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EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP ON STRATEGY EXECUTION ON PRIVATE DAIRY FIRMS IN MOUNT KENYA REGION

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Abstract

Worldwide organizations adopt strategies that enable them not only to survive, but to succeed in a competitive environment. The strategies adopted act as a guideline of their operations towards achieving the set objectives of the organization. However, execution of strategic organization plans remains a major challenge facing organizations in Kenya. Most studies done in the past acknowledge that execution has become the most significant challenge with only thirty percent of formulated strategies being executed in organizations. This study sought to investigate how leadership affects strategic execution of plans in organizations. More specifically the study analyzed the effects of leadership style, assessed the effects of leadership structure and established how leadership communication and leadership support influenced strategy execution in an organization. Common measures of successful strategy execution are effectiveness and efficiency. The results indicated that there was relationship between leadership and strategy execution by dairy firms within Mount Kenya region. This showed that an increase in leadership by one unit causes a decrease in strategy execution. The study recommended that if an organization has to properly execute its strategies, it has to incorporate all the leadership strategies almost to an equal measure.

Keywords: leadership structure, leadership support and strategy execution

1. Dairy industry in Mount Kenya Region

The Dairy Industries history in Kenya back dates to 1958 when Act was enacted to preserve the dominance of New Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC) in the market. The KCC became the sole agent in the marketing of dairy products in the main urban centers, which became known as scheduled areas. The Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) was also instituted under the act as the state agent to regulate the industry. KCC was appointed the sole agent for the processing, packaging and sale of milk in the scheduled urban areas by the KDB. The act also established regulations that were interpreted as keeping raw milk out of the scheduled urban areas, where consumers were to be served pasteurized milk through the formal market (Kamundi, 2014). Most of the other firms in the industry commenced operations in 1993 following a decision by the government in 1992 to liberalize the local dairy industry to allow new milk processing companies into the market. Since then the Kenya dairy industry has emerged among the very competitive markets both locally and in the east African region with potential local investors incorporating dairy companies in various regions of the county.

As at 2015, agriculture and forestry contribute more than 20 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), down from 27 percent in the 1990s and 22.7 percent in 2007. Livestock contributes 10 percent of total and 30 percent of agricultural GDP. Dairy products (excluding live animals) contribute 30 percent of livestock GDP and more than 22 percent of livestock gross marketed products (Muriuki, 2011). Basically dairy firming in Kenya can be categorized in to two major groups; highland commercial dairy farming and lowland commercial dairy farming. Highland commercial dairy farming in Kenya is much practiced around Mount Kenya region and Aberdare ranges. Mount Kenya region comprise of six counties; Meru, Nyeri, Embu, Tharaka-Nithi, Kirinyaga, and Isiolo. Other books argue that all counties in the central province are within the region. The suitable climatic condition of Mount Kenya region has made it a hub of dairy products in Kenya. Low temperature, high rainfall and fertile soils have made the indigenous to concentrate on dairy farming. This has in turn increased raw material for of dairy products leading to eruption of making companies to take advantage. There are more than ten dairy enterprises within the region, some operating as agents or intermediaries to other big companies. The most advanced firms and which have gone to an extent of processing milk and selling the product in the Kenya markets are five. These firms are big in terms of number of employees, amount of milk in liters they collect on daily basis and in terms of products they produce. These firms include; Meru Central Dairy Co-operative Union Limited in Meru County, Silent Valley Creameries in Embu County, Raka Milk Processor Limited, Mweiga Estate Limited and Mukurweini Wakulima Dairy Limited in Nyeri County. These firms initially stated as an agent where they collected milk from the famers and transport it to Nairobi for processing. Due to increase in demand of dairy products in the region and liberalization in the industry, the farmers merged together in form of SACCOs where they processed their owned milk. This leads to growth of dairy firming in the region. Currently large dairy farmers and co-operatives collect, bulk, and sometimes cool the milk before supplying to processors.

2. Statement of the Problem

Due to globalization the dairy industry in Kenya is characterized by intense rivalry and competition. In order to compete effectively in this environment, it has become necessary to have an aggressive research and development of strategies that provide competitive advantage as competitors step up both offensive and defensive strategies to protect their competitive advantages (Ngure, 2013). Proper execution of strategies by local firms has not been successful and thus leading to the retarded growth. The firms in Mount Kenya region have tried to strive despite of the competition they face from other dairy firms in Kenya and cannibalizing by one successful dairy firm in Kenya. From the little research done it is evident that poor management and leadership have geared to failure of firms. Much is wanted, in terms of employees' motivation, proper communication and coordination. Better skills are need for urgent changes to be observed.

This study therefore sought to investigate whether and how leadership impacts strategy execution in the private dairy subsector in Mount Kenya Region.

3. Study Objectives

- i. To analyze the effect of leadership style on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region.
- ii. To determine the effect of leadership structure on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region.
- iii. To assess the effect of leadership communication in organizations influence strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region.
- iv. To establish the effects of leadership support on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region.

4. Research questions

- i. What is the effect of leadership style on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region?
- ii. What is the effect of leadership structure on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region?
- iii. What is the effect of leadership communication model on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region?
- iv. What is the effect of leadership support on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region?

5. Conceptual Framework

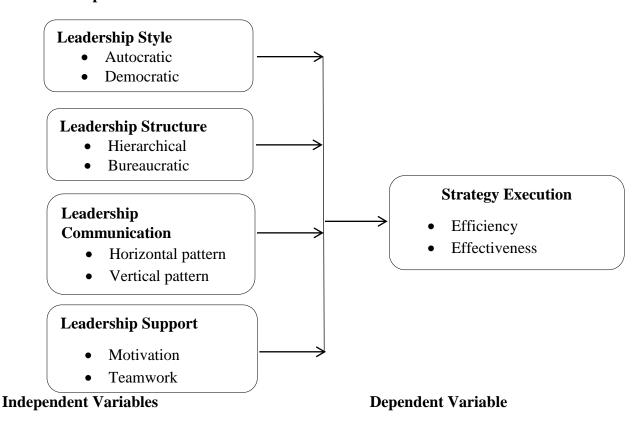


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

6. Scope of the Study

This study was confined to private dairy firms in Mount Kenya region, with a case of five firms in the region. The research was based on these firms because they experience economies of scale and have well departmentalized their functions, providing a clear layout of their operations. These firms process more than 10,000 litres of milk every day.

7. Research Methodology

The study focused on the private dairy industry firms in Mount Kenya Region. Dairy products (excluding live animals) contribute 30 percent of livestock GDP and more than 22 percent of livestock gross marketed products. These firms included Meru Central Dairy Co-operative Union Limited, Raka Milk Processor Limited, Silent Valleys Cremaries, Mweiga Estate Limited and Mukurweini Wakulima Dairy Limited. A sample size of five departments in each firm was targeted using random selection of managers in all levels and employees to be interviewed using open ended questionnaires. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics namely frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistical tools such as correlation and regression were used to determine and explain variable relationship.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

8. Effect of Leadership Style on Strategy Execution

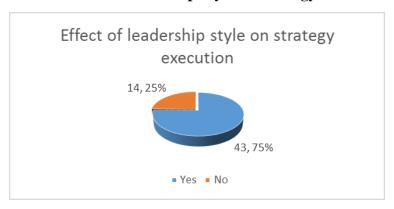


Figure 2: Effects of Leadership Style on Strategy Execution

The results apparently showed that leadership styles affected strategy execution in their organizations. This was because majority (43, 75%) overwhelmingly agreed while the rest (14, 25%) had a contrary opinion. This prompted the researcher therefore to wanting to know which leadership style was applied in their organizations and the results were summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between Leadership Style and Strategy Execution

		Leadership style	Strategy Execution
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	0.648**
style	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
·	N	57	57
Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.648**	1
Execution	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57
	** Correlation is significant at the		

**. Correlation is significant at the

0.01 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the leadership styles and strategy execution. According to Pearson product-moment correlation, there was a strong, positive correlation between leadership style and strategy execution, which was statistically significant where r is 0 .648 and sample size (N) is 57. The p value is 0.00 which is less than 0.05. This therefore means that leadership style has a strong impact on strategy execution. Although the organization has to add some other leadership strategies instead of relying only on leadership style to enhance strategy execution.

9. Effect of Leadership Structure on Strategy Execution

Table 2: Relationship between Leadership Structure and Strategy Execution

		Leadership Structure	Strategy Execution
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.674**
Structure			
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Strategy Execution	Pearson Correlation	.674**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

^{**.} Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation results from table 2 indicate a positive (with r = 0.644) strong relationship between leadership structure and strategy execution and the p value of 0.000 is less than 0.050. This suggests that the company should focus on the leadership structure because they positively affect strategy execution.

10. Effects of Leadership Communication on Strategy Execution

Table 3: Correlation results between leadership communication and strategy execution

		_		
		Leadership Communication	Strategy Execution	
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.598**	
Communication	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
	N	57	57	
Strategy Execution	Pearson Correlation	.598	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	57	57	
	**. Correlation is			
	significant at the 0.01			
	level (2-tailed).			

The correlation results in table 3 indicate a positive relationship between leadership communication patterns and strategy execution. A positive r = 0.598 indicates that there is strength in the relationship. In this case, leadership communication directly determines the strategy execution. The organizations are advised to add on leadership communication patterns other measures that can lead to strategy execution.

11. Effects of Leadership Support on Strategy Execution



Figure 3: Presence of Rewards

An overwhelming majority (84%) indicated that there existed rewards given for excellent performance in the organization.

Table 4: Correlation between Leadership Support and Strategy Execution

		Leadership Support	Strategy Execution
Leadership Support	Pearson Correlation	1	.719**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Strategy Execution	Pearson Correlation	.719**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

^{**}correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed)

The correlation results from table 4 indicate a strong positive relationship between leadership support and strategy execution. This is indicated by the r = 0.719.

12. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was conducted to assess the multicollinearity problem. From table 4.16 it can be observed that the correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable was high and positive at 0.640, 0.677, 0.593 and 0.77 for leadership style, leadership structure, leadership communication and leadership support respectively. The implication was that the high correlation between implementation of strategic plans and it determinants was good for regression analysis. The interpretation was that the level of multicollinearity between the independent variables was not very high which meant that the influence of each variable in the regression model could be isolated individually.

According to Brook (2002) multicollinearity is the problem that occurs when the explanatory variables are very highly correlated with each other. Brook noted further that if there is no © Kabaiku, Kabare ISSN 2412-0294

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relationship between the explanatory variables, they could be said to be orthogonal to one another. If the explanatory variables were orthogonal to one another, adding or removing a variable from a regression equation would not cause the values of the coefficients on the other variables to change. Burns & Burns (2008) asserted that multi-collinearity is the presence of very high correlations between the independent variables and should be avoided.

On the other hand however a very high correlation between the independent and the dependent variable is termed as good since it shows the explanatory power of the individual independent variable. From table 5 it was noted that the correlation between strategy execution and the various independent variables was above 30%, which was a good indicator of the explanatory power of the independent variables on the variance of the dependent variable.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

	Strategy Execution	Leadership Support	Leadership Structure	Leadership Style	Leadership Communic ation
Strategy Execution	1				
Leadership support	0.770 0.000	1			
Leadership Structure	0.677 0.000	0.463 0.000	1		
Leadership Style	0.640 0.000	0.423 0.000	0.427 0.000	1	
Leadership Communic ation	0.593 0.000	0.451 0.000	0.464 0.000	0.701 0.000	1

13. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between leadership and strategy execution on dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region and the model summary was presented in table 6.

Table 6: Regression Results

	Coefficient	Standard	t-statistic	p-value
		Error		
(Constant)	1.736	0.370	2.7946	0.020
Leadership Style	0.273	0.044	3.455	0.000
Leadership Structure	0.401	0.078	3.730	0.000
Leadership	0.309	0.068	3.279	0.000
Communication				

Leadership	Support	0.442	0.054	6.148	0.000
F => 57.050 $P => 0.000$			Adjusted R	-squared 0.739	

The fitted regression model is

$$Y = 1.736 + 0.273 X_1 + 0.401 X_2 + 0.309 X_3 + 0.442 X_4 + \epsilon$$

$$Y = 1.736 + 0.273X_1 + 0.401 X_2 + 0.309X_3 + 0.442X_4 + \epsilon$$
 Standard error 0.370 0.044 0.078 0.068 0.054 t- statistics 2.7946 3.455 3.730 3.279 6.148 p- value 0.020 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000

Where; Y = Strategy Execution, $X_1 = Leadership$ Style, $X_2 = Leadership$ Structure, $X_3 = Leadership$ Communication, $X_4 = Leadership$ Support

For the coefficients, $\beta 0$ = Intercept=1.736, β_1 = 0.273, β_2 =0.401, β_3 =0.309, β_4 =0.442, ϵ = Error Term

From the above regression equation it was revealed that holding leadership style, leadership structure, leadership communication and leadership support to a constant zero, organizational strategy execution would be at 1.736. It is therefore evident that a unit increase in leadership style could lead to 0.273 units increase in strategy execution. On the other hand, a unit increase in leadership structure could amount to 0.401 units increase in strategy execution. Equally, a unit increase in leadership communication could also amount to 0.309 units increase in strategy execution and finally, a unit increase in leadership support could amount to 0.442 units increase in strategy execution. The F test statistic is used to decide whether the model as a whole is statistically significant. From table 6 the value of F-statistic is 57.050 and it is also statistically significant. R- Squared is used in the context of statistical models whose main purpose is the prediction of future outcomes based on other related information The value of adjusted R-squared was found to be 0.739. This implied that the estimated model explains approximately 73.9 % of the variation in strategy execution and that the remaining 26.1 % is accounted for by other factors that were not included in the model. The future researchers are therefore urged to try and improve the model by including other relevant variables in the model.

14. Summary of the findings

The study examined the effects of leadership on strategy execution on private dairy firms in Mount Kenya region thus establishing the relationship between leadership and strategy execution. It was guided by the following objectives: to analyze the effect of leadership style on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region, to determine the effect of leadership structure on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region, to

assess how leadership communication in organizations influence strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region and to assess the effects of leadership support on strategy execution in private dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region.

Leadership Style and Strategy Execution

The researcher sought the opinion of the respondents whether various leadership styles affected strategy execution in their organizations. The results showed that leadership styles had a strong positive correlation with strategy execution in their organizations. This was because majority of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed while the rest had a contrary opinion. The researcher went further to know the leadership styles. A majority of respondents said that their organizations practiced autocratic leadership.

Leadership Structure and Strategy Execution

The researcher asked the respondents how they described the leadership structures that existed in their organizations and four structures were determined. A cross tabulation of each was conducted to ascertain how each enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in the organization. Centralized structures are efficient in business operations. When a small team is involved in management, the decision-making process is quick and efficient. A centralized structure has minimal conflicts because decisions are made by the small top team and dissented across the mid- and lower-level employees. Finally, this form of structure eliminates confusion regarding who is accountable for the outcome of certain decisions. Decentralized structure empowers employees. It also allows them to make better use of the knowledge and experience they have gained and implement some of their own ideas. On the other hand, it relieves the burden. It also helps in preparing for emergencies (Nelson & Quick, 2011). Similarly, a decentralized structure also enhances more efficient decision-making. Regarding hierarchical structure, the respondents also had mixed reactions. Some indicated that authority was obvious. Another group also indicated that it allowed managers to be skilled in specific areas. A correlation between leadership structure and strategy execution indicate a positive relationship between leadership structure and strategy execution.

Leadership Communication and Strategy Execution

The researcher began by identifying how respondents described the communication patterns used by the management of their organizations. Majority of the respondents were of the opinion that their organizations adopted horizontal pattern while others indicated that they adopted vertical pattern of communication. Horizontal communication was the best system of communication in departmental communication. Majority of the respondents indicated that it enhanced quick communication and solution of problems. Horizontal communication allowed quick transmission of messages and solves complex problems in the organization. It also helped in linking with different areas of expertise and an important aspect in guarding against distortion message. Concerning vertical communication, respondents indicated that it brought the people into the communication network at various levels of an organization within the scope of communication.

Others indicated that it led to an established chain of command, and others were of the opinion that it facilitated job assignment and job evaluation while the rest indicated that it improved relationships between management and workers. The correlation results indicate a negative relationship between leadership communication patterns and strategy execution. A negative result indicated that as one variable increases, the other decreases but the strength of the relationship remains the same.

Leadership Support on Strategy Execution

This can be said to be the behavior that expresses concern for followers and their individual needs. The most important factor when implementing a strategy is the top level management's commitment to the strategic direction itself. The researcher wanted to know if management offered rewards as supports to employees. An overwhelming majority indicated that there existed rewards given for excellent performance in the organization. In determining what form of rewards that existed in various organizations. Majority of the respondents indicated that they were given bonuses as forms of excellent performance reward. Other respondents indicated that they were offered profit sharing and stock options respectively. On the extent to which the management of the company has employed some factors to enhance strategy implementation, the researcher observed that at least to some extent, in pursuit of leadership support, employees received training, capacity building, enhanced communication and attended workshops and seminars. This was the most important aspect that any management in an organization could offer to its employees. The correlation results between leadership support and strategy execution indicates a weak positive relationship between leadership support and strategy execution. However, leadership support strategies are important aspects that should be taken into consideration in ensuring strategy execution.

15. Conclusions

The conclusions were derived from the objectives which included leadership style, leadership structure, leadership communication and leadership support. As regards to leadership style and strategy execution, the study found that there exist three forms of leadership styles which include autocratic, democratic and laissez faire. The study concluded that democratic leadership style was the most favored by most respondents. A correlation done between leadership styles and strategy execution was reported strong positive. This therefore means that leadership styles do have a strong impact on strategy execution although organization has to add some other leadership strategies instead of relying only on leadership styles to enhance strategy execution.

Regarding the effects of leadership structure on strategy execution, the correlation results between leadership structure and strategy execution indicated a positive relationship between leadership structure and strategy execution. This concludes that the companies should focus more on the leadership structure because they positively affect strategy execution.

Concerning leadership communication and strategy execution, the correlation results between leadership communication and strategy execution indicated a positive relationship between

leadership communication patterns and strategy execution. In this case, leadership communication does directly determine the strategy execution. The organizations are advised to add other measures on leadership communication patterns that can lead to strategy execution.

Finally, as regards to leadership support and strategy execution, the study found that this was undoubtedly a prerequisite for strategy implementation. In supportive leadership, the manager is not so interested in giving orders and managing every detail as in giving employees the tools they need to work themselves. The study also concluded that if employees are rewarded both material support and monetary support, organizations will never have a problem dealing with attaining their targets. The correlation results indicated a strong positive relationship between leadership support and strategy execution. However, leadership support strategies are important aspects that should be taken into consideration in ensuring strategy execution.

16. Recommendations

The study recommends that leaders should be responsible for formulating and communicating the strategy but also remember that responsibility doesn't stop there. They must also manage the alignment of people for strategy implementation. They need to ensure that the people in the organization understand the strategy, buy into it, and align their decisions and actions accordingly.

The study also recommends the creation of a leadership team that is unified around the strategy which is the most important prerequisite for successful strategy execution. Getting the right people, in the right seats, is a prerequisite to successful strategy execution because strategy typically requires new levels of cross-functional integration. Executives who resist this type of consensus can undermine successful strategy execution. Consensus on, and commitment to, the strategy provides a litmus test for determining who on the leadership team should stay and who should go.

Finally, too many strategies never get executed because they remain closely guarded secrets of the leadership team. To be effective, the study recommends that strategy must be shared with the workforce. Many successful organizations believe that even people who perform non-strategic roles should know the general outline of the strategy so they can become more engaged and find ways to contribute. Strategy executors participate in this communication process by helping translate the strategy into a set of measureable objectives that guide behavior and strategic investments across the enterprise. The execution officer supports the communication program by continually referencing the strategy as a regular, and expected, part of all communication efforts.

17. Areas for further research

This study should be advanced further to include other ingredients that are key to strategy execution in order to establish the degree to which each ingredient influences strategy execution and also to establish whether other factors play a more influential role in the strategy execution process. There is also need to replicate the study in the service industry in order to validate or invalidate the findings of this study, that is, does leadership styles have an influence on strategy

execution in the service industry. The study was done to evaluate the effect of leadership on strategy execution in dairy firms in Mount Kenya Region. Whereas the study confined itself to only four conceptualized determinants, namely leadership style, leadership structure, leadership communication and leadership support, findings have revealed the importance external environment determinant significantly influencing the success of strategy implementation among dairy firms in Kenya. Further study on the determinants of strategy execution in private dairy firms in Kenya may thus be carried out with reference to the same. This study should be advanced by taking into consideration a number of dairy firms in other areas through survey research design in order to establish whether there is a disparity on the influence of leadership style on strategy execution when a different research design is used.

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