



**EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC AGILITY AND
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF CEMENT
MANUFACTURERS IN KENYA**

¹Julius Musyoka Ngila & ²Dr. Justice Mutua

¹Phd Candidate, School of Business & Economics, Daystar University, Kenya

²Lecturer, School of Business & Economics, Daystar University, Kenya

***Email of the Corresponding Author: julyju998@gmail.com**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of The Study: The study sought to explore the impact of strategic agility on the organizational performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya, examining how aspects like organizational structure, product innovation, technological adoption, and human resources influence their ability to adapt and thrive in a competitive and dynamic environment.

Research Methodology: A desktop research methodology was used to gather data from secondary data sources. Data was gathered from published reports, public libraries, websites, and data obtained from past reports and academic journals.

Study Findings: The study found that strategic agility, including factors like organizational structure, product innovation, technological advancement, and agile human resources, positively correlates with the performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya. It was observed that those who embraced these agility components saw improvements in revenue, profitability, and market share growth. Conversely, manufacturers lacking strategic agility experienced declines in revenue growth, profitability, and market share.

Conclusions: The study concludes that cement manufacturers must maintain strategic agility—through optimal organizational structures, consistent product innovation, modern technology application, and superior human resources—to enhance revenue, profitability, and market share. Those lacking in these areas risk revenue losses, declining profitability, and reduced market competitiveness.

Recommendations: The study recommends that manufacturing firms enhance their organizational structures for better teamwork and innovation, invest in continuous product development, and adopt cutting-edge technologies, including automation and digitization, to improve efficiency, competitiveness, and performance. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of strategic agility in human resources to attract, develop, and retain top talent for sustained organizational success.

Keywords: *Strategic agility, organizational performance, organizational structure, product innovation, technological advancement, agile human resources*

INTRODUCTION

This ever-evolving landscape of the post-Covid 19 era have confronted organizations with rapid and unforeseen changes that recalibrate competitive dynamics, disrupt supply chains systems and reshape customer expectations (Leeraphong & Sackrat,2023; Zhang *et al.*,2022). Chaotic and competitive environments require new approaches, for survival and sustainability. It is only companies with the ability to remain agile in the face of rapidly emerging waves of change, those that continually adjust the company strategic direction and to develop innovative paths to create value are likely to build and maintain competitive advantage. Mega trends like digitization, connectivity, diverse demographics, global competition of trade liberation and diverse business models of innovation are the result of the emergence of new competitors and driving more ways of doing business (Holbeche, 2015)

Strategic agility in the corporate structure provides organizations with the ability to respond quickly to change and take steps to help manage any business risks and volatility and in the process improve its performance (Tallois & Pinsonneault,2011). From previous studies, strategically agile organizations can adjust its culture in response to shifts in the market. With this they can acquire knowledge of those shifts in a timely manner and be able to add value to itself through these changes. Strategic agility emerges as a paramount capability for thriving in such-velocity and turbulent environments. Contemporary organizations needs to match its strategy and resources with the complexities of dynamic and challenging institutional contexts (Tatoglu *et al.*,2020)

While the concept of strategic agility has captivated scholars, a comprehensive set of practices for its cultivation remains elusive. Diverse lenses have been applied, including information technology (Overby *et al.*,2006); and organizational development (Arbussa *et al.*, 2017; Bruelles *et al* 2014), each unveiling a unique facet and findings. While Weil *et al.*, (2002) delineated ideal IT capabilities, Storme et al (2020) highlights the significance of human resources and argued that work force agility is the cornerstone for strategically agility development. Despite their studies, limited contributions on strategic agility of Cement manufacturing firms in Kenya is lacking.

In the 21st Century where globalization, technology and diverse products are a boundary less to the economy, organizations without strategic agility are bound to experience competitive disadvantages and continuous decline in performance. Rohrbeck and Kum

(2018) asserted that strategic agility enhances firms' future preparedness, and they are powerful predictors for becoming an out-performer in the industry. (Arokodare, 2020)

Oyerinde et al, (2018) and Onigbinde (2014) pointed out that majority of the firms recorded continuous decline in performance due to poor strategic agility and reaction to environmental challenges surrounding firms in Nigeria. Relatively, most of these past studies reviewed have not established the continued link between strategic agility and firms' performance dimensions in the way this study has conceptualized strategic agility and the firm's performance. In Kenya, for the Bic Four Agenda and the Vision 2030 plan, which intends to convert Kenya to a newly industrialized middle-income nation capable of providing to its population with high living standards, the Cement industry in Kenya is a crucial sector. For it to achieve its economic pillar, it is embodied in cement manufacturing, transportation and the building sector play a key role in growing the infrastructural projects as a back bone as Kenyan economy. According to the World Bank, Kenya requires strategic infrastructural developments of not less than 4 billion over the next decade for it to achieve its objective.

Strategic Agility

Strategic agility, as discussed in various scholarly works, has not yet reached a state of conceptual maturity and is approached from diverse perspectives. Ambituuni et al. (2021) note the evolving nature of the field, while Diego & Almodovar (2021) highlight the lack of a unified definition despite increasing interest. Most scholars, including Clause et al. (2019) and Reed (2021), agree that strategic agility encompasses three core capabilities: strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and a robust response to change. Deshati (2023) traces the origin of strategic agility to the manufacturing sector, emphasizing agility over mass production, a concept later extended to supply chains and IT sectors as described by Reed (2020). Asfahani (2021) defines strategic agility as the ability to quickly identify and react to unforeseen threats and opportunities, adapting successfully to maintain competitive advantage. In contrast, Kumke, as cited by Reed (2020), views it as the continuous maintenance of stability, awareness, and resilience in management, adapting organizational culture to swiftly capitalize on market changes. This research explores how strategic agility—through organizational structure, product innovation, human resources, and technological advancement—impacts the performance of cement manufacturing firms in Kenya, highlighting the significance of each element in driving organizational success.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance encompasses a broad spectrum of metrics including market share, revenue growth, productivity, efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness. Didier Noye (2002) argues that organizational performance is not merely about outcomes but involves measuring these outcomes against set objectives to assess achievement and alignment with enterprise goals. Effective organizational performance also hinges on leadership's ability to foster a collaborative work environment and lead successful teams. Performance is influenced by individual contributions within the organization, emphasizing the importance of partnership and empathy in team activities. Ritcher et al. (2017) suggest viewing organizational performance through financial metrics such as cumulative abnormal returns and market-to-book ratios, among others. This research investigates how strategic agility elements like optimal organizational structure, continual product innovation, effective human resource management, and the integration of emerging technologies influence key performance indicators—revenue growth, profitability, and market share—in the context of cement manufacturers in Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to previous studies, cement industry in Kenya is growing at a rapid pace over the last 10 years. The cement sales are expected to grow rapidly until 2050. The country has been experiencing a booming business for cement with the increase in infrastructural projects currently on-going. (Muchoki, 2022) There number of cement plants have increased dramatically with more branches launched been a testimony to an increasing demand. However, despite the growth in cement firms and plants, Cement manufacturers in Kenya are experiencing loss in revenue, declining profitability, and loss of market share to competition (Schmidt,2018). This has been a result to the several challenges that confront the cement industry in Kenya such as high cost of electricity, inadequate power supply, high cost for imported coal production challenges, human resources concerns tied to government regulations, production capacity and currency fluctuations. This dismissal performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya performance is tied to lack of strategic agility strategies in these cement manufacturing industries in Kenya that are meant to steer the firms to improved organizational performance.

There is existing empirical evidence of studies done on Cement manufacturers in Kenya. For Instance, “*Analysis of competitive strategies of cement manufacturers In Kenya*” by

George Macharia and Prof. Paul Gachanja in 2023. However, no studies have been done to determine the effects of strategic agility on organizational performance of Cement manufacturers in Kenya. This study researches the effects of four strategic agility factors and how they affect performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya. The four strategic factors under study are organizational structure, technological advancement, product innovation and agile human resources and how they affect performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya. The performance metrics under study are revenue growth, profitability growth and markets share growth.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine the effect of strategic agility on the performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i.** To establish the effect of organizational structure on organizational performance of Cement manufactures in Kenya.
- ii.** To assess the effect of technological advancement on organizational performance of Cement Manufactures in Kenya
- iii.** To examine the effect of product innovation on organizational performance of Cement Manufacturers in Kenya.
- iv.** To study the impact of agile human resources on organizational performance of cement manufactures in Kenya.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Dynamic Capability Theory and Contingency Theory as the baseline for the study. These theories were selected to guide the study because their perspectives are tied to the focus and the variables under investigation.

Dynamic Capability Theory

Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT), developed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen in 1997, defines an organization's ability to adapt and reconfigure its resources to thrive in a rapidly changing business environment. This theory emphasizes the critical role of strategic agility in maintaining organizational performance and sustainability, suggesting that firms can gain a competitive edge by continually adapting their organizational structures, human resources, and technological capabilities. Eisenhardt & Martin (2020) highlight that dynamic capabilities are akin to best practices, facilitating various paths to success. While

DCT offers significant insights into leveraging strategic agility for enhanced performance, it lacks specific performance metrics and detailed guidance on measuring strategic agility's impact, particularly in the cement manufacturing sector. This research aims to bridge these gaps by exploring how strategic agility variables such as organizational structure, human resources, product innovation, and technological advancement influence the growth in revenue, profitability, and market share of cement manufacturers in Kenya.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory, originating in the 1960s from scholars like Fred Fiedler, Victor Vroom, and Paul Hersey, posits that effective leadership hinges on the match between a leader's style and situational factors such as task requirements and leader-follower relationships. The theory asserts that there is no one-size-fits-all leadership style; rather, successful leadership is contingent on adapting to the context and circumstances. It highlights the relationship between strategic agility indicators like organizational structure, leadership style, and organizational culture, suggesting that the right alignment between these factors and the business environment can enhance organizational performance. For instance, a decentralized structure may promote agility in dynamic settings, while a centralized one might be preferable in stable conditions (Chegini et al., 2013). However, the theory lacks specific indicators for strategic agility and does not provide a methodology for their measurement, leaving a gap in practical application. This research seeks to fill this void by examining how elements of strategic agility—such as agile human resources, product innovation, and technological advancements—affect key performance metrics like revenue growth, profitability, and market share among cement manufacturers in Kenya, urging them to adopt structures that maximize productivity.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

Effect of Information Technology and Human Resource Indicators on organizational performance.

Kamau, Seneji and Nzioki (2019) conducted a study to investigate the influence that the capability of information technology has on the overall performance of Commercial banks in Kenya. They used the descriptive research technique and a total of 259 questionnaires to reach their conclusion. Their findings were that information technology had a significant impact on banks performance in Kenya. The study concluded that the competency of organization's performance information technology had a positive influence on the

competitive advantage on Commercial banks in Kenya. From my study, the technological agility in cement plays a key role in cement organizations in Kenya. Drawing from my study conclusions, cement manufacturers that remained technologically agile and consistently adapted with emerging technologies realized high revenue growth and profitability. Organizations should therefore ensure that they are technologically agile to continue performing well.

Arokodare (2021) evaluated the effectiveness of strategic agility in oil and gas marketing enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. Cross-sectional design primary data were used to collect data from 515 retail station managers. Regression analysis results revealed that strategic insight, strategic foresight, information technology capability, human resources capability, and internal response orientation as proxies for strategic agility. These elements had a large and favorable impact on the effectiveness, satisfaction, and performance of the company. This study did not address other strategic agile aspects that affect performance such as product innovation and organizational structure. From my study, organizations that continually invest on product innovation and have adapted a suitable organizational structure experience improved performance in terms of revenue growth and profitability.

Mohammad I. Allamah, (2020) conducted a study to determine the *impact of strategic agility on employee performance in Commercial banks in Jordan*. A self-administered questionnaire was developed according to the research objective and hypothesis. The study population consisted of all managerial employees in Jordan commercial banks. Statistics were used to test the hypothesis. The study found out that strategic agility indicator on human resources of employees with high core competencies, technological advancement and shared responsibility had a positive impact on employee performance in commercial banks. The study recommended that Commercial banks in Jordan must adapt strategic agility approach of recruiting people with high level of core competency and need to adopt technological advancement to improve on their employee performance. This study however, failed to determine on how other strategic agility factors such as organizational structure and product innovation affected employee performance in Commercial banks in Jordan. This gap was filled by my study looking on how product innovation and organizational performance affect performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya.

Effect of product innovation strategy on organizational performance.

A study was conducted by Kariuki & Nafula (2020) on *Innovative Strategies and Performance of Cement Manufacturing in Kenya*. However, Kariuki and Nafula (2020) study did not look on the impact of various innovative brands affect performance on these firms. This study will fill the gap by examining the effect of product innovation on organizational performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya. The objectives were used since these cement manufacturing firms are involved with various forms of product innovation. The theories that informed the study are dynamic capabilities theory and contingency theory. This study found out that product innovation played a key role in the performance of these manufacturers under study. It concluded that there existed a strong relationship between product innovation strategy and firms' performance.

Effect of organizational structure and human resource strategy on organizational performance.

Palanisamy et al,2022 and Muthuvelo et al, 2022 on study on, "the Influence of strategic Agility on Organizational performance during pandemic. A perspective of SMEs in manufacturing sector expressed the importance of strategic agility on organizational performance during the pandemic era. In his study, a sample of 149 responses from cross-sectional survey among SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Malaysia were analyzed by using SPSS version 24, and PLS-SEM. The study results revealed that strategic agility on organizational structure significantly influences organizational performance. However, this study did not research on how organizational structure affects organizational performance in other firms across the globe. This study will seek to fill that gap by establishing how organizational structure and agile human resources affects organizational performance of local cement manufacturers in Kenya.

Muthuvelo et al, 2023 and Koay et al, 2023, on the study on strategic agility on organizational performance asserted that organizational performance had become the main issue since firms are facing intense challenges in highly dynamic business environment. The analysis shows that training and innovation are statistically significant and has a strong relationship with job satisfaction and organizational performance. In his study, he used positivist analogy, quantitative methodology and empirical epistemology. It was cross-sectional and used a hypothesis approach in one time to survey data collection within two Months. In this study, 121 responses were collected from electricals and electronics

manufacturing-based organizations in Malaysia. The results indicated that Strategic agility has a significant influence on organizational performance as per I-Top strategic agility model. The data was collected from market reports, cement manufacturers portals and websites and scientific studies and publications, journals, and newspapers.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study conceptualized the relationship between strategic agility and organizational performance as shown in Figure 1.

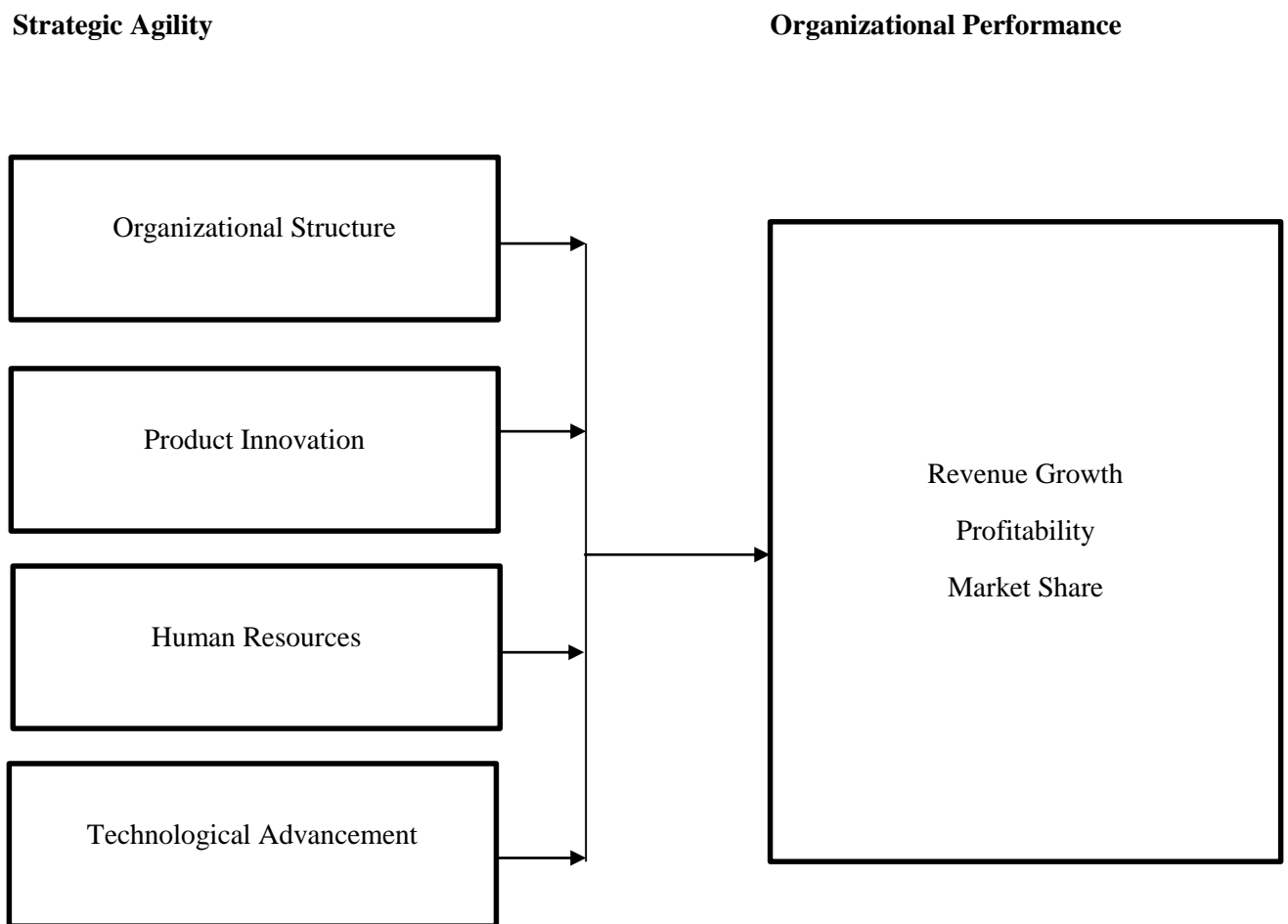


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a desktop research design, utilizing data from market reports, industry analyses, scientific reports, sales data, cement manufacturers' websites, and published scientific studies, journals, and newspapers. This approach allowed for an extensive review of existing knowledge without the need for costly and time-intensive fieldwork, making it suitable for exploratory research and comparative analyses of how strategic agility

variables affect organizational performance in Kenyan cement manufacturers (Thota et al., 2019). Additionally, the use of social websites for data, such as the study by David Crandall and colleagues at Cornell University, illustrates the value of non-reactive data collection from social media platforms, which can inform diverse fields like tourism, city planning, and economics through analysis of geo-tagged photos (Barras, 2009).

STUDY FINDINGS

Organizational structure and performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya

The first objective of this paper was to establish the effect of organizational structure on organizational performance of cement manufactures in Kenya. The findings result indicated that most of these firms had a matrix organizational structure with clear communication lines of authority and leadership. This well-defined hierarchy allowed for efficient decision -making and clear channels of communication, collaboration and streamlined processes and flows which resulted to improved productivity. A study by Kariuki and Nafula, (2020) indicated that organizational structure had a positive relationship between organizational structure and performance of cement manufacturing firms. These findings imply that the performance of the cement manufactures with suitable strategic structure will be higher than those with unsuitable or a poor organizational structure. For instance, Bamburi cement was found to have a matrix organizational structure that allowed clear lines of communication and integration among employees and customers. This is a justification to the theory of dynamic capability by Eisenhardt & Martin (2020) that asserts that organizations should be able to adapt their organizational structure to improve on its performance. Palanisamy et al,2022 and Muthuvelo et al, 2022 empirical evidence on “the Influence of strategic Agility on Organizational performance during pandemic is also justified that organizations with a suitable organizational structure experienced improved revenue growth. This in turned helped to improve on revenue and profitability. Thus, managers should consider the suitable organizational structure based on their area of operation in developing and protecting existing market shares, improving their revenue and profitability.

Technological advancement Strategy and Performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya

The second objective of the study was to assess the effect of technological advancement adoption innovation strategy on performance of cement manufacturing firms in Kenya.

From the findings, and more so from a study by Kariki & Nafula (2020) Correlation results indicated that technological advancement strategy and performance of cement manufacturing firms are positively and significantly related. Regression results indicated that information strategy and performance is positively and significantly related. There findings from other sources were that the Cement firms in Kenya had invested heavily on automation, advancement machine processing and digitization. All the firms were found to have invested on modern and automated machines and processes aimed at improved efficiency and productivity. They also used technology on data analysis, prediction, and digital marketing to reach a wide audience for their products. These resulted to improved performance in terms of growth in revenue, market share and profitability. This aligns with the dynamic capability and contingency theory on firms' ability to align and adapt with evolving technologies which results to improved performance. Kamau, Seneji and Nzioki (2019) studies on the influence that the capability of information technology has on the overall performance of Commercial banks in Kenya. Its conclusion that the competency of organization's performance information technology had a positive influence on the competitive advantage on Commercial banks in Kenya has also been justified that adoption of technological advancement as a strategy result to improved performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya.

Product Innovation Strategy and Performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya

The third objective of the study was to examine the influence of product innovation strategy on performance of cement manufacturing firms in Kenya. The findings from the desktop research indicated that these firms have continued to champion innovation through developing various brands of cement, adhesives and cabros that resolve most challenges in the construction industry. For instance, Bamburi different brands of cement, tector cerum SETI 300 Terracotta, ceramic etc. With the continuous innovation in brands, these firms have experienced revenue growth, growth in profitability and market share. This finding aligns with the dynamic capability theory in that cement firms needs to be dynamic in product innovation to experience increased revenue growth. It also concurs with empirical research done by Kariuki and Nafula (2020) on innovative strategies and performance in Cement manufacturers whose conclusion was increased product innovation had a positive relationship with performance. This means that a unitary improvement in product innovation strategy leads to an improvement in on performance of cement manufacturing firms.

Human resources Strategy and Performance of cement manufacturers in Kenya

The study's fourth objective focused on evaluating the impact of agile human resource strategies on the performance of cement manufacturing in Kenya. Findings revealed that firms, such as Mombasa Cement Limited, Bamburi, Portland, and Simba, prioritized top talent acquisition, employee training, and workforce involvement, resulting in increased revenue and profitability. This underscores the positive relationship between human resources and organizational performance, with investments in skilled professionals and training yielding tangible benefits. The study aligns with Eisenhardt & Martin's assertion (2020) that dynamic capabilities, including strategic adaptation of human resources, lead to improved performance. Given the pivotal role of cement manufacturers in infrastructure projects, the study advocates for the implementation of policies to promote agility in these firms. Overall, the research underscores the significant positive relationship between strategic agility and the performance of Kenya's cement manufacturers, with investments in agile human resources, emerging technologies, product innovation, and organizational structure correlating with revenue growth, profitability, and market share increases across industry leaders like Bamburi, Mombasa Cement Limited, East Africa Portland Cement Ltd, National Cement Ltd, and Savanna Cement Ltd.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that, the cement-manufacturing firm's ability to continually have the most suitable organizational structure, ensure consistent product innovation, application of modern technologies, and ensure they have the best human resource on board is an ingredient for increased revenue, profitability increase and market share growth. Cement organizations who do not remain strategically agile will struggle with loss in revenue, profitability will decline continually, and they will lose market share to competition. Cement manufacturers in Kenya and other organizations should make sure that they are strategically agile to realize the best performance in terms of their revenue growth, profitability, and market share growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that cement manufacturers prioritize strategic agility by investing in agile human resources, innovative technologies, and flexible organizational structures to drive revenue growth, profitability, and market share. Additionally, it suggests continuous product innovation, portfolio diversification, and benchmarking with industry

leaders to enhance performance and competitiveness. Further research avenues include exploring the relationship between strategic agility and performance in higher education institutions and different project funding contexts, as well as investigating the impact of other agility variables on organizational performance in Kenya's cement industry.

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