

## Ansoff Growth Strategies and University Performance

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### Abstract

Universities in Kenya are facing increasing challenges stemming from reduced public funding and intensifying global competition. These pressures have forced the institutions to adopt more strategic approaches to enhance performance. Although Ansoff growth strategies are commonly utilized in corporate settings, the application of Ansoff's framework within higher education particularly in developing countries such as Kenya is an emerging focus of academic research. This study aimed to examine the relationship between Ansoff Growth Strategies and performance of chartered universities in Kenya, with a focus on how strategic choices influence key performance indicators such as academic output, research innovation and institutional collaboration. The study was anchored on Strategic Fit Theory offering a theoretical foundation for understanding how strategic alignment affects institutional outcomes. A cross-sectional research design was adopted, targeting all 54 chartered universities in Kenya comprising 32 public and 22 private institutions. Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered to vice-chancellors or designated senior management representatives. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) results confirmed that the overall model comprising market penetration, product development, market development, and diversification was statistically significant ( $F = 4.596, p < 0.05$ ). Among the strategies, market development exhibited a positive and statistically significant influence on the performance of chartered universities in Kenya ( $\beta = 0.417, t = 2.789, p < 0.05$ ), whereas diversification had a significant negative effect ( $\beta = -0.349, t = -2.510, p < 0.05$ ). In contrast, market penetration ( $\beta = 0.185, t = 1.311, p > 0.05$ ) and product development ( $\beta = 0.084, t = 0.638, p > 0.05$ ) did not show statistically significant effects on performance. These study findings demonstrate that the joint implementation of Ansoff growth strategies significantly influences the performance of chartered universities in Kenya. The study concludes that the implementation of joint Ansoff growth strategies comprising of market penetration, product development, market development and diversification has a significant positive impact on the

performance of chartered universities in Kenya. The study recommends for a shift away from fragmented initiatives toward a comprehensive, multi-pronged growth approach. By integrating diverse strategic actions, universities will be better positioned to address the complex and evolving challenges facing the higher education sector in Kenya and similar contexts, hence improvement in performance.

**Keywords:** Market Penetration, Market Development, Product Development, Diversification, Ansoff Growth Strategies, University Performance

## **Introduction**

University governance globally has experienced notable transformations in response to evolving societal, economic and demographic pressures. As institutions entrusted with advancing teaching, research and community service, universities are now operating in highly competitive environments at both national and international levels. This heightened competition stems not only from traditional academic institutions but also from new entrants such as online education providers and alternative credentialing platforms, which are disrupting the conventional models of higher education (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016). Many universities are grappling with diminishing public funding due to economic constraints and shifts in government spending priorities, raising concerns about their long-term financial viability. Adding to this complexity are broader global uncertainties including rapid technological changes, shifting student profiles and evolving workforce expectations which further complicate institutional planning and decision-making processes (Jorge & Pena, 2017). Within this increasingly volatile context, the adoption of robust strategic management practices has become essential for universities aiming not only to sustain operations but also to remain relevant and effective. Strategic management facilitates the alignment of institutional activities with core missions and stakeholder needs by guiding objective-setting, resource distribution and adaptive responses to external challenges. This approach enables universities to identify emerging opportunities, foster innovation, improve operational efficiency and enhance their overall competitiveness in a rapidly changing environment. Ultimately, strategic management contributes to improved institutional outcomes while supporting the broader mandates of higher education: teaching, research and societal engagement (Agyei & Mtembu, 2018).

As part of this strategic orientation, universities and other organizations often pursue growth and long-term resilience through clearly defined approaches. These typically fall into two main categories, that is, growth strategies and retrenchment strategies. Growth strategies are proactive and market-oriented, requiring well-planned resource allocation and consistent monitoring to ensure sustained development and impact (Pearce & Robinson, 2015). One of the widely adopted frameworks for growth is the Ansoff growth strategy model, which offers a structured approach for identifying pathways to growth and performance improvement. Increasingly, universities are turning to Ansoff's framework to broaden their revenue sources, strengthen institutional relevance and improve outcomes. Literature suggests that the application of these strategies can significantly influence various aspects of university performance (Mutisya & Makoha, 2021).

## *Ansoff Growth Strategies*

Ansoff growth strategies outlines four strategic options firms can adopt to achieve growth by modifying products or exploring new markets. These strategic options are market

penetration, product development, market development and diversification (Ansoff, 1965). Each strategy carries distinct levels of risk and is chosen based on the firm's goals and market conditions. Market penetration focuses on increasing sales of existing products in current markets through pricing strategies, promotions, or enhancing customer loyalty. It is considered the least risky growth path, emphasizing volume expansion and market share gains. Product development involves introducing new products into existing markets. This strategy is resource-intensive and demands significant investment in research and development, along with new capabilities. It is employed to attract new customers and stay ahead of competition through innovation (Peterdy, 2022). Market development entails selling existing products in new markets or customer segments. Firms using this strategy may explore new geographical regions or demographic groups, often requiring careful market research and resource allocation to succeed (Mbithi et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2013). Diversification represents the highest-risk strategy, as it involves launching new products in unfamiliar markets. It is typically pursued when growth within the current market is constrained. Diversification strategies can take several forms: horizontal diversification which aligns the new business with existing products; related or concentric diversification which involves expansion into similar areas; vertical integration involves moving along the supply chain; and conglomerate diversification ventures into unrelated industries, leveraging managerial or operational competencies for competitive advantage (Chirani & Effatdoost, 2013; Le, 2019; Rothaermel, 2017).

#### *University Performance*

Universities play a pivotal role in national development by advancing human capital and contributing to economic growth through research and innovation (Odhiambo, 2018). In alignment with Kenya Vision 2030, which aspires to deliver globally competitive education, training and research for sustainable development, Kenyan universities have tailored their academic offerings to support the country's Big Four Agenda focusing on food security, manufacturing, affordable housing and healthcare. Academic programs in Kenyan universities are structured across four levels: diploma, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. The design and delivery of these programs are shaped by multiple factors, including the founding mission of the institution, prevailing market demands, resource availability, professional regulatory requirements, physical infrastructure and academic staffing capacity (Mukhwana et al., 2016). The operations of universities in Kenya are governed by the Commission for University Education (CUE) under the framework of the Universities Act of 2012. CUE is responsible for quality assurance, accreditation and the recognition of academic qualifications (McCowan, 2018). As of 2022, the country's higher education landscape comprised 35 chartered public universities and 25 chartered private universities, reflecting steady expansion since the founding of the University of Nairobi in 1970 (CUE, 2022). Despite this growth, Kenyan universities face persistent challenges in delivering on their mandate. These challenges include reduced government funding and growing competition for student enrollment and tuition revenue (Sande & Waithaka, 2020). Addressing these challenges calls for the implementation of effective institutional strategies (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016) and the mobilization of adequate internal and external resources (Sum & Chorlian, 2013; Maritan & Lee, 2017).

### *Purpose of the Study*

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of joint Ansoff growth strategies specifically market penetration, market development, product development and diversification on the performance of chartered universities in Kenya. In response to increasing competition, shifting student demands and the imperative for long-term sustainability, universities have begun to embrace more strategic, market-driven models (Nganga & Muthamia, 2022; World Bank, 2021). Ansoff growth strategies provides a structured approach to institutional growth by evaluating options across existing and new markets and programs (Ansoff, 1957; Hussain et al., 2020). Chartered universities both public and private are increasingly compelled to adopt such strategies to enhance competitiveness, expand enrollment and improve operational efficiency (CUE, 2023; Odhiambo, 2020). While Ansoff growth strategies are widely applied in corporate contexts, its use in higher education, especially in developing countries like Kenya, remains a growing area of scholarly interest (Mutisya & Makokha, 2021). This study sought to provide empirical evidence on how the adoption of joint Ansoff growth strategies influences university performance, addressing a gap in current literature that has largely overlooked their application in the academic sector. By doing so, the study aimed to support data-driven decision-making and strategic planning within higher education institutions operating in dynamic environments.

### *Research Objective*

The study aimed to determine the joint effect of Ansoff growth strategies on the performance of chartered universities in Kenya.

### *Research Hypothesis*

The study tested the hypothesis that market penetration, market development, product development and diversification jointly have a significant effect on performance of chartered universities in Kenya.

## **Literature Review**

### *Theoretical Background*

This study was guided by the Strategic Fit Theory (SFT), introduced by Hofer and Schendel (1978). The theory highlights the significance of aligning an organization's internal strengths such as resources, capabilities and competencies with the external environment to enhance performance and gain a competitive edge. The theory suggests that optimal organizational outcomes are achieved when strategic decisions are consistent with both internal capacities and external demands (Venkatraman & Camillus, 1984). In environments characterized by complexity and rapid change, such as the higher education sector, this alignment becomes particularly vital for institutional success.

Within the context of chartered universities in Kenya, SFT provides a relevant theoretical lens for examining how growth strategies including market penetration, market development, product development and diversification can be effectively tailored to fit both the internal characteristics and external challenges facing each institution. The theory suggests that the success of such strategies is not inherent in the strategies themselves, but in how well they are matched to institutional goals, organizational capacity, funding structures and market positioning (Venkatraman & Camillus, 1984).

This framework is especially pertinent given the current landscape in Kenyan higher education, where universities must respond to declining public funding, increasing competition and heightened accountability pressures. SFT supports an evaluative approach to determine whether the implementation of Ansoff growth strategies is contextually appropriate and strategically aligned with each university's operational reality. Moreover, the theory provides an explanation for the differential performance among institutions pursuing similar strategic initiatives, attributing the variation to differences in how well strategies are aligned with institutional and environmental contexts (Miles & Snow, 1978). By grounding the study in SFT, the research emphasized the centrality of strategic alignment in shaping performance outcomes. It complements internal resource-focused frameworks such as the Resource-Based View by incorporating an external, environment-facing perspective, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of strategic effectiveness in the university setting.

#### *Ansoff Growth Strategies and University Performance*

Universities across the globe are facing growing pressure to enhance their competitiveness, ensure long-term sustainability and respond effectively to the evolving expectations of stakeholders including students, governments and employers (Salmi & Bassett, 2021; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). In response to these demands, many institutions have embraced strategic frameworks traditionally associated with the corporate sector, among them Ansoff growth strategies (AGS). These include market penetration, market development, product development and diversification strategies that can be employed either individually or in combination to support institutional growth (Ansoff, 1957; Hussain, Khan & Khan, 2020).

Empirical literature suggests that while each AGS component offers specific benefits, integrated application tends to yield better outcomes in areas such as institutional performance, resilience and sustainable development (Mutisya & Makokha, 2021; Mungai & Mbithi, 2020). Ansoff's model facilitates strategic alignment between internal capacities and external opportunities, enabling organizations to pursue expansion in a structured and data-driven manner (Ansoff, 1957). Although initially developed for the business environment, this framework has proven increasingly applicable in higher education, particularly in efforts to grow student enrollment, broaden academic offerings, expand into new markets and diversify income streams (Mwangi & Otieno, 2022).

Despite growing interest in strategic growth approaches, research examining the combined impact of AGS on organizational performance remains limited. However, studies in various sectors indicate that whether applied separately or collectively, these strategies tend to improve key performance indicators such as profitability, market share and overall competitiveness. This has been observed across a range of industries and organizational contexts, suggesting broad applicability (Aloulou, 2019).

In a study of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Thika, Kenya, Wanjiru and Gonjera (2015) found that firms employing a full range of AGS recorded notable improvements in sales growth, profitability and customer base expansion. Their findings demonstrated that even in environments constrained by limited resources, strategic implementation of growth models can lead to tangible performance gains, emphasizing the flexibility of AGS in emerging economies.

A study by Kahonga and Kariuki (2020) on insurance firms in Nairobi showed that the combined use of market penetration, product development, diversification and mergers accounted for a substantial proportion (59%) of variation in firm performance. Among these strategies, market penetration showed the strongest relationship with performance outcomes, highlighting the effectiveness of deepening engagement in existing markets. These findings also revealed that such strategies are not confined to private enterprises but are relevant in semi-public entities where regulatory and resource constraints are significant. Within the higher education sector, similar trends are emerging. Mwangi and Otieno (2022) demonstrated that universities which adopted multiple growth strategies such as expanding course offerings, entering new regional or international markets and intensifying recruitment efforts achieved superior outcomes in enrollment growth, financial health and institutional reputation. A study by Njoroge, Kitur and Maina (2023) confirmed that a comprehensive and simultaneous application of AGS significantly enhances university performance, particularly in student numbers, income diversification and responsiveness to regulatory and market shifts.

However, scholars also highlight critical limitations and risks of growth strategies. Oduor and Achieng (2023) caution that rapid or uncoordinated implementation of growth strategies, particularly in the absence of sufficient human and infrastructural capacity, can lead to operational inefficiencies and reputational damage. This is consistent with warnings in the broader strategic management literature, which emphasize the dangers of misalignment between strategic ambition and available resources which often results in institutional drift or underperformance (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 2005).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is grounded in a conceptual framework that proposes a relationship between Ansoff growth strategies as the independent variable and the performance of chartered universities, identified as the dependent variable. Ansoff growth strategies represent a set of deliberate, institution-wide approaches aimed at advancing organizational growth. These strategies comprising market penetration, product development, market development and diversification reflect efforts by universities to expand their academic portfolios, engage new student demographics and strengthen both operational and academic capabilities. Each dimension offers a distinct pathway through which institutions pursue strategic positioning and long-term sustainability.

University performance, conceptualized as the dependent variable, is conceptualized as a multifaceted construct, evaluated through a range of performance indicators. These include student enrollment and graduation rates, research outputs and innovation capacity, academic staffing levels and quality, financial stability and competitive standing, as measured by internal and external stakeholder perceptions. Together, these dimensions provide a holistic assessment of institutional effectiveness in fulfilling educational, research and societal mandates.

The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 facilitates an integrated analysis of how strategic growth initiatives shape institutional outcomes in the higher education sector.

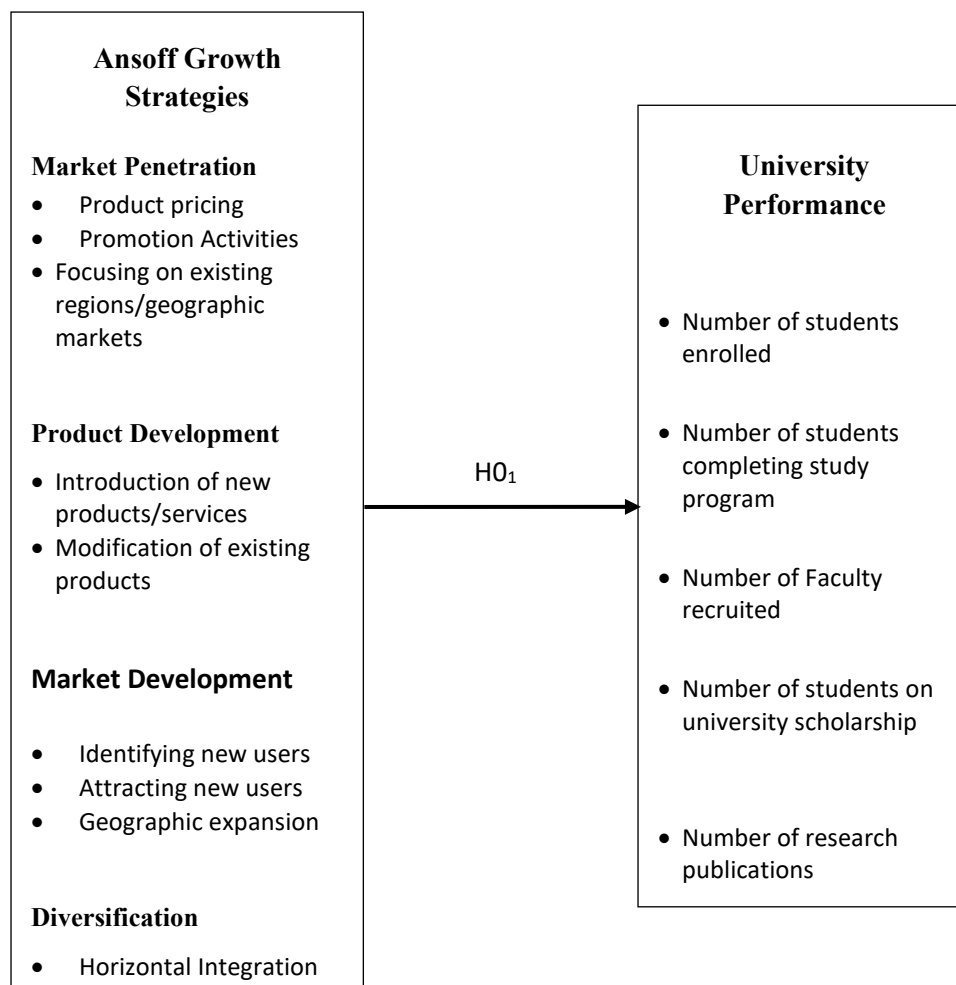


Figure 1: Conceptual model on the effect of Ansoff Growth Strategies on University Performance

As shown in Figure 1, the proposed conceptual framework posits a direct relationship between joint application of Ansoff growth strategies and university performance. It was anticipated that Ansoff's strategic initiatives would contribute to improved institutional outcomes in several ways. Market penetration, achieved through competitive pricing, targeted promotional activities and a concentrated focus on existing geographic regions, is expected to drive student enrollment. Product development, through the introduction of new academic programs and enhancements to existing offerings, is likely to stimulate innovation and increase research productivity. Market development, involving expansion into new regions and outreach to untapped student segments, can extend the university's institutional footprint. Diversification strategies encompassing horizontal and vertical integration, concentric constrained diversification and entry into unrelated areas are projected to generate additional revenue streams and attract a more diverse student population (Hitt et al., 2017).

### Research Methodology

This study was conducted among 54 chartered universities located across various counties in Kenya, capturing a broad representation of institutional contexts within the country. The

study employed a quantitative research strategy, using a structured questionnaire to collect data and statistical tools to examine the effect of joint Ansoff growth strategies on university performance. The study was theoretically anchored in Strategic Fit Theory, which provided the basis for hypothesis development. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize the research data. To test the hypothesis which stated that market penetration, market development, product development and diversification jointly have a significant effect on performance of chartered universities in Kenya, multiple regression analysis was employed and the multiple regression equation was modeled as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where;

$x_1$  = Market penetration strategy;  $x_2$  = Product development strategy;  $x_3$  = Market development strategy and  $x_4$  = Diversification strategy

### Results and Discussions

The target population for this study comprised 60 chartered universities in Kenya. While a census approach was employed for the main study, a pilot study was initially conducted involving 6 universities, representing 10% of the total population. This sample size aligns with established scholarly guidance, which recommends selecting 5% to 10% of the population for pilot testing (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). To avoid any risk of data contamination, the institutions selected for the pilot phase were excluded from the final data collection process. Consequently, the main study focused on the remaining 54 chartered universities. Table 1 presents the response rate.

Table 1  
*Response Rate*

| Chartered Universities | Pilot Study |          |               | Main Study |           |               |
|------------------------|-------------|----------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
|                        | Sample      | Response | Response Rate | Census     | Response  | Response Rate |
| Public Universities    | 3           | 3        | 100.0%        | 32         | 29        | 90.6%         |
| Private Universities   | 3           | 3        | 100.0%        | 22         | 18        | 81.8%         |
| <b>Overall</b>         | <b>6</b>    | <b>6</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>54</b>  | <b>47</b> | <b>87.0%</b>  |

As illustrated in Table 1, the main study achieved a total of 47 valid responses out of the 54 chartered universities contacted, resulting in an overall response rate of 87.0%. According to Baruch and Holtom (2008), a response rate of 60% or higher is generally acceptable in social science research and supports the validity and generalizability of study findings. Therefore, the high response rate achieved in this study provides a strong basis for drawing conclusions applicable to chartered universities in Kenya. An initial screening of the dataset revealed no cases with more than 20% missing responses; hence, no entries were excluded due to excessive missingness. For records with one to three missing items, mean substitution was applied to fill the gaps. The overall level of missing data was low less than 5% and assumed to be Missing Completely At Random (MCAR). To validate this assumption, Little's MCAR test was conducted and yielded non-significant results ( $p > 0.05$ ), confirming the randomness of the missing data. As supported by Pigott (2001) and Schlomer, Bauman and Card (2010), mean substitution is an appropriate technique under conditions of minimal and random

missingness. It preserves statistical power and avoids significant distortion of inter-variable relationships, thus ensuring methodological integrity in subsequent analyses.

### Construct Validity and Factor Analysis

To assess construct validity, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the extent to which the observed variables loaded onto underlying latent constructs and accounted for maximum shared variance. This method was essential in refining the measurement scales by identifying and retaining items that most effectively represented the theoretical constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Prior to extraction, preliminary diagnostics were conducted to evaluate the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis, as recommended by Costello and Osborne (2005). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was applied. The KMO statistic assessed the proportion of variance among the variables that might be common variance, with values closer to 1.0 indicating greater adequacy for factor analysis. The KMO statistic obtained in this study met the recommended threshold, indicating sufficient shared variance among the variables. A threshold of 0.60 or above is generally acceptable (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity examined the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, suggesting no significant inter-variable relationships. A significant result ( $p < 0.05$ ) supports the appropriateness of factor analysis. The Bartlett's Test results confirmed the adequacy of the data for factor extraction.

This study examined the effect of joint Ansoff growth strategies on performance of chartered universities in Kenya which include market penetration, product development, market development and diversification. Descriptive statistics, specifically the mean and standard deviation, were computed to summarize respondents' perceptions of the implementation and effectiveness of these strategic initiatives. As presented in Table 2, the results offer valuable insights into the prevailing strategic orientations and financial management practices within the sampled institutions, highlighting the perceived strengths and variability in the application of growth strategies and funding policies.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviation for adoption of Ansoff Growth Strategies*

|                        | Composite Scores |           |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------|
|                        | Mean             | Std. Dev. |
| a) Market Penetration  | 3.93             | 1.063     |
| b) Product Development | 4.07             | 1.011     |
| c) Market Development  | 3.79             | 1.200     |
| d) Diversification     | 3.90             | 1.020     |

As shown in Table 3, product development emerged as the most adopted strategy ( $M = 4.07$ ), reflecting a strong focus on innovation and enhancement of academic offerings. Market penetration also showed high adoption ( $M = 3.93$ ), suggesting active efforts to grow within existing student markets. Diversification had a moderate mean score ( $M = 3.90$ ), indicating cautious exploration of new markets or program areas. Market Development recorded the lowest mean ( $M = 3.79$ ) and the highest variation in responses, pointing to inconsistent efforts or outcomes in expanding into new market segments.

The results suggest that product development is the most widely and consistently adopted strategy among chartered universities, while market development is the least utilized and has the most variation. This may point to a strategic focus on internal program innovation rather than outward market expansion. The standard deviations, all around 1, suggest moderate consistency across institutions in how these strategies are implemented

### *Test of Hypothesis*

The dataset underwent a series of diagnostic tests to verify compliance with the fundamental assumptions of regression analysis. These included assessments for normality, linearity, autocorrelation, heteroscedasticity and multicollinearity. These tests adhered to the assumptions of regression analysis thus providing an accurate and reliable prediction of the relationship among the study variables (Williams, Grajales & Kurkiewicz, 2013).

To examine the effect of joint Ansoff Growth Strategies on the performance of chartered universities in Kenya, the study tested the hypothesis that the joint application of market penetration, product development, market development and diversification has a significant effect on university performance. A multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the relationship between these strategic dimensions and the composite indicators of institutional performance. In this model, university performance served as the dependent variable, while the four Ansoff strategies were entered collectively as independent predictors. The findings from this analysis are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

*Multiple Linear Regression Results for the Effect of Joint Ansoff Growth Strategies and University Performance*

| Model Summary |                     |                             |            |                           |                            |                   |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Model         |                     | R                           | R Square   | Adjusted R Square         | Std. Error of the Estimate |                   |
| 1             |                     | 0.552 <sup>a</sup>          | 0.304      | 0.238                     | 626.13232                  |                   |
| ANOVA         |                     |                             |            |                           |                            |                   |
| Model         |                     | Sum of Squares              | df         | Mean Square               | F                          | Sig.              |
| 1             | Regression          | 7207563.830                 | 4          | 1801890.958               | 4.596                      | .004 <sup>b</sup> |
|               | Residual            | 16465750.519                | 42         | 392041.679                |                            |                   |
|               | Total               | 23673314.349                | 46         |                           |                            |                   |
| Coefficients  |                     |                             |            |                           |                            |                   |
|               |                     | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t                          | Sig.              |
|               |                     | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |                            |                   |
| 1             | (Constant)          | -1165.937                   | 1855.736   |                           | -0.628                     | 0.533             |
|               | Market Penetration  | 328.878                     | 250.808    | 0.185                     | 1.311                      | 0.197             |
|               | Product Development | 173.495                     | 272.014    | 0.084                     | 0.638                      | 0.527             |
|               | Market Development  | 524.661                     | 188.089    | 0.417                     | 2.789                      | 0.008             |
|               | Diversification     | -579.313                    | 230.780    | -0.349                    | -2.510                     | 0.016             |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Market Penetration, Product Development, Market Development, Diversification

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Chartered Universities in Kenya

The regression analysis results in Table 3 indicate that 30.4% of the variation in performance is explained by Ansoff growth strategies ( $R^2 = 0.304$ ). The ANOVA results reveal a statistically significant joint effect of market penetration, market development, product development and diversification on university performance ( $F = 4.596, p < 0.05$ ), supporting the research hypothesis. Among the individual strategies, market development had the most influential strategic dimension with a positive and statistical significance ( $\beta = 0.417, p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that universities that expanded into new markets or student segments experienced notable performance gains. Conversely, diversification showed a significant ( $p = 0.016$ ) but negative impact on performance ( $\beta = -0.349, p < 0.05$ ), implying that unaligned diversification may dilute institutional focus and constrain effectiveness. The strategies of market penetration ( $\beta = 0.185$ ) and product development ( $\beta = 0.084$ ) had positive but statistically insignificant effects ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating limited influence under current implementation. These findings suggest that while expansion into new markets can enhance institutional outcomes, diversification efforts must be carefully aligned with institutional capacity and mission to be effective. The results support the continued relevance of Ansoff's framework in higher education and underscore the importance of strategic alignment for sustainable university performance.

The study's findings reinforce existing literature highlighting the positive impact of strategic growth frameworks, particularly Ansoff's model, on university performance. Prior research, such as Mwangi and Otieno (2022), supports the conclusion that the integrated application of Ansoff strategies enhances student enrollment, financial health, and competitiveness. Similarly, Njoroge et al. (2023) found that joint implementation of market penetration, product development, market development, and diversification has a greater effect than individual strategies, validating this study's emphasis on synergy.

This study further suggests that while market penetration and market development strategies show positive contributions, their influence is limited when applied in isolation. The role of diversification, although yielding mixed results when implemented in isolation, demonstrates a more pronounced and constructive impact when integrated with other growth strategies. This finding supports the view that diversification alone may not generate significant performance gains unless it complements broader strategic initiatives such as market development or product enhancement. This aligns with the conclusions of Gakure et al. (2011), who observed that in the context of private universities in Kenya, diversification contributed meaningfully to institutional sustainability and competitiveness only when combined with other supportive strategies. Their study highlighted that diversification particularly into non-core programs or revenue-generating ventures required careful alignment with institutional strengths and an enabling policy environment to be effective. Therefore, this study reinforces the notion that diversification should not be pursued as a standalone strategy, but rather as part of a coordinated strategic portfolio to maximize its benefits on institutional performance.

The results of this study underscore the importance of adopting a holistic approach to growth that aligns strategy with institutional capacity and funding policy. While the collective use of Ansoff growth strategies is shown to drive performance, caution is warranted. As noted by Oduor and Achieng (2023), aggressive strategy implementation without adequate resources

may undermine service delivery. Therefore, success depends on strategic alignment, resource availability, and responsiveness to the external environment.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined the influence of joint Ansoff growth strategies on the performance of chartered universities in Kenya. The findings indicate that the joint implementation of market penetration, product development, market development and diversification strategies exerts a significant impact on institutional performance. The findings provide valuable insights for university administrators and policymakers in enhancing institutional growth and long-term sustainability. The study highlights the importance of adopting an integrated strategic approach, emphasizing that the simultaneous application of multiple growth strategies enhances university performance.

This study extends the application of Ansoff Growth Strategies (AGS) beyond the corporate sector into the higher education context of a developing country, thereby enriching Strategic Fit Theory by demonstrating its relevance in non-commercial, knowledge-driven institutions. By empirically establishing the joint effect of market penetration, product development, market development and diversification on the performance of chartered universities, the study advances existing literature by highlighting how integrated strategic approaches yield better institutional outcomes than isolated strategies. Contextually, the findings provide evidence-based insights tailored to Kenyan universities, which face unique challenges such as declining public funding, increased competition, and evolving market demands. This research contributes to knowledge by offering a strategic blueprint adaptable to similar higher education environments in sub-Saharan Africa and other emerging economies, thereby bridging a gap in both theory and practice on the alignment of growth strategies with institutional capacity and external dynamics.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

This study was primarily limited to internal strategic dimensions specifically, the application of Ansoff growth strategies and institutional funding policies as predictors of university performance. While these variables offer valuable insights into institutional dynamics, the study did not extensively consider external environmental factors such as changes in government policy, fluctuations in donor support, or global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. These external forces may significantly influence university operations and outcomes and could interact with internal strategies in complex ways.

Future research should therefore incorporate a broader range of contextual variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of university performance. Longitudinal or mixed-method studies that integrate both internal and external factors would offer deeper insights into how universities adapt and perform in volatile and uncertain environments.

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