



# Unearthing The Contribution of Ethical Orientation and Marketing Strategies in Catalyzing Usage of Locally Made Products: Insights from Sub-Saharan Africa

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to unearth the contribution of ethical orientation and marketing strategies in catalyzing the usage of locally made products using empirical evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. This study adopted a cross-sectional and quantitative approach. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample of 165 manufacturing firms in Uganda, and Smart PLS software supported data analysis. Study results indicate that the ethical orientation and marketing strategies of local firms positively and significantly contribute to the usage of locally made products. Marketing strategies provide a conduit through which the ethical orientation of firms affects consumer usage of locally manufactured products. While several studies have been conducted on product usage, this study provides initial empirical evidence on the mediating effect of marketing strategies in the association between ethical orientation and the usage of locally manufactured products from Sub-Saharan Africa.

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## Introduction

Purchasing goods made locally is recognized as a smart way to help regional economies advance because of its possibility to boost government revenue, open up job opportunities for the local populace, and make local manufacturing companies more competitive (Amoah & Amoah, 2018). According to Ayob and Hussain (2016), using locally produced goods lowers business operating expenses, lessens reliance on imports, and promotes economic activity, all of which raise the GDP (gross domestic product) of a nation. Despite these

seemingly clear benefits of local products, the sub-Saharan African region, specifically Uganda, has registered low levels of local product usage.

The government of Uganda has developed and implemented various policies, bills, and acts aimed at making Ugandan products competitive in both local and international markets, mainly to accelerate the usage of local products. Among the policies that were introduced are the Buy Uganda, Build Uganda (BUBU) policy in 2014 and the Local Content Act of 2019. However, these policies have not produced the anticipated outcomes. Recent studies have further indicated that Uganda uses a higher percentage of imported goods than domestically produced goods (Wandeka, Kiggundu, & Mutumba, 2022), explaining the higher failure rate of local products (Eton *et al.*, 2021). As a result, a number of Ugandan small and medium-sized manufacturing firms (SMEs) have ceased operations, which is probably going to worsen the country's unemployment rate and overall balance of payments situation (Atukwatse, 2022).

Amidst this situation, there is scanty literature on the factors that contribute to the low patronage of local products. The International Trade Administration Report (2023) indicates moral obliquity among business owners and manufacturers in Uganda has largely affected the acceptance of locally made products. However, Turyatamba (2022) found out that the poor quality of Ugandan products has greatly affected their competitiveness in the local and global markets, while (Zhang & Hou, 2017) attached a higher risk to products from the Sub-Saharan region due to inconsistencies in quality and technologies used.

Examining the body of research on product usage, it is clear that researchers have mostly concentrated on consumers and how they perceive local products (Khan *et al.*, 2012; Lee *et al.*, 2020). Consumers associate products from developed nations with superior quality and branding, elevating them above those from developing nations. In addition, previous studies have used advanced pricing (Faith, 2018) and consumer behavioral and physiological values as antecedents of product use (Ma *et al.*, 2021), but also more inclined to the perspective of the consumers (Rodgers, 1976; Ajzen, 2020). Little empirical data is available to advance the perspective of local manufacturing firms boosting the usage of local products, especially using data from Sub-Saharan Africa. This study therefore focuses on the ethical orientation of the firm and marketing strategies as solutions to increase usage of locally made products in Sub-Saharan Africa.

To address this phenomenon, the study borrows insights from moral theory (Kant, 1959) and Porter's generic model (Porter, 2007) to advance knowledge on how local manufacturing firms can accelerate the usage of their products. Kantianism theory promotes the use of locally produced goods by encouraging businesses to uphold deontological values and making the case that laws, rules, duties, and usage principles are sacred and untouchable (Koh & Reamer, 2021), which defines an ethically oriented firm. In a similar vein, Porter's generic strategies of differentiation, focus, overall cost leadership, and forming strategic alliances may be cornerstones of creating competitive advantage for local firms (Lee, 2020). Porter's generic strategies provide foundations through which firms can distinguish themselves in the market and hence attract consumers to use their products (Islami, Mustafa, & Topuzovska, 2020).

Against that backdrop, this study unearths the contribution of ethical orientation and marketing strategies from the perspective of the firm in catalyzing the usage of locally made products using evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. Results indicate that the ethical orientation and marketing strategies of local firms positively and significantly contribute to the usage of locally made products. In the same vein, marketing strategies provide a conduit through which the ethical orientation of firms affects consumer usage of locally manufactured products. This trend is likely to boost local production and the growth of local industries (Uganda National Planning Authority, 2020), as well as promote sustainable industrialization and innovation as stipulated in Sustainable Development Goal 9 (SDG 9).

## Literature Review

This study adopted the Kantianism Moral Theory (Kant, 1785) which argues that if managers for local manufacturing firms can put in place trusted relationships both within and between customers and respect one another as articulated in the respect-for-persons principle (Bowie, 2017), they can easily influence the usage of their products. In this regard, any local manufacturing firm is therefore a community of persons that should be regarded as a moral community ultimately governed by universal laws of morality (Greenwood & Freeman, 2018). The implication of this is that to influence the usage of local products, local manufacturers should create a community of users based on moral principles through which they can maximize sales (Scharding, 2019). Accordingly, through the works of Juvrud and Gredebäck (2020), Kantianism Moral Theory argues that local manufacturing firms should examine the moral principles in their day-to-day marketing actions and the consequences and outcomes of these actions for their businesses and customers. In addition, firms should also borrow the principles of situation ethics by implementing flexible guidelines rather than absolute rules while implementing their marketing programs. This will enable consumers to develop an understanding that locally made products are themselves good with various benefits and comply with national and international quality standards, which boosts their confidence to use these products.

The study also borrows insights from Porter's generic strategies (Porter, 2007) of overall cost leadership, differentiation, focus, and building strategic alliances as key avenues through which firms can influence the usage of their products. Specifically, overall cost leadership enables local manufacturing firms to minimize the cost of production and, hence, lower prices for their products. This makes local products affordable and thus increases their usage and market share (Ali & Anwar, 2021). For differentiation strategy, local manufacturers can develop unique offerings that are distinct (Islami *et al.*, 2020). The use of a focused strategy also permits local entrepreneurs to market and sell their products in areas that are either neglected or underserved (Papadas *et al.*, 2019). This, if well implemented, coupled with strategic alliances, enables local firms to enter into agreements with other companies to collaborate on a mutually advantageous initiative while each maintaining its independence (Mamédio *et al.*, 2019). Using these strategies enables local manufacturers to attain a competitive advantage as compared to those selling imported products, fostering the usage of local products.

A combination of the two perspectives provides a better framework through which local manufacturing firms can influence the usage of their products. Kantian moral theory strongly emphasizes treating customers as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end, which is possible through the application of deontological, teleological, axiological, and situational orientations. The theory therefore provides an ethical and moral framework that may guide firms to produce quality products that fit customers' needs and wants. However, the theory is limited in explaining how manufacturing firms can influence customers to use these locally-made products. This limitation in Kantian moral theory can be closed by Porter's generic strategies (Porter, 2007). Porter argues that customers can be influenced through the effective application of Porter's generic strategies of overall cost leadership, differentiation, focus, and strategic alliances.

## Usage of Locally Made Products

Locally made products are viewed based on geographical boundaries within which a specific product was produced (Puren *et al.*, 2017). In sub-Saharan Africa especially in Uganda, there is a high level of risk associated with locally made products which has made them suffer negative brand perception, negative brand image profile, and a lot of Price-Quality inconsistencies about the quality, packaging, technology, and various parameters that result in greater perceived risk in the mind of a local consumer hence low usage of locally made products (Zhang & Hou, 2017). Usage of locally made products concerns the degree of product usage and has widely been recognized as a major variable relevant to strategy (Lee de la Torre, 2022). This suggests that knowing the level of product usage is very important to a firm and the economy at large. Product usage is conceptualized depending on the number of active consumers who buy the product, the value delivered to the

consumers, and the depth of consumption of the product by a consumer (Cornelius *et al.*, 2020). Product usage may be considered at the level of active consumers of a particular product while keeping in mind the value delivered by the product and the rate at which the consumers use a particular product (Reddipalli, 2020).

## **Ethical Orientation**

The study further borrows insights from the ethical orientation as anchored in Kant's moral theory (1785), more specifically the deontological, teleological, axiological, and situational perspectives. The deontological perspective, grounded in Kantian ethics, focuses on adherence to universal moral duties and principles, asserting that actions are morally right if they align with these duties regardless of outcomes (Jiang *et al.*, 2020). The teleological perspective evaluates the morality of actions based on their consequences, emphasizing outcomes that maximize the overall good (Płachciak & Zaremba-Warnke, 2021). Axiology examines the nature of value, prioritizing intrinsic values such as justice and human dignity. Situational orientation considers the context-specific distinctions that influence ethical decision-making, balancing rigid principles with the complexities of real-world scenarios (Gichuki, 2014). This type of orientation, flexibility, and strategy may be of greater use to local firms intending to influence the usage of their products. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive framework for ethical reasoning, combining rule-based integrity, outcome-focused pragmatism, value-centric considerations, and contextual sensitivity as core variables that may influence consumer usage of the firm's products and services.

## **Marketing Strategies**

This study benchmarks Michael Porter's (1985) model for marketing strategies, which delineates three generic approaches businesses can employ to gain a competitive advantage and influence the performance of their products and services. These strategies include cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. Cost leadership emphasizes becoming the lowest-cost producer in the industry, allowing firms to offer lower prices and attract price-sensitive customers (Islami *et al.*, 2020), thus influencing usage, especially in the sub-Saharan African setting. In the same way, differentiation involves creating unique products or services that stand out from competitors, enabling companies to charge premium prices due to perceived higher value, and fostering customer loyalty (Suryanto & Anggraini, 2020). On the other hand, the Focus strategy targets a specific market niche, tailoring offerings to meet the unique needs of that segment more effectively than broader market competitors. Each strategy requires a distinct operational focus and resource allocation to achieve and sustain competitive superiority for a firm.

## **Ethical Orientation and Usage of Locally Made Products**

The concept of ethical orientation is perceived in existing literature differently. According to Priyastiwati and Fatmariyati (2020), it entails the understanding of the beliefs, behavior, and practices of what is morally right and wrong. Ethical orientation is also advanced as an individual's moral philosophy of valuing concepts like good and bad, right and wrong, justice, and virtue (Johari *et al.*, 2020). In this study, we operationalized ethical orientation in terms of deontological perspective, teleological, axiology, and situational orientation as explicated by moral theory (Kant, 1785) to enlighten the usage of locally manufactured products. As such, ethical orientation is a good starting point for initiating and maintaining good rapport with customers, which could influence the usage of organizational products.

Extant studies on product usage indicate that it is catalyzed by ethical orientation. For example, Kaski, Niemi, and Pullins (2018) assert that when the firm is ethically oriented, it easily strengthens its rapport with customers, especially with business-to-business sales that influence the usage of the firm's products. Johari *et al.* (2020) also argue that if customers begin to perceive that an organization is ethical, the organization stands

a better chance of influencing the usage of its products and services. This implies that ethics is a fundamental practice in business that must be benchmarked if a business is to achieve its goals and objectives.

From the deontological orientation, we note that business practices that conform to a specified set of rules within the industry have higher chances of creating more acceptability in the industry (Jain, 2020). This is supported by Xu and Ma (2016), who believed that telling the truth creates visibility and trust among customers, suggesting that if deontology is well practiced, it could increase brand visibility of locally made products and ultimately usage of local products. Concerning the teleological orientation that is also known as consequentialist ethics, it draws from the moral obligations or duties of what is desirable or good as an end to be attained (Mohd, 2015). This perspective holds that an act is morally right if it produces a greater level of good over evil than any alternative act, and it is morally wrong if it does the opposite (Bennett, 2015). This generally suggests that the quality of the products is measured by their impact and outcome (Juvrud & Gredebäck, 2020). This argument is well aligned with teleological perspectives that emphasize the impact and outcome of manufactured products, which determine their consumption (Juvrud & Gredebäck, 2020). However, amidst this, Mohd (2015) argues that the teleological perspective of ethics emphasizes the outcomes, despite the intent of individual behaviors, yet individual behavior can be of greater risk to consumer behavior and usage of products.

Regarding the axiological orientation, it focuses on the nature and classification of values and the kinds of things that have value, as grounded in the studies of Lapie (1902). The perspective assumes that consumers will continuously use products and services where they derive both intrinsic and extrinsic value (Ahn & Reeve, 2021). As such, Shamim *et al.* (2015) argue that virtue, knowledge, and friendship are some of the intrinsic values that contribute to strengthening the relationship between the firm and its customers. This generally shows that firms oriented towards axiological behavior can provide intrinsic and extrinsic values to customers, which ultimately may influence their usage and consumption behavior.

On the contrary, value pluralists face the problem of explaining whether or how the different types of axiological value can be compared when making rational decisions (Cieciuch *et al.*, 2015). The authors add that values do not exist on the most fundamental level of reality. Despite the different assertions related to value, it remains important that products of value may attract more users than those of less value (Ahn & Reeve, 2021). Finally, situational ethics proposes that ethical laws or rules are applied based on the context (Zheng *et al.*, 2015). This approach calls upon business owners to apply subjectivism by responding differently to different situations. As such, the level of flexibility in applying the differences to approaching consumers may enable them to use products from the said manufacturers. The foregoing deliberation indicates that deontological, teleological, axiological, and situational ethical perspectives are important components that may influence the usage of firm products. Therefore, we hypothesize that;

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between ethical orientation and usage of locally made products.*

## **Marketing strategies and usage of locally made products**

Marketing strategies are conceptualized by Porter (1985) as the ways all the activities of the marketing function are organized to attain profitable growth in sales. Marketing strategies also involve deciding on what resources should be allocated and when (Ambepitiya, 2018). Suryanto & Anggraini (2020), on the other hand, viewed a firm's marketing strategy as the development and decisions about a firm's relationships with its key stakeholders, its offerings, resource allocation, and timing, which are strongly related to the usage of products.

To date, the literature presents different marketing strategies; however, this study is anchored on Porter's (1985) generic marketing strategies of cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, market focus strategy, and strategic alliances to explicate the usage of locally made products. Marketing scholars have conducted several empirical studies on marketing strategies. For example, Amutha (2018) interrogated the link between marketing strategies and firm market competitiveness; Hashem, Hamid, and Samira (2012) explored

the association between marketing strategies and firm performance; and Islami *et al.* (2020) established a relationship between cost leadership and firm performance. Nonetheless, little has been done to establish a relationship between marketing strategies and the usage of locally-made products. Establishing this association agrees with Wong *et al.* (1996), who argued that marketing strategies are meant to change the behavior of consumers through effective communication and superior delivery.

Specifically, Haque *et al.* (2021) and Porter (1985) advanced product differentiation as a marketing strategy that may influence and increase product usage. Product differentiation through higher quality, performance, or unique features has a high correlation with consumer usage of products (Suryanto & Anggraini, 2020). Additionally, firms that invest heavily in research and development activities to increase their innovative capability, differentiate their products on the market, enhance their ability to keep up with the competition, and possibly influence consumer usage of their products (Baron, 2020). Likewise, strategic alliances enable firms to expand into new markets, improve their product line, or develop an edge over their competitors (Yu *et al.*, 2019), which influences the usage of a firm's products. Based on the foregoing discussion, we hypothesize that;

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between marketing strategies and the usage of locally made products.*

## **Ethical Orientation and Marketing Strategies**

Engagement with extant literature indicates that the choice of marketing strategies used by firms is determined by several antecedents, such as firm innovativeness, technology used, service quality, and employee competence (Gichuki, 2014). Relatedly, it is evident that ethical orientation contributes to the proper management of the human resource function in organizations, and there is an ethical dimension embedded in the human resource function (De Silva *et al.*, 2016). However, little emphasis has been placed on ethical orientation and the marketing function. Yet, Gichuki (2014) argues that the firm's ethical orientation determines its strategic decision implementation in the same regard as marketing strategies.

Joensuu-Salo *et al.* (2018) argue that ethical marketing orientation provides standards that marketing managers are expected to develop, implement, and monitor their strategies, while Jiang *et al.* (2020) illustrate that ethical marketing orientation facilitates the implementation of marketing principles within the boundaries and expectations of the general public, government legislators, and competitors. Advancing this argument further, Karman (2021) shows that organizations that apply the deontological approach as an ethical orientation tend to uphold the principles of justice, basic rights, duties, obligations, responsibilities, proper conduct, and the inherent natural rights of others in the implementation of their ploys, such as marketing strategies. In the same regard, teleological ethical orientation enables firms to assess the consequences of their activities among the target market, while Plachciak and Zaremba-Warnke (2021) argue that firms that follow deontological ethical orientation drive the implementation of strategies that enhance sustainable consumption. Upon that backdrop, we hypothesize that;

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant association between ethical orientation and the marketing strategies of the firm.*

## **Mediating Effect of Marketing Strategies**

Whereas several studies have looked at the concept of ethical orientation, little emphasis has been put on the fundamental processes by which marketing strategies translate and communicate ethical behavior to customers. Yet this kind of communication portrays the company's positioning strategy and ultimately may influence the usage of its products. As such, this study bridges this disconnect. Currently, several scholars have used marketing strategies as a conduit through which organizations achieve their objectives. For example, Morga *et al.* (2004) argued that cost leadership, marketing differentiation, and service differentiation are core marketing strategies that mediate the relationship between firm competencies and performance. In the same

vein, Al-Surmi *et al.* (2020) reported that marketing strategies provide a channel through which business alignment and information technology affect firm performance.

Further engagement with the literature indicates that the green orientation of the firm could influence product usage if used as a marketing strategy (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004). Marketing strategies also transform organizational capabilities that facilitate the usage of products, whether in the effective distribution of products, pricing, or promotion effectiveness (Ahmad *et al.*, 2020) for locally made products. Likewise, the ethical orientation of the firm is viewed through its communication strategies, through which customers interpret the firm's intended practices. Basing on this review, we there hypothesize that;

*H<sub>4</sub>: Marketing strategies mediate the relationship between ethical orientation and usage of locally made products.*

## Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative deductive reasoning approach. This approach was more relevant in providing responses to address the research hypotheses at a particular point in time (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021).

The study population consisted of manufacturing firms that are members of the Uganda Manufacturing Association (UMA). There are 1400 members of the UMA as of 2021 (UMA Annual Report, 2021). Out of these, 850 members had introduced a new product and attempted to market it in the last 5 years, and a sample of 165 manufacturing firms was used following the guidelines of Krejcie & Morgan (1970). Two (2) marketing experts were selected from each firm, totaling 330 questionnaires that were distributed. Of those, 254 questionnaires were fully responded to, translating to a 77% response rate, which was sufficient following Baruch (1999) guidelines.

Data was collected via a survey questionnaire entailing a drop-off and pick-up survey method. Responses were anchored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from very low (1) to very high (4); this was mainly done to avoid a middle point. Respondents were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire. The study measured ethical orientation in terms of axiological orientation, deontological orientation, teleological ethical orientation, and situational ethics (Benlahcene *et al.*, 2018). Marketing strategies were operationalized using the generic marketing strategies of cost leadership, strategic alliance, focus, and differentiation strategies (Kotler, 2002). The usage of locally made products, on the other hand, was univariate with thirteen items (Walugembe *et al.*, 2017).

## Data Analysis

The collected data was entered into SPSS, where it was coded, edited, explored, and ascertained to have normality, homogeneity of variance, and interval consistency following the recommendations of Field (2009). Little's MCAR test was also computed and indicated data were missing completely at random (sig = 0.996), and missing values were therefore replaced using linear interpolation as recommended by Field (2009). The data were analyzed using the structural equation model with the aid of partial least squares (PLS). The reliability, validity, and testing for associations between study variables were also assessed using Partial Least Square as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2013).

Following the guidelines of DeVellis (1991), an expert panel was used to validate the instrument. This type of validation is commonly used as a pre-testing tool intended to ensure the content validity of a research instrument (Papachristos, 2014). After the items were developed into an instrument with a four-point Likert scale, they were pre-tested on an expert panel. These included six Ugandan academics from the disciplines of marketing and two practitioners from UMA who assessed the quality of the measurement items and the degree to which they related to the variables they were developed for.

Factor loadings were used to assess the properties of constructs to test convergent validity. All factor loadings were well above the favorable 0.7 value in each case (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The index applied to measure convergent validity is average variance extracted (AVE), where values were above 0.5 in each construct (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The AVE results are indicated in Table 1 and show that our data meet this required criterion. Discriminant validity was examined using heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio values, as shown in Table 2. All HTMT ratios were significantly smaller than one, and thus discriminant validity was found to be appropriate. In sum, enough statistical evidence was found to verify the existence of the three constructs and that the measured variables are appropriate indicators of the related factors with distinct constructs.

Reliability, on the other hand, was assessed using composite reliability and Cronbach's (1951) alpha coefficient. The composite reliability scores of the studied constructs were ethical orientation (0.930), marketing strategies (0.936), and usage of locally made products (0.900), all of which were well above the required minimum of 0.70 as indicated in Table 1, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values ranged between 0.861 and 0.927, indicating an acceptable level of reliability (Ursachi *et al.*, 2015).

Table 1: Reliability values

Variable	Mean	Composite Reliability	T-Statistic	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	Rhoda
Ethical orientation	0.916	0.930	80.958	0.917	0.549	0.920
Marketing strategy	0.926	0.936	113.185	0.927	0.525	0.931
Usage of locally made products	0.860	0.900	53.887	0.861	0.642	0.866

Source: Primary data

Table 2: Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Values

Variables	1	2	3
Ethical Orientation (1)			
Marketing Strategies (2)	0.629		
Usage of Locally made products (3)	0.445	0.595	1

Source: Primary data

## Results and Discussion

### Convergence validity

Our results in Table 3 show that all the components that were used to measure ethical orientation had a positive and significant total effect with it: ethical orientation and axiological values ( $\beta = 0.855$ ,  $t = 37.819$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), ethical orientation and deontological values ( $\beta = 0.892$ ,  $t = 52.922$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), ethical orientation and situational ethics ( $\beta = 0.828$ ,  $t = 30.810$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and ethical orientation and teleological orientation ( $\beta = 0.864$ ,  $t = 37.773$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The components that were used to measure the marketing strategies of the firm were also positively and significantly related to the global variables of marketing strategies, that is, marketing strategies and cost leadership ( $\beta = 0.803$ ,  $t = 24.009$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), marketing strategies and differentiation strategy ( $\beta = 0.841$ ,  $t = 39.528$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), marketing strategies and focused market strategy ( $\beta = 0.879$ ,  $t = 56.429$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and marketing strategies and strategic alliance ( $\beta = 0.801$ ,  $t = 34.114$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results, therefore, confirm the existence of convergence validity for ethical orientation and marketing strategies since the measurement components for these variables could converge to the global variables.



Table 3: Total effects of the specific study variables

	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values
Ethical Orientation -> Axiological Values	0.855	37.819	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Cost Leadership	0.467	9.520	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Deontological Values	0.892	52.922	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Differentiation strategy	0.489	10.618	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Focus Market	0.511	10.714	0.001
Strategies			
Ethical Orientation -> Marketing Strategies	0.581	11.770	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Situational Ethics	0.828	30.810	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Strategic Alliance	0.466	10.797	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Teleological ethical orientation	0.864	37.773	0.001
Ethical Orientation -> Usage of local products	0.406	6.580	0.001
Marketing Strategies -> Cost Leadership	0.803	24.009	0.001
Marketing Strategies -> Differentiation strategy	0.841	39.528	0.001
Marketing Strategies -> Focus Market	0.879	56.429	0.001
Strategies			
Marketing Strategies -> Strategic Alliance	0.801	34.114	0.001
Marketing Strategies -> Usage of local products	0.454	6.593	0.001

Source: Primary data

### Testing for Hypothesized Relationships

This study investigated four hypotheses to establish the relationship between the ethical orientation of the firm, firm marketing strategies, and the usage of locally made products in developing countries. According to our results in *Table 4*, all the tested hypotheses were upheld with positive and significant results. This means that all the hypotheses were supported as per the following interpretation: Firstly, the results of testing  $H_1$  indicate that ethical orientation is significantly and positively associated with the usage of locally made products ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $t = 2.033$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that firms that produce for the well-being of their customers and society in general produce and market their goods and services in conformity with the prevailing rules and regulations. Indeed, firms that produce and market for value consider prevailing conditions during production processes to benefit their customers and have higher chances of their products being accepted, which influences the usage of these products.

Secondly, the results of testing  $H_2$  show that marketing strategy is significantly and positively related to the usage of locally made products ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $t = 6.293$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In the context of this study, local manufacturing firms that adopt and use a focus marketing strategy, can differentiate their products on the market, ensure overall cost leadership, and strategically create alliances with their channel members can easily influence the usage of their products on the market. Thirdly, our results also indicate that  $H_3$  was supported, as ethical orientation and marketing strategies are positively and significantly related ( $\beta = 0.581$ ,  $t = 11.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that strengthening the ethical orientation of firms inherently determines the style and marketing strategy the firm uses. More so, a deontologically oriented firm will most likely focus on marketing practices that are within regulations and principles. Firms that are technologically oriented and focus on marketing will produce products that benefit customers at all costs, while axiologically oriented firms will focus on giving value to customers.

Lastly,  $H_4$  of this investigation was intended to establish the mediation role of marketing strategies in the relationship between ethical orientation and the usage of locally made products. To assess the mediation effect, this study applied the causal-steps procedure (Bontis *et al.*, 2007). According to Bontis *et al.* (2007), a four-step causal procedure for evaluating mediation effects is appropriate when using the PLS analysis technique. First, a direct effect must be established between the independent and dependent variables to ensure that there is a relationship to be mediated. Second, a direct relationship must be established between the independent and mediator variables. Third, the mediator variable must be related to the dependent variable. Fourth, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables should remain significant when the mediator variable is added.

The results shown in *Table 4* indicate that all these assumptions were held. Ethical orientation and marketing strategies are positively and significantly related ( $\beta = 0.581$ ,  $t = 11.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), ethical orientation is also positively and significantly associated with the usage of locally made products ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $t = 2.033$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and marketing strategy is also positively and significantly related to the usage of locally made products ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $t = 6.293$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Marketing strategies mediate the relationship between ethical orientation and usage of locally made products ( $\beta = 0.264$ ,  $t = 5.458$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Given that the direct and indirect relationships are significant, as presented in *Table 4* and *Figure 1*, this means that marketing strategies partially mediate the relationship between ethical orientation and usage of locally made products. This signifies that marketing strategies are a conduit through which ethical orientation improves the usage of locally made products. More so, the interpretation of these findings is supported by Hair *et al.* (2013), who assert that mediation is significant when the total effect is greater than the direct effect.

*Table 4: Hypothesized relationships*

Relationship	Path Coefficients	Indirect Effect	Total Effects	T-Statistics	P-Value
Ethical Orientation- Marketing Strategy	0.581		0.581	11.770	0.001
Ethical Orientation- Usage of Local Products	0.142		0.406	2.033	0.001
Marketing Strategy- Usage of Local Products	0.454		0.454	6.593	0.001
Ethical Orientation-Marketing Strategy- Usage of Local Products.		0.264		5.458	0.001
P-Value- All Values are <0.05					
T-Statistic- All Values are >1.96					

*Source: Primary data*

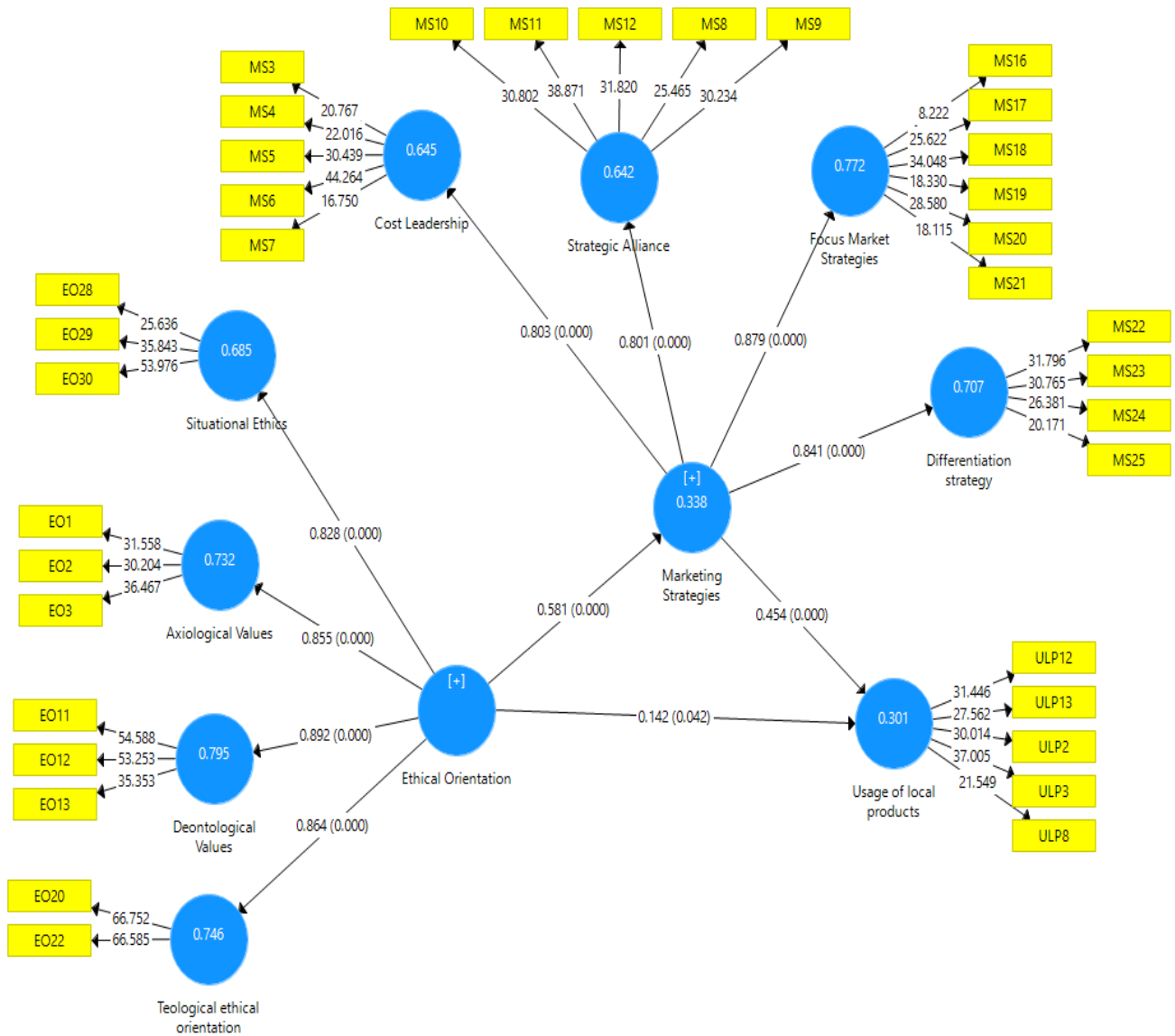


Figure 1: Relationship between study variables

Figure 1 summarizes the findings of this study. The direct relationship between ethical orientation and usage of locally made products was positive and significant, however, with a smaller effect ( $\beta = 0.142, p < 0.05$ ). In comparison to the indirect path, whose effect is ( $\beta = 0.264, p < 0.05$ ), marketing strategies partially mediate the relationship between ethical orientation and the usage of locally made products.

## Discussion

### Ethical Orientation and Usage of Locally Made Products

This study advances the view that ethically oriented firms can easily influence the usage of their products. Firms that practice the values of honesty, fair play, and full disclosure in their manufacturing processes can easily influence the usage of their products and services. Practicing such values strengthens the relationship between the firm and its customers because the firm will be seen to exist for the benefit of the customers. This kind of relationship is what is required between local manufacturing firms and their customers. More so, being

ethically oriented may also mean conformity to manufacturing procedures and processes by following production standards, which are closely related to the concept of deontology. In Uganda and many sub-Saharan African countries, there are standards and regulations related to the production of goods and services; however, the rate at which these standards are adhered to is very low, which may partly explain the low usage of locally made products.

Our findings are supported by Jain (2020), who documented that business practices that conform to a specified set of rules within the industry have higher chances of creating more acceptability in that industry. This suggests that manufacturing firms whose products provide a greater level of good after-use can easily influence accelerated usage of their products and services. This generally corresponds with the need for long-term performance of goods and services as advanced by the teleological perspective of ethical behavior (Bennette, 2015). In addition, the results reveal that locally made products that communicate and deliver value to customers can easily influence the usage of the same products. This type of value may be evidenced through the creation of the desired satisfaction and solving the existing customer need, as postulated by the moral theory (Kant, 1785). This also rhymes well with Amoah and Amoah (2018), who reported that varying ethical decisions as per the prevailing situation is an important condition that may influence the usage of local products in developing countries.

### **Marketing Strategies and Usage of Locally Made Products**

Study results also revealed a significant positive association between marketing strategies and the usage of locally made products. This finding suggests that local manufacturing firms need to invest in marketing activities to increase the usage of their products. In addition, it is important to note that whereas the need for marketing is necessary across industries, special attention needs to be given to creating awareness for locally made products. This attention can be displayed by understanding the cost-related approaches to dealing with local products. Focusing on cost-related approaches enables the firm to be the overall market producer in its category. This implies that there is a need for manufacturing firms in Sub-Saharan Africa to adopt low-cost production technologies, which may facilitate the adoption of locally made products at a relatively cheaper price. In several situations, foreign products are many times cheaper than locally made products in most African markets as a result of the high cost of production. This same argument partly explains China's dominance in the sub-Saharan African markets (Sarwar *et al.*, 2013).

The results of the study further confirm that firms that differentiate their product offerings from what is already on the market tend to attract users of these products. These firms are more innovative and creative and regularly respond to market changes, mainly to produce a unique product on the market. One of the ways firms differentiate their product offerings on the market is through intensive research and development and market surveys. Such surveys enable manufacturers to produce what customers want, which eases acceptance and usage of these products. This is in agreement with Dirisu *et al.* (2013), who assert that product differentiation gives a product specific attention in the desired target market, which eases its acceptance and usage in that market.

Among the other marketing strategies implied in this study were strategic alliances. The results implied that firms that invest in building strategic alliances and collaborations ease the usage of their products. These collaborations may be signed with consumer agencies, competing firms, and channel agencies. These collaborations strengthen the relationship between the firm and its intermediaries, which ultimately affects consumer usage of the firm's products, as supported by He *et al.* (2020).

### **Ethical Orientation And Marketing Strategies**

The study further advanced the view that ethical orientation and marketing strategies are related. This implies that the ethical approach the firm builds may determine the marketing strategy it adopts. Focusing on

the deontological approach as an ethical orientation, firms that emphasize strict regulations in their marketing processes tend to use formalized marketing strategies in the sale of their goods and services. This resonates well with Westjohn *et al.* (2016), who indicate that regulatory focus influences the consumption of consumers, and firms that produce and market their products within the regulatory framework tend to easily influence the consumption of their products.

A report from the Market Overview for the Ugandan market indicates that most ethical marketing and advertising firms root their advertisement strategies in the culture and orientation of the organization. This simply implies that the firm's orientation influences its marketing strategies. In addition, for businesses seeking successful and long-term participation in the market, it is expedient to organize their marketing activities; therefore, they need to choose a clear marketing strategy. The selection of marketing strategy, therefore, starts at the company and is determined by the company culture and orientation (Hapsari *et al.*, 2021).

### **Mediating Effect of Marketing Strategies**

Regarding the mediating effect of marketing strategies, the hypothesis was supported, and as such, marketing strategies provide a channel through which the ethical orientation of the firm influences the usage of locally made products. In this regard, marketing strategies play a communication role by representing what the organization stands for. Several ethical behaviors of the firm can be exhibited through its marketing practices, including pricing methods, product quality, and promotion approaches, among others. These marketing practices are embedded in the specific marketing strategies a firm may decide to apply. In this case, a firm may decide to focus on selling its products in rural areas to sell counterfeited products. Such ethical behavior can only be known through the marketing strategy chosen by the firm.

Relatedly, a firm's alliances and collaborations communicate its ethical grounds and ultimately influence the usage of its products and services on the market. The firm's supplier network, distribution channels, and agents, among others, communicate the ethical orientation of the firm, which may dictate the rate at which customers may use the firm's products and services. These results are supported by Al-Surmi *et al.* (2020), who established that marketing strategies mediate the relationship between information technology and firm performance. This also rhymes well with Gruca and Sudharshan (1995), who argue that a firm's marketing strategy supports the development of decisions about a firm's relationships with its key stakeholders, its offerings, resource allocation, and timing, which facilitate the usage of the firm's products.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to unearth the contribution of ethical orientation and marketing strategies in catalyzing the usage of locally made products using evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. Our results indicate that the ethical orientation and marketing strategies of local manufacturing firms may significantly and positively contribute to the usage of locally made products. At the same time, marketing strategies, on the other hand, mediate the association between ethical orientation and the usage of locally manufactured products.

### **Policy Implications**

The study has some policy implications. For practitioners and regulators, there is a need to strengthen regulations related to ethical behavior among manufacturing businesses. Whereas governments in Sub-Saharan Africa have put in place policies related to manufacturing processes, there is less effort in supervising these policies. In addition, less emphasis has been put on the character of the managers and entrepreneurs who run these entities. Therefore, policymakers should strengthen ethical policies related to the character of these entrepreneurs, managers, and staff so that they run their firms in a manner that is generally acceptable with the goal of fostering the usage of locally made products.

Similarly, policies related to marketing have been given less attention in developing economies. This study necessitates the need to strengthen marketing-related policies. To strengthen these policies, the government needs to emphasize the need for every business at registration to unveil its specific marketing strategies related to cost, specialized market, alliances, and differentiation strategy from other competing products on the market. Such policies may be supported by marketing committees at the national and district levels to provide advice and intensify the penetration of locally made products in the market.

## **Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical implications of this study are significant since the tenets of Kantian moral theory (Kant, 1785) were upheld. Kantianism emphasizes the importance of moral principles, duty, and ethical considerations in decision-making, particularly in business practices. The positive association between ethical orientation and the usage of locally-made products suggests that individuals with a strong ethical orientation prioritize adherence to moral principles, such as supporting local communities and businesses. Furthermore, the positive and significant relationship between ethical orientation and marketing strategies implies that individuals guided by ethical principles are likely to incorporate these principles into their strategic decision-making processes. They may view ethical conduct as integral to achieving long-term success and positive outcomes, aligning with the teleological aspect of Kantian moral theory, which considers the consequences of actions.

The findings of the study also provide theoretical support for Porter's generic strategies (Porter, 2007), which emphasize different approaches to achieving competitive advantage in the market. Specifically, the positive and significant relationship between marketing strategy and the usage of locally made products aligns with Porter's emphasis on differentiation and focus strategies. By strategically positioning locally made products in the market, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and focus on meeting the specific needs and preferences of consumers who prioritize locally sourced goods. The partial mediation of the relationship between ethical orientation and the usage of locally made products by marketing strategies suggests that ethical considerations play a significant role in shaping marketing decisions. Porter's generic strategies also encompass the concept of building strategic alliances to enhance competitiveness. The findings imply that collaborations with local producers or community organizations may be an effective marketing strategy for promoting the use of locally made products. While the study primarily focuses on the relationship between marketing strategy and the usage of locally made products, it indirectly highlights the relevance of overall cost leadership and differentiation strategies in the context of ethical consumption. As a result, the tenets of Porter's generic strategies were upheld.

## **Limitation and Future Direction**

Nevertheless, this study, like any other investigation, has some limitations that can be addressed by other scholars. Specifically, the study adopted a quantitative approach that limited the respondents' ability to share comprehensive information concerning the usage of locally made products. Thus, future studies can employ a mixed-method design that integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data enhancement. In addition, the study was cross-sectional and could not capture changes that take place in the consumption patterns of certain products, thus necessitating a longitudinal study. However, the results of this study are relevant given that they unearthed the mediation effect of marketing strategies in the association between ethical orientation and the usage of locally manufactured products.

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