

Strategic Management Practices and Performance of Selected Logistics Firms in Mombasa County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of strategic management practices on the performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa, Kenya. Firm performance was assessed in terms of operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, innovation, and employee productivity. Despite the significant contribution of logistics firms to the Kenyan economy through transportation and storage services, many continue to face challenges related to competition, rising operational costs, government regulations, and internal inefficiencies. The study focused on four strategic management practices: environmental analysis, employee empowerment, leadership, and stakeholder involvement. The research was guided by the Resource-Based View Theory, Porter's Generic Strategies Theory, and Agency Theory. A descriptive research design was adopted targeting 245 employees from three logistics firms, comprising directors, managers, administrators, and operations staff. Using stratified and proportionate sampling techniques, a sample of 75 respondents was selected. Primary data were collected through questionnaires, while validity was enhanced through expert review. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between strategic management practices and firm performance ($R = 0.943$; $R^2 = 0.889$), indicating that 88.9% of performance variation was explained by the independent variables. ANOVA results confirmed the statistical significance of the model ($F = 241.449$, $p < 0.05$). All variables had a significant positive effect on performance, with stakeholder involvement emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.482$, $p = 0.000$). The study concluded that integrated strategic management practices significantly enhance the performance and competitiveness of logistics firms. The study recommends strengthening stakeholder engagement, leadership development, employee empowerment, and continuous environmental analysis to achieve sustainable organizational performance.

Keywords: *Strategic Management, Practices, Performance, Logistics Firms, Mombasa County*

1.1 Background of the Study

The evaluation of organizational performance has become increasingly important among logistics firms because it enables management to align financial resources, human capital, operational processes, and organizational systems toward the achievement of strategic objectives. Organizational performance refers to the assessment of a firm's capability, productivity, and effectiveness in attaining its strategic goals through operational efficiency, service quality, and successful strategy implementation (Taouab & Issor, 2019). Firm performance is measured using indicators such as financial performance, operational efficiency, and market performance (Mukami, 2021). According to Aguinis (2013), performance evaluation also enables firms to compare their progress with industry competitors and determine their position within the sector.

To enhance and sustain firm performance, logistics companies are increasingly adopting strategic management practices. Strategic management practices help firms align organizational resources and capabilities with opportunities and threats in the business environment, thereby improving competitiveness and performance. In Kenya, logistics firms play a critical role in facilitating trade and commerce through the planning, movement, storage, and distribution of goods and services. However, logistics firms in Mombasa County continue to face performance challenges caused by factors such as government regulations, increasing operational costs, intense competition, and inefficiencies in internal processes.

Strategic management practices enable logistics firms to formulate and implement initiatives that enhance competitiveness in a rapidly changing business environment characterized by evolving technologies and market demands. Strategy acts as a blueprint that guides firms in utilizing resources efficiently, anticipating challenges, and exploiting available opportunities. Without effective strategic management practices, firms risk stagnation, inefficiency, and competitive disadvantage. Consequently, the adoption of strategic management practices is essential for improving organizational performance.

Strategic management focuses on the long-term future of an organization and its preparedness to respond to environmental changes that may influence future success (Ansoff & McDonnell, 2010). Bakar et al. (2011) define strategic management as the process of making decisions, implementing actions, and undertaking corrective measures to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Similarly, Pearce and Robinson (2008) describe it as a set of managerial decisions and actions that facilitate the formulation and implementation of strategies aimed at achieving organizational objectives.

A well-developed strategic plan considers an organization's mission, vision, values, and both internal and external environmental factors affecting operations. Such a plan provides a framework for coordination among departments and positions the firm to adapt effectively to environmental changes. Strategic management practices commonly include environmental analysis, employee empowerment, leadership, and stakeholder involvement. Environmental analysis involves gathering and interpreting information about external and internal factors that influence organizational operations. Machuki and Aosa (2011) emphasize that environmental analysis considers both dimensions and factors affecting a firm's performance. This process helps organizations identify opportunities, threats, strengths, and weaknesses, enabling managers to formulate effective strategies and maintain competitiveness in a dynamic market environment.

Employee empowerment refers to granting employees authority, responsibility, and autonomy in decision-making within their areas of expertise. Sangita, Shalaka, and Kalpana (2022) note that employee empowerment enhances employee motivation, satisfaction, and engagement, thereby improving overall organizational performance. Leadership is also a critical component of strategic management because it involves communicating the firm's vision and mission, motivating employees, and ensuring successful strategy implementation (H. Khan, 2020). Effective leadership contributes significantly to improved organizational performance. Stakeholder involvement entails the active participation and collaboration of individuals or groups with an interest in the organization's activities. Involving stakeholders in decision-making promotes transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns, while also strengthening organizational reputation and long-term sustainability.

Firm performance denotes an organization's effectiveness in achieving its intended objectives through operational efficiency, profitability, and market competitiveness. Performance is evaluated using financial indicators such as revenue and profitability, operational indicators such as productivity and efficiency, and market indicators such as customer satisfaction and market share (Truong & Tran, 2009). Kinuthia (2009) further explains that performance can be assessed

using measures such as market value per share and price-to-earnings ratios. Effective performance measurement should align with organizational strategy and provide valid, reliable, and specific feedback (Wall et al., 2004). The Balanced Scorecard remains one of the most widely used tools for measuring organizational performance.

Logistics firms are organizations responsible for coordinating the movement of goods, services, and information across the supply chain. Their core functions include transportation, warehousing, inventory management, and distribution. In Kenya, the logistics sector has experienced significant growth due to factors such as infrastructure development, increased international trade, and Kenya's strategic position as the gateway to East and Central Africa. Mombasa County, in particular, serves as a major logistics hub because of its strategic connectivity to regional transport networks. Despite the sector's importance in employment creation and international trade, many logistics firms in Mombasa County continue to experience performance challenges, underscoring the need for effective strategic management practices to enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve service delivery.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Logistics firms play a critical role in the Kenyan economy through cargo handling, distribution, and delivery services. Effective strategic management practices are essential in improving profitability, enhancing competitive advantage, reducing operational costs, and ensuring efficient utilization of resources. Increasing global competition has compelled organizations in the logistics industry to restructure their operational processes to improve efficiency and long-term sustainability (Sadeghifar, Jafari, Tofighi, Ravaghi & Maleki, 2015).

Despite their importance, logistics firms in Mombasa County continue to experience significant performance challenges arising from rising operational costs, intense competition, government regulations, and inefficient internal processes. Escalating expenses such as fuel prices, insurance premiums, employee salaries, taxation, and the depreciation of the Kenyan shilling against the US dollar have adversely affected profitability and overall firm performance. Additionally, government policies and regulatory requirements, including tariffs, licensing, customs procedures, documentation, harmonized codes, and cargo handling systems, have increased operational complexities and costs for logistics firms (De Souza et al., 2007).

Competition within the logistics sector has also intensified due to increased bargaining power among consumers and suppliers, ease of market entry for new firms, and pressure on existing firms to lower prices and reduce workforce costs. Consequently, some firms have experienced reduced profitability or closure. To remain competitive and sustainable, logistics firms must continuously improve business processes, strengthen internal controls, and adopt effective strategic management practices such as employee performance reviews, enhanced communication, proper resource allocation, quality management, and timely service delivery.

Previous studies have shown that strategic management practices positively influence organizational performance in various sectors in Kenya. Studies by Langat and Wainaina (2019), Nyagaki (2022), Onyoni (2022), Tumate (2023), and Wanyama and Aila (2022) established that strategic management practices significantly affect organizational performance. However, these studies did not adequately address the specific strategic management variables relevant to logistics firms in Mombasa County, thereby creating a research gap that this study seeks to address.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to analyze strategic management practices and performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The specific objectives were as follows:

- i. To determine the effect of environmental analysis on performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- ii. To investigate how employee empowerment affects performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- iii. To establish how leadership affects performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- iv. To investigate the influence of stakeholder involvement on performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

2.0 Literature Review

This section presents a comprehensive review of existing literature related to strategic management practices and organizational performance, with a specific focus on logistics firms. The literature review is organized into three subsections: theoretical framework, empirical review, and conceptual framework.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three key theories that explain factors influencing organizational performance: The Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, Porter's Generic Strategies Theory, and Agency Theory. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how firms achieve competitive advantage and improve performance through effective utilization of resources, strategic positioning, and managerial relationships.

Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory emphasizes the importance of an organization's internal resources and capabilities in achieving sustainable competitive advantage. According to Wernerfelt (1984), firms gain competitiveness by utilizing valuable resources and innovation to create superior customer value. The theory links strategic management with corporate economics and argues that organizational performance depends on the possession and effective use of unique resources (Grant & Jordan, 2015). RBV suggests that competitive advantage arises when resources are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable. Firms possessing such resources are more likely to outperform competitors because these assets cannot easily be replicated (Hitt, Nixon, Clifford & Coyne, 2010). The theory further argues that even well-formulated strategies cannot succeed if organizations lack adequate resources to support implementation.

In relation to the study, selected logistics firms in Mombasa County must evaluate both internally and externally acquired resources to identify gaps that may hinder performance. For example, a firm may possess adequate financial resources but lack skilled employees, resulting in poor operational outcomes. Management should therefore allocate resources effectively through training, recruitment, and strategic investment to enhance efficiency and achieve competitive advantage. Consequently, the manner in which logistics firms allocate and manage their resources significantly influences long-term decision-making and organizational performance.

Porter's Generic Strategies Theory

Porter's Generic Strategies Theory explains how firms achieve competitive advantage within their industries through cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies (Porter, 1998). Cost leadership involves minimizing operational costs through efficiency, reduced wastage, and economies of scale, enabling firms to offer products at lower prices while maintaining profitability

(Barney, 2007). Firms adopting this strategy are better positioned to survive price competition because of their lower production costs. Differentiation strategy focuses on producing unique and superior products or services that customers perceive as valuable enough to justify premium prices. This can be achieved through innovation, skilled personnel, advanced technology, and continuous product development (Hax & Majluf, 1996). Through differentiation, firms enhance customer loyalty and increase profitability. The focus strategy combines cost leadership or differentiation within a specific market niche. Firms concentrate on serving a smaller segment more effectively than competitors by tailoring products or services to customer needs (Porter, 1998).

In the context of this study, logistics firms in Mombasa County can adopt one or a combination of these strategies to improve competitiveness and performance. Through environmental scanning and market analysis, firms can create business units that implement different strategies depending on operational needs and market demands (David et al., 2001). Such strategic alignment enhances efficiency and overall organizational performance.

Agency Theory

Agency Theory examines the relationship between principals (owners) and agents (managers) in organizations. Developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976), the theory explains how principals delegate decision-making authority to agents to act on their behalf. Agents are expected to make decisions that serve the best interests of the principals rather than pursuing personal interests. The theory highlights the importance of trust, accountability, and effective communication between management and stakeholders. According to Otungu et al. (2011), agents play a critical role in strategy formulation and implementation across organizational levels. Effective collaboration between principals and agents ensures achievement of organizational goals in an efficient and effective manner. In relation to this study, logistics firms in Mombasa County can apply Agency Theory by appointing competent managers to oversee operations while ensuring accountability and performance monitoring. Strong leadership and proper delegation of responsibilities can enhance strategic management practices and ultimately improve organizational performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Environmental Analysis and Firm Performance

Environmental analysis refers to the process of gathering and evaluating information about both the internal and external business environment in which a firm operates. According to Glueck (1988), it involves continuous monitoring of trends and events that may influence a firm's present and future performance. The internal environment consists of factors within the organization's control, such as strengths and weaknesses, which determine the firm's core competencies and competitive advantage. In contrast, the external environment includes opportunities and threats arising from factors beyond the firm's control. Through environmental analysis, firms are able to adjust their strategies to align with changing environmental conditions.

Environmental analysis plays a significant role in enhancing organizational performance in dynamic business environments (Muthami, 2014). By identifying opportunities and threats early, firms are able to formulate strategies that maximize opportunities while minimizing risks. The process also supports risk management by enabling organizations to anticipate uncertainties and prepare contingency measures. Additionally, environmental analysis provides valuable information that supports informed decision-making and efficient resource allocation, both of which are essential for improved firm performance (Omenazu, 2022).

2.2.2 Employee Empowerment and Firm Performance

Employee empowerment refers to the practice of granting employee's authority, autonomy, and access to resources necessary for decision-making within their areas of responsibility. According to Sangita, Shalaka and Kalpana (2022), employee empowerment enables workers to make independent decisions and exercise control over their daily activities. Empowered employees perceive themselves as capable of influencing and improving their work environment, which contributes positively to organizational outcomes (Ng'ang'a & Muronge, 2017).

Several factors promote employee empowerment, including supportive leadership, effective communication, training and development, employee engagement, transparency, and reward systems. Organizations that provide employees with adequate information, tools, and training enable them to understand organizational expectations and execute their responsibilities effectively. Empowerment also involves involving employees in decision-making processes and allowing them to operate with minimal supervision.

Empirical studies indicate that employee empowerment significantly contributes to firm performance by increasing productivity, job satisfaction, innovation, and employee commitment. Empowered employees tend to be more customer-focused, creative, and capable of handling work-related stress effectively, leading to improved organizational performance (Kihanya, 2023). Suprpto and Widigdo (2021) further argue that empowerment strengthens employees' confidence in their abilities, which enhances productivity and organizational excellence. In addition, empowerment increases employee motivation, trust in leadership, and staff retention, thereby strengthening the organization's competitive position (Kipruto & Sitinei, 2022).

2.2.3 Leadership and Firm Performance

Leadership refers to the ability of managers to communicate a firm's vision and mission while ensuring effective strategy implementation. Hughes and Beatty (2005) describe strategic leadership as the ability to make informed decisions and motivate individuals and groups toward achieving competitive advantage. Leadership is therefore essential in guiding organizations toward future success. The implementation of organizational strategies largely depends on leadership effectiveness. Hrebiniak (2005) argues that strategy implementation is challenging and requires leaders to adopt new strategic mindsets and effective management practices. Effective leadership enhances organizational performance through clear communication, motivation, talent development, and change management. Leaders ensure that employees understand organizational goals, roles, and responsibilities, which promotes coordination and reduces misunderstandings.

Leadership also plays an important role in identifying and developing talent within organizations. Through training, mentorship, and succession planning, leaders prepare employees to handle future organizational challenges, thereby sustaining growth and performance (H. Khan, 2020). Additionally, motivated employees are more productive, experience lower turnover rates, and contribute to improved organizational outcomes (Duklaska, 2023). Effective leaders are also capable of managing organizational change, such as technological advancements and market shifts, while minimizing disruptions to performance.

Examples of successful leadership include Jack Welch at General Electric and Steve Jobs at Apple. Welch's emphasis on efficiency, performance management, and growth strategies transformed General Electric into one of the world's most profitable companies. Similarly, Steve Jobs' focus on

innovation, design, and user experience positioned Apple among the world's most valuable firms. Contemporary studies affirm that strategic leadership is essential for successful strategic outcomes and improved firm performance (Northouse, 2007).

2.2.4 Stakeholder Involvement and Firm Performance

Stakeholder involvement refers to the active engagement and participation of individuals or groups with an interest in an organization's activities. Stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, investors, government agencies, and local communities. Successful stakeholder involvement aims to reduce risks, align interests, and improve organizational outcomes (Gao & Zhang, 2006; Sloan, 2009).

Research indicates that inadequate stakeholder engagement is associated with poor organizational performance (Tantalo & Priem, 2016). Stakeholder involvement contributes to better decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing the concerns of different parties (Musyoka, 2015). It also improves risk management by enabling organizations to identify potential challenges and develop appropriate mitigation measures. Stakeholder engagement further supports compliance with legal requirements and promotes corporate social responsibility practices, which enhance organizational reputation and community relations (Muhoro, 2018). Increased transparency, accountability, and responsiveness resulting from stakeholder involvement strengthen stakeholder trust and contribute to sustained organizational performance.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design to systematically describe variables without manipulation, enabling cost-effective and practical data collection. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), a descriptive design focuses on identifying and describing the attributes or behaviours of study variables without manipulating them. This design was considered appropriate due to its practicality, cost-effectiveness, and suitability under constraints of time, resources, and access to respondents. The target population comprised 245 respondents drawn from three logistics firms in Mombasa County, Kenya—Transeast Kenya, Transpares Ltd., and Accelar Global—including directors, management team members, office administrators, and operations staff (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The selection of the firms was based on accessibility, homogeneity in operations,

and their relevance to the study context. Proportional allocation was applied across the categories to ensure balanced representation.

Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation of all population subgroups, with the population divided into strata based on job categories. A total sample of 75 respondents was selected from the target population of 245, consistent with the recommended 30% threshold for generating statistically reliable conclusions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). Data were collected through structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items, administered using the drop-and-pick method to ensure respondent anonymity and confidentiality (Kothari, 2004).

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in data analysis. Data from questionnaires were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A regression model was used to determine relationships between strategic management practices and firm performance: $Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$, where Y represents firm performance; X1 environmental analysis; X2 employee empowerment; X3 leadership; and X4 stakeholder involvement. Ethical approval was obtained before commencing the study, including authorization from NACOSTI, and all sources used in the study were properly cited and referenced to uphold academic integrity.

4.0 Research Discussion

The research discussion includes the presentation of the, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The study examined the relationships between strategic management practices—environmental analysis, employee empowerment, leadership, and stakeholder involvement—and the performance of logistics firms in Mombasa County, measured through operational effectiveness, customer satisfaction, technological advancement, innovation, workforce productivity, and morale. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of relationships among variables (N = 70). The results presented in Table 2 indicate strong, positive, and statistically significant associations between all independent variables and firm performance, suggesting that improvements in strategic management practices are associated with improved organizational outcomes in the logistics sector.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Environmental Analysis	Employee Empowerment	Leadership	Performance of Logistics Firms
Environmental Analysis	1			
Employee Empowerment	.745**	1		
Leadership	.705**	.925**	1	
Stakeholder Involvement	.827**	.955**	1.000	1
Performance of Logistics Firms	.898**	.804**	.733**	.753**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	70	70	70	70

The correlation results indicate that environmental analysis ($r = 0.898$, $p = .000$), employee empowerment ($r = 0.804$, $p = .000$), leadership ($r = 0.844$, $p = .000$), and stakeholder involvement ($r = 0.733$, $p = .000$) are all positively and significantly associated with logistics firm performance. These findings align with prior studies. Wanjiru (2020) found that environmental scanning improves operational efficiency in Kenya's transport sector, while Mwangi and Mutua (2019) established that employee empowerment enhances service delivery in manufacturing. Otieno (2018) linked transformational leadership to improved productivity and innovation, whereas Kariuki et al. (2016) emphasized stakeholder collaboration in supply chain sustainability. Collectively, these studies reinforce the finding that strategic management practices significantly enhance logistics firm performance.

4.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which environmental analysis, employee empowerment, leadership, and stakeholder involvement influence logistics firm performance in Mombasa County. The results include model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients.

Table 2: Model Fitness

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
1	.943	.889	.885

The model shows a strong positive relationship ($R = 0.943$). The R^2 value of 0.889 indicates that 88.9% of variation in performance is explained by the four predictor variables, while the adjusted

R² of 0.885 confirms high explanatory power. The results were supported by an independent variable coefficient of determination of 0.889, indicating that the independent variables are satisfactory in explaining firm performance.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	94.387	4	23.622	242.449	.000
Residual	11.848	65	.098		
Total	105.325	69			

The F-statistic (F = 242.449, p < 0.001) confirms the model is statistically significant, indicating that the predictor variables jointly influence logistics firm performance. The overall model was therefore found to be a good predictor in defining performance among logistics firms in Mombasa County.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Variable	β (B)	Std. Error	Beta	t
Constant	.387	.106		3.661
Environmental Analysis	.147	.104	.254	p = .001
Employee Empowerment	.157	.073	.178	p = .003
Leadership	.164	.105	.369	p = .002
Stakeholder Involvement	.482	.105	.557	p = .000

The regression equation derived from the findings is: $Y = 0.387 + 0.147X_1 + 0.157X_2 + 0.164X_3 + 0.482X_4 + \epsilon$. The results indicate that all predictors have positive and significant effects on performance. Stakeholder involvement ($\beta = 0.482$, $p = 0.000$) has the strongest influence, followed by leadership ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.002$), employee empowerment ($\beta = 0.157$, $p = 0.003$), and environmental analysis ($\beta = 0.147$, $p = 0.001$). These findings are consistent with strategic management theory, which emphasizes environmental scanning for competitiveness, employee empowerment for productivity, leadership for adaptability, and stakeholder engagement for

sustainability. The results confirm that logistics firms adopting integrated strategic management practices achieve higher operational efficiency, innovation, and customer satisfaction.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that the performance of selected logistics firms in Mombasa County is strongly influenced by the adoption of strategic management practices. Environmental analysis, including internal and external scanning and competitor assessment, was found to enhance operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and competitiveness in a dynamic market. Employee empowerment emerged as a key driver of performance, with practices such as staff retention, participative decision-making, and trust-based accountability improving morale, productivity, service quality, and organizational commitment.

Leadership practices, particularly change management, customer orientation, and talent development, enabled firms to adapt to market changes, foster innovation, and strengthen customer loyalty while aligning employees with organizational goals. Stakeholder participation, including networking and involvement across management levels, enhanced visibility, trust, community relations, and sustainability. Overall, the study established that integrated strategic management practices significantly improve efficiency, innovation, employee performance, and customer satisfaction, thereby promoting competitiveness, growth, and sustainability in the logistics industry in Mombasa County.

6.0 Recommendations

Logistics firms in Mombasa County should regularly conduct environmental scanning of internal operations, the external business environment, and competitor activities to anticipate market changes and maintain competitiveness. Investment in employee empowerment through structured training, participatory decision-making, and retention programmes is recommended to enhance productivity and service quality. Firms should also prioritize transformational leadership, change management, and stakeholder engagement including CSR initiatives and cross-departmental collaboration to strengthen reputation, trust, and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the adoption of technology and innovation, supported by systematic customer feedback and market research, is essential for improving operational efficiency and service delivery. Future research should explore environmental analysis and competitive advantage across regions, leadership in

digital transformation, and the long-term impact of stakeholder engagement on organizational performance.

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