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COMPETITIVE MARKETING STRATEGY AND MARKET LEADERSHIP OF SUPERMARKETS IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership of supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The study adopted a positivist research paradigm and a correlational research design to assess how competitive marketing practices relate to market leadership outcomes. The population comprised all major supermarkets in Port Harcourt, and data were collected from 87 managers and marketing staff using a semi-structured questionnaire measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to test three hypotheses. Findings revealed that competitive marketing strategy has strong, positive, and significant relationships with brand recognition ($r = 0.781, p < 0.05$), sales growth ($r = 0.644, p < 0.05$), and a moderate, positive and significant relationship with market share ($r = 0.577, p < 0.05$). Thus, the study concludes that there is a positive and significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership of supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This means that supermarkets that effectively design and implement competitive marketing strategies are better positioned to achieve sustainable market leadership and outperform competitors. Recommendations include strengthening brand-building initiatives, leveraging marketing strategies for sales growth, and expanding market share through innovation and customer engagement. The study provides both theoretical and practical insights for supermarket managers seeking to enhance competitive advantage in a highly dynamic retail environment.

Keywords: Competitive Marketing Strategy, Market Leadership, Brand Recognition, Sales Growth, Market Share.

1. Introduction

The retail sector remains a significant driver of economic activity, with supermarkets occupying a central position in the distribution of consumer goods and services. In urban commercial centres such as Port Harcourt, the supermarket segment has expanded rapidly in response to population growth, urbanisation, rising purchasing power, and increasingly sophisticated consumer expectations. This expansion has transformed the competitive landscape of the retail market, compelling

supermarkets to adopt deliberate and well-coordinated strategies in order to secure favourable market positions and sustain long-term relevance.

As competition intensifies, strategic marketing decisions have become essential for firms seeking to outperform rivals and strengthen their standing within the industry. Supermarkets increasingly compete on multiple fronts, including pricing structures, product assortment, service experience, brand image, and operational efficiency.

Strategic choices in these areas shape how firms attract, retain, and grow their customer base, ultimately influencing their ability to emerge as market leaders. In highly competitive retail environments, success is rarely accidental; rather, it is the outcome of sustained strategic alignment between organisational capabilities and market demands.

Market leadership within the supermarket industry reflects a firm's ability to command superior market influence relative to competitors. This influence manifests through strong customer patronage, consistent sales performance, widespread brand recognition, and perceived superiority in value delivery. Achieving and maintaining such a position requires continuous adaptation to changing consumer behaviour, technological advancement, and evolving competitive pressures. In Port Harcourt, where both indigenous and multinational supermarkets operate side by side, leadership is particularly dynamic and contested, with firms constantly adjusting their strategies to remain competitive.

The retail environment in Port Harcourt has also been reshaped by technological and structural changes, including the adoption of digital payment systems, online shopping platforms, and process automation. These developments have altered shopping patterns and heightened customer expectations regarding convenience, speed, and service quality. Supermarkets that align their strategic marketing decisions with these emerging trends are better positioned to strengthen customer relationships and reinforce their competitive standing. At the same time, the operating environment presents persistent challenges such as economic instability, infrastructural constraints, and fluctuations in consumer purchasing behaviour, all of which demand strategic flexibility and innovation.

Despite the growing importance of strategic marketing in driving competitive outcomes, existing empirical studies have largely focused on broad retail settings or developed economies, with limited attention given to supermarket competition in emerging urban markets such as Port Harcourt. Moreover, much of the literature tends to examine competitive strategies in isolation, without adequately linking them to outcomes related to sustained market leadership within the supermarket context. This has created a gap in understanding how strategic marketing choices translate into leadership outcomes under the unique economic and competitive conditions of Nigeria's retail sector.

This study seeks to address this gap by empirically examining the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership among supermarkets operating in Port Harcourt. By situating the analysis within a developing urban economy and a highly competitive retail environment, the study provides context-specific insights that extend existing strategic marketing literature. The findings are expected to offer practical guidance to supermarket managers on how strategic marketing decisions can be aligned to enhance market leadership, while also informing policymakers and industry stakeholders on strategies that support sustainable growth and competitiveness in the retail sector.

Conceptual Framework

Basically, there are two major variables and three sub-variables being investigated in this study as shown in the conceptual framework. The two major variables are: competitive marketing strategy and market leadership. Competitive marketing strategy is the independent variable, while market leadership is the dependent variable. The dependent variable is operationalized in three measures of (i) brand recognition (ii) sales growth and (iii) market share.

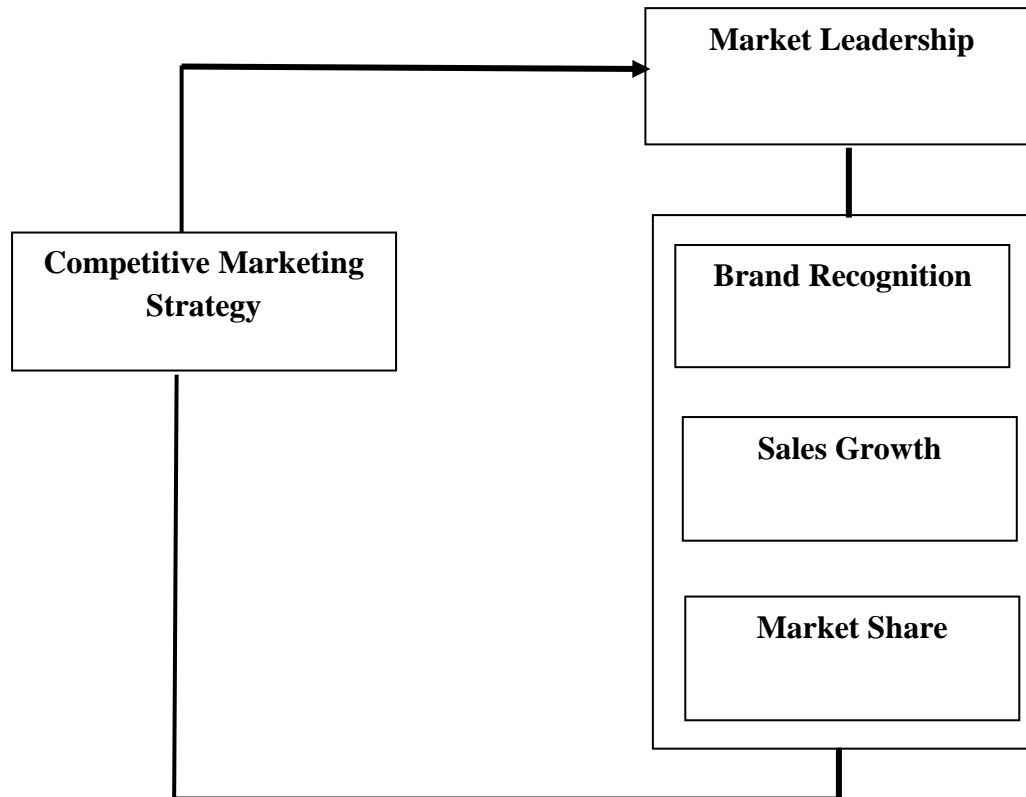


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework of the Relationship between Competitive Marketing Strategy and Market Leadership of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Source: Wangmo, Pichler and Baumann (2024)

2. Literature Review

This literature review examines existing research on the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership within the retail supermarket context. By synthesizing prior empirical and theoretical studies, the review highlights the strategic role of competitive marketing practices in strengthening brand recognition, stimulating sales growth, and expanding market share. The review further underscores how effective strategic marketing positioning contributes to sustained market leadership in increasingly competitive retail environments.

2.1 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review provides a structured discussion of the key concepts examined in this study and clarifies how they are theoretically linked. It focuses on competitive marketing strategy as the explanatory concept and market leadership as the outcome concept, highlighting how strategic marketing actions influence

leadership outcomes in a competitive retail environment. This review establishes the foundation for understanding the relationships investigated in the study.

Competitive Marketing Strategy

Competitive marketing strategy refers to the deliberate and coordinated actions a firm adopts to position itself favourably in the marketplace and outperform competitors over time. It focuses on how an organisation responds to market conditions, customer expectations, and rival activities in order to achieve superior performance and long-term survival (Porter, 1980). Through competitive marketing strategy, firms seek to create value that customers perceive as better than what competitors offer.

In highly competitive markets, marketing strategy plays a central role in shaping how firms are seen by customers and other stakeholders. It guides decisions related to

market positioning, customer engagement, and value delivery, helping organisations remain relevant in changing business environments. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), competitive marketing strategy enables firms to understand market dynamics and align their marketing efforts with consumer needs while responding effectively to competitive pressures. Firms that apply strategic thinking to their marketing activities are better able to attract customers and sustain demand for their offerings.

Competitive marketing strategy is also important because markets are rarely stable. Changes in consumer preferences, technology, regulation, and economic conditions continuously reshape the competitive landscape. As a result, firms must be proactive and responsive rather than reactive. Day (2011) notes that organisations that consistently scan their environment and adjust their marketing strategies are more likely to build strong market positions and withstand competitive threats. This adaptability allows firms to protect their customer base while exploring new growth opportunities.

From a strategic perspective, competitive marketing strategy contributes to organisational success by strengthening customer relationships and improving market outcomes. When firms communicate value effectively and consistently meet customer expectations, they enhance trust and loyalty, which are essential for sustained performance (Barney, 1991). Over time, these strategic marketing efforts can translate into stronger competitive positions and improved business results.

Thus, competitive marketing strategy provides a structured approach through which firms compete, respond to environmental changes, and pursue superior performance. Its relevance continues to grow as markets become more crowded and customers more informed, making strategic marketing an essential tool for organisational success.

The Concept of Market Leadership

Market leadership refers to the position a company holds when it dominates its industry or market segment more than its competitors. At its core, market leadership means being recognised as the most influential and successful player in a given market, often reflected through factors such as a high share of total industry sales, widespread customer recognition, and the ability to shape how the market evolves (Diversification.com, 2026; ProfileTree, 2026). A market leader not only attracts the largest portion of customers but also influences trends and expectations that others in the industry often follow.

Achieving market leadership is an important goal for many firms because it brings several advantages. Companies that hold this position tend to enjoy stronger bargaining power, better visibility among consumers, and a reputation for reliability and quality. This can make it easier for them to sustain customer loyalty and generate stable revenue over time (Diversification.com, 2026). In essence, market leaders become reference points in their industries, setting standards against which others are compared.

Market leadership does not happen by chance. It is the result of continuous effort to understand customer needs, anticipate changes in the business environment, and deliver value in ways that resonate with buyers. When a company consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations, it reinforces its standing in the market and creates a feedback loop that strengthens its leadership position (ProfileTree, 2026). Over time, this cumulative advantage becomes more difficult for competitors to erode.

Yet, holding market leadership also presents challenges. As leaders grow in influence and visibility, competitors may target them with aggressive strategies designed to weaken their grip on customers and market share. This ongoing competitive pressure means that leaders must remain vigilant, adapting and improving their offerings to stay ahead (Diversification.com, 2026). In dynamic and fast-moving markets, sustained leadership is possible only when firms maintain a clear understanding

of market forces and creatively respond to emerging trends.

Thus, market leadership represents a company's dominant role in its industry, attained through consistent performance, customer trust, and influence over market direction. It is both a strategic objective and a reflection of long-term success in competitive business environments.

Measures of Market Leadership

To adequately capture this concept, it is necessary to rely on measurable indicators that reflect a firm's influence, performance, and acceptance by customers. These measures provide practical evidence of how well a firm competes and sustains its position relative to rivals. In this study, market leadership is examined through carefully selected indicators that reflect both market performance and customer perception, offering a balanced and objective basis for evaluating leadership outcomes in the retail supermarket context. These indicators are: brand recognition, sales growth and market share.

Brand Recognition

Brand recognition refers to how easily consumers can identify a brand when they encounter its visual or auditory cues, such as a logo, packaging, slogan, or advertisement (TechTarget, 2023). It goes beyond simple awareness; it reflects the degree to which a brand is familiar and meaningful in the minds of potential customers. In today's crowded marketplace, where consumers face a multitude of choices, being easily recognisable gives a brand an edge in attracting attention and guiding decisions (TechTarget, 2023; Bynder, 2025).

When consumers recognise a brand quickly and accurately, they are more likely to trust it, choose it over unknown alternatives, and engage with its products or services. This familiarity makes the brand feel dependable and can reduce the perceived risk associated with buying decisions. Research shows that strong brand recognition supports customer preference and aids in building long-term relationships, which are essential for

sustained business success (Bynder, 2025). It often acts as the first step in the customer journey, laying the groundwork for deeper connections such as loyalty and advocacy.

Brand recognition also plays a strategic role in competitive environments. Firms that achieve high recognition across their markets are better positioned to retain customers, expand their reach, and respond effectively to rivals. Modern marketing practices harness consistent messaging, visual consistency, and consumer engagement across multiple channels to enhance recognition. In essence, brand recognition helps firms become top-of-mind choices for consumers, influencing their behaviour even before they actively seek specific products or services (TechTarget, 2023). Therefore, among both scholars and practitioners, brand recognition is recognised as a vital indicator of market visibility and consumer resonance.

Sales Growth

Sales growth refers to the increase in the amount of goods or services a business sells over a specific period, usually compared with a previous period such as month-to-month or year-to-year (HubSpot, 2026; Kaybe, 2024). It is a widely used indicator of how well a firm performs in generating revenue and responding to customer demand. When sales grow, it shows that more customers are buying what the business offers, which often signals that the firm's marketing and sales efforts are resonating with consumers (HubSpot, 2026).

Sales growth matters because it reflects both the reach and acceptance of a firm's products or services in the market. It provides a clear picture of whether a business is expanding or contracting over time (Kaybe, 2024). For managers and decision makers, rising sales growth can point to successful strategies that attract new customers and retain existing ones. It also offers evidence that the firm is improving its ability to convert marketing activities into real financial performance. Conversely, slowing or negative sales growth may prompt organisations to reassess their strategies, innovate, or adjust to market changes.

Beyond simply tracking revenue increases, sales growth has broader implications for the health and sustainability of a business. It underpins key strategic decisions such as investments, hiring, and resource allocation. Firms with consistent sales growth are often better positioned to reinvest profits into expanding their operations, adopting new technologies, and exploring new market opportunities. It also provides comfort to stakeholders who view sustained growth as a signal of stability and future potential.

In recent market environments, trends such as digital transformation and data-driven decision making have reshaped how firms approach sales growth. Firms that harness technology and analytics can better understand customer behaviour, forecast demand, and tailor their offerings to changing needs, which often leads to stronger and more sustainable growth patterns (Salesforce, 2026). In this way, sales growth remains central not only as a measure of past performance but also as a guide for future business direction.

Market Share

Market share refers to the portion of total sales in a market that a particular company or brand controls compared to all other competitors (Adobe Express, 2026; Marketbridge, 2026). In other words, it shows how much of the market's "pie" a firm has captured through its sales relative to the total industry. It is usually expressed as a percentage, where a higher percentage means the company has a bigger slice of the market. This makes market share a useful measure of a firm's competitive position and its influence in the marketplace.

Understanding market share is important because it helps reveal how consumers choose among alternatives and which firms are leading in attracting customer demand. When a company's market share grows, it generally suggests that the business is selling more relative to its competitors and possibly gaining strength in the market (Appinio, 2026). This growth can come from winning over more customers, entering new segments, or improving value propositions that resonate with buyers. Conversely, a decline in market share may signal that

rivals are outperforming the firm or that customer interest is shifting away.

Market share also guides decision-making for managers and investors. Firms often monitor market share over time to see whether strategies, such as pricing, promotion, or product development, are yielding results. It offers a reliable snapshot of performance because it reflects both a company's sales and industry trends simultaneously (Marketbridge, 2026). For instance, if overall industry sales are rising but a company's market share stays the same, the firm's growth is merely keeping pace with the market rather than outperforming competitors.

Beyond performance tracking, market share influences how companies plan for the future. A strong share can provide competitive advantages such as increased visibility, customer loyalty, and the ability to negotiate better terms with suppliers. It may also enable firms to invest in innovation and expansion with greater confidence. In essence, market share remains a foundational metric that helps explain a company's standing in the competitive landscape and points to its potential for sustained success.

2.2 Empirical Review

Relationship between Competitive Marketing Strategy and Market Leadership

The empirical review examines previous studies that have explored the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership across various industries and contexts. By reviewing both local and international research, the section highlights how strategic marketing practices influence a firm's ability to achieve dominance in sales, customer recognition, and market share. The review also identifies cases where competitive strategies have varying levels of effectiveness, including situations where expected outcomes are not realized. This provides a foundation for understanding the dynamics between strategy and leadership and helps to identify gaps in the existing literature that the current study seeks to address.

For instance, Muiruri (2020) investigated the relationship between competitive strategies and organisational performance, focusing on Tuskys Retail Supermarkets in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose was to examine how competitive strategies relate to firm performance in the supermarket context. A cross-sectional correlational design was used, with data collected via questionnaires from senior employees and analysed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression. Results showed that differentiation strategy was strongly but *negatively* related to performance, while cost leadership and focus strategies had significant positive relationships ($r=-0.835$ for differentiation). It was concluded that not all competitive strategies consistently enhance performance, and supermarkets should emphasise strategies that align more closely with performance outcomes.

Agyapong, Lin and Islami (2024) examined how competitive strategy influences market performance in Spanish entrepreneurial SMEs. The study aimed to assess the direct impact of competitive strategy on market outcomes and whether innovation mediates this relationship. Data from 1,842 Spanish SMEs were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Findings indicated that competitive strategy positively influenced innovation, which in turn enhanced market performance.

Nyambok, Senaji and Awino (2021) explored the relationship between competitive strategies and organisational performance among four and five-star hotels in Nairobi County, Kenya. The objective was to assess how specific strategies affected performance outcomes. Using a descriptive survey and regression analysis, findings showed that cost leadership and focus strategies positively related to performance, while differentiation strategy did not have a significant effect ($t=-.240$, $p>0.05$). They concluded that the impact of competitive strategies varies by type, and differentiation may not always translate into improved performance.

Moreno-Gómez et al. (2023) investigated how marketing strategies influence competitiveness—a form of market

leadership— among Colombian SMEs. A regression model on data from 176 SMEs showed that marketing communication, marketing innovation, and uniqueness strategies positively and significantly increased competitiveness indicators (including market share). The authors concluded that active competitive marketing strategies enhance overall competitive standing in emerging markets.

Sutjipto et al. (2017) examined the effect of competitive strategy on business performance in Indonesia's wholesale network services sector. Using PLS analysis on data from firms in Indonesia, they found that competitive strategy had a significant positive influence on performance outcomes, including market indicators, though organisational relationships carried greater influence.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The Resource-Based View (RBV) was most prominently developed by Jay Barney, especially through his influential 1991 work, *Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage* (Barney, 1991). RBV suggests that the internal resources and capabilities of a firm are the main determinants of its ability to compete successfully over time. Rather than focusing on external industry forces alone, RBV emphasises that firms possess unique combinations of assets, skills, and competencies that, when properly organised and leveraged, can yield sustainable competitive advantage (Mazzei, 2024; Wikipedia contributors, 2026). According to the theory, these resources should be valuable, rare, hard to imitate, and non-substitutable in order to contribute meaningfully to superior performance (Mazzei, 2024; Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

In simple terms, RBV argues that what a firm *has and does well* internally matters greatly for its success in the market. A supermarket with strong customer service systems, a well-recognised brand, or efficient supply processes, for example, can perform better than competitors that lack these qualities. Over time, these resource advantages can translate into broader outcomes

such as stronger sales, greater market share, and higher customer loyalty.

Several empirical studies have applied RBV to investigate how internal resources relate to performance outcomes. For instance, Sipos et al. (2025) conducted a multi-country analysis of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to identify which firm-level capabilities most strongly predicted marketing innovation. Using data from the Global Competitiveness Project and ordinal logistic regression, the study found that firm capabilities such as product uniqueness and customer responsiveness were significantly related to marketing innovation, illustrating how internal resources influence strategic outcomes across diverse settings. However, pricing strategies and generic management capabilities did *not* show significant associations, highlighting that not all internal resources automatically lead to innovation or performance gains (Sipos et al., 2025).

Another recent study by Oduro and Mensah-Williams (2023) examined how various marketing capabilities influenced competitive performance in Ghanaian SMEs. Using structural equation modelling, the research found that specific marketing capabilities were significantly and positively related to aspects of competitive performance, though some dimensions had weaker effects on financial outcomes. This underscores that internal capabilities, when properly developed, can shape competitive success (Oduro & Mensah-Williams, 2023).

RBV is relevant to this study because it frames competitive marketing strategy as a set of internal strengths that supermarkets use to achieve market leadership. By focusing on brand recognition, sales growth, and market share, RBV helps explain why some firms excel through unique resources and capabilities while others do not. However, the following hypotheses were tested:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and brand recognition of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and sales growth of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market share of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

3. Methodology

The methodology of this study is grounded in the positivist research paradigm, which assumes that social phenomena can be observed, measured, and analyzed objectively. Consequently, a correlational research design was adopted to examine the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership among supermarkets in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This design is appropriate because the study seeks to determine the strength and direction of associations between the independent variable (competitive marketing strategy) and the dependent variable (market leadership), without manipulating any variables.

The population of this study comprised all major supermarkets operating in Port Harcourt, including both indigenous and multinational firms such as Hypercity, Spar, Market Square, Everyday Supermarket, and others. These supermarkets were selected due to their active operations, market presence, and relevance to the study context. Given the manageable size of the population, no sampling technique was employed, and the study adopted a census approach, targeting all the supermarkets in the population.

Primary data were collected from supermarket managers, marketing executives, operations managers, and customer relationship managers, totaling 87 respondents. A semi-structured questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of 16 measurement items covering both competitive marketing strategy and market leadership dimensions, and responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very high extent* = 5 to *very low extent* = 1.

To analyze the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis were conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The analysis tested three hypotheses, with significance evaluated at a 0.05 probability level. This approach allows for the identification of both the strength and direction of relationships between variables, providing insights into how competitive marketing

practices may influence market leadership outcomes such as brand recognition, sales growth, and market share.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Test Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and brand recognition of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Competitive Marketing Strategy and Brand Recognition of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt

		Competitive Marketing Strategy	Brand Recognition
Competitive Marketing Strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.781**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	87	87
Brand Recognition	Pearson Correlation	.781**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	87	87

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

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and brand recognition among supermarkets in Port Harcourt. Using data from 87 respondents, the analysis revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship ($r = 0.781$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Based on this result, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and

brand recognition” is rejected. This suggests that supermarkets implementing effective competitive marketing strategies are likely to experience higher brand recognition.

Test Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and sales growth of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between Competitive Marketing Strategy and Sales Growth of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt

		Competitive Marketing Strategy	Sales Growth
Competitive marketing strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.644**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	87	87
Sales Growth	Pearson Correlation	.644**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	87	87

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

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The results in Table 2 show a strong, positive, and significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and sales growth ($r = 0.644$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that effective competitive marketing strategies

are associated with higher sales growth among supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Test Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market share of supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between Competitive Marketing Strategy and Market Share of Supermarkets in Port Harcourt

		Competitive Marketing Strategy	Market Share
Competitive marketing strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.577**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	87	87
Market Share	Pearson Correlation	.577**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	87	87

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

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

As shown in Table 3, the relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market share is moderate, positive, and statistically significant ($r = 0.557$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, confirming that competitive marketing strategies positively influence market share among supermarkets in Port Harcourt.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicate that competitive marketing strategy has a significant positive relationship with all three measures of market leadership—brand recognition, sales growth, and market share—among supermarkets in Port Harcourt. Specifically, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between competitive marketing strategy and brand recognition ($r = 0.781$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This suggests that supermarkets that actively implement competitive marketing practices are more likely to be recognised by consumers, enhancing their visibility and positioning in the market. This result aligns with the findings of Nyambok, Senaji, and Awino (2021), who reported that specific competitive strategies positively influenced organizational performance, including market-oriented outcomes, in the hotel sector. Similarly, Agyapong, Lin,

and Islami (2024) found that competitive strategies enhance innovation and market performance, further supporting the observed link between strategic marketing actions and brand recognition.

The study also found a strong positive relationship between competitive marketing strategy and sales growth ($r = 0.644$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). This outcome indicates that effective deployment of competitive marketing strategies enables supermarkets to attract more customers, increase sales, and achieve better revenue performance. These results are consistent with Muiruri (2020), who observed that cost leadership and focus strategies positively influenced performance outcomes in retail firms. The findings also resonate with Sutjipto et al. (2017), who demonstrated that competitive strategies are instrumental in improving business performance, particularly when marketing and operational capabilities are leveraged effectively.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed a moderate yet significant positive relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market share ($r = 0.577$, $p = 0.001 < 0.05$). This suggests that strategic marketing initiatives contribute to a supermarket's ability to capture a larger

proportion of the market relative to competitors. This finding corroborates the work of Moreno-Gómez et al. (2023), who reported that marketing strategies significantly improve competitiveness and market dominance among SMEs. It also echoes Nyambok, Senaji, and Awino's (2021) conclusions that effective strategic practices can enhance market positioning and sustain competitive advantage in a highly competitive environment.

Overall, these results indicate that competitive marketing strategy is a key driver of market leadership in supermarkets, influencing both perceptual outcomes like brand recognition and performance indicators such as sales growth and market share. The study confirms that firms that strategically manage marketing resources and respond effectively to market dynamics are better positioned to achieve sustainable leadership in their sector.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and their alignment with previous empirical research, it is concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between competitive marketing strategy and market leadership of supermarkets in Port Harcourt. Specifically, competitive marketing strategy significantly enhances brand recognition, drives sales growth, and strengthens market share. This conclusion underscores that supermarkets that effectively design and implement competitive marketing strategies are better positioned to achieve sustainable market leadership, outperform competitors, and maintain long-term success in a highly competitive retail environment.

To translate these findings into practical actions, the following recommendations are proposed for managers and decision-makers to enhance brand recognition, sales growth, and market share. Supermarkets in Port Harcourt should:

1. **Strengthen Brand-Building Initiatives:** Supermarkets in Port Harcourt should focus on strategic branding activities, such as consistent promotional campaigns, customer loyalty

programs, and in-store marketing, to enhance brand recognition. A strong brand helps attract and retain customers and serves as a foundation for long-term market leadership.

2. **Leverage Competitive Marketing Strategies to Drive Sales:** Managers should actively implement and monitor competitive marketing strategies that respond to consumer preferences and market trends. Strategies such as targeted promotions, pricing adjustments, and service differentiation can contribute to higher sales growth and overall revenue performance.
3. **Expand Market Share through Innovation and Differentiation:** Supermarkets should use innovative approaches, including technology adoption (e.g., online ordering, automated checkout), diversified product offerings, and tailored customer experiences, to gain a larger share of the market. Continuous assessment of competitor activities can also help in identifying opportunities to strengthen market presence.
4. **Invest in Staff Training and Customer Engagement:** Staff training on customer service, product knowledge, and marketing implementation is crucial. Engaged employees contribute to improved service delivery, which positively impacts brand recognition, sales, and market share.
5. **Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation of Marketing Strategies:** Supermarkets should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing strategies using performance metrics such as sales data, customer feedback, and market analysis. This allows for timely adjustments to strategies, ensuring sustained competitive advantage and market leadership.
6. **Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships:** Supermarkets can collaborate with suppliers, local producers, and technology providers to strengthen their marketing capabilities. Partnerships can enhance product variety, supply chain efficiency, and promotional reach, contributing to enhanced market leadership.

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