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**STRATEGIC SENSITIVITY AND PERFORMANCE OF FIVE STAR HOTELS IN KISUMU CITY**

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## STRATEGIC SENSITIVITY AND PERFORMANCE OF FIVE STAR HOTELS IN KISUMU CITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The hospitality industry has become an important sector of the service industry, and one of the world's largest employers of many national economies. As the hospitality industry grows and develops, complex demands are placed upon the hospitality services and performance. The study used the dynamic capability theory and the resource-based view of the firm to elaborate the variables. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of Strategic Sensitivity on performance of hotels in the county of Kisumu. The study was carried out among three five-star hotels in Kisumu City as its target populations. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The sample for the study were 90 respondents drawn from managers and supervisors of the three hotels. These were selected purposively to include only those individuals with the desired information. Data was collected using questionnaires containing both open and closed ended questions which were administered by the researcher through the drop and pick technique. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to address the closed ended questions drawn from the five-point likert scale. The data was analyzed using the SPSS software and presented in the form of tables and narration. The findings of the study revealed that strategic sensitivity had significant positive influence on the performance of five-star hotels in Kenya. The study thus recommends that hotels wishing to maintain and boost their performances should embrace strategic sensitivity in order to have sufficient data for decision making. They should also involve all their stakeholders in partnering for the sake of their success and ensure provision of sufficient resources for sustainability. Lastly, they should also encourage more usage and adoption of modern technology and innovative practices to boost their services.*

**Key Words:** Strategic sensitivity, Strategic Agility, Performance

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is at the heart of strategic management which consists, among others, of strategic agility (Richter *et al*, 2017). Cartin (1999) defines organization performance (OP) as the outcomes from products, processes, and services rendered by a firm as measured, evaluated, and compared against its goals, standards, past outcomes, and competitors. This definition equates performance to products and services rendered by an organization and measures performance by comparing outcomes between firms.

The business environment is becoming more dynamic, reaching new milestones driven by technology and innovation (Miruna, 2020). She notes that the IT sector has been a driver of change and innovation for the economy. It is on a continuous exponential trend, setting new directions for the business environment. Given so, the literature highlights the importance of strategic agility as a tool of increased firm performance and improved results.

Majority of past literature shown that strategic agility and strategic foresight have significantly enhanced firm superior performance (Arokodare, 2020). The decline in performance of firms, according to Zafari (2017) cut across developed, emerging and developing countries due to poor strategic agility and inadequate response to microeconomic and macroeconomic factors.

Cummings and Weiss (2013) view firm efficiency (FE) as the success of the firm in minimizing costs, maximizing revenues, or maximizing profits, conditional on the existing technology. Assessing the efficiency of firms is a powerful means of evaluating performance of firms, and the performance of markets and whole economies.

Alahyari *et al*. (2017) consider that strategic agility is meant to be a value generator tool. By achieving it, companies manage to make a difference on the market and deliver improved performance both internally and externally. Bratianu (2015) adds that in strategic thinking, one is always considering value

generation as an ultimate goal. Paunescu *et al*. (2018) support as well the significance of value creation for the business environment.

Clauss *et al* (2019) studied strategic agility, business model innovation and firm performance. They investigated the extent to which firm firm-level strategic agility predicts the firm's performance. Specifically, the study focused on value creation, value capture, and value proposition (types of BMIs) which are contingent on the degree of turbulence in the firm's external environment. Their analysis of data from 432 German firms in the electronics industry indicated that strategic agility was positively related to BMI and that this relationship was indeed strengthened by the degree of environmental turbulence. The authors established a positive relationship between strategic agility and BMI. Furthermore, the study found that value creation and proposition affect a firm's performance positively while value capture has a negative relationship with a firm's outcomes.

Pieris (2021) studied strategic agility based on its intellectual roots, key concepts and future directions. There is an outstanding gap in the literature regarding the way that critical factors among different theoretical views and disciplines can be codified and connected to provide a holistic model that enables organizations to cultivate strategic agility capabilities. Specifically, several studies that emphasize on strategic agility, identify critical factors in a single theoretical perspective, and yet the literature and empirical studies lack a holistic approach that integrates all the relevant factors.

Arokodare (2020) noted that most business organizations managers in today's modern age, find it difficult to constantly achieve targeted business performance due to poor strategic insight and agility to manage uncertainty business environment and globalization. The majority of firms in the 21st century have recorded a fast decline in financial and non- financial performance resulting from a poor understanding of strategic agility dimensions to tackle global business trends and environmental

turbulence. As such, the firm's management needs to incorporate and integrate strategic agility conceptual measures into their business thinking, activities, processes, and direction to record high performance. Oyerinde *et al* (2018) have observed that most of the firms in Nigeria have recorded unstable performance due to slow agility response to challenges of political interference, lack of transparency, regulatory uncertainty and policy instability, and poor infrastructural facilities. Furthermore, Oyerinde *et al.* (2018) and Onigbinde (2014) had previously indicated that majority of firms recorded continuous decline in performance due to poor strategic agility and reaction to environmental challenges surrounding firms in Nigeria. They opined that SA improves organizations' future preparedness and powerful predictors for becoming an outperformer in the industry. Embracing SA enhances continuous and adequate adjustment of firms towards dynamic business environment and adapt in appropriate time, its strategic direction in core business in relation to changing circumstances and sensitive to the business environment.

Ogolla and Senaji (2017) argued that strategic decision-making theories suggest that organizations that pool strategic agility and its constructs are likely to perform better than those that emphasize on traditional strategic planning. Their results showed a positive significant correlation between the two constructs. Kessio (2017) also studied strategic agility and performance of SMEs in Nairobi Central Business District (CBD) with results showing that human capital, management commitment, innovation and organization structure contributed to performance in that order. Makori *et al* (2021) focused on effect of employee agility on organizational performance (a case study of the State Department for Labour in Kenya. Using a sample of 50 participants drawn from the state departments through stratified random sampling, the study also noted a positive relationship between employee agility and organizational performance.

Muchoki (2022) studied the effect of strategic agility on performance of construction firms in Nairobi. The results showed that organizational human and technological agility had positive and significant influence on performance. Wachira (2023) looked at effect of strategic agility on the performance of Minet Kenya Insurance Brokers Limited. To obtain the most appropriate measure, a firm should select performance indicators that align with its strategic objectives.

Strategic sensitivity is defined as the ability of organizations to actively search for and collect usable data. And absorbing it in terms of its relevance, timing, accuracy, content, interpretation and analysis in order to reach information that helps the organization in implementing its activities (Adim & Maclayton, 2021). Muhammad *et al* (2020) indicated that strategic sensitivity means openness and anticipation of information by maintaining relationships with a variety of individuals and organizations. Strategic sensitivity refers to the keen perception, heightened awareness, and focused attention on strategic situations in real-time or near real-time (Doz, 2020).

Strategic sensitivity describes an organization's scanning ability and knowledge development about its context, the internal assessment of its capacities and its alignment of functions and behaviour in a manner that advances it towards its goals and objectives (Diete-Spiff, 2021).

Strategic sensitivity enables organizations to identify opportunities for new business models (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). This awareness provides the basis for strategic meaning-making, which includes an accurate, insightful, and comprehensive awareness of emerging realities as they take shape (Doz, 2020).

Hamed (2023) observes that in today's business environment is characterized by dynamic changes and challenges, making organizations vulnerable to risks in competitive environments. With the unpredictable nature of environmental developments, strategic planning processes can

become confused, leaving organizations in need of responsiveness to survive and succeed in volatile environments. Strategic sensitivity is, therefore, an essential business requirement in such competitive environments, enabling organizations to remain in touch with the dynamic environment and make necessary adjustments to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through modern strategic concepts.

The success of organizations in achieving their goals requires the correct availability of a number of organizational variables, the most important of which is strategic sensitivity (Muhammad *et al*, 2020). Strategic sensitivity is also described by the organization's ability to survey, develop knowledge, internal evaluation of its capabilities, and its alignment of functions and behavior in a way that pushes it towards achieving its goals and objectives and is concerned with planning the best course of action based on learning and future expectations. Its interests are based on addressing environmental uncertainties (DietE-Spiff & Nwuche, 2021).

Alubadia and Taherb (2021) emphasize that strategic foresight requires early detection and interpretation of various changes in the political, economic, social, and technological spheres, and assessing their potential impact on society and individuals. Hence, it becomes clear that strategic insight is one of the main dimensions of strategic sensitivity, which is related to the organization's ability to perceive, understand and analyze complex strategic situations and reveal their potential effects on the organization.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Balzano & Bortoluzzi (2024) assert that the globalization processes, demand uncertainty, technological uncertainty, and industry competition are constantly challenging firms to keep industry competitive pace and ultimately protect their competitive position. Strategic agility continues to receive little attention in literature. Most of the studies conducted globally focus on SA within the supply chain, manufacturing, and tech industries (Clauss *et al*, 2019; Dehmlaee & Rashnavadi,

2019). Past researchers have generally examined strategic agility under the context of manufacturing industry, with most results indicating the positive effects of strategic agility on organizational performance (Junni *et al.*, 2015; Navarro *et al.*, 2016; Verma *et al.*, 2017).

Several studies in Kenya link SA and OP. Wangasa (2018) studied the effect of SA on commercial banks in Kenya. Waweru (2016) which examined the effect of strategic agility enablers on the performance of insurance brokerage firms. Muchoki (2022) studied the effect of strategic agility on performance of construction firms in Nairobi while Wachira (2023) looked at effect of strategic agility on the performance of one Insurance company. Kessio (2017) studied strategic agility and performance of SMEs in Nairobi. Makori *et al* (2021) focused on effect of employee agility on organizational performance in State Departments in Kenya. Most of the scholars had a few to do strategic sensitivity.

There was a need to examine performance in the post-covid 19 era which is a key factor in changing the environment in which businesses operate. This study filled these gaps in the literature by studying the effect of Strategic Sensitivity on the performance of Five Star Hotels in Kisumu City, Kenya.

### **Study objective**

Establish the influence of strategic sensitivity on performance of Five Star Hotels in Kisumu City.

### **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Strategic sensitivity does not significantly influence performance of Five Star Hotels in Kisumu City.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Literature Review;**

#### **The Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT)**

The dynamic capabilities theory, proposed by Teece and Pisano (1994), is the extension from resource-based view (RBV) of the firm (Barney, 1986, 1991). Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997) defined dynamic



capabilities as the ability of the firm to combine, develop and reconfigure external and internal expertise in order to respond to speedily changing environment.

The theory of dynamic capabilities advances a position on the need for organizations to consistently align their resources and capacities in line with the changes and evolving features of their environment. Panos (2013) described dynamic capabilities as the organization's fluidity in terms of knowledge and competence, and its ability to match such with the requirements and gaps of apparent in its environment.

The DCT frame work works on three fundamental presumptions. Firstly, the capacity to sense and shape opportunities. Secondly, to seize opportunities. Thirdly, to maintain competitiveness through reconfiguring the enterprise's assets (Teece, 2007).

The theory provides a basis for understanding the interaction between strategic agility and organizational performance in the sense that it anchors the organizations capacity development on its learning and understanding of its environment. Thus, the competitiveness of the organization builds on this ability to effectively address and satisfy latent satisfaction gaps within its context through such learning (Diete-Spiff, 2021).

Previous researchers perceived dynamic capabilities as the way on how to solve inflexibility in capabilities (Schreyogg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007), how to utilize and make use of the knowledge (Easterby-Smith & Prieto, 2008) and some even agreed that dynamic capabilities can explain how firms respond to change (Newey & Zahra, 2009) especially from the environmental context.

Scholars proposed that in order for the firm to remain competitive in the market, the firms need to develop specific capabilities and continuous learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Hammer, 2001; Jashapara, 1993; Senge, 1990; Zott, 2003) which is from dynamic capabilities point of view especially in the new or changing market environment

(Wilden, Gudergan, Nielsen, & Lings, 2013). The lack of dynamic capabilities will prohibit the firm to maintain their competitive advantage especially in the changing environment (Gnizy, Baker, & Grinstein, 2014).

Chang, Lin, Yang and Sheu (2003) argued that the dynamic capabilities theory approaches the concept of change and development from a learning perspective, which according to him, emphasizes on organizations identification of key factors that offer them opportunities for relevance and innovation. The theory anchors this study's independent variables including sensitivity, resource fluidity, collective commitment and technology integration as aspects of organizational dynamism that need to be fostered to result in better gains.

### **The Resource Based View (RBV)**

Resource Based View (RBV) analyzes and interprets resources of the organizations to understand how organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage. The RBV focuses on the concept of difficult-to-imitate attributes of the firm as sources of superior performance and competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Hamel & Prahalad, 1996). According to Conner (1991), performance variance between firms depends on its possession of unique inputs and capabilities.

The RBV takes an 'inside-out' view or firm-specific perspective on why organizations succeed or fail in the market place (Dicksen, 1996). Resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991) make it possible for businesses to develop and maintain competitive advantages, to utilize these resources and competitive advantages for superior performance (Collis & Montgomery, 1995; Grant, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

According to RBV, an organization can be considered as a collection of physical resources, human resources and organizational resources (Barney, 1991; Amit & Shoemaker, 1993). Resources of organizations that are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and imperfectly substitutable are main

source of sustainable competitive advantage for sustained superior performance (Barney, 1991).

According to Barney valuable resource ‘must enable a firm to do things and behave in ways that lead to high sales, low costs, high margins, or in others ways add financial value to the firm’ (1986, 658). Barney also emphasized that ‘resources are valuable when they enable a firm to conceive of or implement strategies that improve its efficiency and

effectiveness’ (1991, 105). RBV helps managers of firms to understand why competences can be perceived as a firms’ most important asset and, at the same time, to appreciate how those assets can be used to improve business performance. RBV of the firm accepts that attributes related to past experiences, organizational culture and competences are critical for the success of the firm (Campbell and Luchs, 1997; Hamel and Prahalad, 1996).

### Conceptual Framework

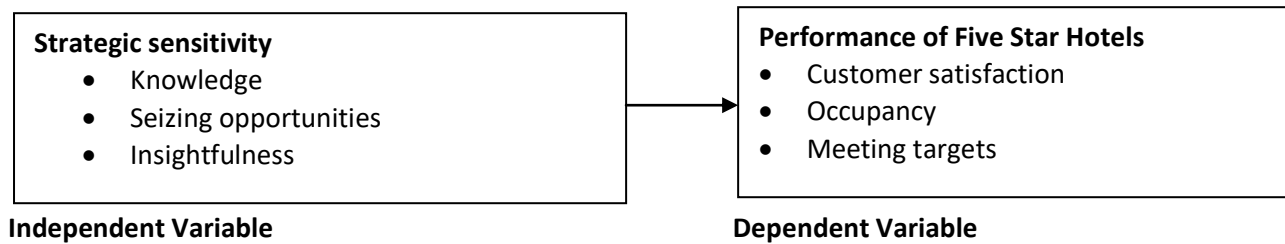


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** This research adopted the cross-sectional survey design which works on the assertion that data can be collected at one point in time from a sample selected to represent a larger population. In a cross-sectional study, the investigator measures the outcome and the exposures in the study participants at the same time. The researcher can study the association between these variables. It is also possible that the investigator recruits the study participants and examine the outcomes in this population. The researcher may also estimate the prevalence of the outcome in those surveyed.

**Target Population:** Mugenda (2011) defines a research sample as a finite and representative number of individuals or objects in a population to be studied. Sampling enables the researcher to identify, select and gain access to the appropriate subjects (Mason, 2004). Through sampling the researcher reduces the amount of data to be collected by examining a subgroup of the total population (Saunders *et al* 2016). This study sampled the entire population from the 93 senior and middle level managers and supervisors of the

five-star hotels as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

**Research Instrument:** The current research adopted questionnaires to collect primary data. Questionnaires have been used by researchers before to collect data. Glasser and Strauss (2015) refer to questionnaires as being an imperative instrument in research. Researchers recommend that each item on the questionnaire be carefully developed to address a specific objective or research question (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). The questions in the questionnaires were both structured and unstructured (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Alternative answers may be provided for some questions while some items were closed ended to provide standardized data and increase the objectivity and validity of the study.

**Pilot Test:** The researcher tested the research instruments to ascertain their validity and reliability. The researcher administered the questionnaire to 11 respondents in Eldoret Town. The researcher settled on the above figures because they represent 10% of the sample population as proposed by Mugenda and Mugenda

(2009). According to Orodho (2009), a pilot study should always be conducted among a different population that are not part in the study. The pilot study helps the researcher to test the research instruments and make the necessary changes in the research tools before going out to collect data.

**Data Analysis:** The collected data was thoroughly examined and checked for errors and tabulated accordingly. The study used descriptive statistics to analyse the data to establish patterns, trends and relationships. Data was presented in frequency tables. The effect of strategic sensitivity on Performance of the three- star hotels in Kisumu, was established using linear regression analysis. The applicable regression model is shown below:

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where;

Y= Performance  
 $\alpha$  =constant  
 $\beta_1$  = parameter estimate  
 $X_1$  = Strategic Sensitivity  
 $\epsilon$  is the error of prediction.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Response Rate

The pilot study was carried out using 9 staff selected from two top hotels in Kisumu City which did not form part of the study. This was 10% of the sample size for the actual study (93). Questionnaires were delivered to each of the respondents and collected at an agreed time. This was considered adequate for analysis. The results for the response rate are presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Response Rate for the Pilot Study**

Targeted Sample		Response	
Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
9	100%	9	100%

The pilot study obtained a response rate of 100% whereby the 9 respondents dully filled the questionnaires and gave them back for analysis. This was considered adequate for analysis.

### Descriptive statistics: Strategic Sensitivity on Performance

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of strategic sensitivity on employee

performance. The respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with specific statements drawn from measures of this risk response measure. Descriptive statistics used to analyse the data were weighted means and the standard deviation. Table 2 shows the findings.

**Table 2: Descriptive Results of Strategic Sensitivity**

**Key:** SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Hotel identifies opportunities for new business growth	21.3%	14.5%	3.6%	42.5%	18.1%	3.21	1.45
The hotel collects insightful awareness of emerging realities	21.3%	17.6%	2.7%	45.2%	13.1%	3.11	1.41
The hotel aligns functions and behaviors in a manner that advances its objectives	20.8%	18.1%	12.7%	44.8%	3.6%	2.92	1.26
The hotel conducts internal assessments of its capabilities to build its strength.	20.4%	43.1%	2.7%	15.2%	18.6%	3.28	1.43
The top management are open to information by maintaining relationships	20.4%	62.2%	0.0%	17.4%	0.0%	3.14	1.26
The hotel has a keen perception and awareness of its strategic situations	18.4%	12.2%	0.9%	44.5%	24.0%	3.37	1.47
<b>Average</b>					<b>3.17</b>		<b>1.01</b>



Six statements were used to determine the variable. Out of the six statements, the respondents rated the statement that the hotel has a keen perception and awareness of its strategic situations highest with a weighted average mean of 3.37. The weighted average of 3.17 shows that generally, the respondents were undecided on whether strategic sensitivity influenced the performance of five -star hotels in Kisumu. The study findings support the assertion made by Adim and Maclayton (2021) that relevance of information is necessary to help organizations assess and implement their performance goals.

**Table 3: Correlation Analysis**

		Risk Assessment Practices	Project Performance
Risk Assessment Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	93	
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	.719**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	93	93

Specifically, the association between strategic sensitivity ( $X_1$ ) and hotel performance was positive and significant ( $r = 0.719$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ). This implies that for every unit increase in strategic sensitivity, there was a positive increase of 0.719 in hotel performance. However, this does not show causation.

**Analysis of linear regression;**

**Table 4: Direct influence of Strategic Sensitivity on Performance**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.927 <sup>a</sup>	.859	.855	4.76657

a. Predictors: (Constant),  $X_1$       b. Dependent Variable: Y

The coefficient of determination value ( $R^2$ ) of 0.859 shows that the combined variables measuring strategic agility predict 85.9% of hotel performance with the remaining 14.1% being predicted by factors not included in the model.

From table 4, strategic sensitivity ( $X_1$ ) has a positive statistically significant effect ( $\beta = 0.205$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) on hotel performance. This implies that holding all

**Inferential statistics**

**Correlation Analysis**

The correlation analysis presented in Table 3 focuses on the relationship between employee performance and several key variables, including job rotation, coaching and mentoring, job shadowing, and employee orientation. The findings reveal significant correlations that highlight how these constructs may correlate with employee performance.

**Linear influence of Strategic Sensitivity on performance**

This tested the direct influence Risk Assessment on performance. The results are shown in table 4.12. Regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between the independent or predictor variables and a dependent variable.

factors constant, a unit increase in strategic sensitivity leads to a 20.5% significant increase in performance of five -star hotels in Kisumu City.

(ii)  $y = 1.775 + 0.205x_1$

Where;  
 $y$  = Performance  
 $X_2$  = Strategic Sensitivity

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first objective focused on establishing the effect of strategic sensitivity on performance of Hotels in Kisumu City. The study noted that the association between strategic sensitivity and hotel performance is positive and significant. This implies that for every unit increase in strategic sensitivity, there was a positive increase in hotel performance.

The objective sought to determine the effect of collective commitment on hotel performance in Kisumu City. The study revealed that the association between collective commitment and hotel performance was positive and significant. This

implies that for every unit increase in collective commitment, there is a positive increase in hotel performance.

The study results showed that strategic sensitivity was positively related to the performance of five-star hotels in Kisumu. This implies that when all factors were held constant, an increase in strategic sensitivity would lead to significant increase in performance of hotels in Kisumu.

### Areas for further studies

Similar study can be done on other projects using similar variables, though using different methods.

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