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STRATEGIC ALLIANCE AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AMONG COMMERCIAL BANKS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

In the competitive landscape of Kenyan banking, institutions employ diverse strategies to thrive. Strategic alliances stand out as a key tactic, yet there remains a notable gap in research on their impact, particularly regarding performance outcomes. These alliances serve as a vehicle for market expansion, product line enrichment, and competitive advantage cultivation, forging cooperative pathways toward mutual benefit. The main purpose of this study was to establish the effect of strategic alliances on technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya. The objectives of the study were; to determine the strategic alliances adopted by commercial banks in Kenya; to establish the effectiveness of technology transfer mechanisms among commercial banks in Kenya; and to examine the effects of strategic alliance on technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya. Drawing upon a systematic review of existing literature, the study reveals compelling associations between alliance dynamics and banking performance in Kenya. Noteworthy disparities in partnership structures are observed alongside successful implementations of innovations such as mobile banking for deposit services. These findings underscore the pivotal role of branching networks in enhancing technology transfer efficacy. The findings of this study enriches the discourse on alliance strategy, unveiling its substantial influence on commercial banking performance. This work contributes valuable insights to strategic management scholarship, offering nuanced perspectives on alliance-driven transformations in Kenya's banking industry.

Key Words: *Strategic Alliances, Technology Transfer*

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INTRODUCTION

Technology has greatly changed the way commercial banks and consumers interact. A shrinking customer base, increase in number of commercial banks with almost identical products has led to stiff competition. As a result, commercial banks have generally adopted the use of technology in service delivery to customers (Mugusia, 2020). This research examines the dynamic nature of technology sharing and alliances in the banking sector, suggesting that these are the new norms for conducting business (Cheruiyot, 2024).

These strategic alliances, notably cost leadership, niche targeting, integration, bank agreements, strive to collaborate with one another for mutual benefits in order to accomplish shared objectives (Musyoka, 2023). The ability of these banking organizations to do so eventually determines their collective performance as they diverge the competitive landscape and align their operational efficiency, even though the concept of technology transfer and information exchange between partner banks is the ultimate goal.

The commercial banking sector in Kenya has spent the last few years advocating for technology transfer initiatives and strategic relationships (Kiruja, 2020). Even if they are bold, they have advantages and disadvantages. It is understandable to wonder where inefficiencies and obstacles have surfaced to prevent or demand a whole transformation of commercial banks' use of technology and information exchange (Cheruiyot, 2024). This issue is of utmost importance as it has a direct bearing on the sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness of Kenya's banking sector. If this issue remains unaddressed, the industry will be unable to post sustainable performance

Technology transfer refers to a collection of formulation and management techniques that regulate the efficiency of the information delivery and technology transmission process using a variety of techniques (Maselo, 2020). This will majorly depend on the degree of collaboration and intensity, the degree of clarity of the partners and aims, the amount of resources committed by each party, and the effectiveness of the systems for coordination and communication. Each of these factors influences technology and knowledge transfer and interchange between the partnering companies, which may have an impact on them in the end, or it contributes to the dynamics of alliance creation. Conversely, the rate of technology adoption and knowledge sharing across partner firms, which is the dependent variable, consists of the following: Efficiency of technology absorption, process speed for knowledge transfer, the magnitude of innovation inciting and knowledge sharing improves the organization's capabilities (Kiruja, 2020).

In an increasingly dynamic financial world, banks' ability to spread technology transfer and information exchange has a huge impact on how contemporary financial institutions stay ahead of the curve and continue to set new standards. The articulation of the mechanisms of technological transfer and information exchange across Kenyan commercial banks to that understanding would be the special research problem in the context of strategic alliances. This entails the examination and resolution of particular concerns that impede efficient, seamless, and well-coordinated alliance functioning, technology transfer, and information exchange. Developing measures to improve the accuracy and efficiency of this partnership is also recommended (Chumo,2022).

Commercial Banks in Kenya

The commercial banking sector in Kenya has seen significant changes from the colonial era to its current state, driven by the forces of innovation and technology (Chumo, 2022). Under the supervision of the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), this sector has several participants, including indigenous institutions such as Equity Group Holdings and KCB Group, as well as foreign-owned banks like Standard Chartered Bank Kenya. These banks offer a comprehensive range of financial solutions, catering to both individual and business customers (Central Bank of Kenya, 2022). While there have been notable accomplishments, they have also been accompanied by certain obstacles, specifically inefficiency and rules. Ongoing efforts are being made to fully use technological advancements and capitalise on market growth trends. These efforts include implementing digitalization and promoting financial inclusion. The regulatory frameworks established by the CBK and various authorities aim to uphold financial stability, promote ethical practices, and safeguard consumer rights (Central Bank of Kenya, 2022). The commercial banking sector in Kenya continues to expand as an industry and plays a crucial role in the country's economic progress and overall financial stability (Koskei, 2020). In addition to addressing challenges and embracing innovation, the sector is well-equipped to sustain economic growth, provide banking services to impoverished individuals, and promote overall well-being.

Statement of the Problem

The commercial banking sector in Kenya has embraced bridge programmes and strategic alliances as proactive measures to adapt their business to market changes and new technology. The current inefficiency and ineffective communication hinder the full integration of technology with information flow across commercial banks, as noted by the Central Bank of Kenya (2022). These difficulties pose a significant challenge to the sector's sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness. Furthermore, they can impede technical advancement and hinder advances in response to changing market trends.

In order to address the aforementioned challenges, commercial banks in Kenya are actively collaborating and harnessing the potential of technology to introduce innovative solutions and overcome barriers to progress according to the report of Central Bank of Kenya (2022). The action taken by banks brings us nearer to resolving certain societal issues, although it does not fully address the numerous intricate difficulties. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of the historical backdrop, management practices, and technology infrastructure and transfer dynamics is necessary to understand the foundational support of the banking sector.

Njenga (2021), explored the correlation between knowledge management techniques and the profitability of commercial banks in Kenya. It is evident that some knowledge management practices are encouraged as they enhance profit margins. However, the study also highlights significant opportunities for improvement, indicating the need for a thorough investigation of bank relationships and technology transfer methods.

This study investigated the development of commercial banks in Kenya by examining several factors such as management styles, technology infrastructure, and transfer channels. However, it is important to note that this study may have confronted some challenges. The study identified and removed any obstacles that hinder the efficient transmission of knowledge within the banking sector, which is crucial for promoting innovation, progress, and competition.

Purpose of the study

To evaluate the effect of strategic alliance on technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya.

Objectives of the study

- To determine the strategic alliances adopted by commercial banks in Kenya.
- To establish the technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya.
- To examine the effect of strategic alliances on technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya.

Research Questions

- What are the strategic alliances adopted by the commercial banks in Kenya?
- What is the strategy of technology transfer among banks in Kenya?
- What are the key outcomes of strategic alliance on technology transfer among commercial banks in Kenya?

METHODOLOGY

Given its effectiveness and efficiency by the fact that it cuts the time duration for data collection as well as cost lessening the challenges incurred by researchers, the desktop research operation's adoption in this study was a sensible strategic move (Dwivedi, 2020). Researchers created a thorough overview of the important factors influencing banking success without fieldwork constraints by compiling easily accessible literature, theories, and field studies (Kohtamäki et al. 2019). By taking this methodology it was possible to cover the financial efficiency-causing elements, benchmarks, and industry behavior in detail, which was very instructional for strategic planning. Muingai (2019), supports the validity of the desktop research methodology in his work on the stating its effective way since it gives a broader of scope of analyzing the problem at hand from various points "Influence of Innovation Strategies on Financial Performance of the Banking Industry in Kenya."

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transaction Cost Theory

Ronald Coase's 1937 Transaction Cost Theory (TCT) is the fundamental tenet upon which I base my arguments. This theory states that circumstances that lead to an increase in transaction costs (as external factors) have the power to collapse market processes and give rise to internal mechanisms like bargaining. In order to reduce these transaction costs, businesses collaborate with one another, which benefits society (Benkler, 2019). These agreements reduce power asymmetry, opportunity costs, and transaction costs because they are the primary driver of partners' interests (Feyen, 2021).

Even though TCT has pinpointed many important facets of the intricate structure of strategic alliances, certain restrictions must still be taken into consideration. According to Dyer and Singh (1998), they include mistrust, a deficiency in relational coordination, and differences in partner agreements. The perception among the general public is that TCT is not a perfect solution to the alliance management and coordination problems, which are especially urgent in tech-heavy businesses or markets with significant volatility.

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the advantages and disadvantages of TCT mentioned in the criticisms may be applied to problems concerning the establishment and performance of strategic partnerships in the Kenyan banking sector. As a result, we expand the TCT paradigm by adding important inputs, such as relational communication, trust, and partner normality, in addition to transaction cost. In addition to discussing the results of the strategic alliance and management issues, this study aims to elucidate the impact of rapid technological advancements and market volatility, which embrace the applicability and constraints of the TCT.

This study broadens our body of knowledge. It expands upon and surpasses the robust TCT foundation while offering a more in-depth understanding of the technology used in Kenyan commercial banks. The results offer a practical illustration of the Kenyan banking sector that both validates and challenges the fundamental idea and forecast of TCT, contributing to the theory's ongoing refinement in the context of commercial banks in developing nations.

Contingency Theory

Fred Edward Feidler (1964) asserts that the contingency theory's efficacy is predicated on the compatibility of internal and external circumstances (Wall et al., 1990). This research, which follows the contingency approach, focuses on strategy alignment indices, including roles, goals, and procedures, and assesses how well they work to maximize an organization's performance (McAdam et al., 2019). Naturally, though, it is frequently criticized because the human element—which defines how to adjust and address the consequences—is not taken into account.

Therefore, this study goes beyond contingency theory to examine the broad relationship-building strategies used by small and medium-sized banks as well as their internal procedures, culture, leadership, and strategy formulation and implementation (Maselo, 2020). In addition, factors related to the outside environment, namely food and political conditions, determine whether the bank's strategic alliances succeed or fail.

By incorporating more internal and external variables into this study, the results of strategic alliances are put to a larger test. As a result, internal processes interacting with external circumstances can lead to dynamic evolution and the emergence of new coalitions (McAdam et al., 2019). As a result, this exploratory method allows the realization of thorough understanding of the intricate dynamics of bank partnerships in Kenya while also helping to fill in theoretical gaps.

Initially, the research that was done provides a foundation for the development of the contingency theory regarding the boundaries it faces and the expansion it requires to incorporate crucial organizational and environmental elements. This study is highly commendable for its comprehension of the interplay between internal and external forces, which has resulted in the successful completion of strategic mergers among Kenyan commercial banks.

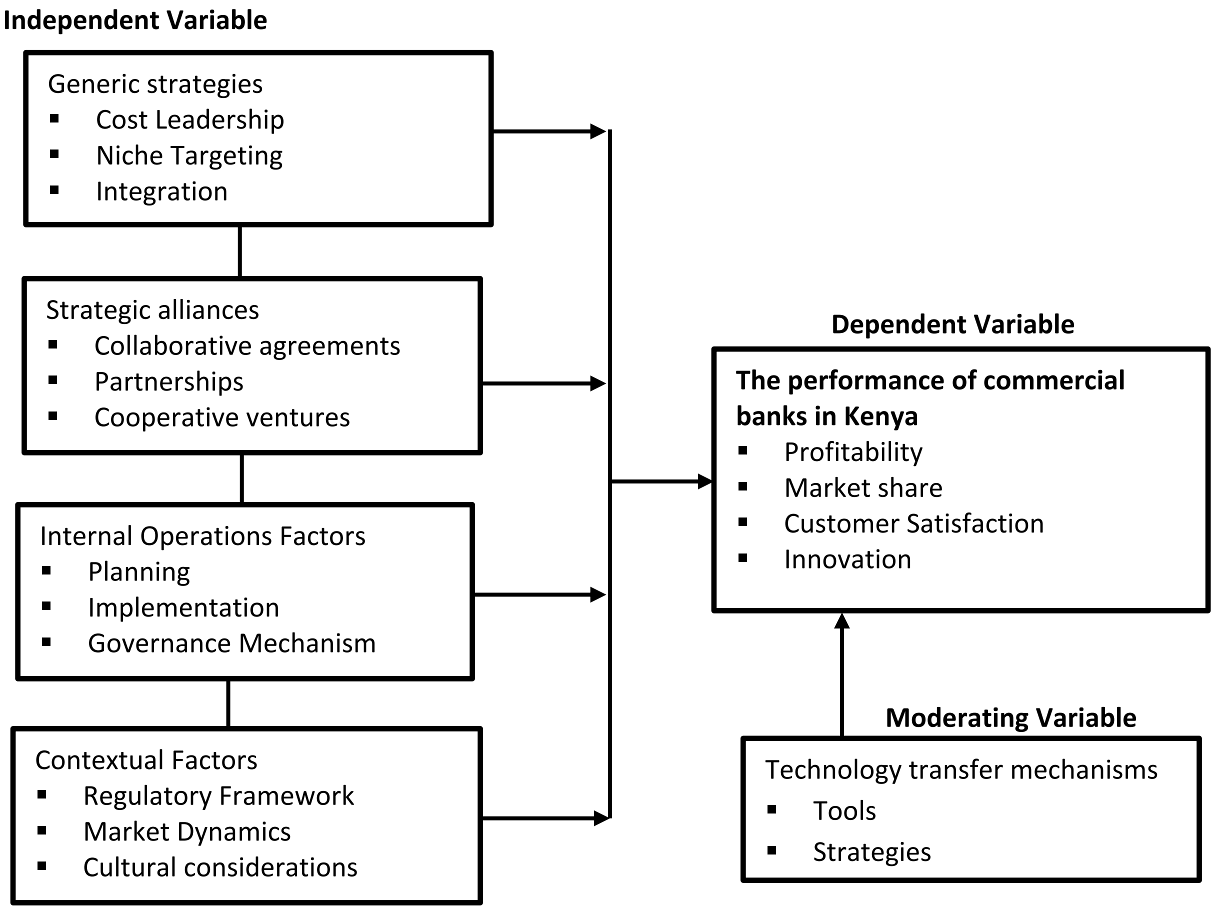

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Researcher (2024).

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

A thorough examination of Kenyan private banks' performance through empirical research has revealed significant advancements in our understanding of the likely causal relationship between technology transfer and strategic alliances. A thorough examination of this problem was given in the papers "Data Mining in Nature Conservation" by Onje and Oloko (2016) and "The Power of Data in Nature Conservation" by Nzengya (2013). Regress analysis was used by Onje & Oloko (2016) to examine the relationship between the aforementioned characteristics and variables like market share, capital sufficiency, and performance indicators. The number of branches, market share, capital sufficiency, and performance measures were found to have a strong positive correlation. In his paper, Nzengya (2013) contended that certain bankers establish strategic relationships. Others, nevertheless, required to be aware that there might be variations in the caliber of these connections between banks.

Even while it is obvious that such research is necessary, there are still certain gaps in the literature that the current study aims to fill. The current study expands upon the research conducted by Onje and Oloko (2016) and Nzengya (2013), utilizing a more comprehensive approach to fully understand the impact of strategic alliances on technology transfer inside Kenyan commercial banks. By utilizing updated data and examining other variables, the new study goes deeper. As a result, it offers a more thorough examination of the technology transfer and strategic relationships made by Kenyan banks.

In order to address the gaps in the contradictory research findings, this study first examines the variables that contribute to the success or failure of specific strategic alliances in the transfer of technology. By conducting in-depth analyses of the foundational elements including compatibility, trust, and communication, this research helps bank managers who are searching for specific toolkits to completely manage their strategic relationships.

From a didactic perspective, this study adds to the body of empirical research by examining the long-term effects of strategic combinations on technology transfer and bank performance. A view of the future of strategic alliances in the Kenyan banking industry is provided, in part, by this study project, which examines the economics and viability of these partnership partnerships in a setting of evolving markets and innovations.

The empirical reviews conducted by Nzengya (2013) and Onje and Oloko (2016) gave accurate behind-the-scenes information on how strategic partnerships support the operations of large enterprises in Kenya's banking sector. However, by expanding on the findings of the previous study, the research fills in the gaps in the current literature and looks at how technology transfer amongst Kenyan commercial banks is affected by strategic alliances.

First, this study will be build around an understanding of the examined theories by Onje and Oloko (2016), which include Competitive Advantage, Transaction Cost Theory, Competence-Based Theory, and Resource Dependency Theory. By combining these theoretical contributions with the technology transfer method, the current work provides a more comprehensive explanation of the mechanisms behind the impact of strategic alliances on bank performance.

Moreover, Nzengya (2013) and Onje and Oloko (2016) used data and questionnaires from earlier research. However, in order to provide a more thorough analysis, this study will employ a mixed methods approach that combines the collecting of quantitative and qualitative data. The findings show that when technology transfer occurs, political party alliances must be used, and that the success of these coalitions is greatly influenced by contributing elements including technological infrastructure, technology dissemination, and customer services.

As a last note, research in this rapidly developing field of study focuses on the function of alliance strategies in the platform of long-term relationships for technology transfer and bank performance. The findings suggest that in order to maintain competitiveness in Kenya's financial services sector, sustained engagement in strategic alliances and consequences focused on dynamics should be implemented.

Descriptive research done by Kulecho (2013) "Strategic Alliances Among Commercial Banks in Kenya", took a close look at how these technological facilities' costs affected their ability to compete. However, the qualitative analysis of both simple and complicated data makes the research relevant for it. Second, because it makes use of more advanced statistical methods, this research is also intriguing for empirical investigation. Anyieni (2018), used a desktop research approach in his paper, "Performance of Listed Commercial Banks in Kenya," as part of this study. Anyieni's article examined how technology advancements impact stock market banks' efficiency.

Kulecho (2013), even addressed the issue of how a bank's success is impacted by its customer service throughout the conversation. Customer service is viewed by most respondents as the most important component, according to the gathering of primary and secondary data. They did not, however, acknowledge the fact that they were devoid of detailed statistical analysis and details, indicating the necessity for additional empirical research. The paper addressed the gaps in the methodologies as well as the gaps in the empirical and conceptual elements. Although the available study provides useful information about strategic alliances, further data from statistical analysis is required to fully validate these statements. It may seem necessary to provide the operational procedures that improve lenders' competitive advantage through partnerships in a concrete way. To strengthen the integrity and validity of the findings, the research delved into the objective of strategic alliances adopted by commercial banks in Kenya.

Commercial banks need to have expansion plans, particularly in African economies with low levels of consumption and production like Kenya. (Gatwiri, 2014) "Effects of Expansion Strategies on Performance of Selected Commercial Banks in South Nyanza Region, Kenya," goes into additional detail about the impact that expansion strategies have on a subset of the commercial banks in the South Nyanza region. Gatwiri (2014), used a descriptive study approach to look into how five particular commercial banks' performance were impacted by their expansion strategies: Kenya Commercial Bank, Barclays Bank, Cooperative Bank, Equity Bank, and Diamond Trust Bank are the country's "Big Five" banks. Employers from these banks made up 47 of the study's participants. Through directing data regarding the impact of the aforementioned growth strategies which include agency banking, mobile banking, mergers and acquisitions, and strategic alliances on banks in the South Nyanza region of Kenya. Gatwiri (2014), found out that these tactics have an impact on the banks' performance. By providing information on the goals that commercial banks are pursuing and how they affect performance, Gatwiri's study serves as an excellent illustration. However, in order to adequately measure the degree and provide room for additional evidence-based research, the study must go farther and show the vast amount of data. Robust statistical methods will be used in subsequent studies to bolster the results and improve the conclusions' validity. Then, by offering agency banking and mobile banking services, Gatwiri (2014) discovered new ways to expand access to formerly unreached populations on the fringes. This data supports the objective of establishing the effectiveness of technology, transfer mechanisms among commercial banks in Kenya.

Nonetheless, even with knowledge of expansion methods across Kenya, certain variables, such opportunities and difficulties, are domains that require a thorough understanding. Methodologically speaking, the Gatwiri (2014) study shows that the validity of the results is ensured by the instruments used for data collection being reliable during the pilot phase. Increased generalizability could be achieved by increasing the sample size in this study. In order to give a comprehensive understanding of the impact of dispersion on banks' earnings, the research can also consider more frequent data collection methods, such as customer and industry expert interviews. Based on the research findings and statistical data, it can be concluded with confidence that bank growth plans have a major effect on the performance of banks in Kenya's South Nyanza District. By way of illustration, 95.3% of respondents concur that agency banking has an impact on bank performance, whereas 4.7% disagree. Moreover, a significant proportion of participants (83.7%) concurred that the impact is really strong or even remarkable when examining the influence, it has on bank performance. Retail banking was also well-received, as seen by the 90.7% of respondents who acknowledged its impact and the 93% who agreed that mergers and acquisitions (M&A) improve banks' performance. According to 83.7% of those surveyed, statistical analysis revealed that the strategic alliance was one of the most important factors influencing the bank's performance. In summary, a majority of 60.5% of the participants regarded the strategic alliance's impact as highly significant. Statistics can help us understand how effective and relevant these methods are for banks in Kenya generally, as well as how potent a weapon they are for the banks' expansion in the South Nyanza region of Kenya.

STUDY FINDINGS

The examination of the success resulting from the involvement of strategic partners within the Kenyan commercial banking industry is enhanced by the empirical reviews conducted by Onje and Oloo (2016), Nzengya (2013), and Gatwiri (2014). The goal of the current study was to address the significant issues raised by the study review and provide additional clarity on the standards for tying technology transfer and strategic partnerships together.

As all performance measures (market share, growth, efficiency, and asset base) were at good value, this work has shown that partnerships are essential for successful performance. Regression and correlation research by Onje & Oloko (2016) revealed a robust positive association between strategic networks and bank performance, which helped Kenyan commercial banks successfully transfer technology to their operations.

Additionally, as Nzengya (2013) noted, this study highlights the uneven cooperation of Kenyan banks. As a result, this can be explained by the fact that the strategy component is a key element influencing the operations of financial institutions. Mobile banking and informal agent swapping can improve this tactic.

This study adds the comprehensiveness of branching networks, agency banking, mobile banking, mergers, and other considerations, and their connection to successful commercial banking in Kenya, to aid Gatwiri (2014) in setting the influencing factors and effectiveness of technology transfer mechanisms. The study's findings support the existence of these variables as significant determinants influencing banks' performance among the participants who made up the vast majority of respondents who acknowledged their significance.

By providing a microscopic view of how strategic alliances affect the technology subsidy in the Kenyan banking markets, this study considerably adds to the body of current work. Almost every technology transfer tool and a strategic alliance process management technique are researched and reviewed in this study to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic.

Thus, the main conclusions of the study are supported by this conclusion, which also demonstrates the importance of partnerships and technology transfer in improving the efficiency of Kenyan banks. It is assured that Kenya's commercial banks will develop into major actors in the competitive sector and national economy through cross-border collaboration and astute cooperation with varying technology improvements.

CONCLUSIONS

This study's primary goal was to investigate the strategic alliances used by Kenyan commercial banks. In order to become more efficient and competitive in the market, Kenyan commercial banks have amalgamated with a greater number of strategic alliances, according to the findings. Nzengya claims that most banks participate in one or more strategic alliances or partnerships. To improve service delivery, the approach comprises putting formal agent services and mobile banking models in the hands of financial institutions. Because the economy is constantly changing, banks must adapt to new technological advancements in order to stay competitive.

The creation of a forum for technology transfer amongst Kenyan commercial banks was the second goal. Gatwiri (2014) investigates the impact of technology transfer strategies on the success of banks, including branch networks, correspondent banking, and mobile banking. Partnerships and technology transfer are essential for banks to remain viable and grow because they enable success. However, more research is required to completely understand the underlying mechanisms.

The third goal was to investigate forming strategic alliances to facilitate the transfer of technologies between Kenyan commercial banks. The inferred performance factors are proven by the cited recurring discovery of strategic alliances between Onje and Oloko, Nzengya, and Gatwiri. The beneficial effects of connections and collaboration on efficiency and market share are demonstrated using regression analysis. The article concludes with the recommendation that Kenyan commercial banks establish strategic alliances in order to become more efficient and competitive in the ever-changing banking landscape. Effective cooperation within the commercial banking sector is necessary to support the field's growth and advancement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Banks that do business: As the main tactic for increasing market share and performance, support strategic collaborations. Choose which technology transfer channels to invest in based on when they would best help the company innovate while using the partnerships in question.

Authority for Regulation: Establish a policy environment that is conducive to innovation and appropriate cooperation in the banking industry. To ensure the unfettered transfer of technology and information exchange, bring up regulations for fair competition and consumer protection that should be put in place among collaborator companies.

Industry Associations: Foster an atmosphere wherein best practices for forming and managing strategic relationships amongst commercial banks are exchanged and information is shared. To facilitate the mastery of technology, transfer tactics, arrange training sessions and workshops on capacity building.

Universities: Strategic management, technology transfer, innovation, and finance are a few examples of fields in which you can carry out specialized study and create training curricula. Discuss and provide thoughts on how recycling agency officials decide whether to continue with such programs by interacting with them.

Buyers: Acknowledge technology transfer and strategic alliances as resources for improving commercial banks' long-term sustainability and viability. When it comes to choosing a new strategic path for their growth strategy, banks that demonstrate some vision and ambition should be encouraged to invest.

According to the report, alliance building and appropriate technology transfer are critical success factors that impact the performance improvement of Kenyan commercial banks. Enhanced customer satisfaction and economic progress are contingent upon the stakeholders' ability to enable the appropriate expansion and ongoing enhancement of this dynamic and adaptable banking industry, which can be achieved by implementing the recommended steps.

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