

INFLUENCE OF CREATIVITY ON PERFORMANCE OF KENYAN OWNED AIRLINE ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: This research aimed to investigate the influence of creativity on the performance of Kenyan-owned airlines, focusing on how entrepreneurial mindset and innovation impact business success within the industry.

Statement of Problem: The performance of Kenyan-owned airlines is influenced by various factors, with creativity being a key driver of success. This study seeks to understand the role of creativity in improving operational efficiency, customer loyalty, and overall business performance in the Kenyan airline industry.

Methodology: The study adopted a positivist research philosophy and utilized an exploratory research design. A descriptive survey design was employed, targeting 47 licensed Kenyan-owned airlines, from which a sample of 42 firms was selected through simple random sampling. The sample consisted of 32 passenger airlines and 10 cargo carriers. Data were collected from two respondents in each airline—chief executive officers and senior-level managers—resulting in a total sample size of 84. Structured questionnaires were used for primary data collection, and both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. A regression model was employed to analyze the relationship between creativity (independent variable) and performance (dependent variable).

Result: The study found a significant positive relationship between creativity and the performance of Kenyan-owned airlines ($R = 0.556$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.309$) indicates that creativity accounts for 30.9% of the variation in airline performance. The findings suggest that creative practices, such as innovation in service delivery and strategic market positioning, contribute substantially to business success in the industry.

Conclusion: The study concludes that creativity is a critical factor influencing the performance of Kenyan-owned airlines.

Recommendation: The study recommends that airline leaders foster a culture of creativity and innovation within their organizations.

Keywords: *Creativity, performance, Kenyan owned airlines*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs are widely recognized as the prime movers of economic development; the people who translate ideas into action (Shane, & Venkataraman, 2015). An entrepreneur is a person who has the ability to scan and identify opportunities in his or her environment. They then, gather the resources necessary to take advantage of the opportunities and implement successful action to utilize the opportunities (Shane, 2015).

Based on Shane and Venkataraman (2015) study, most people have a wide range of aptitudes—natural talents, tendencies, or capacities. Entrepreneurs apply their aptitudes to their business ventures. Entrepreneurs can visualize their end results or goals. They have a vision of their success, and they constantly work toward making it real. They make business decisions with this end in mind and don't get side-tracked (Shane & Venkataraman, 2015). Often, they have written their vision, either formally in a mission statement, or informally, perhaps in a personal journal. Entrepreneurs need to have a pretty high tolerance of risks, comfortably accept taking chances (Richert, 2014). Entrepreneurs are confident with themselves; it is easier for others to believe in them. Even if they fail, they know they will succeed the next time. This is a key characteristic of entrepreneurs (Krauss, 2019). Entrepreneurs are creative. Creating and running a business is hard work. It often means long hours, disappointments, and setbacks. Perseverance is the determination that pushes the entrepreneur to keep going, keep trying (Shane & Venkataraman, 2015). When an entrepreneur sees an opportunity, he or she takes the initiative. Initiative is the readiness and willingness to start a new enterprise. Entrepreneurs are self-motivated and quite willing to take on this leadership role and make themselves personally responsible for the success or failure of an operation. Entrepreneurs are passionate about their ideas, their company, and their vision (Krauss, 2019).

Entrepreneurial Mindset

An entrepreneurial mindset is distinct from Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) which is a collective identity in young entrepreneurial firms that fosters innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking among participants in the firm (Lumpkin & Dess, 2018). The entrepreneurial mindset exhibited through creativity, innovativeness and being business alert is the key to these firms that are able to stay above competition and performs as expected. Psychological research highlights that true creativity comes not from the areas in which one is generally active but from the ability to conceive something

that is both “new and appropriate” (Amabile, 2011). In this way, an entrepreneurial mindset is a philosophy by which individuals engage in creative acts. An entrepreneurial mindset can be contrasted to a “managerial mindset” which deals with creating order and efficiency through controlling, evaluating, and administering policies (Sarasvathy, Simon & Lave, 2018). Managerial mindset focuses on facilitation of business objectives within a set of policies and procedures. An entrepreneurial mindset is similar to ‘entrepreneurial cognitions’ in that they both signify a philosophy of personal identity and values and a group of heuristics or decision-making tools that entrepreneurs use to evaluate and exploit business opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2015).

Creativity is thinking new things, the ability to develop new ideas and to discover new ways of looking at problems and opportunities (Wolf, 2014). In an entrepreneur, it is critical for it to result in three exhibits. These are: Knowledge, which refers to having relevant understanding an individual brings to bear on a creative effort, creative thinking which shows how people approach problems and depends on personality and thinking style and finally motivation acting on an intrinsic passion that drives one to perform better. Creativity is a process by which a symbolic domain in the culture is changed. New songs, new ideas, new machines are what creativity is about (Mihaly & Wolf, 2015). It is the ability to make or otherwise bring into existence something new, whether a new solution to a problem, a new method or device, or a new artistic object or form. Wyckoff (2016) defines creativity as new and useful and the act of seeing things that everyone around us sees while making connections that no one else has made.

Statement of the Problem

In the developed countries, most notably the BRICs – Brazil, Russia, India, China – impressive growth has been driven by some veritable entrepreneurial activities (Naude, 2013). It has been observed that successful entrepreneurs are the movers of any economy in different sectors like the airline industry (Naude, 2013). Airline industry contribution towards economic growth is paramount for a sustainable economic development. This decade has seen local and East African airlines either winding up or experiencing loss positions constitutently (Wanjiku, 2014). Job losses as well as loss of revenue to the shareholders and government has been experienced. There has been a great emergence of new local and low fare airlines in Kenya over the last decade (Amadala, 2019).

In Kenya, the contribution to the GDP by the airline sector has been varying over the years for instance in the year 2014, the contribution was at 0.3%, the year 2017, the contribution increased to 0.4% and the year 2018 increased to 0.5% (KNBS, 2019). Notwithstanding that there are variations in the development of domestic commercial airlines, the profitability of the airlines has been plunging as airlines record a net loss of Kshs. 7.1 billion in 2017 compared to Kshs. 8 billion in 2018, with debt financing increasing to Kshs. 23billion in 2018 (AFRAA, 2018).

Njeru (2012) studied the extent of entrepreneurial mind-set and its effect to the performance of enterprises and found out that innovativeness relates to the firm's capacity to introduce new products. This capacity to innovate is among the most important factors that impact on business performance (Wanjiku, 2014). In previous studies targeting airlines in Kenya, there is a lot of focus on expansion projects in creating better financial performance and profitability of the Kenyan owned airlines. A study by Nabosu (2013) observed the focus by Kenya Airways to return to profitability through route expansion and buying larger carriers. A number of studies have shown that many businesses stagnate while others show remarkable performance in terms productivity, profitability or expanded market size. These aspects form the basis of this research since the airlines are operating under similar environment yet some have managed to perform exemplary well, while others seem to stagnate and struggling to remain afloat. Few studies have been done on airline performance in Kenya and no particular studies have been carried linking entrepreneurial creativity and performance of Kenyan airlines. One of the studies by Nabosu (2013) proposes this as an area of study. This study seeks to address this knowledge gap. It will investigate the influence of entrepreneurial creativity to the performance of Kenyan owned airlines.

Objective of the Study

To investigate the influence of creativity on Kenyan owned airlines' performance.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Creativity has no positive influence on business performance in the Kenyan airline industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship is driven by various motivational factors, with McClelland's Motivation Theory highlighting the key roles of achievement, power, and affiliation in entrepreneurial behavior. This theoretical framework is applied to understand how these motivations influence business performance, particularly in the context of Kenyan-owned airlines.

Theoretical Framework

McClelland's (1976, 1987) theory of motivation highlights three primary needs that drive entrepreneurial behavior: the need for achievement, power, and affiliation. McClelland argues that entrepreneurs are primarily driven by the need for achievement—the desire to succeed through their own efforts—which pushes them to create new ventures and overcome challenges. This need for achievement is linked to the entrepreneurial drive to innovate and excel, a characteristic that distinguishes entrepreneurs from business owners. According to McClelland (1987), the entrepreneur's focus is not solely on personal consumption but on producing for others, thus fostering an environment where the three needs—achievement, power, and affiliation—converge to shape entrepreneurial success. Subsequent research by Audretsch (2020) supports this, emphasizing that entrepreneurs are distinguished by their ability to make decisions under uncertainty and their drive for continuous improvement.

Barreto (2012) further supports McClelland's assertion by noting that not everyone possesses the combination of needs required to become an entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs must have a strong need for achievement, as well as a need for affiliation and power, which together form the foundation of an entrepreneurial personality. This need for achievement is essential for fostering economic and social development, as it propels entrepreneurs to persist despite challenges such as financial constraints or external pressures (Lobler, 2018). McClelland's (1987) Kakinada Experiment, conducted across India, America, and Mexico, demonstrated that high achievement motivation could be induced in young adults through training and exposure to success-oriented thinking. This experiment reinforced the idea that entrepreneurs are not only driven by intrinsic motivation but also by external strategies that encourage the cultivation of these needs.

Further insights into entrepreneurship highlight the role of innovation and resource management. According to Mwangi and Ngugi (2012), the economic psychological model of entrepreneurship emphasizes the handling of scarce resources, entrepreneurial

competence, and managerial skills as directly influencing business performance. Entrepreneurs excel by not just utilizing existing business factors such as land, labor, and capital, but also by introducing innovation and new technology (Audretsch, 2020). Njeru, Namusonge, and Kihoro (2012) add that growth-oriented enterprises tend to prioritize innovation, with a long-term commitment to growth rather than short-term profit. This alignment of motivation, innovation, and long-term planning underscores the critical link between achievement orientation and entrepreneurial success. The motivation theory, therefore, provides a useful framework for understanding how entrepreneurs develop the traits necessary for navigating challenges and achieving business goals, particularly in contexts like the performance of Kenyan-owned airlines.

Creativity

Creativity is defined as production of novel and useful ideas in any domain that defines new processes or products (Rogers, 2013). There are some processes influencing creativity. Associative process is involved in divergent thinking and problem solving while cognitive flexibility is process by which obvious patterns of thinking are discarded and new higher order rules are adopted. Intrinsic motivation is process where people feel motivated by interest, challenge and satisfaction of work itself.

Creative thinking is capacity to put existing ideas in new combinations and is facilitated by diversity of experience and learning (Baregheh, 2016). Divergent thinking is process by which one extrapolates many possible answers to an initial stimulus or target data while intuition of flash intelligence is a flash of a recognition that problem is solved. Also, the considered is flow when a person is fully immersed in what is being done and has a feeling of energized focus, shows full involvement and success and excludes other stimuli leading to creativity. The ability of an entrepreneurs to solve problems using this level of creativity explains the extent of entrepreneurial mindset.

Empirical Review

In business, creativity is key in positioning a business within the market. Levine (2013) showed that in the airline industry there are further economies that have been demonstrated to play an even greater role than economies of scale: economies of scope, which denotes the reach of a route network; and economies of density that depicts the combination of small distributed loads from a number of points of origin into a larger more economical load through a center to a final destination. Yet the advent of so called low-cost, direct

service carriers, has demonstrated that superior performance can be achieved with relatively low-density economies (point to point services versus hub and spoke) and high performance can be maintained with relatively limited scope economies and slow growth.

Airlines have come up with a strategy to ensure customers are properly treated by offering services through alliances and travel intermediaries. According to Dhar and Sundararajan (2017), this is one of the disruptive strategies that modern business ought to adopt. Christensen (2013) contends that a disruptive strategy ought to be customer-focused and focusing a low-income market niche` and this exactly what customer data analytics seeks to achieve. There are three types of travel intermediaries: travel agents, business travel agents and tour operators. Each of them is an integral part of the travel industry. Firstly, travel agents perform as sales intermediaries between the end user and companies such as airlines, car rental and ferry operators. They represent package tour companies, airlines, coach and rail operators, while they advise potential travelers on a large spectrum of travel related issues concerning the journey itself, accommodation and final destination (Bhatia, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used positivism research philosophy. The researcher used exploratory research to understand the effect of interactive relationship between an entrepreneurial mindset exhibited through innovations and the airline performance. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The target population was Kenyan owned airlines. There are 47 Kenyan owned licensed airlines. The research focused on a population of these airlines from whom a sample of 42 firms were selected through simple random sampling method. The sample comprised of 32 passenger airlines and 10 cargo commercial carriers. In the 42 airlines, the researcher accessed two subjects, a chief executive officer and a senior level manager giving a total sample size of 84. The study employed structured questionnaires to collect primary data. Both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics was generated. From this data, a regression model was used to show the relationship between the independent variables to the dependent variable.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to describe the basic features of the data collected and the quantitative descriptions presented in tables and figures. Descriptive analysis preceded

quantitative analysis of the data done to test the hypotheses proposed by the research model. General descriptive statistics of the study variables were summarized through the use of frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviation and figures. The researcher started by a general analysis on the demographic data got from the respondents which included: gender, age of respondents, length of operation of the airline and level of management of the respondents.

Gender of Respondents

The respondents were required to indicate their gender by either ticking against the option of male or female. The findings revealed that majority 53 (66%) of the respondents were male while the remaining 27 (34%) were female. The information on gender was done to ascertain that there was a balance in the distribution of views collected from both genders. The findings indicate that while male respondents were slightly more than female respondents, there was diversity in the respondents and hence the data collected was not expected to be distorted by factors relating to data distribution.

This is also an indicator that Kenyan airlines are in compliance with the gender equality rule in the Kenyan constitution which states that none of the gender sensitive institutions that give equal opportunities to both males and females. Gender distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	53	66
Female	27	34
Total	80	100

Age of Respondents

The study sought to determine the respondents' age. Majority 39 (54%) of the respondents were of ages above 40 years while 26 (32%) were of ages between 30 to 40 years. A few 15 (14%) were below 30 years. This indicates that the response on the influence of entrepreneurial mindset on performance of Kenyan owned airline enterprises was from a wide representation of ages among the employees.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age of respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	15	14
30 to 40 years	26	32
Above 40 years	39	54
Total	80	100

Length of Operation of the Airline

The respondents were required to state the length of time the airline had been in operation. Majority 64 (58%) of the respondents indicated for over 5 years. A few (28%) had their airlines being in operation for between 3 to 5 years while (14%) had them for less than 2 years. The findings indicate that the airline had been in operation long enough to be experience and sufficient to evaluate the influence of entrepreneurial mindset on performance of Kenyan owned airline enterprises. Hence, information provided was reliable and could be used to make conclusions on the study hypothesis and variables. The findings also indicate that airlines stay in the market for long periods within Kenya and therefore a good indication of high entrepreneurial mindset. This can be attributed to the aspects of ready market in the aviation industry. Findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Length of Operation of the Airline

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2	15	14
3 to 5 years	31	28
Over 5 years	64	58
Total	110	100

Level of Management

The respondents were required to state their level of management at the given airline enterprise. Majority 43 (54%) of the respondents were juniors while 25 (31%) were mid-level employees. A few 12 (15%) were of senior levels. The findings indicate that the participants represented all level of management and therefore were conversant with the operations and therefore were better informed of the influence of entrepreneurial mindset on performance of Kenyan owned airline enterprises.

Table 4. Level of management

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
Junior	43	54
Mid-level	25	31
Senior	12	15
Total	80	100

Effect of Creativity on Kenyan Owned Airlines' Performance

The study probed the effect of creativity on performance of Kenyan owned airlines by examining if the products are usually updated to ensure that they remain attractive to the customers. If the organizations remain attractive to new customers by rebranding regularly and if by acting on customer feedback, they attract new customers. The researcher investigated if they maintained their original brand to get customers and if they usually ensure durability to maintain the customer base. The study probed if the firms chose their current market through a feasibility study or by observing the need in the market. The findings are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect of Creativity on Kenyan Owned Airlines' Performance

Creativity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The products is usually updated to ensure that they remain attractive to the customers	80	3.99	.849
I remain attractive to new customers by rebranding regularly	80	4.05	.745
By acting on customer feedback I attract new customers	80	4.33	.776
I maintain my original brand to get customers	80	4.04	.754
I usually ensure durability to maintain my customer base	80	3.96	.863
I chose by current market through a feasibility study	80	3.90	.851
By observing the need in the market I am able to identify my market	80	3.91	.930
My friends advise me on the market	80	4.08	.839
Am able to satisfy my customers by employing more workers	80	3.98	.795
In venturing in new markets, I get new customers	80	4.05	.794
I ensure customers loyalty and growth through low prices	80	4.10	.773
By maintaining quality, I get to win customers loyalty and growth in business	80	4.16	1.049

Through advertising I get new customers and loyalty and business growth	80	4.03	.993
I continually improve the products to enhance business performance	80	4.03	.993

A large number of the respondents agreed that the products was usually updated to ensure that they remain attractive to the customers as revealed by a mean of 3.99 and a standard deviation of .849. Majority agreed that they remained attractive to new customers by rebranding regularly as shown by a mean of 4.05 and a standard deviation of .745 and by acting on customer feedback I attract new customers as shown by a mean of 4.33 and a standard deviation of .776. A large number maintain their original brand to get customers as indicated by a mean of 4.04 and a standard deviation of .754 and they usually ensure durability to maintain my customer base as shown by a mean of 3.96 and a standard deviation of .863. A large number agreed that they chose by current market through a feasibility study as revealed by a mean of 3.90 and a standard deviation of .851 and by observing the need in the market they are able to identify their market as shown by a mean of 3.91 and a standard deviation of .930. Creative thinking is capacity to put existing ideas in new combinations and is facilitated by diversity of experience and learning (Baregheh, 2016). Divergent thinking is process by which one extrapolates many possible answers to an initial stimulus or target data while intuition of flash intelligence is a flash of a recognition that problem is solved. Also, the considered is flow when a person is fully immersed in what is being done and has a feeling of energized focus, shows full involvement and success and excludes other stimuli leading to creativity. The ability of an entrepreneurs to solve problems using this level of creativity explains the extent of entrepreneurial mindset.

The study revealed that Kenyan-owned airlines emphasize various strategies to enhance customer loyalty and business growth. Respondents indicated that they receive valuable market advice from friends (mean = 4.08), employ more workers to meet customer needs (mean = 3.98), and attract new customers by venturing into new markets (mean = 4.05). They also focus on maintaining low prices (mean = 4.10) and ensuring product quality (mean = 4.16) to drive customer loyalty. Advertising (mean = 4.03) and continuous product improvement (mean = 4.03) were also identified as key factors in expanding their customer base and fostering business growth. Creativity, defined as the production of novel and

useful ideas, plays a significant role, with processes like associative thinking, cognitive flexibility, and intrinsic motivation driving innovation in these businesses (Rogers, 2013).

Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was done using t-tests. In this study, the research rejected the null hypothesis if the t-calculated is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 thus accepting the alternative hypothesis. In a stipulation where the t-calculated is greater than the t-critical value, the study did not reject the null hypothesis. The study tested the effect of creativity on Kenyan owned airlines' performance. This was through performing a regression analysis to determine and test the hypothesis for the existence of a link between the two variables. The composite index was computed for attributes relating to innovativeness and Kenyan owned airlines' performance and the hypothesis tested through multiple regression analysis. The hypothesis stated that creativity has no positive influence on business performance in the Kenyan airline industry. The results are in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Output

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.556 ^a	.309	.012	88.67954		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Creativity						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	15323.990	1	15323.990	81.949	.167 ^b
	Residual	613396.760	78	7864.061		
	Total	628720.750	79			
a. Dependent Variable: Kenyan owned airlines' performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Creativity						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	8.273	83.794		.337	.737
	Creativity	0.736	20.585	.156	1.396	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Kenyan owned airlines' performance						

The results indicate that there is a relatively strong but significantly positive association between creativity influence performance in the Kenyan airline industry ($R=.556$). The coefficient of determination $R^2=.309$ implies that creativity influence explains 30.9% of

the variation in performance in the Kenyan airline industry. The other variables in the Kenyan airline industry explain the remaining 69.1%. This is an indicator of a weak influence of creativity on performance in the Kenyan airline industry. The analysis from the model had the F value of 81.949 with p-value $.000 < 0.05$, while the results of the beta coefficient showed that a unit increase in creativity will cause a .414 increase in performance in the Kenyan airline industry ($B=.736$, $t=1.396$, $p<0.05$). This implies that creativity is a good a relatively poor predictor of performance in the Kenyan airline industry. The findings, thus, were sufficient to support the influence of creativity on performance in the Kenyan airline industry; therefore, the hypothesis (H_0) was rejected.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The study found that creativity positively influences the performance of Kenyan-owned airlines. Respondents highlighted the importance of product updates and rebranding to attract and retain customers. Many airlines identified their market through feasibility studies and market observation, ensuring customer satisfaction by employing more staff and offering competitive prices. Additionally, maintaining quality, advertising, and continual product improvement were key strategies for fostering customer loyalty and business growth.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that creativity is a critical component of the entrepreneurial mindset among Kenyan-owned airlines, significantly contributing to increased market share and sustainable business growth. By consistently updating products, rebranding, and maintaining their original brand, these airlines ensure customer attraction and retention. They effectively identify their market through feasibility studies and keen observation of market needs. The use of external advice, strategic pricing, quality maintenance, and advertising further fosters customer loyalty and business expansion. Overall, the continual improvement of products plays a vital role in enhancing business performance and sustaining growth in a competitive market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the airlines leaders should be mentors to enhance the development of employee cohesion, participation, and teamwork. This will enhance loyalty and commitment of employees and clients to the organization. The airlines should be formulating policies that are sensitive on the needs of people both inside and outside

the organization and the employees need to be dynamic and creative to better the performance of the organization.

Generally, entrepreneurial mindset practices have positive effect on performance of Kenyan owned airline. To any government, performance of Kenyan owned airlines is of great concern. The study recommends that the government to issue policy guidelines requiring all Kenyan owned airlines to adopt practices that combats performance challenges. Further, a harmonized detailed entrepreneurial mindset practices policy should be formulated to ensure that no Kenyan owned airlines is left out in providing improved performance. Kenyan owned airlines further need to constantly monitor their operations to determine the additional entrepreneurial mindset initiatives that need to be adopted to improve performance of Kenyan owned airlines.

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