition of process innovation. The utilization of contemporary advertising techniques is the goal, along with fine modifications to product packaging, promotion, price, layout and placement (OECD, 2005).

2.4 Empirical Literature Review

There exists a multidimensional and intricate relationship between innovation and gaining a competitive advantage. A company's ability to expand its market appeal by introducing specific cost savings and competencies will depend on how successfully it implements current business tactics. Understanding when change is appropriate and when it is not demands for strong adaptability. In order to establish a commercial operation that is ready, decision-makers should understand consumer demands to be able to make pertinent judgments. Also, there must be adequate interest in innovation that is facilitated, controlled, and retained.

In the Chinese mechanical manufacturing industry, Zhang et al. (2018) conducted a study to assess the impact of open innovation on firm performance in the industry. The researchers collected data from 213 firms in the industry and conducted statistical analyses to examine

the research hypotheses. The study examines the concept of open innovation, which involves firms collaborating and integrating external knowledge and resources into their innovation processes. It investigates two key aspects of open innovation; this includes inbound open innovation, which involves acquiring and utilizing external technologies and knowledge, and outbound open innovation, which focuses on external commercialization and utilization of internal knowledge and technologies. The researchers hypothesize that both inbound and outbound open innovation positively influence firm performance in the Chinese mechanical manufacturing industry. They also consider the moderating effect of firm size, as larger firms may have different resources and capabilities for open innovation compared to smaller firms. The findings of the study reveal that both inbound and outbound open innovation positively impact firm performance in the Chinese mechanical manufacturing industry. This suggests that firms that actively engage in acquiring and utilizing external knowledge and technologies, as well as in commercializing their internal knowledge and technologies, are more likely to achieve better performance outcomes. Moreover, the findings of this study uncover that the relationship between firm performance and the adoption of open innovation practices is contingent upon the size of the organization. Specifically, the research indicates that smaller firms demonstrate a more pronounced and positive connection between firm performance and inbound open innovation activities. Consequently, larger firms exhibit a stronger positive association between outbound open innovation efforts and their overall performance. These findings emphasize that the influence of open innovation on firm performance is contingent upon the size of the organization, highlighting the importance of considering firm size as a key factor in analyzing the impact of open innovation strategies. However, this study was done in China and was based on Chinese mechanical manufacturing industry.

Karabulut (2015) conducted a study in Turkey's manufacturing firm to investigate the correlation between firm performance and innovation strategy. The researcher collected data from 267 manufacturing firms and conducted statistical analyses to explore the research objectives. The study focuses on innovation strategy, which refers to the deliberate and systematic approach adopted by firms to foster and manage innovation within their operations. The researcher proposed that the adoption of an innovation strategy has a positive influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Turkey. The study's findings support this hypothesis, demonstrating that implementing an innovation strategy has a beneficial effect on firm performance within the Turkish manufacturing industry. These results imply that companies actively engaged in developing and executing innovation strategies are more likely to achieve favourable performance outcomes in the sector. Furthermore, the study highlights the moderating role of firm size in the relationship between firm performance and innovation strategy. Specifically, the positive association between innovation strategy and firm performance is more pronounced for larger firms in comparison to smaller ones in the industry. This indicates that the impact of innovation strategy on firm performance can vary depending on the size of the company, nevertheless, it is vital to note that the research was specifically conducted in the context of Turkey.

In their study in Ghana, YuSheng & Ibrahim (2020) investigated the relationship between different types of innovation, innovation capabilities, and firm performance in the banking sector of Ghana. The researchers collected data from 193 employees in various banks operating in Ghana and conducted statistical analyses to examine the research hypotheses. The study explores two main dimensions of innovation; innovation types and innovation capabilities. Innovation capabilities refer to the organization's ability to effectively manage and leverage its resources to foster innovation. Innovation types include organizational innovation, process innovation, and product innovation. The researchers hypothesize that

innovation capabilities positively influence different types of innovation, which in turn impact firm performance. The findings of the study reveal that innovation capabilities significantly influence all three types of innovation in the banking sector of Ghana. Specifically, the researchers found that innovation capabilities positively affect organizational innovation, process innovation, and product innovation within the banks. This suggests that organizations with strong innovation capabilities are more likely to engage in different types of innovation activities. Furthermore, the study indicates that organizational innovation and product innovation have a positive effect on firm performance, however, the relationship between process innovation and firm performance was not found to be significant. This implies that the introduction of new products and services and the implementation of innovative organizational practices can enhance the overall performance of banks in Ghana. However, this study was done in Ghana and focus on banking sector.

Noting that innovation orientations are critical to the survival and success of any enterprise, Ibrahim (2016) studied the impact of innovation orientation on competitive advantage at Safaricom limited. The researcher administered 359 questionnaires and sampled the employees. The findings display that the business enterprise's design of products and services aimed to conform with the legal requirements, satisfied the user's needs, and by extension achieved competitive advantage. To apprehend and respond to consumer needs, the company had deployed a device for collecting the personnel' opinion, automate its inventory system, and maintained a normal inspection of its products and facilities. The study found out an affirmed and substantial relationship between product innovation and competitive advantage.

According to a research by Oira and Kibati (2016) on economic performance and innovation of commercial banks in Nakuru, Kenya, firms must adopt effective innovation models for their success. These financial institutions' innovative choices were flexible, which

led to a high level of client uptake. High profit rate, growth of sales and return on investment had been the most endorsed accounting based financial measures of an employer's performance. According to studies, there is a three to six-year lag between the time an invention occurs and its impact on a company's success. Given this observation, it was critical to recognize that short-term financial performance indicators were inappropriate since the long-term effects of these variables were the most obvious (Sethibe&Steyn, 2016)

Muthoni (2017) investigated the impact of product innovation on the competitive benefit inside the fast-moving goods (FMCG) industry, with PZ Cussons as the case study. The findings indicated that updated product development and introduction in the market were significant indicators of achieving competitive advantage. Corporations that delivered new products, advanced existing products, and promoted a culture of innovation amongst personnel while presenting assets were likely to acquire competitive advantage. The study also mounted a high quality and great effect of system innovation, and market innovation in gaining and maintaining competitive advantage. Nur, Topsakal, and Dogan (2014) conducted a research study to determine the scope of updated strategic innovation initiatives in hotels operating in the province of Antalya and their restrictions. Their findings showed that innovations in hotel services enhanced quality of services to hotel visitors. The study's findings showed that organizations were responsible for the significance of utilizing modern technologies and innovation since it consists both of inputs and outputs.

Oyoo (2002) assessed the financial potential of SACCOs prior to post-deregulation. The results of his analysis demonstrated that SACCOs should focus on future plans and extend their scope beyond internal operations in order to maintain their competitive edge. A research by Owino (2011) on the competitive tactics used by SACCOs in Mombasa County came to the conclusion that the SACCO must choose the precise competitive strategies that it requires. Additionally, they ought to seek funding and insightful leaders to attain a feasible

competitive advantage to counter issues emanating from the external environment.

The literature above describes the strategic innovations and competitive advantage and their interrelation as the organization operate under dynamic and ever-changing business environments. The winners and losers in the business world are determined by the rate in which they react to innovation competitiveness. Research on competitive advantage and innovation has been conducted in many different ways, but little attention has been paid to how innovation tactics affect competitive advantage. As a result, there should be an empirical research to determine how innovative techniques affect SACCOs' competitive advantage.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a comprehensive overview is presented regarding the research design, data collection methodologies, and data analysis techniques utilized in the study. The intricate details of these aspects are thoroughly explained to provide a clear understanding of the approach taken in conducting the research.

3.2 Research Design

A case study approach was used in the research. Kothari (1990) refers a case study as an approach that involves a cautious and thorough surveillance of social units, communities, families and institutions. Majority of case study researches involve an in-depth analysis rather than just a study overview. A case study design was deemed appropriate for this study in answering the questions “how” and “why” that do not necessarily necessitate taking full control of the events since they focus more on operationalization acquaintances that can be obtained over time rather than incidences or frequencies (Kothari, 1990).

3.3 Data Collection

Using interview guidelines, face-to-face interviews with the respondents was used to collect primary data for this study. The respondents consisted of branch managers, departmental heads and general staff in Mwalimu National Sacco. These top management employees who are in most cases engaged in the creation and execution of strategies were relevant in providing data for the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data gathered was qualitative in nature hence it required an analytical understanding of the

qualitative analysis method. The data was evaluated for completeness, consistency and credibility prior to the data analysis. Content analysis techniques was utilized to make systematic inferences from the obtained words and concepts relating to their occurrences and trends. In order to fully comprehend the impact of business innovation strategies on sustained competitive advantage in Mwalimu National Sacco in Nairobi County, key arguments, concepts, and topics was collected through content analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus is on conducting data analysis, interpreting the findings, and engaging in discussions. These activities are aligned with the objectives of the study, providing a comprehensive analysis of the topic

4.2 Demographic Information

The primary objective of this study was to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their work experience, job designation, age, and gender. The ensuing section presents the findings obtained from the analysis of these demographic factors.

4.2.1 Respondents' Designation

Table 4.1. Respondent's position

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Branch Managers	3	15
Departmental Heads	4	20
General Staff	13	65
Total	20	100

Figure 4.2 Respondents' Designation

Based on the analysis, it was determined that a significant portion of the participants (65%) belonged to the staff category, 20% held positions as departmental heads, and 15% were managers. This implies that the study effectively incorporated the perspectives of individuals

responsible for formulating and executing innovative strategies within the SACCOs. As a result, these participants were able to provide valuable insights and relevant information pertaining to the research objectives.

4.2.3 Respondents' Highest Level of Education

Table 4.2 Respondents' Highest Level of Education

Education level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Higher diploma	2	10	10
Bachelors' degree	14	70	80
Master's degree	4	20	100.0
Total	20	100.0	

Based on the data presented in the table, it is evident that a majority of the study participants (70%) held bachelor's degrees, while 10% possessed higher diploma qualifications and another 20% had obtained master's degrees from universities. Thus, it implies that the respondents were well-educated, possessing a high level of academic qualifications, which suggests their capacity to comprehend and provide insights into the issues under investigation.

4.2.4 Working History of Respondents

Table 4.3 Working History of Respondents

Period	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
0-5 years	2	10
6-10 years	5	25

11-15 years	10	50
16-20 years	3	15
Over 20 years	0	0
Total	20	100

Figure 4.3 Working History of Respondents

According to the data depicted in Figure 4.3, it can be observed that 10% of the respondents had a work experience of less than 5 years in the SACCO, while 25% had worked for 6 to 10 years. Additionally, a significant majority of 50% had accumulated work experience ranging from 11 to 15 years, and 15% had over 15 years of experience. This indicates that a substantial proportion of the study participants possessed more than 5 years of practical experience in the field, suggesting their familiarity with the issues under investigation.

4.3 Innovative Strategies

The research sought to determine some of the innovative strategies used by the firm. The analysis reveals that the firm used product innovation plans as well as process and marketing innovation models. Branding, corporate partnership as well as the use of modern technology was also common.

4.3.1 Product Innovations Strategies

The inquiry tried to establish the product innovation plans adopted by the firm. It was noted that the firm has adopted different product innovation plans with the aim of promoting its success. The firm had developed high level of originality in their existing products and the majority of the clients found it easy and simple to use their products. One of the managers noted:

“We have products from different ranges and they are unique to meet customer’s value. In addition, we are forward in all our plans and operations and this puts us above rivals in terms of customer’s contentment in terms of our product portfolio”.

The participants also noted that the firm products have been designed to meet their customer's values as well as their client's preferences and overall tastes. This is important in attracting new customers. From their views, the product cycle has also been shortened to meet the customer's value and needs. One of the managers noted:

“The firm products are reviewed after every five years and we do this with the aim of meeting our client's desires and needs. However, we are also considering long term products to meet diverse needs of our customers. This is done with the aim of remaining competitive and operating in good manner in the market”.

This perspective suggests that innovative products offered by firm possess the potential to attract a wide range of consumers with diverse needs. Furthermore, SACCOs that offer innovative products have the capability to retain customer loyalty. These organizations boast exceptional products that demonstrate a high likelihood of success, irrespective of the specific SACCO launching the product. In its product design, the firm always work with other partners such as banks and this has led to their long-term business growth.

Other innovations mentioned were establishment of Mwalimu Asset Management (MAM) and this was done in establishment and management of projects such as the Kisaju Housing Project and other low cost housing programs in Juja. There were also land purchase activities that led to new branch openings to new members.

4.3.2 Pricing and Organizational Innovation Strategies

The analysis also confirmed that the firm adopted organizational innovation plans and this helps it to enjoy good value in its operations. The study revealed that the organizational structure promotes effective support from supervisors to their teams within the organization. Participants highlighted the organization's emphasis on fostering open and transparent

communication within teams, with a majority expressing their agreement that top management displays enthusiasm and confidence in their work. As a result, all employees feel a sense of belonging and involvement in the decision-making process. Many participants acknowledged the organization's encouragement of self-supervision, which instills confidence among employees. Furthermore, respondents widely agreed that the management is innovative and actively supports workers in obtaining the necessary resources for their work.

Moreover, the respondents noted that the firm's top management worked hand in hand with other stakeholders in late 2016 in setting up a performance management system called the balanced score card (BSC). BSC is a planning tool to monitor the success of the Board members as well as the staff. The establishment of BSC has helped in the learning and growth of the firm, the financial management as well as the customer value and monitoring of the members success. It has also led to increase in membership, high savings as well as high loan value and good membership retention. This also led to high risk management, and effective service delivery to the members. .

“We promote innovation in the firm to encourage collaboration and effective working relationship and manage the firm culture. At our organization, we provide our employees with autonomy and flexibility in determining their work approach. We have implemented an innovative framework and foster a culture of creativity to effectively manage our firm's operations. This approach allows our employees to exercise their discretion and explore innovative solutions to meet their work objectives. Our pricing are a bit lower in terms of charges to join. We also provide high interest to people who deposit with us”.

From this analysis, it can be argued that the firm has innovative plans and most agreed that the SACCO has effective banking agency services. This means that the top management has

given the employees the chance to apply their creativity. It is important management promote more opportunities for enhancing creativity in the long term.

4.3.3 Process Innovation Strategies

The analysis noted that the firm adopted process innovation plans and this was important in promoting the firm success. “We have implemented several process innovations, such as enabling customers to make bank payments using mobile phones. This innovation has had a positive impact on our market share, effectively increasing our presence in the industry.” Interestingly, all study participants unanimously agreed that service delivery innovations have led to a noticeable boost in sales turnover. One respondent specifically mentioned this observation, highlighting the significance of service innovations in driving business growth.

“Our process innovation covers issues associated with automation, mobile banking as well as business process re-engineering plans and this process innovation has the ability to cut down nonoperational costs and we believe this is important in promoting success of our firm.”

The respondents also noted that they have adopted management information systems (MIS) in order to promote their services. This was done with introduction of mobile apps as well as introduction of automation of customer’s services. The introduction of the Navision, a new MIS in 2015 to replace the old CMIS, and the Mwalimu Go mobile app led to improved service delivery in the firm. The firm customers have the chance to conduct self services through these innovations and this led to growth of direct deposits, increase in efficiency of operations as well as high support in the members call center activities and programs.

The introduction of the Navision Novel App also led to consolidation of services, securing members online as well as automation of the services. The systems also reduce errors in operations, account reconciliation and efficient interface management. Members and the

staff were able to adopt and continue with mobile banking as well gaining efficiency through other internet based-services.

Based on these findings, it can be asserted that the SACCO has embraced process innovation, leading to notable improvements in various performance indicators. These enhancements include reduced waiting times in banking halls, enhanced market share, lowered operational expenses, and improved overall efficiency. Consequently, these advancements are expected to positively impact the overall performance of the SACCO.

4.3.4 Marketing Innovation Strategies

The study inquired the marketing innovation plans adopted by the firm to improve its competitive edge. The analysis indicate that the firm used diverse marketing plans including marketing through social media sites as well as the use of website and other print-based marketing models. According to the feedback provided by the respondents, it was emphasized that an innovative product, regardless of its quality, will not yield success if it is poorly marketed. A majority of participants agreed that an organization's investment in market innovation plays a crucial role in expanding its market share. Additionally, most study participants concurred that establishing branches in various regions helps to broaden the customer base and reach. They also acknowledged the significant role of information technology in enabling the development of effective marketing strategies. One of the managers noted:

“We always use digital marketing platforms and integrated platforms to attract new clients and ensure that our products are visible to others. This has led to effective customer acquisition and we understand that many customers are currently online. With strong presence online, we are able to meet our customer’s value and we answer their queries promptly and within time”.

The analysis further verified that effective marketing of firm products, with a focus on highlighting their core features, can effectively attract consumers. A majority of the participants expressed agreement that establishing multiple distribution channels for SACCO is a strategic approach in conducting business. Furthermore, participants widely acknowledged that promoting innovative production leads to increased sales and a broader customer base. This is important for growth and success of the firm.

Moreover, the main market innovations based on the respondents included the introduction of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook pages. This led to attraction of more customers. There was also the use of emails to attract customers and few YouTube videos. With call centres, the SACCO has the opportunity to provide clients with immediate feedback and solve their queries.

4.4. Competitive Advantage

The study seeks to understand some of the ways the firm has achieved competitive advantage in its major operations. From the majority of the respondents it was evident that competitive edge that has been achieved in the firm is adoption of cost-effective pricing. The management of the firm also adopted differentiation as well as market segmentation to promote its success. The firm uses branding and digital innovations to promote their competitive advantage.

Analysis also confirms that the firm used high interest rates on deposits as a way of attracting customers and increasing their value. As per the responses received, it was observed that a significant proportion of the respondents indicated that the firm paid dividends on share capital at a rate of 7-8% in 2016. In the subsequent year, the firm paid dividends at an interest rate ranging from 8% to 9%. By 2018, the SACCO increased its dividend payments to customers, ranging from 9% to 10%. These findings indicate a progressive improvement in

the pricing models adopted by the SACCO under investigation, allowing them to gain a competitive edge in the market. One of the managers argued:

“We are very ethical and moral in our operations. Our rates can only increase and we do this to attract diverse customers and to work in line within government set rules and policies. We have different markets and we must charge based on income and disposable income among our clients”.

Moreover, the analysis indicated that the firm has adopted effective branding and digital innovations to promote its customers' needs. Participants in the research stated that the degree of customer satisfaction was extremely very good and this could translate to better value in the firm in terms of the level of deposits and number of customers gained. It is important that the firm works with different agencies in promoting its market research about the customers.

4.5 Innovation Strategies and Competitive Advantage

It should also be noted that the firm has adopted different innovation models including product innovation, organizational innovation, process innovation, as well as marketing innovation. All this improves the success and competitive edge of the firm. The analysis also indicates that adoption of product innovation was important since it help gain more clients. This implies that firms that prioritize and invest in product innovation are more likely to achieve favourable outcomes and competitive advantages. It highlights the importance of fostering a culture of innovation within organizations, as it serves as a crucial determinant of their overall success and growth in the market.

Accordingly, the analysis noted that organizational innovation in terms of low pricing and adoption of modern technology, training of the workers and avoiding customer's challenges also improved the success of the firm. It is important that firm uses product innovation, firm

capability as well as different pricing and process innovation to improve its success. Market innovation should cover customer's needs and values to achieve success in the long term.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

This study findings confirmed that the firm adopted different innovations. The analysis reveals that the firm used product innovation plans as well as process and marketing innovation models. Branding, corporate partnership as well as the use of modern technology was also common. Through the application of these models, the firm was able to enjoy high success in its operations.

Moreover, the analysis indicated that the adoption of innovative plans led to improvement in the success and competitive edge of the firm. It is important that the firm adopt product innovation and marketing innovation since they promote attraction of new clients. It was evident that when customers are satisfied and have no complains, the firm is stable and get more customers and this promotes competitive edge.

The results indicated that various aspects of product innovation played a vital role in enhancing performance by fostering customer loyalty, driving business growth, and providing a competitive advantage. These findings align with the conclusions drawn by Muiruri and Ngari (2014), who discovered that financial innovations significantly influenced financial performance. Similarly, Adhiambo (2014) established a positive correlation between improved product innovation and enhanced financial performance. Therefore, these findings further validate the significance of product innovation in driving overall organizational success and financial outcomes.

The results of the study demonstrated a consensus among the respondents regarding the significance of organizational innovation. These findings support the conclusions reached by Kibugo and Maina (2016), who established that organizational innovations can serve as a

source of competitive advantage. According to their research, firms that possess a deep understanding of customer needs, monitor competitors' actions, and keep pace with technological advancements are better equipped to leverage organizational innovation effectively. Consequently, these organizations are more likely to maintain a competitive edge in the market.

The findings of the study demonstrated the significant impact of marketing innovation on enhancing organizational performance. This was evident in terms of increased market share, higher sales figures, and an expanded customer base. These results are consistent with the findings of Lilly and Juma (2014), who observed a positive relationship between the acquisition of new markets for products or services and organizational performance. The ability to tap into new markets creates opportunities for expansion and meeting the growing demands of customers, ultimately contributing to improved organizational performance.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provided a thorough review of the study, including a brief overview of the findings, major inferences formed from them, useful guidance gathered from their implications, and ideas for prospective future research. All of these components, which attempted to offer a thorough comprehension of the subject matter, were drawn from the study objectives.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the association between innovative thinking and Mwalimu National Sacco's performance in Kenya. The study was guided by specific objectives, which included examining how marketing innovation affects the firm, assessing the effect of process innovation on the firm's competitive edge, evaluating the influence of organizational innovation on the firm's competitive advantage, and investigating the impact of product innovation on SACCOs' performance. By addressing these objectives, the research aimed to provide valuable insights into the role of different types of innovation in shaping the performance and competitiveness of Mwalimu National Sacco.

This study specifically centered on Mwalimu National Sacco as its main focus. The primary instruments employed for data collection were interview guides. The collected data underwent analysis using content analysis models. The findings revealed that various components of product innovation played a crucial role in enhancing the competitive edge of the firm, facilitating business growth, and fostering customer loyalty. However, it was also highlighted that product innovation faced obstacles due to the regulatory framework and guidelines within the banking industry.

The findings of the study demonstrated the significance of product innovation as a predictor of a firm's competitive edge. It was established that product innovation plays a crucial role in determining the firm's competitive advantage today. Moreover, the findings indicated agreement with most of the statements regarding organizational innovation, such as the presence of an established and effective legal framework, the provision of necessary resources for employees' work, the enthusiasm and confidence displayed by top management, and the support provided by supervisors to their teams. However, the study also revealed that employees did not have complete freedom to decide how they would carry out their work. It was evident that organizational innovation holds significant importance and should be employed to promote the firm's competitive edge. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the adoption of process innovation by the firm, which resulted in several positive outcomes such as enhanced efficiency, decreased operational costs, improved market share, and reduced queuing in the banking hall. Additionally, the study emphasized the crucial role of marketing innovation in improving the firm's competitive advantage. Marketing innovation facilitated an increase in market share, facilitated the development of effective marketing strategies, expanded the customer base, and resulted in higher sales and customer satisfaction.

5.3 Conclusionsof the Study

According to the study's conclusions, each of the four independent variables, which include marketing innovation, process innovation, organizational innovation, and product innovation was a reliable indicator of SACCO performance. Each of these variables demonstrated statistical significance in their relationship with the firm's success. As a result, the study came to the conclusion that product innovation, organizational innovation, process innovation, and marketing innovation are all crucial to boosting the firm's competitive edge. In other words, the efficient and widespread use of these four forms of innovation may be credited with the company's success.

5.4 Recommendationsofthe Study

Based on the study's conclusions, it is recommended that SACCOs adopt and implement product innovation within the banking industry's guidelines. To enhance organizational innovation, the human resource department should focus on promoting employee freedom and autonomy. Additionally, improving the services provided by financial intermediaries within SACCOs is essential for meeting customer needs effectively. These recommendations aim to enhance customer satisfaction through improved financial services, empower employees for innovation, and strike a balance between innovation and compliance.

5.5 Suggestionfor further Research

The study centered on examining the relationship between innovation strategies and the competitive edge of Mwalimu National Sacco. However, future research could expand its scope by investigating smaller unregistered SACCOs in the region to gain a broader understanding of the topic. Additionally, conducting similar studies in sectors beyond the banking industry would provide valuable insights into the role of innovation strategies in different contexts. By exploring these avenues, researchers can enhance their knowledge and contribute to the existing firm competitiveness and literature on innovation strategies.

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Organizations Convinced? A Two-Phased Study into the Innovation Process,
Management Decision,

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Part A: Background Information

1. What is the greatest educational level you have attained?.....

.....

2. For how long have you been working in the organization?

.....

3. What is your position in the SACCO?

.....

SECTION B: INNOVATION STRATEGIES

PRODUCT INNOVATION

In what ways has the SACCO fostered innovation in existing products to enhance customer usability and improve client satisfaction?

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In what manner does the SACCO adapt its products to align with evolving customer preferences and changing tastes?

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How has the product cycles shortened over the last five years?

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How does the SACCO offer low price for its products compared to its competitors?

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How has service delivery in the SACCO increased?

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Has the SACCO initiated long-term innovative products that are beneficial to the organization?

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PRICING INNOVATIONS

How does the SACCO adjust the product prices to improve demand?

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How does the SACCO update its pricing strategies for existing products and determine the pricing of new products?

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In what ways does the SACCO utilize analytical methods during its innovation process to facilitate effective decision-making?

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How does the SACCO innovation strategies affected the overall cost leadership?

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MARKETING INNOVATION

How is the modernization of techniques promoting the services demand, especially in the value of existing services and offering of new services?

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How does the SACCO enhance its distribution channels without altering the logistics processes associated with product delivery?

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How is the renewing general marketing management activities done in the SACCO?

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How does the SACCO proactively identify opportunities based on customer needs and develop products that fulfill those needs?

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How does the SACCO try to predict prospective market tendencies in order to come up with suitable strategies?

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How does a changing market pricing strategy affect the SACCO?

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How does the SACCO Come up with new product placement strategies?

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How is the Introduction of innovative promotion activities done in the SACCO?

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PROCESS INNOVATION

How does the SACCO identify and eliminate non-value-added activities within its delivery processes?

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How does educating on variable costs and/or improving delivery speed in the logistics

process impact the overall delivery operations of the SACCO?

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What efforts has the SACCO put on Installation of a potent and exceptional processing System?

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How often is the reviewing operational process done?

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How does the SACCO consistently improve the quality of its products to align with changes in the market and meet the evolving needs of customers, while also staying competitive with industry rivals?

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In what ways does the SACCO employ contemporary management techniques to drive innovation and implement changes in its product offerings?

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SECTIONC: SUSTAINABLECOMPETITIVEADVANTAGE

In what manner has the SACCO achieved a competitive advantage by optimizing efficiency in its operations?

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In what ways has the SACCO obtained a competitive advantage by being responsive to customer needs and preferences?

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In what manner has the SACCO achieved a competitive edge by fostering employee satisfaction and happiness?

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How has the SACCO enhanced the quality of its service delivery in recent times, leading to an improved level of service quality?

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How has the SACCO's enhancement of services contributed to an increase in customer satisfaction levels?

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In what ways do the quality control processes implemented by the SACCO contribute to effective decision-making practices?

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In what manner has the SACCO achieved a competitive advantage by implementing a cost leadership strategy?

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How has the market share and influence of the SACCO expanded over the past five years?

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THANK YOU