

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: The study aimed to identify the critical success factors (CSFs) that contribute to successful strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry.

Statement of the Problem: Strategy implementation is crucial for firms to overcome problems, achieve long-term growth, and gain a competitive advantage. Despite its importance, the aviation industry faces significant challenges in implementing effective strategies, owing to a disconnect between strategy formulation and implementation, resulting in suboptimal outcomes and impeding its ability to achieve long-term growth and competitive advantage.

Methodology: The study focused on three of Rockart's CSFs including, industry factors, environmental factors, and strategic factors. The research addressed existing gaps in the literature by providing a detailed analysis of these factors and their influence on strategy implementation in Kenya through a desktop research approach, including a comprehensive review of existing literature and case studies in the Kenyan aviation industry.

Study Findings: The literature review revealed the critical importance of industry-specific, environmental, and strategic factors for aviation firms' success in Kenya, emphasizing the significance of various factors. The existing literature on CSFs and strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry reveals several theoretical, conceptual, and contextual gaps that need to be addressed.

Conclusion: Based on the findings, research on strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry highlights the critical importance of industry-specific, environmental, and strategic factors for aviation firms' success. Findings deepen our understanding of strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry and suggest ways for airlines to enhance their operational efficiency, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Keywords: *Critical Success Factors (CSFs), Strategy Implementation, Industry Factors, Environmental Factors, Strategic Factors.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced aviation business environment, the successful implementation of organizational strategies is crucial for sustainable growth and competitive advantage (Mubanga & Lesa, 2024; Anene, 2021). Understanding the critical success factors (CSFs) that drive effective strategy implementation is essential for organizations seeking to achieve their strategic objectives (Bastola, 2022; Rockart, 1979). Rockart proposed that businesses should consider four key categories of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) including industry factors, environmental factors, strategic factors, and temporal factors (Rockart, 1979).

The aviation industry in Kenya faces a complex challenge in balancing economic, environmental, and social sustainability (Kimeria, 2022). A range of critical success factors (CSFs) have been identified in the aviation industry, with a focus on industry factors (Adabavazaeh & Nikbakht, 2019), environmental factors (Abdelgadir, 2022), and strategic factors (Bastola, 2022). Bastola, (2022) further underscores the significance of leadership, environment, culture, structure, and technology. Environmental elements such as politics, economics, social culture, technology, laws, and ecology have a considerable impact on the aviation sector (Serfontein & Govender, 2020). The strategic factors and implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry are influenced by a range of internal and external factors (Liu et al., 2022). These include the need for sustainable policies that balance economic, environmental, and social aspects (Kimeria, 2022), as well as legal and regulatory aspects (Omweno, 2021). Organizational leadership, culture, environment, structure, and technology are key influences of strategic outcomes according to Bastola, (2022). Effective leadership and organizational performance are closely linked, with government leadership and aviation leadership playing crucial roles in success or failure (Bastola, 2022).

Ramdani, (2019) and Zehir et al., (2020) emphasizes the significance of human resources and capacity building in the aviation sector. According to Kyalo, (2023), the availability and sufficiency of physical, human, technological, and financial resources in an organization are critical in enhancing the implementation initiatives of strategy those who implement it. Consumer demands and preferences shape aviation sector strategies, impacting choices and satisfaction (Banerji et al., 2023; Yajid et al., 2020). These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of CSFs in the aviation industry, encompassing various industry, environmental, and strategic aspects.

The aviation industry in Kenya is a significant contributor to the country's GDP, accounting for 4.6% (*Iata-Annual-Review-2019.Pdf*, n.d.) and comprises of key players including airlines, airports, ground handling agents, and aviation stakeholders. The aviation industry is a critical sector globally, characterized by intense competition, rapid technological advancements, and stringent regulatory frameworks and prone to various challenges, including fluctuating fuel prices, geopolitical tensions, and environmental concerns (*Annual-Review-2023.Pdf*, n.d.). According to Mungai & Bula, (2023), effective strategy implementation is essential for aviation firms to navigate these challenges and achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage. **A strategy is said to be successfully achieved** when there is *attainment of set goals, improvement of performance*, and when *there is strategic alignment between the organization and its objectives* (Mungai & Bula, 2023a). Several research have looked into the interaction between strategy implementation and performance of organizations in the Kenyan aviation industry and found that strategy implementation positively impacted the performance of aviation firms (Kyalo, 2023; Mungai & Bula, 2023b; Thukia, 2022; Wicklyfe & Lawrence, 2023).

Strategy implementation is critical for businesses to overcome obstacles, achieve long-term growth, and obtain a competitive advantage (Kimeria, 2022; Rani, 2019). Despite its importance, the aviation industry confronts major issues in implementing successful plans due to a gap between strategy formulation and execution, which results in suboptimal outcomes and limits the industry's capacity to achieve long-term growth and competitive advantage. Empirical research estimate that between 50% and 90% of company strategies fail to actually achieve their objectives, with inadequate strategy implementation being the main contributory factor (Yadua et al., 2024).

This study sought to identify the critical success factors (CSFs) that contribute to successful strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. For this study, we will focus on three of these critical success factors; **industry factors** (competitive landscape, technological advancements, and consumer needs and preferences), **environmental factors** (economic conditions, environmental concerns, and political and regulatory conditions), and **strategic factors** (organizational leadership, organizational culture, and resources and capabilities) as the independent variables. Dependent variable is strategy implementation, with its indicators as goal attainment, KPI improvement, and strategic alignment. This variable is critical as it indicates the effectiveness of the strategy implementation process and its impact on organizational performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The aviation industry in Kenya is a vital sector contributing to the country's economic development, facilitating trade, tourism, and connectivity both domestically and internationally (Anene, 2021). However, despite its significance, the aviation industry faces significant challenges in implementing effective strategies, particularly in times of crisis, often leading to suboptimal outcomes and hindering its ability to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage (Alomar, 2022). These challenges include regulatory complexities, infrastructure limitations, connectivity issues, safety concerns, and fierce competition (Njoroge & Samunderu, 2021).

Effective strategy implementation is essential for aviation firms to navigate these challenges and achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage (Kimeria, 2022). However, research suggests that there is often a disconnect between strategy formulation and implementation, leading to suboptimal outcomes (Mohapi & Louw, 2024; Rani, 2019). Global research has shown that a majority of strategies flop during the execution stage (Rani, 2019). Empirical research estimate that between 50% and 90% of business plans fail to accomplish their objectives, with inadequate execution of strategies being the main reason for this (Yadua et al., 2024). Scholars have highlighted that implementing a strategy is significantly more challenging than formulating one, emphasizing the need for both academics and practitioners to focus more on the implementation process (Sinaga, 2021).

A range of studies have highlighted the significant role of strategy implementation in determining organizational success (Twum, 2021; Sinaga, 2021; Vigfusson, 2021; Galpin, 2023). Key barriers to successful implementation include low employee involvement, communication barriers, insufficient resources, and inadequate monitoring and evaluation practices (Twum, 2021). Stakeholder uncertainty, resources, and expertise have also been identified as major factors influencing strategy implementation failure (Sinaga, 2021). Furthermore, a review of existing empirical literature has identified several bottlenecks and success factors affecting strategy execution (Vigfusson, 2021).

Despite the recognition of the importance of strategy execution, many organizations still struggle with its effective implementation (Galpin, 2023). Several studies have highlighted the challenges in strategy implementation across different sectors. Yadua (2024) stresses the significance of involvement of stakeholders, specifically transparent communication, diversified input, and stakeholder satisfaction, in obtaining resources for strategic changes in

Nigerian government institutions. Mohapi (2024) reveals a disjuncture between the goals of performance management systems and their implementation in a South African government department, with a focus on the need for a monitoring function and fair application. Research in the aviation industry in Kenya has highlighted the positive influence of turnaround strategies on firm performance (Nduta, 2020; Mungai, 2023). The implementation of a strategy is a complex and challenging process, often overlooked in academic research (Sinaga, 2021). In the aviation industry, this is further complicated by the need for strategic analysis to adapt to the rapidly changing market conditions (Njoroge & Samunderu, 2021).

The aviation industry in Africa, particularly in South Africa and Kenya, faces challenges in leadership, competition, and operational excellence (Mukhezekule, 2019; Abedelgadir, 2022). In their study, Yegzaw & Imiru, (2024) conducted a study that looked at how commercial banks implement strategies in developing economies. They discovered that a lot of research in the field of strategic management suggests that hurdles in implementation cause more than half of business strategies to fall short of their intended goals. Akuja (2024) and Pila (2024) both highlighted the challenges of policy implementation in Kenya, with Akuja focusing on Climate Smart Agriculture and Pila on manufacturing firms. These studies underscore the need for effective strategy implementation, a concept that is further explored by Vigfússon (2024) in the Icelandic fisheries industry.

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the application of Rockart's Critical Success Factors (CSFs) in the aviation industry in Kenya. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to explore the specific CSFs that are crucial for successful strategy implementation in this industry. While existing research has explored various aspects of strategy formulation in the aviation industry, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific CSFs that contribute to successful strategy implementation in the Kenyan context (Anene & Muriithi, 2021). Additionally, most studies also focused on airlines and drawing conclusions about the overall aviation industry, ignoring other aviation stakeholders such as ground handling agents (GHAs), regulators, airport authorities, among others. Given the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the Kenyan aviation industry, it was essential to conduct a study that would specifically examines the CSFs for successful strategy implementation within mind as the context.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To investigate the influence of industry factors on strategy execution in the aviation industry in Kenya.
- ii. To analyze the effect of environmental factors on strategy execution in the aviation industry in Kenya.
- iii. To assess the influence of strategic factors on strategy execution in the aviation industry in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The desktop research design was used in this study. For this study, a desktop research approach was selected because it was economical, time-efficient, and provided access to a large number of pre-existing data and literature sources. Desktop research does not require primary data collection, making it an ideal method for synthesizing existing knowledge on the topic (Kate, 2023; Mukahi, 2023). A range of studies have utilized desktop research methodology in Kenya, providing valuable insights across various fields. Mukahi, (2023) used this methodology to explore the use of art as a tool for social justice and revealed a need for further study in this area. Several studies conducted in Kenya have investigated a range of subjects using desktop research technique. By examining how liquidity risk management affects state-owned firms' financial performance, Jagongo & Rop, (2021) filled in gaps in the body of research. Kate, (2023) investigated how devolution affected local governance and service provision, highlighting the necessity of county-to-county cooperation, accountability, and capacity building. These studies collectively demonstrate the diverse applications of desktop research methodology in different fields. This approach aligned with the study's objective of exploring critical success factors for strategy execution in the aviation industry in Kenya by analyzing trends and patterns from existing research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in several key theoretical perspectives that provide a robust framework for understanding the critical success factors (CSFs) contributing to effective strategy execution. The study was anchored on the resource-based view (RBV) and supported by strategic choice theory.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, developed by Barney (1991), contends that enterprises can gain a sustained competitive advantage by using their distinctive resources and skills. In the context of the study, RBV relates to explaining how the availability and allocation of resources (financial, human, technological, etc.) influence the successful implementation of strategies in the Kenyan aviation industry. The theory posits that organizations with valuable, rare, and inimitable resources are more likely to implement strategies effectively and achieve competitive advantage. The study aims to explore how effective resource allocation enhances strategy implementation outcomes. RBV suggests interactions of diverse Critical Success Factor (CSF) in relation to strategy implementation.

On the industry factors, organizations need to allocate resources strategically to adapt to industry trends and dynamics, ensuring they remain competitive and meet market demands. RBV would emphasize the importance of understanding the industry environment and leveraging resources to capitalize on opportunities and mitigate threats. In relation to environmental factors, RBV suggest that organizations must allocate resources to adapt to external environmental factors such as regulatory changes, technological advancements, and economic conditions. By allocating resources effectively, organizations can enhance their ability to implement strategies that align with these external factors. In respect to the strategic factors, RBV emphasize the need for organizations to allocate resources to develop and maintain strategic capabilities that are valuable, rare, and inimitable. In doing so, organizations can effectively implement strategies that leverage their unique strengths and capabilities, leading to a sustainable competitive advantage.

According to Priem and Butler (2001), RBV's concentration on internal resources may cause organizations to underestimate the importance of external environmental elements including economic conditions, competition, and changes in regulations, all of which can have a considerable impact on strategy implementation.

Strategic Choice Theory

Developed by Child, (1972), Strategic Choice Theory suggests that organizations make strategic choices based on the interplay between internal capabilities and external environmental factors. The theory emphasizes that organizations must align their strategies with their internal resources and capabilities while also considering external environmental factors to achieve competitive advantage. In the context of the study, Strategic Choice Theory

relates to understanding how organizations in the Kenyan aviation industry make strategic choices and allocate resources to implement these strategies effectively. Strategic Choice Theory suggests interactions of diverse Critical Success Factor (CSF) in relation to strategy implementation.

On the industry factors, organizations must analyze industry trends and dynamics to make informed strategic choices. Strategic Choice Theory emphasizes that organizations should align their strategies with industry conditions to gain a competitive advantage. By understanding industry factors, organizations can make strategic choices that leverage industry trends and dynamics to enhance strategy implementation. In respect to environmental factors, Strategic Choice Theory highlights the importance of considering external environmental factors such as regulatory changes, technological advancements, and market conditions when making strategic choices. Organizations need to allocate resources to adapt to these external factors and align their strategies accordingly to ensure successful implementation. Concerning strategic factors, organizations must make strategic choices that align with their internal capabilities and resources. This involves allocating resources to develop and maintain strategic capabilities that are valuable, rare, and inimitable. By making strategic choices that leverage their unique strengths, organizations can enhance strategy implementation and achieve competitive advantage.

The theoretical gap in Strategic Choice Theory is its limited focus on implementation, while the theory emphasizes the importance of strategic choices, it pays less attention to the implementation phase (Mintzberg, 1978). Critics argue that successful strategy implementation is as important as strategic choice and requires careful planning, resource allocation, and monitoring, which are not adequately addressed in the theory.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

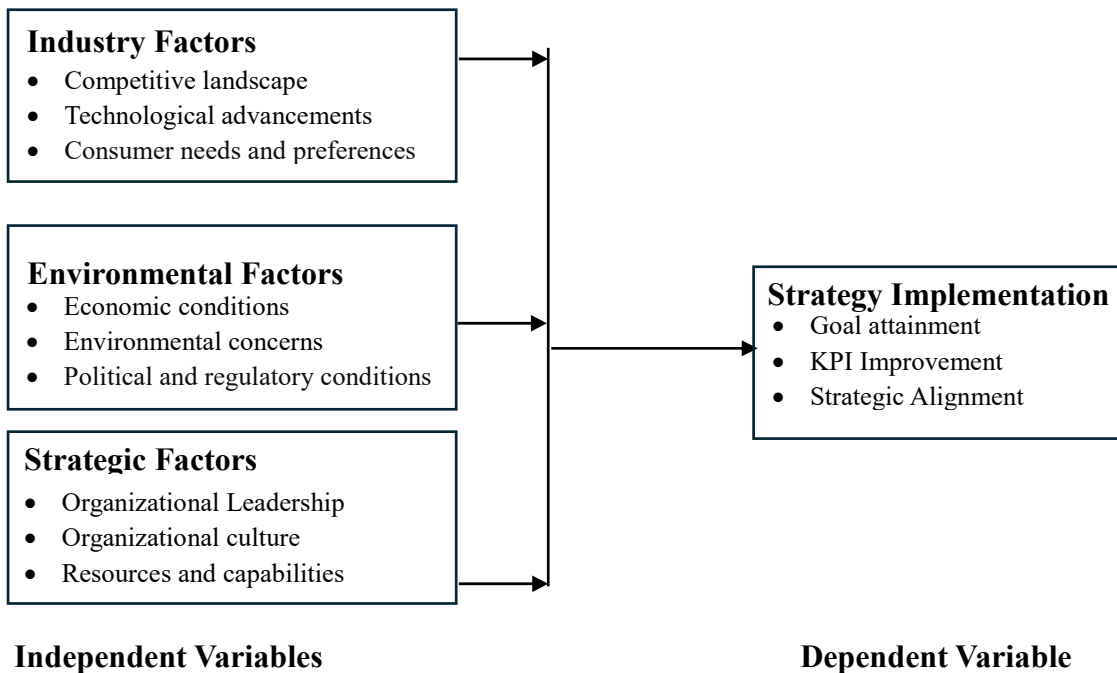


Figure 1: Conceptual framework.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Industry Factors and Strategy Implementation

Mungai and Bula's (2023) study on Kenya Airways' turnaround strategies found that implementing four key strategies led to a significant positive impact on the airline's performance. Their research, based on a sample of 48 management-level respondents, used a descriptive design with stratified random sampling and regression analysis. The study highlighted the importance of cost reduction in achieving turnaround success and recommends ongoing implementation efforts, management support, and adaptation to technological changes. These findings provide valuable insights for organizations seeking to improve performance and serve as a reference for scholars, policymakers, and students in the aviation industry. In their study, Liu et al. (2022) conducted a mini review of the internal and external factors influencing Kenya Airways' strategic management and found that Kenya Airways needs to adapt its strategies to the dynamic and competitive aviation industry landscape. This adaptation should involve leveraging the airline's strengths to overcome challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Liu et al., 2022). The study underscores the importance of strategic agility and

proactive management to ensure Kenya Airways' competitiveness and sustainability in the evolving aviation sector.

A study by (Anene, 2021; Mubanga & Lesa, 2024) examines the competitive dynamics in the Kenyan aviation industry, emphasizing the need for airlines to develop sustainable competitive advantages through innovation, cost leadership, or differentiation strategies. This research indicates that understanding and adapting to the competitive landscape are crucial for successful strategy implementation. The aviation industry's competitive landscape is a key determinant of success, with critical success factors such as cost efficiency, customer service, and operational excellence playing a crucial role (Mungai & Bula, 2023b).

A number of studies have explored the impact of technological advancements on strategy implementation in the aviation industry in Kenya. Chepkemboi & Paul, (2019), discusses the impact of technology on the Kenyan aviation sector, pointing out that airlines that embrace new technologies, such as digital booking systems and data analytics, can improve operational efficiency and customer service. They found that the uptake of disruptive innovations, including digital platforms, mobile technology, and travel intermediaries, positively influenced the performance of selected airlines. This study suggests that leveraging technology is essential for successful strategy implementation in the industry.

Yajid et al. (2020) conducted a study titled "An Analysis of the Consumer's Price and Service Quality Preferences" in the Kenyan aviation industry. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were collected through surveys or questionnaires administered to a sample of airline customers, while qualitative data were gathered through interviews or focus groups. The study used a descriptive research design to analyze consumer preferences for price and service quality. Research by Yajid et al., (2020) underscore the significance of understanding evolving customer needs and preferences in the Kenyan aviation industry. This research emphasizes the importance of airlines continuously gathering and analyzing customer feedback to tailor their services effectively, leading to successful strategy implementation.

Environmental Factors and Strategy Implementation

Liu et al. (2022) conducted a mini review of internal and external factors influencing Kenya Airways' strategic management. Their study employed a descriptive research design, reviewing existing literature to identify key environmental factors impacting the airline's operations. The study by Liu et al. (2022) identified several internal and external factors that influence Kenya

Airways' strategic management. Internal factors included aspects like organizational structure, leadership, and resource allocation, while external factors encompassed economic, political, technological, and competitive factors. The study highlighted the importance of aligning internal capabilities with external opportunities and threats to ensure strategic success.

Yadav and Goriet's (2022) study, "An Illustrative Evaluation of External Factors That Affect Performance of an Airline," employed a quantitative research method. The study's sample consisted of a diverse group of airline industry professionals, including executives, managers, and operational staff, totalling 300 respondents. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of external factors on airline performance. Statistical analysis, including correlation analysis, was conducted to determine the relationship between external factors (specifically political and legal influences) and airline performance. The study found a strong positive correlation between these external factors and airline performance, with a statistically significant result ($p < 0.05$), indicating a high degree of confidence in the findings. Omweno, (2021) also examined the regulatory framework governing the aviation sector in Kenya, highlighting the need for airlines to comply with regulations and adapt to changes in the political and regulatory environment. This study emphasizes that regulatory compliance is critical for successful strategy implementation.

Yadav and Goriet's (2022) study revealed a significant positive correlation between external factors, particularly political and legal influences, and airline performance. They found that market-driven fluctuations and intentional external factors can greatly impact airlines, with political instability and tension being key factors affecting performance. This underscores the need for airlines to carefully manage external dynamics to ensure sustainable operations and performance.

The studies by Yadav and Goriet (2022) and Liu et al. (2022) highlight the significant impact of economic factors on the implementation of strategies by Kenya Airways. Economic factors such as fluctuations in fuel prices, currency exchange rates, and overall economic conditions can greatly influence the airline industry's operational costs, profitability, and strategic decisions. Airlines, including Kenya Airways, need to carefully consider these economic factors in their strategic planning and implementation to remain competitive and sustainable in the dynamic aviation industry landscape. These research highlights the importance of economic resilience in successful strategy implementation.

Strategic Factors and Strategy Implementation

Various studies have explored the influence of strategic factors on strategy implementation and overall performance of organizations (Bastola, 2022). A number of studies have explored the influence of organizational culture on employee engagement and performance, suggesting that a culture that promotes innovation and collaboration can lead to better outcomes. This research indicates that fostering a supportive organizational culture is essential for successful strategy implementation. (Kyalo, 2023; Mubanga & Lesa, 2024; Ngigi & Namusonge, 2019; Vigfússon et al., 2021).

Kyalo, (2023) investigated how organizational structure impacts strategy implementation in Kenya's government tourism agencies. Using a positivist approach, the study surveyed 327 participants from 10 areas within the tourism sector, including the Ministry of Tourism, to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The findings highlight that organizational structure significantly influences an organization's ability to achieve objectives and profits. Factors such as organizational functions, employee learning and growth structures, communication systems, and organizational culture play key roles in strategy implementation success. Statistical analysis, including descriptive and inferential statistics, supported these findings, emphasizing the importance of a positive organizational culture in enhancing strategy implementation in government tourism agencies.

Ngigi and Namusonge (2019) conducted a study on organizational culture and strategy implementation at the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA), highlighting the importance of strategy implementation for achieving organizational goals. Despite knowing their strategies, many organizations struggle to translate them into action. The study used a descriptive survey research design to assess the effect of organizational culture on strategy implementation at KCAA. The target population included senior, middle, and lower-level staff, with a sample size of 80 respondents selected randomly. The results showed that leadership played a significant role in strategy implementation at KCAA, while aspects such as communication, reward and recognition, and team orientation were less significant. This study underscores the importance of leadership in driving strategy implementation and suggests that organizations should focus on fostering a supportive and effective organizational culture to enhance their strategic outcomes.

Anene, (2021), highlights the importance of the availability and adequacy of physical, technological, human and financial resources in an organization were very important in

boosting the implementation efforts of strategy implementers. The study on the determinants of strategy implementation in the aviation industry in Kenya found that organizational resources positively influence the performance of airlines. Specifically, the availability and adequacy of resources such as financial base access, physical resources like planes and landing grounds, and investments in research and development, training, networking, and innovation were found to be positively related to organizational performance. The study recommends that airlines in Kenya should focus on improving their financial base, acquiring necessary physical resources, and investing in research and development, training, and innovation to enhance their performance in the aviation industry. This study suggests that optimizing resources and capabilities is crucial for successful strategy implementation.

Ramdani's (2019) study on the formulation of human resources development strategies for aircraft maintenance in Indonesia's Aircraft Services business unit of Indonesian-aircraft Industries reveals critical insights into the importance of resources and capabilities in strategy implementation. Using a qualitative case study approach and SWOT analysis, the research examines the need for skilled human resources, particularly in narrow-body aircraft maintenance for Airbus and Boeing. The study emphasizes the necessity of structured human resources development programs, including training, procurement systems, and performance evaluation mechanisms. This study underscores the crucial role of human resources in strategy implementation within the aircraft maintenance industry, highlighting the need for comprehensive and proactive development strategies to ensure competitiveness and operational success.

Strategy Implementation and Organizational Performance

Studies by Ramdani (2019) and Kyalo & Namusonge (2019) provide valuable insights into strategy implementation and goal attainment in the aviation industry in Kenya. Ramdani's study focuses on the formulation of strategies for developing human resources in aircraft maintenance, highlighting the importance of aligning human resource development with strategic goals to enhance organizational performance (Ramdani, 2019). Kyalo and Namusonge's study examine the role of organizational culture in strategy implementation at the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority, emphasizing the significance of a conducive culture for successful strategy execution (Kyalo & Namusonge, 2019). Both studies underscore the importance of strategic alignment, suggesting that organizations need to ensure that their human resources, organizational culture, and structures are aligned with their strategic objectives to achieve goal attainment. Additionally, these studies emphasize the importance of

key performance indicators (KPIs) in measuring and improving performance, indicating that a clear focus on KPIs is essential for monitoring progress and ensuring that strategic goals are met.

STUDY FINDINGS

The research findings highlight the multifaceted nature of strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry, emphasizing the significance of various factors. The existing literature on relating to the existing literature on CSFs and strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry reveals several theoretical, conceptual, and contextual gaps that need to be addressed.

Firstly, a theoretical gap regarding the disconnect between strategy formulation and implementation was identified. While studies such as Mungai and Bula (2023) have shown the positive impact of key strategies on airline performance, there was a lack of comprehensive research on the specific factors contributing to successful strategy implementation in the Kenyan context. This study addressed this gap by identifying critical success factors (CSFs) that contribute to successful strategy implementation, focusing on industry factors, environmental factors, and strategic factors.

Secondly, a conceptual gap was identified regarding the specific challenges and dynamics of the Kenyan aviation sector. While studies like Liu et al. (2022) emphasized the need for adaptation to the dynamic industry landscape, there was a conceptual gap in understanding the specific factors impacting strategy implementation in this context. This study filled this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the CSFs and their impact on strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry.

Thirdly, a contextual gap was identified regarding the specific factors impacting strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. While studies like Anene (2021) provided insights into competitive dynamics, there was a need for more in-depth analysis of the factors influencing strategy implementation in this context. This study addressed this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the CSFs, providing a nuanced understanding of their impact on strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry.

Moreover, a theoretical gap was identified regarding how factors such as technological advancements and regulatory frameworks influence strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. While studies like Chepkemboi & Paul (2019) discussed the impact of technology on operational efficiency, there was a need for more theoretical understanding of

how these factors impact strategy implementation. This study contributed to the literature by providing a theoretical framework that explains how technological advancements and regulatory frameworks influence strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. Additionally, a conceptual gap was identified in understanding how customer preferences impact strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. While studies like Yajid et al. (2020) analyzed consumer preferences, there was a conceptual gap in understanding how these preferences influence airlines' strategy implementation efforts. This study addressed this gap by examining the relationship between customer preferences and strategy implementation, providing insights into how airlines can tailor their strategies to meet customer needs.

In addition, a methodological gap was identified in the literature regarding the use of desktop research designs in the study of strategy implementation in the aviation industry. While most studies in this area have utilized primary data collection methods, such as surveys and interviews, there has been limited use of desktop research designs (Mungai & Bula, 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Chepkemboi & Paul, 2019). This study filled this gap by adopting a desktop research design, which allowed for a comprehensive review of existing literature and a synthesis of key findings. By employing this methodological approach, this study was able to provide a comprehensive analysis of the critical success factors influencing strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry.

Lastly, a contextual gap was identified regarding how environmental factors like political and legal influences impact strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry. While studies like Omweno (2021) examined the regulatory framework, there was a need for more contextual understanding of how these factors impact strategy implementation. This study filled this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of the political and legal influences on strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry, providing valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers.

The theoretical gap in RBV, as highlighted by Priem and Butler (2001), is its focus on internal resources and capabilities, neglecting the importance of external factors and market dynamics. This study addresses this gap by examining how external environmental factors influence strategy implementation outcomes in the Kenyan aviation industry. By considering both internal and external factors, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence strategy implementation and competitive advantage in the industry.

This study also advances Strategic Choice Theory by providing empirical evidence and practical insights into how organizations in the Kenyan aviation industry make strategic choices and implement them. By focusing on the implementation phase, the study adds a practical dimension to the theory, which has been criticized for its limited focus on implementation (Mintzberg, 1978). By identifying and analyzing the critical success factors that contribute to successful strategy implementation, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving strategy implementation practices in the Kenyan aviation industry.

CONCLUSION

Research on strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry highlights the critical importance of industry-specific, environmental, and strategic factors for aviation firms' success. Industry-specific factors like cost reduction strategies, technological adaptation, and competitive advantages are key determinants of airline performance (Mungai and Bula, 2023; Anene, 2021; Mubanga & Lesa, 2024). Environmental factors such as regulatory compliance, technological investment, and market dynamics are crucial for maintaining operational stability and competitiveness (Omweno, 2021; Chepkemboi & Paul, 2019; Liu et al., 2022). Strategic factors like organizational culture, leadership, and resource optimization are essential for effective strategy implementation and sustainable performance (Ngigi & Namusonge, 2019; Ramdani, 2019). These findings deepen our understanding of strategy implementation in the Kenyan aviation industry and suggest ways for airlines to enhance their operational efficiency, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government and regulatory bodies should collaborate with aviation firms to develop policies and regulations that support cost reduction strategies, technological innovation, and competitiveness in line with industry dynamics, ensuring that regulatory frameworks promote sustainable practices and encourage investments in technology and market adaptation.
- Aviation firms should prioritize compliance with regulatory requirements and adapt their strategies to evolving legal frameworks.
- Investors should make strategic investment in technology that is aligned with environmental trends and customer preferences to drive operational efficiency and service quality.

- Industry associations and trade organizations should provide guidance and support to member airlines in adopting innovative strategies and best practices for sustainable performance and staying competitive in the dynamic aviation industry.
- Developing strong leadership and fostering a supportive organizational culture are crucial for effective strategy implementation and employee engagement.
- Strategic managers should ensure efficient allocation and utilization of resources, including human resources, are essential for sustainable performance and growth.
- Aviation companies should continuously monitor and adapt to market changes and trends to maintain relevance and competitiveness.
- Researchers should consider using desktop research designs, as in this study, to relate various studies within a specific subject and offer a unique methodological approach for further exploration of the topic.
- The study's findings will guide leadership and management in the aviation industry to adopt and implement strategies for sustainable performance of their firms.

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