

**STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND
PERFORMANCE OF NATION MEDIA GROUP PLC**


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented in any other institution.

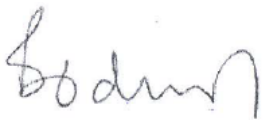
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DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my family, colleagues and friends for being an encouragement and an inspiration.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INMA	International News Media Association
NMG	Nation Media Group Plc
NTV	Nation Television
PwC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
RBV	Resource Based View
SACCO	Savings and Credit Co-operatives
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
TV	Television
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

ABSTRACT

Media organizations in Kenya operate in a turbulent environment which has necessitated the need to develop strategic responses to enhance their performance in the midst of the turbulence. The media firms started facing challenges from technological advancements at the turn of the millennium in the year 2000. Currently, Covid-19 pandemic has been the current challenge facing the firms and therefore need to come with strategic response if they are to survive in the market. The objective of the study was to establish the effect of response strategies to Covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc. A case study research design was utilized in this study. The main collection of data was done using an interview guide. The targeted respondents for this research were four senior managers at Nation Media Group Plc who sit in the board and are involved in strategy namely; Group CEO, Group finance director, editorial director and Group head of risk and audit. The data collected from the interview guide was examined qualitatively. The qualitative analysis was carried out using the content analysis. The results of the study revealed that Covid-19 had an impact which was mostly negative on the management structure, the culture of human resources, infrastructure, products, and production as well the finances of the firm. The issue of strategic response to effects of Covid-19 revealed that the company adopted strategies such as the product pricing strategy, service diversification, new customer management strategies and digitization. Finally the respondents revealed that the company's performance was positively impacted by the strategic responses. Based on the study conclusions the study recommends that NMG and other firms in the media sector should adopt such strategies that will aid them to address the negative effects of Covid-19. The study further makes recommendations to the government through the communication authority of Kenya to come up with policies that will enable media companies to adopt the strategies that will help them to fight the effect of Covid-19.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's dynamic and turbulent environment, businesses should come up with strategic response to the environmental changes to enhance their performance (Abashe, 2016). Ansoff (2016) argues that strategic responses depend on the situation but the end goal for all the responses is to achieve the desired level of performance. For strategic response to enhance firm performance there is a need to relook at the strength, weaknesses, opportunities as well as the political stability, environmental factors, technological changes, economic environment as well as social environment (Thompson & Strickland, 2013).

The environmental dependency theory holds that an organization is dependent on its environment for survival (Pfeffer, 2003). According to this theory, organizations must therefore derive and pursue strategies that make it possible for it to operate in the environment with minimal disruptions to its operations. It is assumed that companies operating in an environment will take measures in order to reduce uncertainty by decreasing dependency or increasing power upon others (Nienhüser, 2018). The resource-based view (RBV) holds that firms within an industry maybe heterogeneous with respect to the bundle of resources that they control but they will exhibit differences in their reactions to developments within the environments depending on the resources they control (Barney, 1991).

Firms and especially international companies have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as the lockdowns have made it difficult to deliver their goods and services. It is essential for any international company that hopes to succeed to grasp viral patterns,

facts and dangers. Companies must know what they can do with COVID-19 to recover their momentum in operation. This study was based on the argument that strategic responses have become a key driver in Nation Media Group Plc performance. Since its inception in 1959, the Nation Media Group Plc has faced a lot of environmental turbulence that calls for strategic response to survive in the market. The environmental turbulences include intense competition, technological advancements, political instabilities, government regulations and most recently the covid-19 pandemic that has called for an evaluation of how firms conduct their business. The media industry in Kenya plays a significant role in economic development. PwC (2019) report holds that the total entertainment and media expenditure in Kenya exceeds US\$3 billion annually and this represents 4.9% of the Kenyan GDP.

1.1.1 Strategic Response

Strategic response, according to Ansoff and McDonnell (2013), is the skill of formulating, evaluating, and implementing certain critical choices that allow an organization to remain sustainable and accomplish its goals even in a chaotic environment. It includes a detailed description of the company's goals, policies, and strategies. In general, it refers to how an organization's behavior evolves in response to external changes. According to Ansoff (2011), strategic solutions may include pricing, product, market, and service diversification, new customer management strategies, information technology breakthroughs, and mergers and acquisitions. Where there is a lack of understanding of the company's internal and external risks and strengths, strategic solutions will fail. It is necessary to reconsider the strengths, limitations, possibilities, and political stability, as

well as environmental variables, technological developments, the economic environment, and the social setting (Thompson & Strickland, 2013).

Grant (2011) argues that the success of strategic responses depends heavily on the business environment. The sociological, political, environmental, social and economic contexts of an organization affect success rates or the impact of its strategic response. The rate of success of a strategy response is also determined internally, such as the resources available to a business, the overall assets assigned to implementing strategies, personnel capacity, organizational processes and technologies (Peteraf & Barney, 2013). Strategic responses to enhance organizational performance were anticipated (Nganga, 2014).

Organizations need to focus on implementing changes that touch on aspects such as the kind of products or services to offer, which markets to target, what key strengths to leverage on and most importantly what resources are needed to optimize the products' market presence. In other words, response strategies are particularly focused on the nature of decisions and undertakings meant to catapult an organization towards the full realization of its key objectives (Sohl, 2012).

1.1.2 Covid-19 Pandemic

Globally, COVID-19 is considered a new illness, caused by the corona virus, which is related to the same family as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), according to the United Nations Children's Fund (2020). From the year 2020, the global outbreak of COVID-19 has had significant adverse effects on global economies and finance, which has been considered the worst damage to be caused by major public health events. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that, there was a global increase in infections around

the world and further stated that the inflection point of the epidemic is yet to happen. The Since March 2020, the virus has been designated a global public health emergency impacting people's lifestyles and corporate activities.

With the pandemic affecting most countries, including Kenya, the consequences of attempts to contain the virus have severely impacted the country's economic activities.

With most Kenyan companies, including media businesses with their goods on the market they provide impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential for any company that hopes to succeed to grasp viral patterns, facts and dangers. Companies must know what they can do with COVID-19 to recover their momentum in operation. With social distance at the heart of the pandemic, companies have to invent new methods to provide their goods while maintaining social distance with more favored online business interactions (Fernandes, 2020).

1.1.3 Firm Performance

Huang (2018) describes performance as entailing attainment of goals that an organization sets out to achieve. It entails an organization's ability of attaining its goal through efficient and effective utilization of its resources (Daft & Marcic, 2013). Bharadwaj, Chauhan and Raman (2015) believe that an organization's performance is a complex relationship with the following seven criteria: efficiency, reliability, productivity, effectiveness, quality of work, creativity and profitability. Performance is therefore closely linked to the achievement of all the seven criteria, which can be considered as performance goals. Even though there is no commonly agreed upon meaning of performance, an organization ought to have objectives and measure all outcomes based on the set objectives.

Organization performance is an important measure which helps determine the productivity, organizational efficiency and competence of a company. It may be seen as a measurement of the efficacy of resources to create goods of the type required in the long term by customers and society (Bain, 2016). Organization performance helps show the profitability of the firm which is measured with income and expense. Promoting organization performance is a vital task for business managers because a profitable business has the ability to survive (Chakravarthy, 2016).

Organization performance cannot be measured by any single index and this has resulted to reluctance in using both monetary as well as non-monetary performance measures of a business organization (Chakravarthy, 2016). Researchers previously have frequently used the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992) to assess performance. The balanced scorecard produces success metrics based on the mission, vision, and strategy of the company. It serves as a metric for assessing the organization's overall performance. It involves the financial factor, customer factor, internal processes and learning and development (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). The balance scorecard was used in this analysis since it is commonly recognized as a performance measure.

1.1.4 Nation Media Group Plc

The Nation Media Group Plc (NMG) was founded in 1959 and currently owns 20 brands in the print, broadcast and digital media industry spread across four countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda). Between 1990 and 2000, the company made its entry into online publications in order to take advantage of the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), majorly the internet that had begun to sprout in Kenya. In recent years, NMG has continued to invest in digital media since major global

advancements in ICT has led to a shift in consumer preferences and increased competition. The company has presence in the digital space for all its products, boasting of over five million monthly page-views (NMG, 2021).

Having gone through stable periods, the business is currently facing unprecedented competition between the various organizations which has compelled Nation Media Group Plc to adopt different response strategies to enhance performance. The formulation of business units was done purposefully to have each business segment focus and drive key competitive advantages identified by the firm for a comeback positioning in the market. The firm has experienced tremendous changes in the recent past triggered by new entrants, the introduction of new technologies and innovations. For the firm to stay competitive in the industry, it needs to enhance key strategic responses to covid-19 pandemic in a bid to maintain control in line with the changing business environment (Mburu, 2020).

In terms of performance, Nation Media Group Plc has proved itself as one of the leading media houses in Kenya with the Newspaper being ranked as the number one newspaper in Kenya in terms of readership. While also maintaining the first position in broadcast with NTV being ranked the best TV station in Kenya according to Geopoll (2019). In addition, in the 2021 World Media Honors presented by the International News Media Association, NMG received six awards (INMA). NMG was included among 58 top-notch winners in the 20 category of news brand innovation and best practices, media platforms optimization, subscriptions, business growth, and data and analytics.

1.2 Research Problem

A key area in management is firm performance. It is important to explain the different performance exhibited by different firms that operate in the same environment.

Researchers have exploited this concern. This concern has motivated research work that has focused on several internal and external factors causing the difference in firm performance. It is therefore important for management of any firm to establish components of external environment that are likely to change in the near future. Organizations have for one reason or another realized that they cannot survive without the inclusion of the external environment. Hence, organizations are environment serving (Abashe, 2016). This realization has led to adoption of strategic responses for firms to enhance their performance in the midst of turbulent working environment.

Firms and especially international companies have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as the lockdowns have made it difficult to deliver their goods and services. It is essential for any international company that hopes to succeed to grasp viral patterns, facts and dangers. Media organizations in Kenya operate in a turbulent environment which has necessitated the need to develop strategic responses to enhance their performance in the midst of the turbulence. The media firms started facing challenges from technological advancements at the turn of the millennium in the year 2000. Most media houses began adapting to the changes by investing in digital media, in particular launching news websites. With time, technological changes were more rapid as access to the internet became easier following the high penetration of broadband and cell phones that could access the Internet. This in turn has led to rapid changes in consumer preferences as it opens up the market for easier entry of more competitors, causing a disruption of business processes for traditional media (PwC, 2019). Currently, Covid-19 pandemic has been the current challenge facing the firms and therefore need to come with strategic response if they are to survive in the market.

Studies on strategic responses show many gaps in scope and in context. Munir et al (2011) examined the strategic responses used by the banking sector in Sri Lanka. The study revealed that strategic responses enhance performance. There exists a contextual gap as the study did not examine the media industry nor did the effect of Covid-19 pandemic taken into account. Mwithiga (2013) examined the strategic responses used by SACCOs to respond to the dynamic operational environment and found that adoption of information systems is the main strategic response among SACCOs. A conceptual exist as strategic responses were operationalized differently. Mashhadi and Rehman (2012) focused on the effect of external environment on the performance of the fast food industry in Islamabad. The study revealed that social-cultural environment influences performance. This study presents a contextual gap as this study was conducted among fast food firms whose operations are different from media firms. Mohammed (2012) investigated the pharmaceutical industry's strategic reactions to changes in the environment in Kenya. The study found that the firms have developed strategies to overcome environmental turbulence. This study was conceptually similar but contextually unrelated. Kimaiyo (2018) study was on strategic responses by state corporations to changes in the environment. The study revealed that state corporations have adopted strategic responses to a great extent. The study was not specific to the media industry in Kenya and therefore a contextual gap.

The gaps in knowledge show that there is a need to focus on strategic responses and performance. The business environment in which firms operate contains threats and failure by firms to respond to these threats will result in losses. The covid-19 pandemic provides a good timing to conduct a study on strategic response as firms have had to develop

responses to survive in the turbulent environment. In responding appropriately, firms should establish the different strategic responses and how they impact performance. Considering the existing knowledge gaps from prior studies in this area, this study therefore sought to answer the research question: what is the effect of response strategies to covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of the study was to establish the effect of response strategies to Covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc.

1.4 Value of the Study

The study findings would be very important to future researchers since they may be a benchmark. The results may also be important to the academics and researchers in recognizing gaps in research on related subjects as well as in evaluating empirical literature to establish further research fields.

The study's results would be helpful to policymakers in measuring the development of policies linked to the media industry's role in the economy. Policymakers will benefit from the study's results because they will get insight into the connection among strategic responses and business success.

The results of this research will provide additional information to practitioners. Such empirical data may most likely be utilized to develop and improve policies. The research will assist the management and employees of the chosen companies by increasing their understanding of response tactics and how they may help them reach their performance objectives.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter deals with theoretically and empirically literature review on strategy response, pandemic cover-19, company performance and relationship. The chapter begins with an examination of the theories behind these ideas, an examination of empirical studies on similarities and discrepancies and research gaps, and lastly a summary of the review of the literature that shows the hypothesized connection between study variables.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

Literature review essentially finds and analyzes the work of other researchers and academics on the variables of interest. This review offers comprehensive information of what has been done and serves as a foundation for interpreting the research results and also to overcome the limitations of the prior investigations. The next section discusses several ideas such as the notion of environmental reliance and the resource-based perspective.

2.2.1 Environmental Dependency Theory

Environmental dependency theory as developed by Pfeffer (2003) is the anchor theory for the current study. The idea was initially designed to offer an alternate view to economic theories of fusions and board linkages and to accurately explain the kind of interorganizational connections, which played such an important part in market distortions (Pfeffer, 2003). The goal of the organization's management was to guarantee the survival of the organization and to increase their own autonomous from the external causes and pressures, while trying to preserve stable relationships with the company. These initiatives have been the driving forces for many of the organization. When it comes to choosing

strategy, the search for power has frequently led to profits, an understanding that is clearly in conflict with the main economic methods.

The theory consists of three principal ideas: social environment matters, organizations have tactics to strengthen their autonomy and pursue goals and power is essential for understanding organizations' internal and external activities. The focus on power and the articulating of the visible repertoire of tactics accessible to organizations is one of the very different features of resource dependency theory which distinguishes them from other methods including such economic transaction costs. Davis and Cobb (2009) report that a riskier dependency management approach is to work together. The implication is that organizations can manage changes in their environments by adapting their strategies to the environmental changes.

The resource dependency theory is critiqued for its assumption that a firm must depend on other actors in the external environment for acquisition of resources. This assumption is unidirectional as it fails to recognize the reverse relationship. The theory is relevant to the current study as it views organizations as arrangements that evolve constantly in response to various economic needs and consistent competition over scarce resources. In that regard, environmental scanning provides a major aspect of surveillance and self-analysis particularly for organizations faced with constant changes in their operational environment.

2.2.2 Resource Based View

Penrose (1959) introduced the theory of Resource based View (RBV). Instead of homogeneity of the available productive resources, Penrose anticipated a definite exception. The concept of heterogeneity in an organization's resources is the principal topic of a resource-based vision. Penrose (1959) states that a business may decide on internal

and external growth by using the company's assets by means of fusion, acquisitions, and diversification. An organization consists of a mix of valuable resources which can only contribute to an organization's competitive benefit if it is located and used in a way that facilitates access for the association to those productive resources. These businesses need to identify their strengths and shortcomings so that they may create strategies to combat their rivals with the available resources (Wernefelt, 1984).

RBV argues that the valuable resources of organizations are those that determine the business' success and competitiveness. RBV says that the main factors affecting and impacting the competition's benefit and how great a business performs are generated from the skills and resources of the firm that are difficult to duplicate and appreciate (Barney, 1991). Through RBV companies may develop and implement their company strategy by looking at the position of their skills and internal resources (Sheehan & Foss, 2007). The main weakness of RBV is its failure to recognize that different resource configurations can result in the same value for firms and therefore derive no competitive advantage.

Resources only create value when they are used to implement strategies. The only way to measure the value of the resources is to measure the value that is created by the strategies and attach the acquired value to the resources and capabilities. If a company is to manage its growth, development and development, it has to monitor the factors that generate change and growth and those that respond to demands and threat. Managers should not just be conscious of changes in the environment; they must oversee the resources of the company to seize opportunities and fight dangers. Strategic answers should guarantee this occurs and that the organization's culture and values are enough to meet the main success criteria.

2.3 Types of Strategic Responses

Strategic responsiveness has been growing rapidly today and this ensures a fit into the changing external environment. Furthermore, strategic responses determine the cumulative decisions that results in formulation and application of action plans that aid in the achievement of a firm's objectives (Agha, Alrubaiae & Jamhour, 2012). A variation in the business environment changes the manner in which businesses conduct operations and as such a firm must adapt a suitable strategic response. Literature on strategic management states that for a strategy to be successful, it must be aligned to the external environment (Snow & Hrebiniak, 2016).

One of the strategic responses to a competitive environment is strategic crisis management which requires an analysis of internal and external limitations and vulnerabilities, formulate strategies, execute the strategies and update it with evolving conditions. The maintenance of open communications and nurturing of key relationships is critical in the management of crises (Johnson & Scholes, 2015). The lack of a crisis management strategy creates room for incorrect or inconsistent communication, and a prolonged recovery. While crisis management strategies are employed to enable complete recovery, survival strategies should also be incorporated. These constitute methods of ensuring organizational survival in the wake of a turbulent environment or existing threats, and include minimizing costs, layoffs, and improving access to emergency credit. Creative thinking is necessary in formulating survival strategies (Johnson & Scholes, 2015).

Another strategic response is strategic innovations. Jin et al. (2014) stated that strategic innovation is a futuristic oriented business development framework which seeks new

growth opportunities and creates sustainable competitive advantage. Kuratko et al. (2015) argued that the combination of modern methods of business innovation using conventional consulting models, strategic innovation creates cross-functional teams which consist of organizational change agents, that guide in the identification of new streams of income, in creating sound growth strategies, to formulate new products, services and business models, encourage new business associations and adopt current new practices. Strategic innovation involves searching for creative methods to exploit new opportunities (Kaplan & Palmer, 2017). Kim and Mauborgne (2015) stated that, the importance of strategic innovation rests an organization's ability to counter competition by creating more long-term value. This they stated can be done by creating differentiated businesses that are better than competitors and new business offers that eliminate competition.

The present level of competition in contemporary market needs with the aim of gaining a superior advantage has been the focus of organizational performance in current business organizations. Firms need to survive to avoid being pushed out of business by the increasing costs and market competition (Dubin & ALrbabah, 2015). Business environment keeps on changing, increasing responsibilities and accountability to meet their client needs. With unlimited access to the market, new firms continue to limit the market share of the existing firms thereby forcing organizations to constantly review their plans operational strategies. These reviews and changes calls for a strong strategic leadership for speedy action that will see immediate results being delivered since traditional leadership approaches are not enough to serve the rapid changes in the knowledge economy (Aslan, Diken & Sendogdu, 2011).

2.4 Measures of Firm Performance

The balanced scorecard advanced by Kaplan and Norton (1992) has often been used by previous researchers in measuring performance. The balanced scorecard creates performance measurements on the basis of mission, vision, and firm strategy. It is used to evaluate the organization's general performance. It encompasses the financial side of the organization, which determines the financial consequences of the organization's varied decisions. Another important issue to consider is customer pleasure. It emphasizes on the customer as well as the market, and it assesses key success criteria unique to these groupings. Another important statistic is internal procedures. It finds the high-performing business processes within the company. Lastly, a balanced scorecard stresses learning and growth that are both important for a company's long-term success (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Because it is well acknowledged as a performance measure, the balance scorecard will be utilized in this research.

Stowell (2014) suggests that financial performance is a measure of revenue growth which shows the leader's ability to attract the necessary finances to sustain the efficiency of the program. The operational cost and return on investments should be on monitoring. Organizations are required to increase revenue and ensure sustainability of their service offerings. In this study the respondent would be implored on how they are satisfied with the effort made by strategic leaders toward revenue growth in the organization.

Internal focus is related to the organization's effectiveness. To understand performance, it is crucial to appreciate the goals and strategies of the business and how effective they are. Effectiveness denotes to the degree by which a firm moves in achieving its mission and goals. Its indicators include formulated strategy with clear vision, mission, strategic

objectives and feedback system for evaluations. Organizational effectiveness measures how successful organizations are in achieving their goals using the strategic objectives (Darrab & Khan, 2010).

Customer focus refers to a customer's sense of satisfaction after comparing their perceived performance to their expectations. The degree to which performance meets expectations determines the amount of satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Similarly, Owino (2013) claims that customer satisfaction level is determined by how well the product/service characteristics meet the client's wants. When a customer's expectations are exceeded, the customer is said to be happy; nevertheless, when the customer's expectations are not met, the client is said to be unsatisfied. While Kotler and Keller (2012) argue that it is a choice made after a specific service meeting. According to Makgosa and Molefhi (2012), it is an emotional reaction that influences attitudes and is specific to consumption.

2.5 Strategic Responses to Crisis and Firm Performance

Ozili research (2020) aimed at determining the status of African countries as regards country's economic performance and impact of COVID-19 on them. The research showed that majority of the countries had taken full quarantine and a shutdown to limit the virus spread. The results of the research revealed that the COVID-19 brought severe financial problems and might possibly lead to recession. This substantial decrease in performance has been directly linked to total performance as a result of the early performance of individual companies.

Mashhadi and Rehman (2012) focused on the effect of external environment on the performance of the fast food industry in Islamabad. This study presents a contextual gap

as this study was conducted among fast food firms whose operations are different from media firms. In addition, the study presents a conceptual gap as the influence of strategic response to covid-19 on firm performance which is the focus of the current study was not addressed. Nyawira (2010) examined the reactions of cement firms to the strategic issues of Kenya's cement industry competitiveness. This study was addressing the cement industry and therefore a contextual gap.

Mohammed (2012) studied strategic reactions to changes in the environment in Kenya's pharmaceutical sector. This study was conceptually similar but contextually unrelated. Kimaiyo (2018) study was on strategic responses by state corporations to changes in the environment. The study was not specific to the media industry in Kenya and therefore a contextual gap. Knowledge and methodological gaps exist as informed by these studies. A cause to explain the significance of strategic response to covid-19 in relation to firm performance is necessary. A research in which the contextual setup covers the media industry would sufficiently explain the concept of strategic response in the field.

The context in which companies function sometimes threatens everyone and, if a company fails to react to a danger, the losses are continuing to mount (Maina & Manyara, 2014). The covid-19 pandemic provides a good timing to conduct a study on strategic response as firms have had to develop responses to survive in the turbulent environment. In order to react appropriately, different strategic answers and their impact on performance need to be established. With information gaps in earlier research on the same topic, this study aims to determine the impact on Nation Media Group Plc's performance of the strategic reaction to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A research technique is required to meet the research goal of the study. This chapter comprises of the study design, instruments used to gather data and how to perform the data analysis. The philosophy should show the way the study is conducted, the organization of research, how information is collected, and from whom information is ultimately obtained in order to evaluate the information, in view of the final objective of creating findings of the study.

3.2 Research Design

Cooper and Schindler (2014) defined research design as a technique that the researcher procedurally acquires and which allows the researcher to answer questions correctly, effectively, objectively and cheaply. Khan (2008) reports that a research design intends to improve the research capacity to design an operational plan so as to embark on the numerous available techniques and tasks needed to complete the study while ensuring that the methods employed are sufficient to provide valid, objective and exact answers to research concerns.

A case study research design was utilized in this study. A case study is an investigation of a person, institution or phenomena (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). It was suitable for this research since it includes a thorough evaluation by a single institution, which is mainly focused on depth analysis rather than broad analysis. It is best suited if a comprehensive and thorough examination of a particular research unit is needed. Yin (2018) highlighted the rigorous and thorough monitoring of social units in the case study. A case study offers

a firsthand examination of a topic whose features are not well recognized or known. In a case study, nearly everyone in the unit is examined for unearthing patterns of behaviour.

3.3 Data Collection

The main data was used for this research. The main collection of data was done using an interview guide provided in Appendix I. The interview guide was chosen for this case study because it is able to collect information from respondents and to provide the researcher with a better grasp of the findings of the study. The interview guide would also provide the researchers with more up-to-date information and information that may not have been obtained by previous data collecting methods.

The targeted respondents for this research were four senior managers at Nation Media Group Plc who sit in the board and are involved in strategy namely; Group CEO, Group finance director, editorial director and Group head of risk and audit. The interview guide was divided into several parts. The first focused on the demographic information of the respondents, while the remaining parts concentrate on research goals. To guarantee that the investigative tool collects information from the participants as intended, the researcher asked open questions, which, if no answer is obvious, will give rise to additional inquiries. The researcher conducted the interviews individually.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the interview guide was examined qualitatively since we may draw broad judgments on how the categories of data are linked. The study took qualitative analysis because the scientist were capable of describing, interpreting and criticizing the

research topic since it is hard to accomplish so quantitatively. The qualitative analysis was carried out using the content analysis.

In order to assess the answer, make conclusions and draw suggestions, content analysis was utilized. The process of the content analysis involved familiarizing the data, assigning preliminary data codes to describe the content, looking at patterns or themes in the codes through the various interviews, examining themes, defining and identifying themes and, in conclusion, drawing conclusions from the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a presentation of the results for the data. The analyses and presentation was done in line with the study objectives. A discussion of the study findings is also provided in this chapter.

4.2 Respondent Profile

This section contains the respondents' demographic characteristics. The respondents were the Group CEO, Group finance director, editorial director and Group head of risk and audit.

4.2.1 Current Position in the Firm

The interview was conducted among 4 senior managers in the firm. These were the; Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), Group Finance Director (GFD), Editorial Director (ED) and Group Head of Risk and Audit (GHRA). These were the ones selected since they were deemed to be core in company operations.

4.2.2 Duration overseeing this Function

Regarding the length of time the managers had been in the position the participants indicated that they had been overseeing the function for between five years to ten years. This was long enough to know about the firm operations and hence had enough and valid information regarding strategic response to Covid-19 pandemic and how this had affected the firm's performance.

4.2.3 Involvement in Strategies of the Firm

The participants were asked if they were involved in strategies of the firm. The participants who were senior managers in the firm revealed that they were involved in the forefront on firm strategies. This implied that the responses the participant provide regarding strategies on Covid-19 were valid and hence could be used to make conclusions regarding strategic response to Covid-19.

4.3 Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on NMG

4.3.1 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Management Structure

Concerning the impact that Covid-19 has on the management structure the respondents indicated that the management structure had been affected through remote working by employees. This required delegation of more work previously done by senior managers be made to junior managers. Covid-19 also led to more use of workers who are not tightly connected to the company i.e. contractors. The respondents also indicated that the relationship among senior managers and their juniors has become less formal.

4.3.2 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Culture at NMG

The respondents indicated that due to Covid-19 the company had to understate some of the cultures while it had to put more emphasis on others. The company failed to pay more attention to such cultures as those that were related to high performance like weekly physical meetings to brainstorm issues and put more emphasis on those that are related to flexibility of employees, supportiveness, empathy and understanding and also those that were customer oriented.

4.3.3 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Human Resources

The responses provided by the respondents indicated that the human resource was greatly affected by the Covid-19. The respondents stated that due to measures put in place to curb the spread of the virus the majority of the employees had to work remotely. Moreover the company had to downsize hence some employees were retrenched which affected the human resource of the company. The few employees that were left in the company had to overwork in order to handle the work that their colleagues were handing. The salaries of most of the employees was also reduced which affected their motivation to work. The reward system was also reviewed which was also a demotivating factor for the employees. The human resource was also affected in terms of supervision and effective communication which was negatively impacted due to the fact that they had to work from home.

4.3.4 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Infrastructure

The respondents revealed that the company infrastructure was also affected by Covid-19. The respondents indicated that the company redirected funds that had been budgeted for infrastructural development to other urgent operations in the company. The respondents also revealed that the constructions that were ongoing were halted due to unavailability of labour force and also due to difficulty in sourcing for construction materials.

4.3.5 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Products

According to the responses provided the NMG products were affected by the Covid-19. The demand for the company products and services reduced. The number of advertisements that the company received were reduced by a considerable number and adoption of e-paper model to reach customers who were not ready to go out and obtain physical copies.

4.3.6 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Production

The responses regarding the impact of Covid-19 on production revealed that at NMG the production of company products was negatively affected. Due to the low demand for company products the company had to reduce the units of production. The production unit was also affected due to the reduced finances for the company hence the amount of budget for production had to be reduced. The respondents also revealed that the lack of enough labour due to retrenchment affected the production negatively as there were not enough skills and workforce.

4.3.7 How Covid-19 Pandemic Has Impacted the Finance

According to the respondents the revenue at NMG were negatively impacted by Covid-19. The respondents said that due to the reduced workforce less production and reduced sales the inward remittances in the company reduced. The respondents also said that the effect of Covid-19 on finances was also affected by the measures put in place such as the installation of proper technology that would allow the employees to work from home and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to all staff in order to protect them from Covid-19. All this was implemented at a considerable cost that was not initially budgeted for.

4.4 Response Strategies to Covid-19 Pandemic by NMG

The interviewees were asked if the company had any general guidelines/action strategies/goals pursued to counter the effects of covid-19. The participants revealed that at NMG there were strategies that the company put in place in order to address the effects of Covid-19.

The interviewees were also asked at what level in the organization are strategies made. The responses provided revealed that the strategies at NMG were made at the senior management level but the other employees were involved during enhancing the strategies before implementation and in implementing them.

Further the participants were also asked to describe some of the strategic responses used.

The following responses as in Table 4.1 were provided.

Table 4.1: Strategic Responses to Covid-19 Pandemic by NMG

Strategy	Description
Product pricing strategy	The respondents' revealed that the company had reviewed the pricing strategy for its products which helped attract more customers of diverse backgrounds. Products such as advertisements were priced differently depending on the source. The respondents revealed that they priced advertisements from small firms at lower costs than those from large firms.
Service diversification	The participants indicated that they diversified the services they used to offer. The respondents noted that they came up with new services that they rendered to new customers. This they said helped attract customers who would have not accessed their services before the pandemic.
New customer management strategies	The study participants said that the company came up with strategies that attracted new customers and also helped retain them. The respondents revealed that the company provided offers for new customers and which would help cushion them against the pandemic.
Digitization	The participants indicated that the company enhanced the kind of technology that the company had been using. They revealed that they adopted new technologies that allowed the employees to be able to work from home and at the same time ensure customer support.

The participants when asked if Nation Media Group Plc respond to the pandemic proactively or reactively said that the response was a proactive one since the management was able to foresee the negative impact that covid-19 would have on the company and hence came up with strategies that would counter the effects before they even happened.

Further the interviewees were asked if the company considered resource requirements when implementing the strategy. The participants responded to the affirmative noting that the company did proper planning where the resources needed were highlighted and the company was able to weigh the possibility of implementing the strategies with the resources they had.

Furthermore they were asked if they considered likely reactions by competitors when deriving response strategies. The participants affirmed to this question and pointed out that they were aware that their competitors were also devising plans on how to counter the effects of the pandemic. The participants noted that the company was innovative in the way it formulated the strategies in order to come up with unique strategies that their competitors would find difficult to copy.

The interviewer also asked the study participants about how frequent they review the effectiveness of the response strategy. The participants noted that they also have a monthly timeline where the strategies are evaluated on effectiveness. They also pointed out that they review the effectiveness whenever they foresee a problem. The above results concurred with the assertion by Snow and Hrebiniak (2016) who states that for a strategy to be successful, it must be aligned to the external environment.

4.5 Response Strategies to Covid-19 and Performance

The interviewer sought to understand how the strategies adopted by NMG has impacted the performance of the company. The participants were therefore asked about how the performance at NMG has been impacted as a result of its response to covid-19. The response was that the response of the company to covid-19 has helped improve the

performance. They noted that compared to the projections they had about the impact that the pandemic would have on the performance, the performance after the response was higher.

Further they were asked if the adoption of Covid-19 response strategies has improved revenue growth rate at NMG. The participants noted that compared to the previous revenue generated when the pandemic just hit, the revenue growth rate for the company exhibited a positive outlook.

Regarding the innovativeness of the company the interviewer asked the participants if NMG had achieved increased innovativeness as a result of the response strategies to Covid-19 pandemic. The participants noted that the innovativeness of the company was enhanced as the company sought to adopt strategies that were unique and that would be rare and difficult for competitors to copy. This was in line with the findings by Johnson and Scholes, (2015) who found that creative thinking is necessary in formulating survival strategies.

More so the participants were asked if the customer base of NMG improved as a result of covid-19 pandemic response strategies. They affirmed to this pointing out that the strategies adopted helped increase the number of customers as the strategies were customer oriented. The findings however contradicted with the findings by Ozili (2020) who revealed that the COVID-19 brought severe financial problems and might possibly lead to recession. This substantial decrease in performance has been directly linked to total performance as a result of the early performance of individual companies.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The results of the study revealed that Covid-19 had an impact which was mostly negative on the management's structure, the culture of the human resources, infrastructure, products, and production as well the finances of the firm. The impact was majorly due to the measures put in place to curb the spread of the pandemic. The issue of remote working affected the management structure as well as the human resource as the management was forced to delegate their assignments to junior managers. More so the pandemic had an impact on the financial standing of the firm as the demand for products went down and the production was downsized. This also affected the infrastructure in the company as there was not enough funds to cater for the developments of infrastructure.

The issue of strategic response to effects of Covid-19 revealed that the company adopted strategies such as the product pricing strategy, service diversification, new customer management strategies and digitization. The companies put different price tags on advertisements from small firms and high costs on those from large firms. More over the services were diversified such that they were able to attract and retain more customers from different background. Additionally the new customers received special treatments such as offers which helped to retain them in the company. Finally the digitization as a result of the changes made in the company helped to work more effectively while also reaching to more customers.

Finally the respondents revealed that the company's performance was positively impacted by the strategic responses. The performance was enhanced through the increased customer base as the strategies helped the company to attract new customers and also retain the old

customers. The performance was also improved through the increased revenue growth rate as a result of the responses adopted.

The study findings are in agreement with environmental dependency theory by Pfeffer (2003) which views organizations as arrangements that evolve constantly in response to various economic needs and consistent competition over scarce resources. In that regard, environmental scanning provides a major aspect of surveillance and self-analysis particularly for organizations faced with constant changes in their operational environment.

The study findings are also in agreement with RBV theory by Penrose (1959) which states that resources only create value when they are used to implement strategies. The only way to measure the value of the resources is to measure the value that is created by the strategies and attach the acquired value to the resources and capabilities. If a company is to manage its growth, development and development, it has to monitor the factors that generate change and growth and those that respond to demands and threat. According to the theory, managers should not just be conscious of changes in the environment; they must oversee the resources of the company to seize opportunities and fight dangers. Having strategic managers in place should guarantee this occurs. The firm should also have a culture and values that enhance the achievement of organization goals.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary conclusion as well as recommendations for policy and practice and also for further research. The limitations of the study were also provided. The study aimed at establishing the effect of response strategies to Covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc. Data was collected using an interview guide from senior managers at NMG.

5.2 Summary

From the responses provided it was revealed that at NMG the Covid-19 had negatively impacted on the various aspects of the company. The management structure had been affected as the company senior managers had to delegate a lot of work to junior managers who were able to have close contact with employees' working from home. The pandemic also had an impact on the culture at NMG. The company culture that was related to high performance was downplayed while the company put more emphasis on those that are related to flexibility of employees' supportiveness, empathy and understanding and also those that were customer oriented. The impact of the pandemic on the human resource was seen to affect the way work was done in the company as well as the number of human resources. The company had to lay off some staff and also slice down the salaries of remaining staff. The reward system was also affected as the company had to review it. Moreover it was revealed that the company's infrastructure was impacted by the pandemic as the company had to redirect the costs related to infrastructure to other important

operations in the company. More over the production unit at NMG was also affected as it was scaled down due to low demand for products as well as the lack of finances to cater for the production process.

Regarding the strategies adopted to counter the effects of Covid-19 it was revealed that at NMG there were strategies that were formulated that were aimed at ensuring that the company operations continues to run despite the pandemic. Such strategies were product pricing strategy, service diversification, new customer management strategies and digitization. These strategies were mostly customer oriented and also ensured moral support of the employees.

Finally concerning the effect of response strategies on performance at NMG it was revealed that the responses helped cushion the company against the negative effect of the pandemic. The responses helped to improve the customer base for the company and also to increase the revenue growth rate against the projected one. Moreover the strategies also enhanced the innovativeness of the company as the strategies were innovative in nature.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the study findings the study concluded that at NMG the impact of Covid-19 was felt. The study concludes that Covid-19 affected the way work was done at NMG. The study concluded that the effect of Covid-19 on the various aspects of NMG was negative. More so the study concludes that at NMG the Company was able to come up with strategies aimed at cushioning the firm against the effect of Covid-19. The strategies that were adopted by the NMG were related to customer orientation and also employee support which are important aspects of any firm.

The study further concludes that the strategies adopted by NMG had a positive impact on the performance of the company. It was concluded that the strategies were effective in cushioning the firm against the negative effect of the pandemic. The study further concluded that the strategic response to Covid-19 at NMG was helpful in increasing the revenue for the firm as it helped to increase the production and the finances for the firm and also to attract and retain more customers who use or are subscribed to the company products.

5.4 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the study conclusions, the study recommends that NMG and other firms in the media sector should adopt such strategies that will aid them to address the negative effects of Covid-19. They should formulate strategies that are aligned with the customer experience and also employees' moral support which would motivate the employees to work harder and which would lead to attraction and retention of more customers. The management of such companies is also recommended that they ensure that the strategies adopted is aimed at enhancing the performance of their company.

The study further makes recommendations to the government through the Media Council of Kenya and The Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB) to come up with policies that will enable media companies to adopt the strategies that will help them to fight the effect of Covid-19. More so the government is recommended to support the media companies in their bid to fight the effect of Covid-19. They can do so by providing financial support to the companies or giving more incentives.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study faced a number of limitations. First the study was limited in terms of the methodology that was adopted. The study adopted a case study where only one firm was involved in the study. Moreover the study made use of interview guides to collect data which was analysed through content analysis. To ensure that this limitation was addressed. The study will make recommendations for further study that will aim at adopting other methodologies.

The study also was limited in terms of the reluctance of some participants to provide the required information. Some of the interviewees were hesitant when approached to be interviewed. However the researcher assured them that the information that they would provide would only be used for academic purposes only and would not be disclosed to any third party. More so in reporting the data the researcher would not reveal the identity of the study participants.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The current study aimed at to establish the effect of response strategies to Covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc. The study hence makes recommendation that researchers who aim at conducting their study in this field could consider extending the study to other media companies for comparisons. Further the study recommends that future researchers could translate the study to other companies that are not in the media sector such as those in the financial sector service, manufacturing sector and other sectors that could have experienced different effects through the Covid-19.

The study also recommends that future scholars could consider adopting other methodologies to conduct similar studies. They can consider making use of questionnaires

to collect data which would provide more direction to the respondents on the information required. Moreover future researchers could collect secondary data on the performance of companies which may provide more insight on the topic.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

This interview guide is designed to collect data that will help in better understanding response strategies, covid-19 and firm performance at Nation Media Group Plc. The data collected by this interview guide will be held with strict confidentiality.

The purpose of this interview is to:

- i) Establish the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on Nation Media Group Plc.
- ii) Determine the response strategies to covid-19 adopted by Nation Media Group Plc.
- iii) Establish the effect of response strategies to covid-19 on performance of Nation Media Group Plc.

PART A: RESPONDENT PROFILE

- 1) What is your current position in the firm?
- 2) For how long have you been with the firm overseeing this function?
- 3) Are you involved in strategies of the firm?

PART B: EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON NMG

- 4) Please describe how covid-19 pandemic has impacted the following aspects at NMG.
 - Management structure
 - Culture
 - Human resources
 - Infrastructure
 - Products
 - Production
 - Finance

PART C: RESPONSE STRATEGIES TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY NMG

5) Are there any general guidelines/action strategies/goals pursued to counter the effects of covid-19?

6) At what level in the organization are strategies made?

7) Describe some of the strategic responses used?

8) In your view, did Nation Media Group Plc respond to the pandemic proactively or reactively?

9) Did you consider resource requirements when implementing the strategy?

10) Did you consider likely reactions by competitors when deriving response strategies?

11) How often do you review the effectiveness of the response strategy?

PART D: RESPONSE STRATEGIES TO COVID-19 AND PERFORMANCE

12) In your view, how has the performance at NMG been as a result of its response to covid-19?

13) Can you conclude that the adoption of covid-19 response strategies has improved revenue growth rate in your firm?

14) Has NMG achieved increased innovativeness as a result of the response strategies to covid-19 pandemic?

15) In your view, has customer base of NMG improved as a result of covid-19 pandemic response strategies?

Thank you for your co-operation