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Selected Pricing Strategies and Financial Sustainability of Membership Based Social Enterprises, A Case Study of the Kenya Scouts Association

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of selected pricing strategies on the financial sustainability of the Kenya Scouts Association (KSA), a membership-based social enterprise. Specifically, it determined the effect of cost-based pricing, established the effect of value-based pricing, and assessed the effect of market-oriented pricing on financial sustainability. The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design. The target population comprised 250 employees and key volunteers at KSA headquarters, from whom a sample of 154 respondents was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Data was collected using structured questionnaires, supplemented by secondary data from audited financial statements, pricing guidelines, strategic plans, and board minutes covering 2020–2025. A total of 141 valid questionnaires were analyzed, representing a response rate of 92.2%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, simple and multiple linear regression, diagnostic tests, effect-size analysis, and secondary-data analysis. All three pricing strategies had statistically significant positive relationships with financial sustainability. Cost-based pricing significantly predicted perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.648$, $R^2 = 0.300$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.604$, $R^2 = 0.262$, $p < 0.001$). Value-based pricing recorded the strongest individual effects on perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.726$, $R^2 = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.678$, $R^2 = 0.355$, $p < 0.001$). Market-oriented pricing also had significant positive effects on perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.528$, $R^2 = 0.232$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.488$, $R^2 = 0.204$, $p < 0.001$). When combined, the three pricing strategies explained 52.4% of the variance in perceived profitability and 46.2% of the variance in perceived liquidity. Value-based pricing remained the strongest predictor in the combined models. Secondary data showed that the Operating Self-Sufficiency Ratio improved from 0.824 to 1.248, while the Current Ratio increased from 1.240 to 2.554 over the five-year period. The study contributes empirical evidence on pricing-sustainability relationships in membership-based social enterprises in developing countries, addressing a significant gap in literature. It extends Mission-Market Tension Theory, Price Signaling Theory, and Social Resource Orchestration Theory to the Kenyan social enterprise context. The study recommends strengthening evidence-based value assessment, improving cost reviews and cost-recovery mechanisms, enhancing competitor and demand monitoring, and integrating pricing decisions with regular financial performance reviews.

Key Words: *Cost-based pricing, value-based pricing, market-oriented pricing, financial sustainability, operating self-sufficiency ratio, current ratio, social enterprise, Kenya Scouts Association*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Social enterprises globally face the persistent challenge of balancing social mission with financial sustainability. Unlike traditional businesses focused on profit maximization, social enterprises must generate sufficient revenue to sustain operations while keeping services accessible to the communities

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they serve (Ghosh, Ray, Nair, Nath, & Bishu, 2024). Pricing strategies have emerged as important tools for generating income while maintaining affordability, yet many organizations struggle to establish approaches that effectively balance these competing demands.

The global landscape of social enterprise has experienced transformative shifts over the past decade, with financial sustainability emerging as a critical concern for organizations pursuing the dual mission of social impact and economic viability (Armstrong & Grobbelaar, 2023). Many social enterprises struggle to achieve financial stability because they operate in environments where their target beneficiaries often have limited purchasing power, while reliance on grants and donations frequently exposes these organizations to financial uncertainty.

In Africa, social enterprises play a critical role in addressing socio-economic problems including high poverty levels, unemployment, and limited access to education and healthcare services (Ogbari, Ingomowei, & Amaihian, 2024). However, these organizations face structural and economic challenges that threaten their financial sustainability, including limited access to capital, weak institutional support, regulatory constraints, and unstable economic environments. Research indicates that adoption of strategic business practices such as market orientation, innovation, and effective pricing strategies can significantly improve the performance and sustainability of enterprises operating in resource-constrained environments (Fathi et al., 2025).

Kenya has emerged as one of the leading centers for social entrepreneurship in Africa, hosting approximately 7,500 social enterprises nationwide (Government of Kenya, 2025). Despite this growth, many social enterprises in Kenya continue to face financial sustainability challenges, as rising operational costs, limited access to financial resources, and fluctuating donor support hinder organizations' ability to maintain long-term operations. As a result, many social enterprises are increasingly exploring internal revenue-generation strategies to support their activities and reduce reliance on external funding, with effective pricing of products and services becoming an important factor influencing organizational sustainability (Musyoki, Senelwa, & Mugambi, 2024).

The Kenya Scouts Association (KSA) is a membership-based social enterprise with over 1.3 million members across 47 counties, making it one of the largest youth organizations in Kenya. Established over a century ago, KSA has a long history of contributing to youth development through programmes

including training, camping, community service, and skills development. The Association operates various income-generating activities including membership fees, training programmes, camping services, and facility rentals. As a membership-based social enterprise, KSA must balance its social mission of youth development with the need to generate sufficient revenue to sustain its operations.

1.2 Research Problem

The specific problem is that the Kenya Scouts Association lacks empirical evidence on whether its current pricing strategies effectively support financial sustainability. This problem manifests in three critical areas. First, the Auditor-General's report for the financial year ending June 2025 revealed serious financial management concerns at KSA, including weak internal controls over revenue collection, failure to bank revenue amounting to KSh362,780 at Embu Scouts Centre, and absence of daily cash reconciliations (Office of the Auditor-General, 2025). Second, the Association's strategic plan identifies "Good Governance and Financial Sustainability" as a key strategic pillar (Kenya Scouts Association, 2020), yet no empirical evidence exists on how the Association's pricing strategies affect its financial sustainability. Third, this gap is part of a broader research gap in the social enterprise literature, as existing studies focus on commercial SMEs, microfinance institutions, or non-governmental organizations, but do not examine how cost-based pricing, value-based pricing, and market-oriented pricing affect financial sustainability within membership-based social enterprises operating in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to establish the effect of selected pricing strategies on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises, with specific reference to the Kenya Scouts Association. The specific objectives were:

a) To determine the effect of cost-based pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises.
b) To establish the effect of value-based pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises.
c) To assess the effect of market-oriented pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises.

1.4 Research Questions

a) What is the effect of cost-based pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises?
b) What is the effect of value-based pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises?
c) What is the effect of market-oriented pricing on the financial sustainability of membership-based social enterprises?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Mission-Market Tension Theory (Young, Jung, & Aranson, 2010) posits that non-profit and social enterprise organizations must simultaneously pursue social missions and financial solvency, creating inherent trade-offs between mission-responsive actions and financially rewarding actions. This theory is linked to cost-based pricing strategy, as recovering all costs may lead to fees that are more than what targeted beneficiaries can afford, hence excluding them from the social mission.

Price Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973; Stiglitz, 1987) suggests that consumers use price to decide whether a product or service is high-quality, valuable, or exclusive. Under a value-based pricing approach, service prices signal quality and influence beneficiary perceptions and purchasing behavior. Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) and Social Resource Orchestration Theory (Robb & Brownell, 2024) explain that organizations perform better and remain sustainable when they have valuable resources and manage them effectively. This theory connects with market-oriented pricing, which means setting prices by looking at what competitors are charging and how much customers are willing to pay.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) provides a framework for understanding how financial sustainability is influenced by the organization's ability to build and maintain effective relationships with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, donors, employees, and government institutions.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Cost-Based Pricing and Financial Sustainability: Durango, Lara-Rubio, Galera, and Blanco-Oliver (2021) examined structured pricing systems in microfinance institutions and found that cost-based

pricing significantly improved financial self-sustainability by reducing capital requirements and strengthening credit risk management. In South Africa, Kaswa (2021) investigated resource mobilisation and pricing among fifteen social enterprises and found that social enterprises adopt mostly discounted and value-based pricing as part of their financial resource mobilisation. In Kenya, Mwito (2024) studied pricing strategies among SMEs in Imenti North Sub-County and found that cost-plus pricing had a positive influence on growth of SMEs.

Value-Based Pricing and Financial Sustainability: Ofek, Bertini, Botha, and Cekin (2021) conducted a case study of Project Maji, a non-profit social enterprise installing solar-powered water kiosks in Kenya and Ghana, demonstrating that value-based pricing decisions directly affect financial viability. Donfouet et al. (2020) provided empirical estimates of mean willingness to pay for a social health enterprise in Viwandani slum in Nairobi, Kenya, finding that 97 percent of respondents were willing to join the proposed social health enterprise, with a mean WTP of approximately US$2 per person per month. Mungai (2024) found that differentiated pricing contributed to explaining 60.2 percent of the variance in financial sustainability among non-profit organizations in Nairobi City County.

Market-Oriented Pricing and Financial Sustainability: Ndwandwe and Khoza (2026) surveyed 132 SMEs in a South African municipality and found that competitor-based pricing is one of the primary strategies used by businesses, and that market-oriented pricing practices are significantly and positively associated with both growth and long-term sustainability. Kahinga, Kitonga, and Kinyua (2025) found that demand-based pricing was associated with improved revenue stability among solar social enterprises in Nairobi. Do Adro, Fernandes, and Veiga (2023) demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect of market orientation on the performance standards of non-profit organizations.

Financial Sustainability in Kenyan Social Enterprises: Mungai (2024) established that innovative financing strategies collectively explain 60.2% of the variation in sustainability outcomes among non-profit organizations in Nairobi City County. Chege (2025) found that financial management practices collectively explained 77.1% of the variation in NGO sustainability. Muraguri (2023) found that weak financial controls negatively affect sustainability regardless of revenue levels.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the independent variables (cost-based pricing, value-based pricing, and market-oriented pricing) and the dependent variable (financial sustainability). Cost-based pricing is operationalized through full cost recovery and standard markup; value-based pricing through perceived value and differentiated pricing; and market-oriented pricing through competitor-based pricing and demand-based pricing. Financial sustainability is measured through the operating self-sufficiency ratio (profitability) and the current ratio (liquidity).

2.4 Research Gap

The empirical literature reviewed reveals three key observations. First, cost-based, value-based, and market-oriented pricing have each been associated with improved financial outcomes in various organizational contexts, but evidence specific to membership-based social enterprises in Kenya remains lacking. Second, no study has systematically examined how the sub-dimensions of these pricing strategies affect financial sustainability measured through profitability and liquidity. Third, while financial sustainability has been studied in Kenya, the role of pricing strategies has been largely overlooked in favor of revenue diversification, governance practices, or external support. The Kenya Scouts Association has not been the subject of empirical research on pricing and financial sustainability, justifying the present study.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design. A cross-sectional design was appropriate because data was collected at a single point in time from respondents representing the target population, allowing the researcher to describe the current state of pricing strategies and financial sustainability at KSA (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design is correlational because it aims to establish the nature and strength of relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

The target population comprised 250 employees and key volunteers at the Kenya Scouts Association headquarters in Nairobi who are directly involved in financial management, pricing decisions, programme delivery, or strategic planning. The population was distributed across six functional categories: Senior Management (8), Finance Department (12), Programmes Department (30), County Coordinators (120), Headquarters Support Staff (50), and Key Volunteers (30).

Yamane's formula (1967) was used to determine the minimum sample size:

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where $N = 250$ and $e = 0.05$. Substituting the values:

$n = 250 / (1 + 250(0.05)^2) = 250 / 1.625 = 153.85$

Rounding up, the minimum sample size required was 154 respondents. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to allocate the sample across the six strata.

Primary data was collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire consisting of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire captured respondents' perceptions of the three pricing strategies and financial sustainability. Secondary data was obtained from audited financial statements (2020–2025), Auditor-General's reports, the KSA strategic plan, internal pricing schedules, and revenue collection records.

Quantitative data from the structured questionnaires was coded and entered SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine relationships between variables. Simple linear regression was used to assess the individual effect of each pricing strategy, while multiple regression analysis was used to assess the combined effect. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, autocorrelation, homoscedasticity, and linearity were conducted. Effect-size analysis using Cohen's f^2 was also performed. Secondary data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and trend analysis.

4. Study Results

4.1 Response Rate

A total of 141 valid questionnaires were analyzed, representing a response rate of 92.2%. All strata achieved response rates above 88%, with senior management and finance department achieving 100% response.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

County Coordinators constituted the largest proportion of respondents (48.2%), followed by Headquarters Support Staff (19.9%), Programmes Department staff (12.1%), Key Volunteers (11.3%), Finance Department staff (5.0%), and Senior Management (3.5%). More than two-thirds (68.1%) of

respondents were involved in pricing decisions, and 77.3% had four or more years of experience with KSA.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

All Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.874 to 0.918. Value-based pricing recorded the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.918$), followed by financial sustainability ($\alpha = 0.906$), cost-based pricing ($\alpha = 0.892$), and market-oriented pricing ($\alpha = 0.874$).

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

Value-based pricing recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.88$), indicating strong agreement with statements measuring its implementation. Cost-based pricing recorded a mean of 3.42 ($SD = 0.98$), while market-oriented pricing recorded the lowest mean of 3.22 ($SD = 0.98$). Perceived liquidity recorded a slightly higher mean ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.12$) than perceived profitability ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.12$).

4.5 Correlation Analysis

All relationships among the study variables were positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Value-based pricing recorded the strongest correlation with perceived profitability ($r = 0.642$) and perceived liquidity ($r = 0.596$). Cost-based pricing showed moderate positive correlations with perceived profitability ($r = 0.548$) and perceived liquidity ($r = 0.512$). Market-oriented pricing recorded the comparatively weakest correlations with perceived profitability ($r = 0.482$) and perceived liquidity ($r = 0.452$).

4.6 Regression Analysis

4.6.1 Simple Linear Regression Results

All six simple regression models were statistically significant at the 1% level ($p < 0.001$). Value-based pricing recorded the largest coefficients for both outcomes ($\beta = 0.726$ for profitability and $\beta = 0.678$ for liquidity), followed by cost-based pricing ($\beta = 0.648$ and $\beta = 0.604$, respectively). Market-oriented pricing recorded the smallest coefficients ($\beta = 0.528$ for profitability and $\beta = 0.488$ for liquidity).

Table 1: Summary of Simple Regression Results

Model	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β	R^2	F	p
1a	Cost-Based	Profitability	0.648	0.300	72.694	<0.001
1b	Cost-Based	Liquidity	0.604	0.262	57.002	<0.001
2a	Value-Based	Profitability	0.726	0.412	137.124	<0.001
2b	Value-Based	Liquidity	0.678	0.355	105.536	<0.001
3a	Market-Oriented	Profitability	0.528	0.232	39.508	<0.001
3b	Market-Oriented	Liquidity	0.488	0.204	30.746	<0.001

4.6.2 Multiple Regression Results

The combined model explained 52.4% of the variance in perceived profitability ($R^2 = 0.524$, $F(3,137) = 48.256$, $p < 0.001$) and 46.2% of the variance in perceived liquidity ($R^2 = 0.462$, $F(3,137) = 39.184$, $p < 0.001$). Value-based pricing was the strongest predictor in both models ($\beta = 0.432$ for profitability; $\beta = 0.384$ for liquidity), followed by cost-based pricing ($\beta = 0.342$; $\beta = 0.308$), with market-oriented pricing playing a supporting role ($\beta = 0.268$; $\beta = 0.238$).

Table 3: Secondary Data Trends (2020–2025)

Indicator	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total Change
OSSR	0.824	0.883	0.966	1.082	1.248	+51.5%
Current Ratio	1.240	1.485	1.806	2.174	2.554	+106.0%
Pricing Policies	2	3	6	10	12	+10
Sustainability Milestones	0	1	1	3	3	+3

4.7 Triangulation of Findings

The triangulation of primary and secondary findings revealed strong convergence across all dimensions. The consistency between what respondents reported and what organizational documents showed suggests that the perceptual data is reliable. The linkage analysis demonstrated a clear temporal relationship between the introduction of formal pricing policies and improvements in financial sustainability, with the most significant improvements occurring in 2022–2023 when standard markup and WTP policies were introduced.

5. Discussion

5.1 Effect of Cost-Based Pricing on Financial Sustainability

The study found that cost-based pricing has a significant positive effect on financial sustainability, with simple regression results showing that it significantly predicts both perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.648$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.604$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with Durango et al. (2021), who found that structured pricing systems were associated with improved financial self-sustainability in microfinance institutions. The finding can also be interpreted within the Mission-Market Tension Theory (Young, Jung, & Aranson, 2010), which emphasizes the need for social enterprises to balance financial requirements with social accessibility.

5.2 Effect of Value-Based Pricing on Financial Sustainability

Value-based pricing had the strongest positive effect on financial sustainability, with simple regression results showing that it is the strongest predictor of both perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.726$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.678$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with Hussain, Ahmad, and Mia (2023), who emphasized the importance of perceived value and willingness to pay in the performance of social enterprises. The finding is also consistent with Mungai (2024), who reported a significant relationship between differentiated pricing practices and financial sustainability among Kenyan non-profit organizations. The Price Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973; Stiglitz, 1987) explains this finding, as differentiated pricing signals value to different beneficiary segments, enhancing willingness to pay.

5.3 Effect of Market-Oriented Pricing on Financial Sustainability

Market-oriented pricing had a significant positive effect on financial sustainability, though it was the weakest among the three strategies. Simple regression results showed that it significantly predicts both

perceived profitability ($\beta = 0.528$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived liquidity ($\beta = 0.488$, $p < 0.001$). This finding is consistent with Ndwandwe and Khoza (2026), who reported that market-oriented pricing practices were positively associated with organizational growth and long-term sustainability among SMEs. The finding is also consistent with Do Adro, Fernandes, and Veiga (2023), who found a statistically significant positive relationship between market orientation and the performance of non-profit organizations.

5.4 Combined Effect of Pricing Strategies

The combined model explained 52.4% of the variance in perceived profitability and 46.2% of the variance in perceived liquidity, with all three predictors being statistically significant. This finding supports the Social Resource Orchestration Theory (Robb & Brownell, 2024), which suggests that organizations that combine pricing strategies achieve higher financial sustainability than those relying on a single approach. The finding is also consistent with Ndwandwe and Khoza (2026), who found that businesses that frequently modify prices in response to market competition and technological advancements achieve improved business performance.

6. Conclusions

The study concludes that cost-based pricing has a significant positive effect on the financial sustainability of the Kenya Scouts Association. While KSA has established cost recovery mechanisms, there is room for improvement in systematic markup application and regular cost reviews.

The study concludes that value-based pricing has the strongest positive effect on financial sustainability. The strong differentiated pricing practices demonstrate that KSA effectively balances revenue generation with social accessibility, consistent with Stakeholder Theory.

The study concludes that market-oriented pricing has a significant positive effect on financial sustainability, though it is the weakest among the three strategies. There are significant opportunities for improvement in demand-based pricing.

The study concludes that the three pricing strategies together have a significant positive association with financial sustainability. Value-based pricing emerges as the strongest predictor, followed by cost-

based pricing, with market-oriented pricing playing a supporting role. The synergistic effect of the three strategies working together exceeds the sum of their individual contributions.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for the Kenya Scouts Association

Strengthening Cost-Based Pricing:

a) Increase the markup from the current average of 16.8% to between 20% and 22% for selected programmes with strong demand and higher perceived value.
b) Implement monthly cost reviews for all programmes to ensure that costs are accurately tracked and that markups remain appropriate.
c) Target 75% of programmes achieving full cost recovery within two years.
d) Implement activity-based costing for all programmes to ensure that indirect costs are accurately allocated.

Strengthening Value-Based Pricing:

a) Conduct annual willingness-to-pay surveys across all 47 counties to ensure that pricing decisions are evidence-based.
b) Expand fee categories to four or more for all major programmes to improve accessibility and revenue generation.
c) Develop a comprehensive value communication strategy to increase members' willingness to pay.
d) Create a segmented pricing matrix by county to balance accessibility and revenue across different regions.

Strengthening Market-Oriented Pricing:

a) Expand competitor benchmarking to include five or more organisations on a quarterly basis.
b) Develop comprehensive seasonal pricing for all camps and facilities to increase revenue during peak periods.
c) Implement demand-based fee adjustment with monthly reviews to optimize revenue.
d) Establish a market intelligence unit to monitor youth sector trends and inform pricing decisions.

7.2 Recommendations for Other Membership-Based Social Enterprises

a) Implement comprehensive pricing strategies that integrate cost-based, value-based, and market-oriented pricing.
b) Prioritize value-based pricing, as it is the strongest predictor of both profitability and liquidity.
c) Strengthen cost-based pricing by implementing systematic cost recovery mechanisms.

d) Adopt market-oriented pricing, particularly demand-based pricing, to optimize revenue.
e) Progressively introduce formal pricing policies and document pricing practices.
f) Develop governance mechanisms for pricing, such as Pricing Committees.
g) Invest in financial management systems and internal controls.

7.3 Recommendations for Policymakers

a) Develop policies that support social enterprises in developing pricing capabilities.
b) Support social enterprises in conducting willingness-to-pay research.
c) Develop regulatory frameworks that accommodate differentiated pricing models for social enterprises.
d) Include pricing strategy modules in capacity-building programmes for social enterprises.
e) Support social enterprises in developing earned income streams through pricing.
f) Develop guidelines for membership-based non-profit organizations regarding revenue generation and financial self-sufficiency.

8. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

8.1 Methodological Limitations

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational research design, which limits the ability to establish causality definitively. The study was conducted as a single case study of the Kenya Scouts Association, which may limit generalizability to other membership-based social enterprises. The primary data relied on respondent perceptions, which may differ from objective reality. The study relied on five years of financial data, which may not capture long-term trends.

8.2 Contextual Limitations

The study was conducted in the Kenyan context, which has specific characteristics that may not be applicable to social enterprises in other countries. The study focused specifically on membership-based social enterprises, which have unique characteristics. The study focused specifically on the Kenya Scouts Association, which is a youth development organization. The study was conducted during a period of significant change for KSA.

8.3 Suggestions for Future Research

a) A longitudinal study should be conducted to track pricing strategy implementation and financial sustainability over a longer period.

b) A comparative study should be conducted to compare KSA with other membership-based youth organisations in Kenya.

c) A qualitative study should be conducted to understand the decision-making processes behind pricing practices.

d) An impact evaluation should be conducted to assess the effect of specific pricing interventions on the OSSR and Current Ratio.

e) A beneficiary study should be conducted to examine member perspectives on pricing, willingness to pay, and perceived value.

f) A financial management study should be conducted to investigate the relationship between internal financial controls and pricing effectiveness.

g) A regional comparison study should be conducted to compare KSA with Scouts organisations in other African countries.

h) A study should be conducted to examine the relationship between pricing strategies and social impact.

i) A study should be conducted to examine the role of governance in pricing strategy implementation.

j) A study should be conducted to examine the effect of external factors on pricing strategies and financial sustainability.

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