

## Relationship between Place strategy and Organizational Performance of Maize Seed Companies in Kenya

<sup>1\*</sup> Nancy Jelimo <sup>2</sup> Dr. Beatrice Jemaiyo, (PhD), & <sup>3</sup> Dr. Mary Nyiva, (PhD)

<sup>1\*</sup>MBA Student Catholic University of Eastern Africa

<sup>2, &3</sup> Lecturer Catholic University of Eastern Africa

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main purpose of the study was to evaluate relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. The study was guided by Marketing Mix Theory. This study adopted correlational research design. The sample size was 286 respondents (114 Marketing & 172 Sales officers). Data collection instrument was questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study results showed that place strategy has a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya with ( $r=0.674$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). In conclusion Maize seed companies in Kenya use place strategy to improve organizational performance. Most of the maize seed company's stores are strategically located to ensure consumers can easily access and purchase company products. The study recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture restructure maize seed distribution retail stores, as many of these stores are located far from local customers.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Place strategy, organizational performance & maize seed companies.*

### INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is the degree to which a firm meets its preset objectives, serving as a measure of the firm's attractiveness and overall success. The Balanced Scorecard is a comprehensive tool for evaluating organizational performance, considering various dimensions such as finances, customers, employee motivation, learning, and internal efficiency (Wilensky, 2018). This approach is based on the premise that organizations should assess their performance from economic, environmental, and social perspectives. Both financial and non-financial measures can be used to gauge performance, allowing firms to utilize various metrics or units to assess their success and progress toward their goals.

Place strategy is another important element of the marketing mix, also referred to as distribution. It is defined as the process and methods by which products or services reach customers (Martin, 2018). Placement refers to the location where products and services can

be sold or bought. Wang (2018) determined the effect of a market-oriented approach to accomplish product positioning and product recommendation for smartphones and wearable devices. The placements also consist of physical channel cooperation. Place is the process where organizations decide where to locate their store and how many stores to have for the convenience of shoppers.

In Spain, distribution is another name for place. According to them, it is the third element of the marketing mix, and it encompasses all decisions and tools which relate to making products and services available to customers. Place or distribution is a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product available for use or consumption by consumers. Place strategy calls for effective distribution of products among the marketing channels such as wholesalers or retailers. Place has a significant effect on business performance.

In Nigeria, place also means ways of displaying your product to customers; this could be in a shop window or via the internet. Additionally, placing or distribution strategy is the method a company uses to get products and services to different channels and networks with the objective to reach the end customer, either directly or indirectly. The intermediaries include agents, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers. These elements help ensure that a firm provides customers with quality customer service, influencing the level of customer satisfaction. The product must be available in the right place, at the right time, and in the right quantity, while keeping storage, inventory, and distribution costs to an acceptable level.

The performance of local organizations in Kenya is low due to significant competition from developed nations, particularly in the quality of seeds produced (Spielman & Kennedy, 2018). This competitive pressure affects their market performance, as they struggle to match the high standards set by international producers. Additionally, Kenyan companies face intense competition in the digital market, which adds another layer of complexity to their business environment. Despite these challenges, employing effective place strategies has been beneficial for some organizations, helping them achieve their objectives by optimizing their geographical presence and distribution channels to better meet market demands.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The use of place strategy is one of the keyways to create awareness of company products and services, through the four key elements of the place strategy. Marketing strategies are very crucial in an organizational long-term performance and existence in the industry (Kumar, Shankar, & Aljohani, 2020). However, maize seed companies in Kenya have failed to improve in their performance sales revenue due to poor place strategy. The performance index of the top three maize seed companies in Kenya stands at an average of 2.1 (2.85, 1.78 & 1.66) and the commitment level stands at 2.73 and the transparency level stands at 2.7. The general performance of the seed companies are average and thus faces stiff competition and diminishing market share in the East African region. Since place is

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one of the strategies that elevate performance index, Seed Companies have also taken a slow pace than anticipated to invest in more innovative strategies (Chivasa et al., 2022).

Another problem facing performance of the maize seed companies in Kenya is the use of the old traditional marketing channels on their products and services, trying to persuade customers. The old marketing strategies are losing its momentum and may not be efficient due to changing customer tastes and preferences, which suits product place strategy. To reach cynical level of customers and cater for their needs, the products and services real benefits, Seed Companies and other companies need to understand and harness their marketing strategies. The ability of the organizations to respond rapidly and appropriately to the environmental challenges depends largely on the marketing strategies adopted by the seed industry. However, organizational performance of the Seed Companies will still drop further since products can hardly survive in a competitive and dynamic market without any means of marketing strategies. It was therefore necessary to carry out a study on place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya.

### **Research Question**

What is the relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H01:** There is no relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Central place theory of Distribution**

Central place theory was introduced German geographer Walter Christaller in 1933. Central places theory tries to explain the spatial distribution of a system of cities. This distribution is best understood by assuming a central place and its market area. A central place has the main function of supplying goods and services to the surrounding population. It specializes in selling various goods and services. The market area is the summation of consumers traveling to the central place, which is a part of a hierarchy with other central places. Its influence is a function of its market area, and the size of this market area will determine the nature of the spatial order. The market area of a centre of a higher order includes the equivalent of three market areas of centres of the next lower order.

This theory supports the variable of place strategy since it relates only to the service element of the regional economy, failing to explain distortions in the hierarchy caused by the location of the primary and manufacturing industry, which tends to group into clusters or agglomerations due to resource location. The theory is essentially static, explaining the existence of a regional spatial structure but failing to explain how that structure has evolved

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in the past and might change in the future. Still, it serves a useful role in identifying important concepts such as the interdependence of a city and its region, a hierarchy of functions and canter, and their market range and threshold populations.

### **Place strategy and Organizational Performance**

Wang (2015) determined the effect of market-oriented approach to accomplish product positioning and product recommendation for smart phones and wearable devices. The main objective of the study was to determine effect of product positioning on the performance of the organization. The study used descriptive survey research design as a research design. Findings showed that another very important element of marketing is a place that is also called the distribution, which is defined as the process and methods by which products or services reach customers. Distribution is the elements that help customers and users to find and keep purchase those products from those manufacturers /providers with them at the time of need. Thus the distribution may become a functioning complex system where producers, brokers and independent trade and the interests of consumers wholly compatible with each other in a certain environment and a certain time. Goods are produced to be sold to customers; they have to be made ready to the customers at a suitable place where they can handily make deal. So, it is important that the product is ready at markets in the city. This includes a chain of persons and organizations like distributors, wholesalers and retailers who shape the distributing network of the organization (the channel of distribution) (Ole Kulet, Wanyoike, & Koima, 2019).

Thabit and Raewf (2018) examined the evaluation of marketing mix elements. The main objective of the study was to determine the effect of place strategy on performance of the organization in marketing department in Al-Saaeda Company for medical equipment technologies, Iraq. The study used a case study research design methodology. Findings showed that the organization must choose whether to sell directly to the persons or through the distributors. It can even plan to sell it directly to customers. Buyers can purchase products or services on the market either physical or virtual market. The placements also consist of the physical channel cooperation. Place is the process where organizations decide where to locate their store and how many stores to have convenience of the shoppers. The study objective of the study was to determine the effect of place strategy on marketing department in Al-Saaeda Company for medical equipment technologies in Iraq and the researcher recommended another study to be carried out on the same topic but different firm entity. This study seeks to fill the gap by determining the effect of marketing mix on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya.

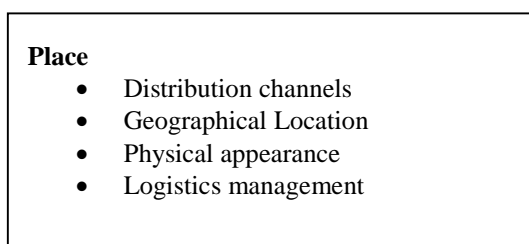
A study adopted a case research design as the methodology to examine the impact of effective inventory control management on organizational performance Ogbo and Ukpere (2014). The main objective of the study was to evaluate the effect of place on performance of the company in Nigeria. Findings indicated that the product must be available in the right place, at the right time and in the right quantity, while keeping storage, inventory and distribution costs to an acceptable level. Besides that, place also means ways of displaying your product to customers, this could be in a shop window, but it could also be via the

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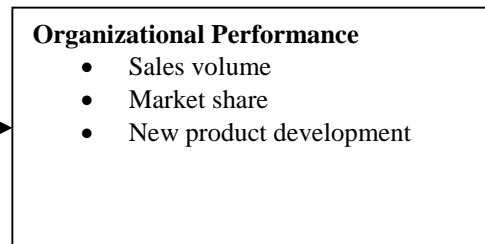
internet. Besides that, Placing or distribution strategy is the method company uses to get the products and services to different channels and networks with objective to reach the end customer, either directly or indirectly. The intermediaries include the agents, wholesalers, distributors and also retailers. These elements help in ensuring that a firm has provided the customers with quality customer service that has an influence on the level of customer satisfaction. The study focused on effect of place on performance of the company in Nigeria and looked at time, quantity, inventory and distribution costs as the study variables. The study noted that place strategy would be best discussed based on the existing distribution channels, geographical location and physical appearance variables. This study therefore seeks to fill the gap by assessing the effect of marketing mix (place strategy variable) on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya.

Another study posited that a company needs to have a deep understanding about their target market, who they want to target to buy their product so they can discover the most efficient positioning and distribution channels that can directly speak with their target market. Brata, Husani and Ali (2017) studied the influence of quality products, price, promotion, and location to product purchase decision on Nitchi at PT. Jaya Swarasa Agung in Central Jakarta. The study was based on descriptive research design. The findings showed that it is very important for company to make sure that the product is ready at markets in the strategic locations that is accessible to potential buyers. The geographic location has a considerable influence on firm's profit margin and success. This might be due to availability and proximity of raw materials and labor, proximity to customers and competitors, infrastructure and transportation costs. Husani and Ali (2017) did its study in Indonesia focusing on the influence of quality products, price, promotion, and location to product purchase decision while this study focuses on effect of marketing mix on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya.

**Independent Variable**



**Dependent Variable**



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

This study adopted correlational research design. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either

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positive or negative (Seeram, 2019). The target population was 1014 employees from 14 maize seed companies in Kenya. The sample size of this study was drawn using Yamane (1967) formula which gave a sample size of 286 respondents. The study employed simple random sampling technique when collecting data from 286 employees from the maize seed companies in Kenya. The sample size included 50 employees from Kenya Seed Company, 41 employees from Monsanto Seed Company, 22 employees from Seedco Seed Company, 19 employees from Amiran Kenya Ltd, 21 employees from East African Seed Company Limited, 18 employees from Elgon Kenya Ltd, 19 employees from Freshco Seeds Kenya, 16 employees from Kenya Highland Seed, 11 employees from Pannar Seed Ltd, 17 employees from Premier Seed Limited, 7 employees from Savan Seeds Ltd, 15 employees from Simlaw Seeds, 10 employees from Pioneer Seed Company and 22 employees from Western Seed Company. The employees included marketing officers and sales officers. The researcher used questionnaire as the main data collection instrument. Descriptive statistics such as standard deviation, mean score, frequencies and percentages for each variable was calculated and tabulated using frequency distribution tables. In the inferential statistics simple and multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Place strategy and Organizational Performance

In table 1, the study sought to answer the question on the influence of place strategy on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. Employees were asked to give their opinions whether they Strongly Disagreed (SD), Disagreed (D), Undecided (U), Agreed (A) or Strongly Agreed (SA) with the statements provided. Key: F=frequency, %=Percentage. Descriptive statistics of the responses are presented as shown in the Table.

**Table 1. Place Strategy and Organizational Performance**

Place strategy	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The company uses multiple distribution channels, which has increased sales and profit.	12	4.7	34	13.3	15	5.9	109	42.6	86	33.6
The geographic location of the company is dominated by farmers, which are our clients.	8	3.1	16	6.3	20	7.8	126	49.2	86	33.6
Our organization is location is close location of organizations selling similar products affects performance.	9	3.5	26	10.2	21	8.2	119	46.5	81	31.6

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Our store design is strategic to most consumers who access it to purchase our products.	5	2.0	32	12.5	18	7.0	128	50.0	73	28.5
Our shops are designed with appealing colors and good music to attract customers.	6	2.3	32	12.5	15	5.9	128	50.0	75	29.3
The physical location of the company is surrounded by a good working environment that is appealing to customers.	16	6.3	21	8.2	26	10.2	111	43.4	82	32.0
The organization use reliable and unique distribution channels that influences product availability to customers.	10	3.9	34	13.3	13	5.1	125	48.8	74	28.9
The company uses attractive stimuli such as music has an influence on customers.	12	4.7	27	10.5	20	7.8	114	44.5	83	32.4
Our distribution channels located in urban areas generate more returns than those in rural areas.	11	4.3	34	13.3	17	6.6	122	47.7	72	28.1
Our retail stores located far from customers generate few returns than those in rural areas.	13	5.1	23	9.0	27	10.5	105	41.0	88	34.4

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 Source: Field data, 2023

Table 1 presents findings on the effect of place strategy on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. The study findings revealed that majority 195(76.2%) of the study participants agreed, 15(5.9%) were undecided and 16(18.0%) disagreed with the statement that the maize seed company uses multiple distribution channels, which has increased sales and profit. Using multiple distribution channels can offer numerous advantages to a company, such as increasing market coverage and reach, enhancing customer convenience and satisfaction, and reducing risk and dependence.

Table 1 also, show response on statement that maize seed companies are dominated by farmers, which are clients to buy from the company products. The statistical response showed that majority 212(82.8%) of the study participants agreed, 20(7.8%) were undecided and 24(9.4%) disagreed with the statement that the geographic location of the maize seed companies company is dominated by farmers, which are clients to buy from the company products. Proximity to potential customers increases the likelihood of attracting

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and retaining customers. Geographic location of the maize seed companies can access more potential customers if they relocate organizational operations to the strategic location where farmers are many.

The study findings also showed that majority of the study participants 200(78.1%) agreed, 21(8.2%) were undecided and 35(13.7%) disagreed with the statement that maize seed company organization location is close to organizations selling similar products affects performance. If a company is located to place where there is an existing company producing similar products then the competition will be very high. Maize seed companies that are located in one location encounter market competition with their competitors.

Study results also show that majority of the study participants 201(78.5%) agreed, 18(7.0%) were undecided and 37(14.5%) disagreed with the statement that maize seed company store design is strategic to most consumers who access it to purchase company products. Most of the maize seed companies in Kenya are not located close to farmers except a few of the companies. However many of the maize seed companies are located in major towns. This has limited organizational performance since they have to redesign stores around where farmers can access the seeds.

Respondents also indicated that maize seed company shops are designed with appealing colours. This is revealed by the majority 203(79.3%) of the study participants agreed, 15(5.9%) were undecided and 38(14.8%) disagreed with the statement that maize seed company shops are designed with appealing colours and good music to attract customers. Table 8 also indicated that majority of the study participants 193(75.4%) agreed, 26(10.5%) were undecided and 37(14.5%) disagreed with the statement that the physical location of the company is surrounded by a good working environment that is appealing to customers. On average most of the maize seed companies have good working environment that is appealing to the customers when they go and buy maize seeds. The findings concur with Das et al., (2021) that the key to success for any business is to have happy customers. But so many companies fail to recognize that the way to achieve that is to focus on employee happiness first.

Study findings also show that majority of the study participants 199(77.7%) agreed, 13(5.1%) were undecided and 44(17.2%) disagreed with the statement that the maize seed company organization use reliable and unique distribution channels that influences product availability to customers. Distribution channels are important to businesses as they allow for the smooth delivery of goods or services to a customer which increases revenue generation for the company. Distribution channels help businesses by delivering products on time, regardless of location. They also keep enough stock, provide market info, promote goods, assist with finance, create jobs, and handle delivery risks (Chen, Kumara, & Sivakumar, 2021).

The study also asked respondents to give opinion on attractive stimuli such as music. Study results shows that majority 197(77.0%) of the study participants agreed, 20(7.8%) were undecided and 39(15.2%) disagreed with the statement that the maize seed company use attractive stimuli such as music has an influence on customers. Study results also show that majority of the study participants 194(75.8%) agreed, 17(6.6%) were undecided and



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45(17.6%) disagreed with the statement that maize seed company distribution channels located in urban areas generate more returns than those in rural areas. Urban areas have access to wider market distribution because people go to main stores to get access to variety of products compared to rural areas that focuses on one region.

Finally, table 1 shows that majority of the study participants 193(75.4%) agreed, 27(10.5%) were undecided and 36(14.1%) disagreed with the statement that maize seed companies retail stores located far from customers generate few returns than those in rural areas. Rural settlements or farmers offer the market for the products manufactured, produced or purchased in bulk by the urban centres. The maize seed customers are located in the rural areas therefore most of the stores in rural generate more income due to high purchases from the farmers than in the urban centres.

### Inferential Analysis

The study conducted inferential analysis using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The correlation coefficient ranges from -1.000 to +1.000. The correlation coefficient value of -1.000 indicates a perfect negative correlation, correlation coefficient value of +1.000 indicates a perfect positive correlation and a correlation coefficient value of 0.000 implies that there is no correlation between the study variables (Rusyani, Lavuri, & Gunardi, 2021). The correlation results were shown in Table 2.

### Correlation Analysis Results

**Table 2: Overall Correlation Analysis Results**

		Place strategy	Organizational performance
<b>Place strategy</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
<b>Organizational performance</b>	Pearson Correlation	.674**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

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

The goal of the study was to evaluate relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. The findings in Table 2; indicate that the place strategy has a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya with ( $r=0.674$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This implies that a unit change in place strategy contribute to 67.4% changes to organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. Place strategy calls for effective distribution of products among the marketing channels such as the wholesalers or retailers. According to Mustapha (2017) place or distribution as a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process

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of making a product available for use or consumption by consumers. Place has significant effect on business performance.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

The study used multiple linear regression analysis to determine the combined linear relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Table 3 show results of model summary.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the
1	.885	.783	.780	.20489

The model summary of the study shows coefficient results from correlation coefficient (R) and determination ( $R^2$ ), which is the degree of association between place strategy and organizational performance. The results in Table 3 on model summary indicated that  $R=0.885$ ,  $R^2=0.783$  and adjusted  $R=0.780$ . R-value gives an indication that there is a linear relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. The  $R^2$  value indicates that explanatory power of the independent variables is 0.783. This means that the study variables (Place strategy and organizational performance) accounts for 78.3% for the organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya, whereas 21.7% of the organizational performance of maize seed companies is accounted by other factors out of the study.

### Fitness of Regression Model

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the simple regression model was fit for the data. The results were as shown in table 4.

**Table 4: ANOVA for Testing Multiple Regression Model**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	38.116	4	9.529	226.986	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	10.537	251	.042		
Total	48.654	255			

**a.** *Dependent Variable: organizational performance; b.* *Predictors: (Constant), Place strategy.*

The results from table 4 indicates that the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable was statistically significant ( $F=226.986$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This implies that the multiple regression model was fit for the data on place strategy and organizational performance.

**Regression Coefficients**

The T-test of statistical significance of each regression coefficient was conducted in order to determine the beta ( $\beta$ ) which shows how strongly each independent variable influences the dependent variable. Table 5 shows the regression analysis results.

**Table 5: Regression Analysis**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.421		.125	3.375	0.00
Place strategy	.316	.021	.458	14.801	.004

The study findings in table 5 shows the regression coefficients results whereby place strategy had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya ( $\beta=0.316$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The multiple regression equation for Place strategy was as shown below:

$$Y_i = 0.421 + 0.316X_1$$

This implied that at constant place strategy and organizational performance is at 0.421 units. The coefficient 0.316 indicates that improvement on place strategy by one unit increases organizational performance by 0.316 units.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The study hypothesis stated that there is no relationship between place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. However, the study results revealed that place strategy has a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya ( $\beta=0.316$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The results rejected the null hypotheses  $H_1$  signifying that revealed that place strategy has a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance of maize seed companies in Kenya. Place strategy is importance because it lets businesses reduce costs and expenses through planning, analysis, and monitoring variances. Effective place strategy helps maize seed companies reach more potential clients which can increase organizational performance through revenue creation. The findings concur with Mustapha (2017) that place or distribution as a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making a product available for use or consumption by consumers. Place strategy calls for effective distribution of products among the marketing channels such as the wholesalers or retailers. Place has significant effect on business performance.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion Maize seed companies in Kenya use place strategy to improve organizational performance. For example, the geographic locations of the maize seed companies are dominated by farmers, who are clients buying the company products. Also, maize seed company shops are designed with appealing colours to attract customers. Most of the maize seed company stores are strategically located to ensure consumers can easily access and purchase company products. Despite the fact that the majority of maize seed companies in Kenya are not located close to farmers, they use distribution channel stores to be closer to farmers. In addition, seed companies located in competitive regions encounter market competition with their counterparts. Most companies are located in urban areas because of access to wider market distribution.

### Recommendations of the Study

The study recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture restructure maize seed distribution retail stores, as many of these stores are located far from local customers and are predominantly in urban areas. Rural farmers represent a significant market for the products manufactured, produced, or purchased in bulk by urban centres. Using multiple distribution channels can provide numerous advantages, such as increasing market coverage and reach, enhancing customer convenience, and reducing risk.

### Suggestions for Further Research

A study to determine the challenges facing place strategy and organizational performance of maize seed a company in Kenya is recommend for scholars.

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