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Paper: “Effects of Focus Strategies on the Financial Performance of Safaricom PLC in Kenya During the COVID-19 Pandemic”

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Corresponding Author: Grace Wangui Chege

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Diana Maria Lopez Celis
Jorge Tadeo Lozano University of Bogotá, Colombia

Reviewer 2: Tewodros Girma Gutema
Howard University, USA

Reviewer 3: Blinded

Reviewer 4: Blinded

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026

This form is designed to summarize the manuscript peer review that you have completed and to ensure that you have considered all appropriate criteria in your review. Your review should provide a clear statement to the authors and editors of the modifications necessary before the paper can be published, or the specific reasons for rejection.

Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes a peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

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Reviewer Name: Tewodros Girma Gutema	
University, Country: Howard University, USA	
Date Manuscript Received:	Date Review Report Submitted: 06/15/2026
Manuscript Title: Effects of Focus Strategies on Financial Performance of Telecommunication Companies in Kenya During the COVID-19 Pandemic — A Case of Safaricom PLC	
ESJ Manuscript Number: ESJ-09	
You agree that your name is revealed to the author of the paper: Yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper is available in the “review history” of the paper: You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper:	

Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
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1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	3
<i>The title adequately conveys the paper's core subject, highlighting focus strategies and financial performance in Kenya's telecom sector, using Safaricom as a case study. However, it is long and could be more concise. I recommend rewriting it as "Market Focus Strategy and Financial Performance in Kenya's Telecommunications Industry: Evidence from Safaricom PLC."</i>	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	3
<i>The abstract includes the study's objective, methodology, and key findings, meeting essential requirements. However, it should be revised for clarity. The sample size (248) is listed, but the response rate (80.6%) based on 200 usable questionnaires is missing, which is important. The statistical findings are inconsistent: $\beta = 0.408$ is a standardized regression coefficient, not a Pearson correlation, which needs clarification. The final sentences mention post-pandemic sector statistics from 2024–2025, which were not part of the original study, disrupting coherence and temporal scope. The abstract covers the basics but requires revisions for consistency.</i>	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	2.5
<i>The manuscript has grammatical and presentation issues that need to be corrected. While "Porter" is misspelled as "Potter" in the Literature Review. Additionally, some sentences are incomplete; for example, a qualitative interview excerpt ends mid-sentence: "which could" without finishing the thought. Tense inconsistencies are present, with some sections using future tense ('the questionnaire will consist of') in what appears to be a finished study, indicating possible copy-paste from a proposal.</i>	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	2.5
<i>The methodology section has some issues that need to be corrected. First, the study claims to use both simple random sampling in one paragraph and purposive sampling in another, but these methods are contradictory, and it is unclear which was employed. This inconsistency undermines the study's validity.</i>	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	2.5
<i>The results section contains several errors and inconsistencies in the analysis. In Table 3 (the regression output), the independent and dependent variables are reversed: the table labels financial performance as the predictor and focus strategy as the response variable, but the text is written as if the reverse were true. The correlation table shows the same coefficient (0.408) for both variables as separate rows, even though it represents a single bivariate correlation—this duplication is confusing and unnecessary. The ANOVA table (Table 4) lists degrees of freedom for regression as 1 and residual as 30, indicating a sample size of 32, which conflicts with the stated $n=200$. Additionally, the summary in the 'Summary of Findings' section incorrectly refers to 'manufacturing firms' instead of telecommunications companies.</i>	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	4
<i>The conclusion is generally coherent and aligns with the study's stated objective. It correctly identifies focus strategy as a positive predictor of financial performance and acknowledges the practical implications for Safaricom's strategic decisions, including the importance of market segmentation, competitor analysis, and customer-centricity.</i>	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	3

The reference list includes a reasonable mix of foundational theories and recent empirical studies from Kenya's telecom sector. However, corrections are necessary: some in-text citations don't align with the reference list; APA formatting is inconsistent; the Weidinger and Platts (2012) reference seems misplaced, as it's about sustainable energy rather than performance measurement; and 'Potter (2008)' likely should be 'Porter (Michael E. Porter)'.

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The study addresses a relevant and practically important question: how focus strategies shape Safaricom PLC's financial performance during the COVID-19 period. Using primary survey data from 200 managers at Safaricom's Nairobi headquarters is a reasonable methodological approach for this type of exploratory study, and the inclusion of recent sector statistics from the Communications Authority of Kenya and Safaricom's 2025 Annual Report demonstrates awareness of the current operating environment. However, the manuscript needs to be revised to address methodological, analytical, and editorial issues before it can be considered for publication. These are:

1. The manuscript states in one section that simple random sampling was used and in another that purposive sampling was applied. This contradiction undermines the research design. The authors should clarify which approach was used, explain the rationale, and ensure all references to the sampling strategy are consistent and methodologically justified throughout the paper. Additionally, in the methodology section, the author uses future-tense phrases like 'the questionnaire will consist of...' and 'the study will use...', even though the study is already completed and its results have been reported. The authors should ensure consistent use of the past tense for describing procedures that have been finalized.
2. Table 3 labels 'financial performance' as the independent variable and 'focus strategy' as the dependent variable. This is the reverse of the study's stated hypothesis and research question. The authors should correct this error. Additionally, the ANOVA table (Table 4) reports residual degrees of freedom of 30, implying a sample of approximately 32 observations. This is inconsistent with the reported sample of 200 respondents. The author should verify whether this table corresponds to the actual dataset used in this study. Moreover, the demographic data in the tables do not match the accompanying narrative. Specifically, the percentage of 20–30-year-old respondents is 10% in Table 4.1.2 but 8% in the text; the 31–40 age bracket is 41.5% in the table

but 40.5% in the text; and respondents above 50 are listed as 18.5% in the table but 12.5% in the text. The experience breakdown also reports a total exceeding 100% when its components are summed. These inconsistencies must be corrected and verified against the raw data.

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:

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Reviewer Name: DIANA MARIA LÓPEZ CELIS	
University, Country: Colombia	
Date Manuscript Received: 4/6/2026	Date Review Report Submitted: 10/6/2026
Manuscript Title: EFFECTS OF FOCUS STRATEGIES ON FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN KENYA DURING THE COVID -19 PANDEMIC—A CASE OF SAFARICOM PLC	
ESJ Manuscript Number: 09....04....2026	
You agree that your name is revealed to the author of the paper: yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper is available in the “review history” of the paper: You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: yes	

Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
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1. The title is clear, and it is adequate for the content of the article.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The title of the evaluated article is consistent with the research conducted, as it accurately reflects the content of the study.	
2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.	4
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The abstract requires revision because it is overly lengthy. It should be made more concise and specific to improve clarity and readability	
3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The manuscript is free of major grammatical errors, is well organized, and follows a clear and logical structure. The progression of ideas effectively conveys the research story, facilitating the reader's understanding of the study and its findings.	
4. The study methods are explained clearly.	3
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The Methods section should provide a clearer explanation of the purpose and functionality of each statistical analysis performed, including both descriptive and inferential methods.	
5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.	3
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The results are clear and relevant to the research question. Nevertheless, a deeper and more comprehensive analysis is needed to provide stronger support for the conclusions and to better highlight the significance of the findings	
6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	4
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The Conclusions section would benefit from a stronger linkage to the theoretical framework, ensuring that the findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature and theoretical foundations of the study.	
7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	5
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The references are relevant and current, and they adequately support the research presented in the manuscript	

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Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	XXXXX
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s)

The study is significant because it was conducted in a specific geographical context during the COVID-19 crisis. Its contribution is further strengthened by the relatively low volume of published research in this area of the country, helping to address an important gap in the literature

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:

Reviewer A:
Recommendation: Revisions Required

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title is in line with the content of the manuscript and the title is scholarly topical

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract is perfect. The authors should consider the Editorial word limits.

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

A second proof reading is recommended or copy editor's review to ensure the paper is error free

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

There should be justification for choice of research instruments. Data collection administration should be more clearly stated to avoid ambiguity.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The results are clear, however, the discussion should follow more in depth reviews literature to substantively justify the findings.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

Conclusion is apt. The findings can be modelled for other climes... Perhaps stronger recommendations can ensue from the findings

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

Editorial guidelines should be strictly followed for accurate referencing

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Overall Recommendation!!!

Accepted, minor revision needed

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Great effort by the author. The highlighted areas of improvement will enhance the quality of the study.

Reviewer B:

Recommendation: Resubmit for Review

The TITLE is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.

The title is clear and generally reflects the content of the article. However, it is quite long and could be slightly shortened for better readability. Since the study mainly focuses on Safaricom PLC, this case-study focus should be made more direct in the title.

The ABSTRACT clearly presents objectives, methods, results, and conclusions.

The abstract gives a good overview of the study, including the objective, methods, analysis, and main findings. However, it is rather long and includes too many details. It would be stronger if it were more concise and focused only on the key objectives, methods, results, and conclusion. Some points in the abstract also need to be aligned more carefully with the actual results of the paper

There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

The paper is understandable, but it needs careful proofreading. There are several grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and unclear sentences. Some wording also needs academic improvement. A few terms are used incorrectly, and some editing comments appear to have remained in the text. Language revision would improve the quality of the article significantly.

The study METHODS are explained clearly.

The methodology section includes important information such as the research design, population, sample size, questionnaire, and data analysis methods. However, some parts need clarification. The paper mentions different sampling approaches, so the author should clearly explain which method was actually used. The questionnaire, validity, reliability, and data analysis procedures should also be explained in more detail.

The results are clear and do not contain errors.

The results are presented through descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and ANOVA. However, this section needs major improvement. Some figures and percentages are inconsistent, and the interpretation of the regression results does not always match the values shown in the tables. The author should carefully recheck the statistical tables and make sure that the explanations are accurate.

The CONCLUSION or summary is accurate and supported by the content.

The conclusion is related to the content of the paper and summarizes the main idea of the study. However, because there are issues in the results section, the conclusion should also be revised after the statistical analysis is corrected. The author should avoid making claims that are stronger than the data can support.

The list of REFERENCES is comprehensive and appropriate.

The article includes a reference list with relevant sources, but the references need to be carefully checked. Some references are incomplete or not consistently formatted. The author should ensure that every in-text citation appears in the reference list and that every source in the reference list is cited in the article

Please rate the TITLE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

4

Please rate the ABSTRACT of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the LANGUAGE of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the METHODS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the RESULTS of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the CONCLUSION of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Please rate the REFERENCES of this paper.

[Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]

3

Overall Recommendation!!!

Return for major revision and resubmission

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

The article addresses an interesting and relevant topic, especially because competitive and focus strategies remain important for telecommunications companies after the COVID-19 pandemic. The paper has a clear structure and includes useful sections such as the introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

At the same time, the paper needs major revision before it can be accepted. The author should first revise the methodology and clearly explain the sampling method, questionnaire design, reliability, validity, and data analysis process. The results section should be carefully checked, especially the regression and ANOVA results, because some interpretations do not match the statistical values presented. The author should also correct inconsistencies in the demographic data and make the discussion more precise.

In addition, the article needs careful language editing. Some sentences are unclear, some words are used incorrectly, and a few editing notes appear to remain in the manuscript. The reference list should also be corrected and matched with the in-text citations. Overall, the paper has potential, but it requires substantial revision before publication.
