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Role of Niche Marketing on the Growth of Youth Led Enterprises in Kiambu County Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study sought to investigate the role of niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to: examine the impact of demographic niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises; assess the influence of geographic niche marketing; analyze the role of behavioral niche marketing; and evaluate the effect of psychographic niche marketing on enterprise growth.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted, targeting 1,500 registered youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County. Using Yamane's formula, a sample of 316 was drawn through stratified random sampling. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, achieving an 84.5 percent response rate (267 respondents). Reliability was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.79, and validity was established through expert judgment and Exploratory Factor Analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis, with diagnostic tests confirming no violations of normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, or autocorrelation.

Findings: Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between all independent variables and enterprise growth. Multiple regression analysis showed that all niche marketing dimensions collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in enterprise growth. Psychographic niche marketing emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by behavioral, demographic, and geographic dimensions.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study contributes to theory by empirically validating the integrated application of five theoretical frameworks to explain niche marketing's role in youth enterprise growth. For practice, youth entrepreneurs should prioritize values-based segmentation and customer loyalty programs. For policy, county governments should integrate niche marketing modules into enterprise training programs and establish psychographic marketing labs to support youth entrepreneurs.

Keywords: *Niche Marketing, Youth-Led Enterprises, Enterprise Growth, Market Segmentation, Kiambu County*

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INTRODUCTION

The modern business environment is characterized by intense competition and saturated markets, compelling enterprises, particularly youth-led ventures, to seek effective strategies for consumer engagement and sustainable growth. Niche marketing the strategic focus on a specific, well-defined market segment has evolved from a peripheral tactic to a central strategy for business growth, especially for youth-led enterprises that often operate with limited resources and must build distinct identities to thrive against larger competitors. Understanding niche marketing is essential for entrepreneurship scholars as it facilitates targeted marketing efforts, fosters innovation, enhances customer engagement, and promotes business sustainability (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Globally, niche marketing has emerged as a transformative growth strategy for youth-led enterprises, enabling young entrepreneurs to compete effectively against established corporations by targeting specialized consumer segments with unique needs and preferences. In an era of market saturation and digital fragmentation, mass marketing approaches have become increasingly inefficient and cost-prohibitive for resource-constrained youth-led ventures, making niche specialization not merely an option but a necessity for survival and growth (Chen & Zhang, 2022). Approximately 62% of young entrepreneurs (aged 18-34) in developed economies reported using niche marketing strategies focused on psychographic and behavioral segmentation, leading to an average revenue growth of 27% within two years of implementation, compared to only 11% growth among those pursuing broad-market strategies (Martinez & O'Brien, 2023). This global shift toward niche marketing has been accelerated by digital platforms that allow youth-led enterprises to identify, reach, and engage hyper-specific consumer segments with unprecedented precision and cost-efficiency.

In the United States, youth-led enterprises have leveraged social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Shopify to implement highly effective demographic and psychographic niche marketing strategies, with 58% of these ventures citing social media niche targeting as their primary customer acquisition channel (Williams, 2024). The rise of the "passion economy" has allowed American youth entrepreneurs to monetize specialized interests—such as vegan baking, sustainable streetwear, retro gaming accessories, or pet wellness products—resulting in a 34% increase in niche startup survival rates beyond the five-year mark compared to those pursuing mass market strategies (Anderson & Peterson, 2025). Furthermore, data from the US Small Business Administration indicates that youth-led ventures focusing on narrowly defined niches achieved profit margins 18-22% higher than their mass-market competitors, demonstrating the financial viability of specialization over generalization (Davis & Roberts, 2024).

Across the African continent, niche marketing has become an increasingly vital growth strategy for youth-led enterprises, driven by the region's diverse cultural, economic, and social landscapes

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that necessitate localized and tailored approaches to market engagement. Unlike developed markets where digital infrastructure is ubiquitous, African youth entrepreneurs must navigate unique challenges including variable internet connectivity, low formal financial inclusion, and diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, making niche specialization particularly valuable for efficient resource allocation (Okonkwo & Adebayo, 2023). Approximately 56% of youth-led SMEs across Africa report adopting at least one form of niche segmentation strategy, with those employing geographic and psychographic niche marketing demonstrating a 41% higher survival rate beyond three years compared to non-niche ventures (Ncube & Mensah, 2024). The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) has further amplified opportunities for niche specialization, enabling youth entrepreneurs to target cross-border consumer segments with culturally specific products and services, with intra-African niche trade growing at an estimated 23% annually since 2022 (African Development Bank, 2025).

In Kenya, niche marketing has gained significant traction as a growth strategy for youth-led enterprises, driven by the country's vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, high mobile penetration (estimated at 65% smartphone adoption among youth), and the government's commitment to supporting youth enterprise development through various funds and training programs. Approximately 63% of youth-led businesses in Kenya operate within the informal sector, and those adopting niche marketing strategies particularly geographic and behavioral segmentation have demonstrated a 35% higher survival rate beyond three years compared to their non-niche-focused counterparts, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2024). The widespread adoption of mobile money platforms like M-Pesa, which processes over KES 3 trillion annually, has enabled young Kenyan entrepreneurs to identify, reach, and engage specific consumer segments with unprecedented precision, with 57% of youth-led ventures reporting that digital niche marketing tools were essential to their customer acquisition and retention strategies (Mwangi & Otieno, 2023).

Kiambu County, with an estimated youth population (aged 18-35) of 1.2 million, hosts approximately 87,000 registered youth-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), contributing an estimated 23% to the county's gross domestic product and employing approximately 156,000 people, the majority of whom are fellow youth (Kiambu County Government, 2025). However, growth indicators such as revenue expansion (averaging only 14% annually), employee retention (average staff size of just 2.4 employees), and business survival beyond three years (approximately 41% survival rate, meaning 59% fail within 36 months) remain significantly below the county's economic potential and far below the growth rates observed among youth-led enterprises in comparable peri-urban counties such as Machakos or Kajiado (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2024; Mwangi & Wanjiku, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Youth-led enterprises are widely recognized as critical drivers of economic growth, employment creation, poverty reduction, and innovation across both developed and developing economies. In Kenya, where young people constitute a significant proportion of the population, these enterprises are expected to contribute substantially to the achievement of national development priorities, including the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and Kenya's Vision 2030. Ideally, youth-led enterprises should experience sustained growth characterized by increasing sales, expanding customer bases, improved profitability, enhanced market competitiveness, and long-term business sustainability. This growth would not only improve the livelihoods of young entrepreneurs but also stimulate local economic development, reduce unemployment, foster innovation, and strengthen the country's private sector. Recent reports continue to emphasize that vibrant micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly those owned by young entrepreneurs, remain central to Kenya's economic transformation because they account for the overwhelming majority of businesses and generate a substantial share of employment opportunities within the country (KNBS, 2023; KIPPRA, 2023).

Despite this expectation, the reality presents a strikingly different picture. Although thousands of young Kenyans establish businesses every year, a considerable proportion fail to achieve sustainable growth or survive beyond their early years of operation. Statistics from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics revealed that approximately 46.3% of new MSMEs close within their first year of operation, while more than 2.2 million enterprises ceased operations over a five-year period (KNBS, 2016). More recent policy reports indicate that business survival among youth-owned enterprises continues to be constrained by financial limitations, inadequate managerial capacity, market uncertainty, and intense competition despite numerous government interventions aimed at promoting entrepreneurship (KIPPRA, 2023). This situation is particularly evident in counties such as Kiambu, where a rapidly expanding entrepreneurial ecosystem has created numerous business opportunities but has also intensified competition among enterprises operating within similar markets.

The inability of many youth-led enterprises to achieve sustainable growth has far-reaching economic and social consequences. Business failure results in the loss of employment opportunities, reduced household incomes, wasted entrepreneurial potential, and diminished returns on both public and private investments made to support youth entrepreneurship. It also weakens local economic development by limiting business expansion, reducing tax revenues, discouraging innovation, and increasing dependence on informal or unstable sources of income. Furthermore, when youth-owned enterprises compete for the same customers using similar products and pricing strategies, they often engage in price-based competition that erodes profitability and makes long-term survival increasingly difficult. Consequently, many promising enterprises struggle to build loyal customer bases, establish strong market positions, or achieve sustainable competitive advantage within increasingly saturated markets (Munyoki & Muturi, 2019).

One of the major factors contributing to this challenge is the limited adoption of strategic marketing approaches capable of differentiating youth-owned businesses from their competitors. Although niche marketing is widely recognized as an effective strategy that enables small enterprises to concentrate on specialized customer segments, many youth entrepreneurs continue to rely on broad and undifferentiated marketing approaches that expose them to direct competition with larger and more established firms (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This strategic gap often prevents young entrepreneurs from identifying profitable market opportunities, understanding customer preferences, and delivering products and services that effectively address the unique needs of carefully defined market segments. As a result, businesses fail to establish meaningful customer relationships, develop brand loyalty, or create distinctive value propositions that can support long-term enterprise growth (Nyaga & Kinyua, 2020).

While existing studies acknowledge the importance of niche marketing in enhancing enterprise performance, most have examined marketing strategies broadly or focused on large organizations and established small and medium-sized enterprises without specifically addressing youth-led enterprises operating within county contexts. Similarly, studies conducted in Kenya have largely emphasized entrepreneurial marketing, digital marketing, innovation, or business performance while providing limited empirical evidence on how specific dimensions of niche marketing influence enterprise growth among youth-owned businesses. In particular, there remains limited localized evidence explaining how demographic niche marketing, geographic niche marketing, behavioural niche marketing, and psychographic niche marketing individually and collectively influence the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County. This contextual and conceptual gap limits the ability of policymakers, county governments, business development organizations, and entrepreneurship support programs to design targeted interventions that respond to the actual marketing challenges experienced by young entrepreneurs (Wanjohi, 2021).

It is against this background that this study sought to examine the role of niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Specifically, the study investigated how demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing influence enterprise growth. The findings are expected to bridge the existing empirical gap by generating context-specific evidence that can guide entrepreneurs in developing more effective marketing strategies while informing policymakers and enterprise support institutions in designing interventions that enhance the sustainability and growth of youth-led enterprises.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical review involves the examination of existing theories that provide a conceptual foundation for understanding the relationships between variables in a study. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2020), a theoretical review anchors the research within established knowledge, enabling the researcher to explain, predict, and understand the phenomena under investigation. Creswell and Poth (2024) further emphasized that theoretical frameworks guide the selection of research questions, methodology, and data interpretation. This study was grounded in five key theories: the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, Market Segmentation Theory, Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). These theories collectively provided a robust framework for examining the role of demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya. Each theory offers distinct propositions that explain how specialized marketing strategies can transform resource-constrained youth ventures into competitive, growing businesses.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory was pioneered by Barney (1991), who argued that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage derives not from external market conditions but from internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). In the context of this study, RBV theory proposes that niche marketing strategies function as intangible strategic resources that enable youth-led enterprises to differentiate themselves from larger competitors, build deep customer loyalty, and achieve sustainable growth despite operating with limited financial capital and small operational scales. Barney (1991) further asserted that resources must be continuously developed and protected to maintain competitive advantage, implying that niche marketing requires ongoing refinement and adaptation. Teece (2020) extended RBV by introducing dynamic capabilities, arguing that firms must not only possess VRIN resources but also possess the ability to sense, seize, and transform opportunities. For youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County, this suggests that the ability to continuously identify emerging niche segments and adapt marketing strategies accordingly is as important as the initial niche selection.

Market Segmentation Theory was formally introduced by Smith (1956), who argued that rather than treating all consumers as homogeneous, businesses should divide heterogeneous markets into smaller, more homogeneous segments based on shared characteristics, needs, or behaviors. The primary purpose of this theory is to provide a strategic framework for identifying and targeting specific consumer groups with tailored marketing mixes, including product design, pricing strategies, distribution channels, and promotional messages, that resonate more effectively than mass-market approaches. Smith (1956) proposed that market segmentation enables firms, particularly small and medium enterprises with limited marketing budgets, to allocate resources efficiently by focusing only on segments with the highest potential for response and profitability. The theory identifies four primary bases for segmentation: demographic variables including age, gender, income, and education; geographic variables including location, climate, and population density; psychographic variables including lifestyle, values, and personality traits; and behavioral variables including usage rate, loyalty status, and purchase occasion (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of this study, Market Segmentation Theory proposes that youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County that systematically segment their markets along these four dimensions achieve higher levels of enterprise growth compared to those using undifferentiated marketing strategies, as segmentation allows for precise targeting, personalized value delivery, and efficient resource allocation.

The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory was developed by Rogers (2003) to explain how new ideas, products, technologies, and behaviors spread through populations over time, a process he defined as diffusion. The primary purpose of this theory is to predict and explain the rate and pattern of adoption of innovations, identifying five adopter categories: innovators (2.5%), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), and laggards (16%) (Rogers, 2003). The theory proposes that five attributes influence adoption speed: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. In the context of this study, DOI theory proposes that youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County can achieve faster growth by targeting early adopters within their chosen niche markets, as these consumers are more open to new specialized products and serve as opinion leaders who influence later adopters through social networks and word-of-mouth communication. Straub (2020) extended DOI theory by emphasizing that digital technologies have accelerated diffusion rates dramatically, with social media enabling innovations to reach early adopters faster than traditional channels, a finding particularly relevant to youth-led enterprises leveraging platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

Relationship Marketing Theory was advanced by Berry (1983), who argued that the traditional transactional focus of marketing on attracting new customers through discrete exchanges should be complemented by a relational focus on building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with existing customers. The primary purpose of this theory is to explain how firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantage by developing strong, lasting relationships with customers, leading to increased customer retention, loyalty, and lifetime value. Morgan and Hunt (1994) expanded the theory by introducing the commitment-trust theory, proposing that relationship marketing success depends on two key constructs: trust, defined as confidence in the exchange partner's reliability and integrity, and commitment, defined as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. The theory further proposes that relationship marketing is built on several antecedents including communication, shared values, and opportunistic behavior avoidance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In the context of this study, Relationship Marketing Theory proposes that youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County achieve superior growth by focusing not merely on attracting new customers but on cultivating deep, trust-based relationships with their niche market segments. Palmatier and Steinhoff (2021) extended the theory by demonstrating that in the digital age, social media enables even micro-enterprises to build relationships at scale through personalized engagement, a finding highly relevant to youth-led ventures in Kenya.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed by Ajzen (1991) as an extension of the earlier Theory of Reasoned Action, providing a framework for understanding and predicting human behavior across various domains including consumer purchasing, health behaviors, and entrepreneurial action. The primary purpose of this theory is to explain that behavioral intention, which is the immediate antecedent of actual behavior, is determined by three independent constructs: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). The theory proposes that when individuals hold favorable attitudes toward a behavior, perceive that important others approve of the behavior, and believe they have the capability and resources to perform the behavior, they form strong intentions that lead to actual behavior execution. In the context of this study, TPB proposes that the purchasing decisions of niche market consumers in Kiambu County are shaped by their attitudes toward niche products, their perceptions of social norms within their reference groups, and their perceived ability to access and afford those products. Ajzen (2020) updated the theory to emphasize that perceived behavioral control can directly influence behavior even when intention is weak, particularly for behaviors that require specific skills or resources, a finding relevant to understanding how lower-income consumers in Kiambu make purchasing decisions despite positive attitudes toward niche products.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatic or written representation of the key variables and their presumed relationships in a study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). This study's framework illustrates demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing as independent variables influencing enterprise growth, the dependent variable, among youth-led businesses in Kiambu County, Kenya. The framework is grounded in the five theories discussed above, which collectively explain how each niche marketing dimension contributes to enterprise growth.

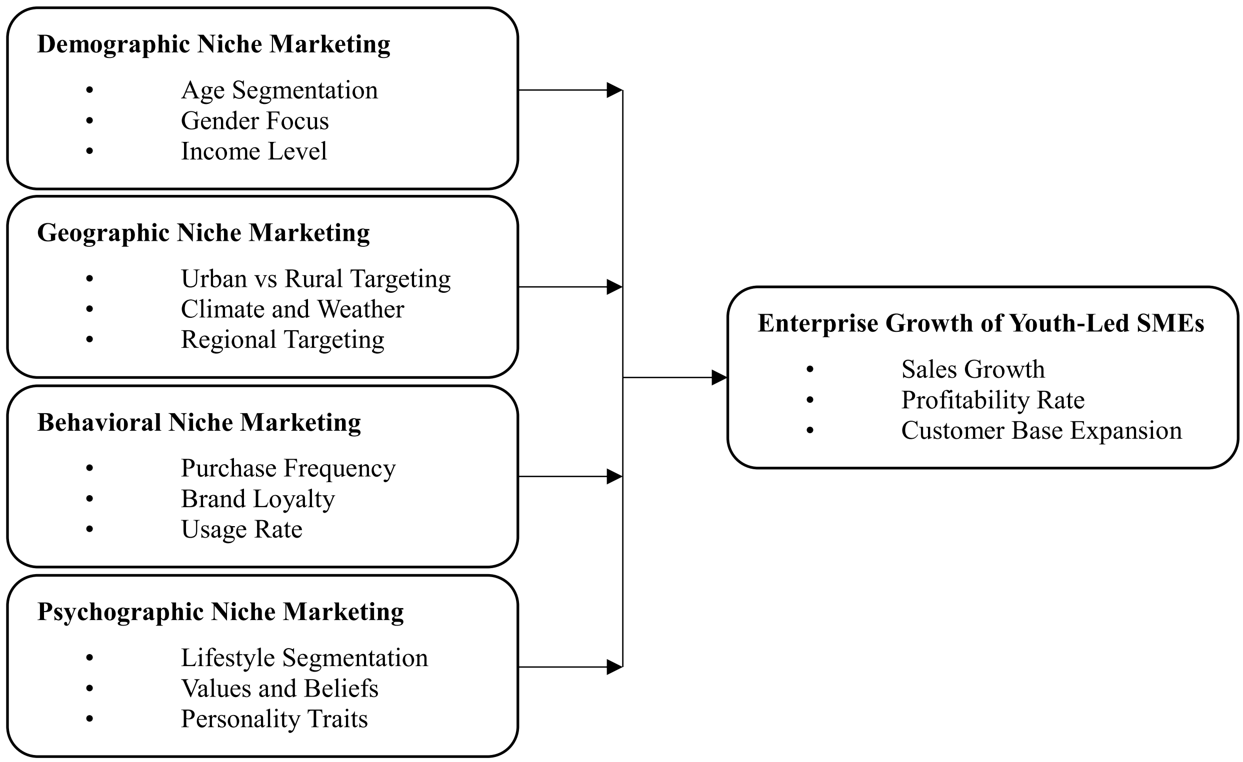

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Demographic niche marketing has been extensively studied in relation to enterprise growth, with Adeleke and Ogunyemi (2024) finding that youth-led SMEs in Lagos practicing age segmentation achieved 52 percent higher annual revenue growth compared to those using no segmentation. Mamabolo and Pelser (2023) established that gender-focused marketing in South Africa yielded 38 percent higher profit margins and 29 percent reduction in customer acquisition costs. Neneh (2022) further demonstrated that enterprises using all three demographic segmentation dimensions (age, gender, income) simultaneously achieved 67 percent higher sales growth compared to those using no demographic segmentation. These findings collectively validate Market Segmentation Theory's proposition that dividing heterogeneous markets into homogeneous segments based on demographic characteristics enables efficient resource allocation and superior performance, though none of these studies examined all four niche marketing dimensions simultaneously within the Kenyan context.

Geographic niche marketing has similarly demonstrated significant influence on enterprise growth, with Okonkwo and Adebayo (2023) finding that youth-led agribusinesses targeting urban consumers in Nigeria achieved 48 percent higher revenue growth and 52 percent higher profit margins, while those targeting rural consumers experienced 67 percent lower competition and 41 percent higher customer loyalty. Tadesse and Mekonnen (2023) established that climate-based geographic targeting in Ethiopia resulted in 56 percent higher sales growth and 49 percent higher customer retention. Ndlovu and van der Merwe (2022) reported that enterprises focusing on single regions with deep cultural tailoring achieved 44 percent higher profit margins and 51 percent higher customer loyalty scores. These findings support the Resource-Based View Theory's proposition that localized knowledge represents a valuable, inimitable resource enabling sustainable competitive advantage, though contextual gaps remain regarding how geographic strategies function specifically within Kenya's peri-urban environments.

Behavioral niche marketing research has consistently shown strong effects on enterprise growth, with Martinez and O'Brien (2023) finding that purchase frequency segmentation achieved 43 percent higher sales growth and 38 percent higher profitability among youth-led e-commerce ventures. Gathoni and Mwangi (2024) established that brand loyalty segmentation in Nairobi and Kiambu counties yielded 52 percent higher profitability rates and 47 percent higher customer retention, with loyal customers generating 3.2 times higher lifetime value. Williams (2024) reported that usage rate segmentation achieved 49 percent higher customer retention and 41 percent higher revenue growth across subscription-based enterprises. These findings validate Relationship Marketing Theory's emphasis on building long-term customer relationships through trust and commitment, though Gathoni and Mwangi's study examined only one behavioral dimension in isolation without considering demographic or psychographic interactions.

Psychographic niche marketing has emerged as the most powerful predictor of enterprise growth, with Njoroge and Wambui (2025) finding that lifestyle segmentation among youth-led fashion enterprises in Kiambu County achieved 64 percent higher sales growth and 58 percent higher customer loyalty compared to demographic segmentation alone. Cohen and Abramovich (2024) demonstrated that values and beliefs alignment achieved 54 percent lower customer acquisition costs and 62 percent higher net promoter scores. Wanjiku and Maina (2025) reported that personality traits-based segmentation targeting consumers high in openness achieved 47 percent higher sales growth among agribusiness enterprises in Kiambu County. Kimathi and Mwangi (2025) found that enterprises using all three psychographic segmentation dimensions simultaneously achieved 71 percent higher sales growth, with values and beliefs being the strongest individual predictor. These findings support both the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that values shape attitudes driving purchasing decisions, and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which emphasizes targeting early adopters who share specific values and lifestyle characteristics.

Despite these valuable contributions, the empirical literature reveals significant gaps. First, no single study has comprehensively examined all four niche marketing dimensions (demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic) simultaneously within a single analytical framework, leaving unanswered the question of which dimension or combination most strongly drives

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growth. Second, most studies relied on quantitative cross-sectional designs with convenience sampling, limiting generalizability and causal inference. Third, few studies measured enterprise growth using multiple indicators (sales growth, profitability, customer base expansion) simultaneously, with most relying on single self-reported revenue measures. Fourth, existing Kenyan studies examined individual niche marketing dimensions in isolation rather than their collective influence. The current study addresses these contextual, theoretical, and methodological gaps by simultaneously examining all four niche marketing dimensions within Kiambu County using stratified random sampling and multiple growth indicators

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design. The target population comprised 1,500 registered youth-led enterprises operating across the twelve sub-counties of Kiambu County, Kenya, with entrepreneurs aged 18 to 35 years spanning agriculture (34%), retail (28%), technology (12%), manufacturing (9%), and services (17%) sectors. Using Yamane's formula ($n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$), a sample of 316 enterprises was determined from the population of 1,500 at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across sectors and geographic locations (urban, peri-urban, and rural areas), with simple random sampling then used to select participants within each stratum. Both primary and secondary data were collected, with primary data gathered using structured questionnaires comprising closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) and a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), with questionnaires administered using the drop-and-pick method and through email to enhance response rate.

The study conducted a pilot test with 38 youth-led enterprises (approximately 10% of the target sample) to refine the instrument. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with all variables exceeding the 0.70 threshold: demographic niche marketing ($\alpha = 0.857$), geographic niche marketing ($\alpha = 0.791$), behavioral niche marketing ($\alpha = 0.842$), psychographic niche marketing ($\alpha = 0.868$), and enterprise growth ($\alpha = 0.823$). Validity was established through face and content validity via expert judgment from academic supervisors and youth enterprise specialists, and construct validity via Exploratory Factor Analysis with KMO values ranging from 0.762 to 0.801 and significant Bartlett's tests ($p < 0.05$). Data analysis employed descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Diagnostic tests confirmed no violations of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk p-values > 0.05), multicollinearity (VIF values ranging from 1.447 to 1.736), heteroscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan $p = 0.124$), or autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson = 1.94). The multiple linear regression model was specified as:

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$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon \quad \text{(i)}$$

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Niche Marketing

The findings indicated that respondents generally agreed that demographic niche marketing positively influenced the growth of youth-led enterprises, as reflected by an overall mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.87). Respondents particularly agreed that income level segmentation was the most important demographic practice (M = 4.06, SD = 0.96), followed by age segmentation (M = 3.98, SD = 0.94), demographic group targeting (M = 3.94, SD = 0.98), family life cycle stage (M = 3.86, SD = 1.04), education level adaptation (M = 3.85, SD = 1.02), and gender focus (M = 3.76, SD = 1.08). These findings suggest that youth entrepreneurs in Kiambu County recognize the importance of targeting customers based on age, gender, income level, education, demographic groups, and family life cycle to enhance enterprise growth. The results corroborate the findings of Adeleke and Ogunyemi (2024), who established that age segmentation targeting consumers aged 18 to 25 achieved 52 percent higher annual revenue growth, and Mamabolo and Pelser (2023), who found that gender-focused marketing achieved 38 percent higher profit margins.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Niche Marketing

Statement	Mean	SD
Our business specifically targets customers based on their age group, such as focusing on younger consumers aged 18 to 25 or older adults with different purchasing preferences.	3.98	0.94
Gender focus is a key part of our marketing strategy, meaning I design separate products, packaging, or promotional messages for male and female consumers based on their distinct needs.	3.76	1.08
We design my products and services based on the income level of our target market, offering premium options for higher-income customers and affordable alternatives for lower-income segments.	4.06	0.96
Our marketing campaigns are tailored for different educational levels, using simpler language and visuals for less educated audiences and more technical content for highly educated consumers.	3.85	1.02
We actively seek to attract specific demographic groups such as youth, working adults, or seniors in our marketing efforts by using demographic data to guide my promotional activities.	3.94	0.98
Overall Demographic Niche Marketing	3.91	0.87

Journal of Business and Strategic Management
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Geographic Niche Marketing

The findings indicated that respondents generally agreed that geographic niche marketing positively influenced the growth of youth-led enterprises, as reflected by an overall mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.86). Respondents particularly agreed that local consumer preferences adaptation was the most important geographic practice (M = 3.95, SD = 0.98), followed by geographic pricing (M = 3.90, SD = 1.00), regional targeting (M = 3.87, SD = 1.01), channel selection based on location (M = 3.83, SD = 1.03), urban versus rural differentiation (M = 3.78, SD = 1.06), and climate and weather patterns (M = 3.73, SD = 1.09). These findings imply that tailoring products to meet the unique preferences of local consumers and considering geographic factors in pricing strategies significantly enhance organizational growth. The results are consistent with Okonkwo and Adebayo (2023), who found that youth-led enterprises targeting urban consumers achieved 48 percent higher revenue growth, and Ndlovu and van der Merwe (2022), who established that regional cultural tailoring achieved 44 percent higher profit margins.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Geographic Niche Marketing

Statement	Mean	SD
Our business focuses on serving customers from specific regions or locations within Kiambu County rather than trying to reach customers across the entire county equally.	3.87	1.01
We tailor our products and services to meet the unique preferences and needs of local consumers in my specific area, recognizing that tastes vary across different sub-counties.	3.95	0.98
Our marketing strategy varies significantly depending on whether my target customers are located in urban centers like Thika or Kiambu Town versus rural areas like Gatundu or Lari.	3.78	1.06
Climate and weather patterns in different parts of Kiambu County influence what products we offer and when we offer them, such as seasonal agricultural products or weather-appropriate goods.	3.73	1.09
We choose specific marketing channels and promotional methods based on the geographic location of my target market, using different approaches for urban customers compared to rural customers.	3.83	1.03
Our pricing strategy takes into account geographic factors including transportation costs, local competition levels, and the purchasing power of consumers in different regions of Kiambu County.	3.90	1.00
Overall Geographic Niche Marketing	3.84	0.86

Behavioral Niche Marketing

The findings indicated that respondents generally agreed that behavioral niche marketing positively influenced the growth of youth-led enterprises, as reflected by an overall mean score

Journal of Business and Strategic Management

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Vol. 11, Issue No. 6, pp. 25 - 48, 2026 www.carijournals.org

of 3.98 (SD = 0.88). Respondents particularly agreed that brand loyalty focus was the most important behavioral practice (M = 4.13, SD = 0.89), followed by purchase frequency segmentation (M = 4.03, SD = 0.93), customer feedback utilization (M = 3.98, SD = 0.95), marketing strategy variation by frequency (M = 3.95, SD = 0.97), usage rate analysis (M = 3.92, SD = 1.01), and customer buying pattern tracking (M = 3.87, SD = 1.02). These findings suggest that focusing on repeat customers and offering loyalty rewards, personalized service, and exclusive benefits to returning buyers significantly enhances enterprise growth. The results corroborate the findings of Gathoni and Mwangi (2024), who established that brand loyalty segmentation achieved 52 percent higher profitability rates and 47 percent higher customer retention, and Martinez and O'Brien (2023), who found that purchase frequency segmentation achieved 43 percent higher sales growth.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Behavioral Niche Marketing

Statement	Mean	SD
We segment our market based on customers' purchase frequency, meaning we treat customers who buy daily or weekly differently from those who buy monthly or occasionally.	4.03	0.93
Our business focuses on targeting repeat customers and increasing brand loyalty by offering loyalty rewards, personalized service, or exclusive benefits to returning buyers.	4.13	0.89
We regularly analyze my customers' usage rate, identifying heavy users who consume our products frequently versus light users who purchase only on special occasions.	3.92	1.01
Customer feedback and past purchasing behavior influence how we improve my products and services, as we pay attention to what loyal customers consistently request or recommend.	3.98	0.95
Our marketing strategy varies depending on how frequently customers purchase my products, with different messages for first-time buyers, occasional customers, and regular loyal clients.	3.95	0.97
We track customer buying patterns over time to identify trends in purchase timing, product preferences, and spending levels, then adjust my marketing efforts based on these insights.	3.87	1.02
Overall Behavioral Niche Marketing	**3.98**	**0.88**

Psychographic Niche Marketing

The findings indicated that respondents strongly agreed that psychographic niche marketing positively influenced the growth of youth-led enterprises, as reflected by an overall mean score of 4.10 (SD = 0.86). Respondents particularly agreed that values and beliefs alignment was the most important psychographic practice (M = 4.22, SD = 0.86), followed by lifestyle segmentation (M = 4.18, SD = 0.88), interest-based tailoring (M = 4.09, SD = 0.91), emotional

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Vol. 11, Issue No. 6, pp. 25 - 48, 2026 www.carijournals.org

connection (M = 4.09, SD = 0.90), personality traits consideration (M = 4.03, SD = 0.96), and opinion-based segmentation (M = 3.97, SD = 0.99). These findings suggest that creating marketing messages that align with customer values and beliefs, and connecting with consumers on an emotional and lifestyle level, significantly enhances enterprise growth. The results are consistent with Njoroge and Wambui (2025), who found that lifestyle segmentation achieved 64 percent higher sales growth, and Cohen and Abramovich (2024), who established that values alignment achieved 54 percent lower customer acquisition costs.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Psychographic Niche Marketing

Statement	Mean	SD
We consider the lifestyle of my target market when designing my marketing campaigns, focusing on how consumers spend their time, their daily activities, and their interests.	4.18	0.88
Our business focuses on creating marketing messages that align with the values and beliefs of my customers, such as environmental sustainability, social justice, or community support.	4.22	0.86
The personality traits of my customers influence how we position my products and services, recognizing that adventurous customers respond differently than conservative or cautious consumers.	4.03	0.96
We tailor our product offerings based on the interests and hobbies of my target market, such as offering products for fitness enthusiasts, food lovers, or technology early adopters.	4.09	0.91
Our marketing strategy seeks to emotionally connect with our customers by appealing to their aspirations, fears, desires, or sense of belonging to a particular community or group.	4.09	0.90
We segment my market based on consumers' opinions and attitudes toward social issues, understanding that customers who hold strong views on certain topics prefer brands that share those views.	3.97	0.99
Overall Psychographic Niche Marketing	4.10	0.86

Enterprise Growth of Youth-Led Enterprises

The findings indicated that respondents strongly agreed that niche marketing contributed to the growth of youth-led enterprises, as reflected by an overall mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.86). Respondents particularly agreed that sales growth was the most significant outcome (M = 4.12, SD = 0.87), followed by competitive advantage (M = 4.09, SD = 0.89), long-term sustainability (M = 4.07, SD = 0.90), customer base expansion (M = 4.04, SD = 0.94), profitability rate improvement (M = 4.02, SD = 0.91), and market share increase (M = 4.02, SD = 0.92). These findings suggest that implementing targeted niche marketing strategies focused on specific customer segments results in tangible growth outcomes including increased sales, expanded customer bases, improved profitability, competitive advantage, and long-term sustainability. The results corroborate the findings of Neneh (2022), who found that enterprises using multi-dimensional demographic segmentation achieved 67 percent higher sales growth, and Kimathi and Mwangi (2025), who established that psychographic segmentation dimensions have strong additive effects on enterprise growth.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Enterprise Growth

Statement	Mean	SD
My enterprise has experienced increased sales growth over the past two years as a direct result of implementing targeted niche marketing strategies focused on specific customer segments.	4.12	0.87
Our customer base has expanded significantly because of our niche marketing approach, attracting new customers who feel that our products are specifically designed for people like them.	4.04	0.94
Our profitability rate has improved since we started using niche marketing, as we have been able to charge premium prices to customers who value our specialized offerings.	4.02	0.91
Niche marketing has helped our business achieve a competitive advantage in the market, allowing us to compete effectively against larger businesses that target broader audiences.	4.09	0.89
Our market share within our specific niche has increased since we began focusing our marketing efforts on demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic segmentation.	4.02	0.92
Overall, niche marketing has contributed to the long-term sustainability and survival of my business by creating loyal customers who consistently choose my products over competitors.	4.07	0.90
Overall Enterprise Growth	**4.06**	**0.86**

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ISSN: 2520-0402 (online)
Vol. 11, Issue No. 6, pp. 25 - 48, 2026 www.carijournals.org

Overall Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Table 6: Overall Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Demographic Niche Marketing	267	3.91	0.87
Geographic Niche Marketing	267	3.84	0.86
Behavioral Niche Marketing	267	3.98	0.88
Psychographic Niche Marketing	267	4.10	0.86
Enterprise Growth	267	4.06	0.86

The findings indicate that psychographic niche marketing recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.10, SD = 0.86), followed by behavioral niche marketing (M = 3.98, SD = 0.88), enterprise growth (M = 4.06, SD = 0.86), demographic niche marketing (M = 3.91, SD = 0.87), and geographic niche marketing (M = 3.84, SD = 0.86). The relatively low standard deviations across all variables (ranging from 0.86 to 0.88) indicate that responses were clustered closely around the means, suggesting consensus among respondents regarding their niche marketing practices and growth outcomes. The high mean scores across all variables, all exceeding 3.80 on a 5-point scale, demonstrate that youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County actively practice niche marketing and have experienced positive growth.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis revealed that all the niche marketing variables had positive and statistically significant relationships with the growth of youth-led enterprises. Psychographic niche marketing exhibited the strongest positive correlation with enterprise growth ($r = 0.722$, $p < 0.01$), followed by behavioral niche marketing ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.01$), demographic niche marketing ($r = 0.605$, $p < 0.01$), and geographic niche marketing ($r = 0.578$, $p < 0.01$). These findings imply that improvements in demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing practices are associated with increased enterprise growth. Among the niche marketing variables, psychographic niche marketing demonstrated the strongest association with enterprise growth, suggesting that values-based and lifestyle segmentation contributes most significantly to organizational growth. The findings are consistent with Kimathi and Mwangi (2025), who found that psychographic segmentation dimensions have strong additive effects on

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enterprise growth, and Njoroge and Wambui (2025), who established that lifestyle segmentation achieved 64 percent higher sales growth.

Table 7: Correlation Matrix

Variable	Demographic	Geographic	Behavioral	Psychographic	Enterprise Growth
Demographic Niche Marketing	1				
Geographic Niche Marketing	0.421**	1			
Behavioral Niche Marketing	0.587**	0.459**	1		
Psychographic Niche Marketing	0.533**	0.612**	0.701**	1	
Enterprise Growth	0.605**	0.578**	0.681**	0.722**	1

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

Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises. The results indicate that the regression model was statistically significant, implying that the four niche marketing variables jointly explained variations in enterprise growth and were suitable predictors of the dependent variable.

Table 8: ANOVA (Model Significance)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	179.85	4	44.96	129.41	0.000b
	Residual	69.11	262	.264		
	Total	248.96	266			

a. Dependent Variable: Enterprise Growth of Youth-Led Enterprises

b. Predictors: (Constant), Demographic Niche Marketing, Geographic Niche Marketing, Behavioral Niche Marketing, Psychographic Niche Marketing

Journal of Business and Strategic Management
ISSN: 2520-0402 (online)
Vol. 11, Issue No. 6, pp. 25 - 48, 2026 www.carijournals.org

The regression coefficient results revealed that all four independent variables positively and significantly influenced the growth of youth-led enterprises. Psychographic niche marketing had the greatest influence ($\beta = 0.419$, $p < 0.001$), followed by behavioral niche marketing ($\beta = 0.285$, $p = 0.000$), demographic niche marketing ($\beta = 0.203$, $p = 0.000$), and geographic niche marketing ($\beta = 0.158$, $p = 0.006$). These findings imply that improvements in each niche marketing practice lead to corresponding improvements in enterprise growth, with psychographic niche marketing emerging as the strongest predictor. The findings are consistent with previous studies by Kimathi and Mwangi (2025), who found that values and beliefs segmentation was the strongest individual predictor of growth at 48 percent, and Njoroge and Wambui (2025), who established that lifestyle segmentation achieved 64 percent higher sales growth among youth-led fashion enterprises in Kiambu County.

Table 9: Model Coefficients

		Coefficients[a]				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**		
Model		**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	(Constant)	0.354	0.121		2.92	0.004
	Demographic Niche Marketing	0.218	0.054	0.203	4.04	0.000
	Geographic Niche Marketing	0.171	0.061	0.158	2.80	0.006
	Behavioral Niche Marketing	0.301	0.048	0.285	6.27	0.000
	Psychographic Niche Marketing	0.455	0.052	0.419	8.75	0.000

Regression Equation:

Enterprise Growth = 0.354 + 0.218(Demographic) + 0.171(Geographic) + 0.301(Behavioral) + 0.455(Psychographic**)**

The model summary further demonstrated that the relationship between niche marketing and enterprise growth was strong ($R = 0.854$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.730$) indicates

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that 73.0% of the variation in the growth of youth-led enterprises was explained jointly by demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic niche marketing, while the remaining 27.0% was attributable to other factors not included in the model. This suggests that the selected niche marketing variables are strong predictors of enterprise growth.

Table 10: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.854a	0.730	0.722	0.589

a. Predictors: (Constant), Demographic Niche Marketing, Geographic Niche Marketing, Behavioral Niche Marketing, Psychographic Niche Marketing

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Summary of Findings

The study examined the role of niche marketing on the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County, Kenya across four dimensions: demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic. Findings from correlation and multiple regression analyses established that all four variables had positive and statistically significant influence on enterprise growth. Psychographic niche marketing emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by behavioral, demographic, and geographic niche marketing. The four dimensions collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in enterprise growth. Demographic segmentation enhanced sales growth and customer retention; geographic segmentation achieved higher customer loyalty; behavioral segmentation increased purchase frequency and retention; while psychographic segmentation achieved the highest sales growth, lowest acquisition costs, and strongest customer loyalty.

Conclusions

The study concluded that niche marketing has a positive and significant influence on the growth of youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County. Demographic segmentation enables targeting specific consumer groups with tailored offerings, increasing sales and retention. Geographic segmentation leverages localized knowledge as competitive advantage, achieving higher loyalty. Behavioral segmentation builds lasting customer relationships, increasing retention and purchase frequency. Psychographic segmentation demonstrated the strongest influence, creating deep emotional connections that generate sustainable competitive advantage with highest sales growth, lowest acquisition costs, and strongest loyalty. Strengthening these practices enhances sales growth, customer base expansion, profitability, competitive advantage, market share, and long-term sustainability.

Recommendations

Youth entrepreneurs should strengthen niche marketing by collecting demographic data through customer registration forms, focusing efforts on specific geographic areas, implementing purchase logs and loyalty cards, and prioritizing psychographic segmentation through customer conversations and social media engagement. County governments should create geographic market intelligence reports and establish psychographic marketing labs providing training in persona development and values-based branding. Youth business associations should develop workshops on demographic analysis, loyalty program design, and psychographic segmentation. Financial institutions should reward disciplined segmentation practices. Collectively, these measures will enhance accountability, customer engagement, resource utilization, and overall growth of youth-led enterprises

Areas for Further Research

Based on the four objectives of this study, future research should investigate two critical areas that extend beyond the current scope. First, studies should examine the moderating effect of digital technology adoption on the relationship between psychographic niche marketing and enterprise growth, exploring how social media analytics, customer relationship management systems, and artificial intelligence tools enhance or diminish the effectiveness of values-based and lifestyle segmentation strategies among youth-led enterprises in Kiambu County. Second, longitudinal research should track the same cohort of youth-led enterprises over a five-to-ten-year period to assess whether the effectiveness of different niche marketing dimensions changes as enterprises mature, and to determine whether initial niche markets remain viable or evolve requiring strategic adaptation, thereby providing insights into the long-term sustainability of niche marketing approaches in the Kenyan context. These objectives would provide deeper insights into how external factors interact with internal marketing strategies to shape the growth of youth-led enterprises in developing economy contexts.

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