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Nyanchama, Peninah Andrew & Dr. Elishiba Murigi

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[1]Nyanchama, Peninah Andrew & [2]Dr. Elishiba Murigi

[1]Masters Student, Kenyatta University-Department of Business Administration

***E-mail Address: pencham09@gmail.com**

[2]Lecturer, Kenyatta University-Department of Business Administration

E-mail Address: Murigi.elishiba@ku.ac.ke

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Abstract

Strategic management practice has gained significance in recent years, particularly in the Kenyan banking industry. Players in banking industry are continuously under intense pressure to profoundly change the manner in which they do business to remain competitive and ensure their survival. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of Customer focus Strategies on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The study adopted a primary research methodology, which involved use of closed questionnaires to collect data from a sample of 65 employees selected from among the staff and board members of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. Data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0 software. Findings from the study revealed that customer focus strategies ($p=0.028$; $p<0.05$) have a significant influence on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. Customer focus strategies are part of strategic change management practices that influence the performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. It was recommended that Cooperative Bank of Kenya should engage in continuous improvement through maintaining focus on customers in order to sustain performance.

Key words: Change Management Practices, Customer Focus, Cooperative Bank of Kenya.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The banking sector in Kenya is facing a lot of challenges with vicious reports swirling about the financial health of many banks and discerning where the reality is sandwiched between countless shades of grey is strangely difficult. Recent decade has seen banking sector in Kenya has gone through challenging environmental changes not witnessed before. Banking sector has not been spared either. Managing this increasingly competitive environment has called on companies in the industry to reconsider their business strategies (Pearce & Robinson, 2007).

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Gone are the days when banks could just wait for customers to beat a path to their gates. Organizations particularly in the banking industry have realized that their services, irrespective of how good they are, simply do not sell themselves (Pearce & Robinson, 2007).

Strategies have become great assets for organizations seeking to improve their performance. Strategy is defined as a high-level plan set to attain the basic long term goals of an organization. It also involves implementation of various alternatives and allocating needed resources to execute various goals. Strategic Management concerns setting goals and adopting corrective and timely actions in the business (Pearce & Robinson, 2005). Strategic management practices has various phases including planning strategy; implementation of strategy, control of strategy and evaluation strategy. Usually, strategic change management practices can go a long way in improving the efficiency in a number of organizations (Johnson & Scholes, 2003). Strategies thus are crucial to organizations because they provide a guidance top management to focus effort, set direction, describe or clarify the business as well as and offer guidance or consistency in response to the business environment.

Strategic change management within an organization is inevitable in modern times. Due to the ever competitive global scene, companies have to continuously adapt their organizational strategies to remain in the market. Most banks in Kenya and the world at large continue to prioritise customer focus strategies due to the belief that the customer is the reason for existence of the business. Customer focus strategies involve increasing number of market players in the banking sector have forced companies to become market oriented as opposed to product oriented, through constantly aiming to provide consumers improved services to remain market positions; necessitating flexible changing processes (Bitner et al., 2010). Additionally, Lin (2010) claim the importance for companies to be flexible due to developments in aspects of information technology, which have increased the market dynamic speedily; and force companies to do so as well.

The main goal of banking organisations is continuous improvement of their services with the aim of enhancing levels of performance. Bates & Holton (1995) define performance as a construct whose measurement varies as a result of a host of factors. They further state, when measuring performance it's essential to state clearly from the onset the objective of the measurement process that is, if it is to measure the behaviours or outcomes. Performance is also defined as a record of the outcome of individual activities. The level of performance is influenced by a number of issues such as individual person character, organization management, interpersonal issues and situational factors.

Using the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) July 2017 report, Kenya's banking industry presently comprises of 43 commercial banks, which were broken down as follows, 1 Home finance firm, 3 Islamic Banks, 12 MFI banks, 8 foreign banks representative offices, 86 foreign exchange bureaus, 3 credit reference bureaus and 14 money remittance providers (http://www.central bank.go.ke). The Co-operative Bank of Kenya Limited operates three subsidiary companies. The first subsidiary is Kingdom Securities Limited: Is a stockbroking company with the bank holding a controlling a stake of 60%. The second subsidiary is Co-op Trust Investment Services Limited. This subsidiary is the fund management subsidiary and it is wholly-retained by the bank. Finally**,** the Cooperative Bank of Kenya operates Consultancy & Insurance Agency Limited (CCIA). CCIA offers services including corporate finance, financial advisory and capacity-building. Similar to Co-op Trust Investment Services Limited, Cooperative Bank has a full ownership of CCIA subsidiary.gn banks representative offices, 86 foreign exchange bureaus, 3 credit reference bureaus and 14 money remittance providers. The Cooperative Bank of Kenya Ltd is one of the leading banks within East African Community.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many organizations in the banking sector in recent years are experiencing mergers, downsizing as well as change in management yet many of the companies keep wavering with regards to effectively manage change practices. Kehone (2007) and Maginn, (2007) concur that all firms are constantly changing and they either change or else wither away. Hoque (2004) noted that the main motive for undertaking an organizational strategic change is coping with the dynamic business environment and taking competitive advantage. Banking sector in Kenya is characterized by stiff competition among its players. In this regard, many financial institutions are in cut throat competition with one another to deliver customers' products and services and attain a competitive advantage over other firms.

There are countless pool of literature and studies conducted in the area of Strategic Change Management for example; Marangu (2012) studied the perception of employee on the change management practices and their effect on performance at KPLC. Mutura (2012) study looked at stakeholder involvement in change management process in the insurance industry within Nairobi County, Kenya. Kiilu (2012) research examined strategic change management within judiciary of Kenya. An interesting study by Mwandembo (2012) examined organizational structural design and change management practices within Kenya Revenue Authority KRA. Similarly, Njeri (2011) study explored change management practices within NIC bank of Kenya. From the past studies conducted, none has been conducted to identify the relationship between strategic change management practices and performance of banks.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To determine the effect of Customer focus Strategies on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya.

1.4 Research hypothesis

H0-Customer focus strategies have no effect on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya.

1.5 Significance

The study's findings will be useful to business scholars for future studies in this expansive area of change management process. The research will further inform theory in the related field of strategic change management by analysing whether change management practices stipulated in the literature is applicable to other organizations not only in Kenya but globally. Moreover, this research will be valuable to executive as well as staff commercial banks operating within the banking industry in Kenya by providing information concerning customer focus strategies and their influence on the performance of the bank.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study is underpinned by three theories namely learning Organization Theory, the Open System Theory and Resource Based View Theory.

2.1.1 Learning Organization Theory

Learning organization theory is a change approach designed at help in formulating and using knowledge in building capability for endless transformation and learning. The approach indicate that learning business organizations continuously search for strategic change through learning, communication as well as experimentation to reinvent itself continuously. The process of learning is a vital prerequisite to managers as well as workforce for any operative change process to happen.

Relevance of the theory becomes very vital to the study for minus the process learning, skills and the attitudes necessary in formulating and implementing a new strategic undertaking won't develop; neither will a novel frame by which selection as well as promotion choices are completed (Hoque, 2004). Further organizations in all industries use knowledge as well as value based changes advocated for in the theory to enhance their problem solving capabilities. Learning enterprises are built by personal mastery of individual shared visions, team learning and mental models within the business organization repetitive tasks. The learning organizational theory is vital for it help understand why unpredictable business situations where change process is formulated and driven from the top for example banking sector. Many scholars have argued that the suitability of learning organizational theory may be dependent on the culture of organization. These important aspects of the theory make the learning theory very important especially to the staff that have a direct contact with the customers.

According to learning organizational theory, it is critical that an organization to continuous cultivates a learning culture because there are no better or worse approaches to change process. As an alternative, there is need to think along appropriateness of an approach to the circumstances being handled. The subject, thus, becomes one of ensuring that the approach developed is the best for the circumstances.

2.1.2 Open System Theory

All organizations are open systems. Open systems theory denotes to the concept that organizations irrespective of the industry are strongly influenced by the environment they operate in (Bastedo, 2006). An open system generally implies one which work together with the surrounding business environment with regards to inputs and outputs. Bastedo (2006) argues that this interaction with the business environment implies that open systems demand to adapt to the changes process.

The theory is relevant to the study for organizations for example in the banking sector are open systems that possess a number of interrelated sub-systems. These include goals of the organization, the technological semi-systems, values semi-systems, the managerial semi-systems and the psychological semi-systems. These interconnected semi-systems receive inputs from other semi-systems and converts them into outputs for use by further semi-systems subsequently influencing organization performance. The open systems process structures the functions of a business organization, in a way that through distinct lines of coordination the business objectives are collectively pursued (Li, 2005).

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2.1.3 Resource Based View Theory

Day (1994) developed the resource based view of the firm. The resource based view theory is founded on firm performance. Day (1994) posited that the distinctiveness of an organization's capabilities have a significant influence on its competitive advantage. The theory of Resource Based View as a theory was developed by and. According to the resource based view of the firm, performance of an entity is largely determined by the resources that it possesses. Thus, the uniqueness of the resources that a firm owns contributes to the sustainability of its competitive advantage. Generating a viable strategy in an organization involves the strategic planning function relying on organizational resources available to them. This emphasizes the necessity of thorough checking on the resources at the organization's disposal for implementing a specific predetermined strategy such as change management strategy or product diversification.

The resource based view theory exhibits relevance to the study because it theoretically underpins the understanding of ways through which firms can strategically and efficiently manage various resources in order to achieve its prospects. The resources of the firm include its human resources such as customer care staff. This study seeks to identify how the quality of resources owned by Cooperative Bank that can be used to boost performance through maintaining focus on customers. The study will critically analyze the extent to which Cooperative Bank's resources meet the attributes of being valuable, rare, inimitable, and costly, and if the resources actually enhances performance or not.

2.2 Empirical Review

Payne & Holt (2001) emphasized the centrality of the importance of customer satisfaction should never be neglected. Baker (2014) argues that customer focus strategies should be a key consideration especially while planning marketing and positioning campaigns in any organization. Satisfied customers are more probable to share organization's content across the various platforms. Communication aspects should be emphasized in strategic change management process targeting employees.

Although many studies point out that communication is a key success factor within strategy change implementation (Peng and Litteljohn, 2001), communicating with employees concerning issues related to the strategy management is normally delayed until the changes have already crystallized. Turning a customer service strategy into actuality is a critical challenge for organizations (Baker, 2014). Customer service is today undeniably the competitive strategic weapon to increase competitiveness in dynamic business environment. Organizations need to develop customer-driven workforce that not only ensures productivity but likewise long term business strategic change.

A focus on customers is argued to influence strategic change (Baker, 2014). Managers all over the world can never underestimate the need to focus on customers for it provides them good value, and improve productivity. In fact, metrics such as market share and customer satisfaction have become so critical that many organizations not only track them frequently but also reward employees based on such measures.

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2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in figure 1 below depicts the relationship between customer focus strategies and performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya.

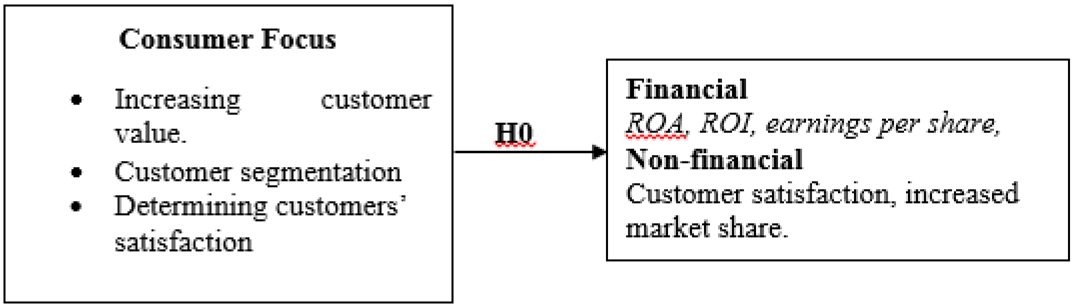

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a primary research methodology. A case study design was used. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2015) posit that a research design is the structure of any research project that holds the element in a research together. The study was a case study for the reason that the unit of analysis was only one organization, Cooperative Bank of Kenya limited. For purposes of this study the target population was stratified through Cooperative Bank of Kenya Management Board and staff (i.e. Group managing directors, chairmen), branch managers and middle managers, Heads of Departments totalling to 215 employees of the Cooperative Bank of Kenya limited Kenya.

Table 1: Target population distribution

Branch	Target population (N)	Percentage
Coop Trust	135	62.7
Coop Bank House	80	37.2
Total	**215**	**100**

A sample size of 30% of the target population is large enough so long as it allows for reliable data analysis as well as allowing testing for significance of differences between given estimates (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Thus, a proportionate sample size of approximate 65 respondents, which is 30% precision of the population was selected using a stratified sampling technique from the sample.

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Table 1: Sample Size Distribution

Branch	Target population (N)	Percentage	Sample Size
Coop Trust	135	30%	41
Coop Bank House	80	30%	24
Total	**215**	**30%**	**65**

The research instruments for this study were questionnaires. According to Neil (2010), collecting and analyzing quantitative data requires researchers to use closed-ended questionnaires. The structure of closed questionnaires is such that they gives respondents chances of selecting an option from a list of options. Data collection involved administering the closed-ended questionnaires to the senior management team of Cooperative Bank of Kenya limited. Both online and printed questionnaires were used. Online questionnaires were mailed to branch managers from regions that are not located within Nairobi and its environs.

Data collected was coded and entered into SPSS (Statistical Software for Social Sciences). Coding involved assigning response real numbers to the responses that are non-parametric in order to make them parametric; this was necessary to make them permissible in analyzing using the SPSS. The codes will be entered into the software and analysis carried out to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages/proportions, and crosstabs. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, included statistics that provide relationships among variables; these include correlations and regressions. A multiple regression model was used to link the independent variables to the dependent variable as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Performance; X_1= Consumer focus strategies; ε = Error term; β_0 = the constant term

β_0 and β_1 measure of the sensitivity of the dependent variable (Y) to unit change in the predictor variable X_1

Using the multiple regression, it was possible to determine the effect of change on an independent variable on the dependent variable. The multiple regression model was used to reject/not reject hypothesis depending on the value of p-values that were generated. Presentation of the findings was done using tables, pie charts and histograms. These was meant to make findings clearer and enhance the appealing nature of the final output of the study.

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4.0 Findings

4.1 Response rate and Demographics

Out of the 65 questionnaires that were expected to be filled and returned to the researcher, only 61 were successfully filled and returned. This translated to 93.84%, as shown in the pie chart in figure 1 below.

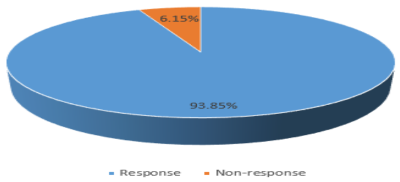

Figure 2: Response Rate

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

Majority of the respondents were female (52.5%) aged 31-40 years (37.7%) with a first degree level of education (54.1%) and having worked with cooperative bank for a period of 3-4 years (3-4 years). What this means is that the views presented in the findings from this research are mostly of the groups whose proportions are highest. However, all groups exhibit almost equal representations except for the level of education, which is represented by only first degree (54.1%), postgraduate (42.6%) and tertiary (3.3%).

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

The variable Customer focus was made up of only five items. Similarly, frequency, standard deviations and mean analyses were executed and the results presented using table 3 below.

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Table 3: Descriptive Analysis for Customer Focus

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	The focus of the organization in organizational change is to satisfy needs of customers.	45.9%	39.3%	4.9%	9.8%	-	1.787	.9330
2	When changes are being implemented, increasing customer value is the priority.	36.1%	44.3%	11.5%	8.2%	-	1.918	.8999
3	Organizational change management is executed based on data from customer requirements.	26.2%	44.3%	16.4%	13.1%	-	2.164	.9692
4	Customers are segmented in order to identify their needs and address them whenever changes are made.	36.1%	41%	8.2%	9.8%	4.9%	2.066	1.1383
5	The focus on customers enhances the rate at which organizational change management is actualized.	42.6%	32.8%	9.8%	9.8%	4.9%	2.016	1.1760
	Aggregates						**1.990**	**1.023**

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

From this analysis, it can be observed that Cooperative Bank of Kenya is highly prioritising customer focus. Most of the choices made based on the statements defining this variable ranged between 1 and 2, which represent strongly agree and agree with the Likert Scale statements. The greatest proportion of customers strongly agreed that the focus of the organization in organizational change is to satisfy needs of customers (45.9%). Similarly, the statement, *the focus on customers enhances the rate at which organizational change management is actualized*, also attracted a huge proportion of the respondents who strongly agreed (42.7%). The aggregate mean for the variable customer focus was 1.9902, which becomes 2 when rounded off to the nearest whole number. This means that regardless of a few respondents who expressed disagreeing and neutrality, most of the respondents agreed with the respondents. However, the standard deviation of 1.02328 indicates a high variability of the choices that participants made.

While questioning the actual need for organizational change, Peng and Litteljohn (2001) insisted that everything is cantered on satisfying the needs of customers. If a company wants to do any kind of restructuring without a customer in mind, such a change is potentially unnecessary. The findings further exhibits consistency with the assertion by Baker (2014) that organizations intending to change focus on increasing customer value, but to achieve this value, the need to understand customers through proper segmentation becomes a priority. Through focusing on customers, Baker (2014) argues that the rate at which the objectives of organizational change management are achieved is increased.

4.3 Regression and Correlation Analysis

The association between customer focus strategies and performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya was 0.871 (r=0.871). Similarly, a 1 unit change in customer focus would lead to 0.871 change in the performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The correlation between management commitment strategies and performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya is statistically significant, evidenced by the p-value of 0.00 ($p<0.05$).

From the regression analysis, the coefficient of the independent variable (customer focus strategies) was 0.152 as shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.115	.079		-1.454	.151
AV_CF Customer Focus	.152	.067	.146	2.261	.028

a. Dependent Variable: AV_BP Performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya

(Source: Survey data, 2019)

The table above shows the coefficient of the independent variable that can be used to create the predictive equation of the form $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X1 + \varepsilon$. Thus, the equation becomes:

$Y=-.115+0.152X+ \varepsilon$

Where: Y = Performance; X_1= Consumer focus strategies; ε = Error term.

The coefficient of employee customer focus strategies is 0.152. This means that a unit increase in management commitment when all other variables are held constant lead to a 0.152 increase in performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The relationship is positive, but weak. The hypothesis being tested in this study was ‘customer focus strategies have no effect performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya’. Analysis from the study revealed that the p-value for customer focus is 0.028. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05 ($p<0.05$), null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, customer focus strategies have a significant effect on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya.

5.0 Conclusions

The third objective intended to determine the effect of customer focus strategies on performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The research findings revealed that customer focus is a central element of change management at Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The aggregate mean for customer focus was found to be 1.9902, which becomes 2 (agree) when rounded off to the nearest whole number. This means that majority of the respondents agreed with the statements depicting customer focus. Particular elements of employee focus that Cooperative Bank gives attention to during change management processes include satisfaction of the needs of customers, increasing customer value, using data from customers to support change prospects, and segmenting customers in order to identify their actual needs.

The correlation between customer focus and performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya was found to be 0.871. This implies that customer focus and performance of the bank have a strong and positive association. Regression analysis revealed that the coefficient of management commitment strategies is 0.152 and a p-value of 0.028. This implies that the relationship between management commitment and performance of Cooperative bank of Kenya is weak, but positive. The relationship is statistically significant given that the p-value is less than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis depicting the relationship between customer focus strategies and performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya is rejected. Emphasizing customer-centricity in organizational change management was supported by Peng and Litteljohn (2001) and Baker (2014).

Customer focus strategies affect the performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. The reason for customer focus is founded on the popular saying that makes the customer the king of any business activity. Thus, any organizational change implemented in Cooperative Bank of Kenya is basically meant to improve customer satisfaction. Therefore, organizational change prospects ought to use customer data based on their needs and requirements to prioritize customer value. Segmenting customer needs can greatly enhance the extent to which the bank satisfies customer needs and addresses emerging needs when implementing organizational changes. Focusing organizational changes on customers not only improves organizational performance, but also enhances the speed of actualizing organizational change management plans.

6.0 Recommendations

Cooperative Bank of Kenya should adopt the latest communication technologies to improve not only management of internal aspects, but also the ways of anticipating and identifying customer needs so that they can satisfy them in real time. Cooperative Bank of Kenya should invest in areas such as focusing organisational change activities on satisfying the needs of customers, prioritising customer value, and using reliable data to determine the requirements of customers. Similarly, the bank should properly segment its customers and identify their needs and address them whenever organizational changes are carried out.

6.1 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that it used a limited sample of only 65 participants, which were executives of Cooperative Bank of Kenya. Although a high response rate was achieved (93.84%), this sample is small to allow for the generalizability of the findings. moreover, the study concentrated only on one organization (Cooperative Bank of Kenya). This contextual limitation also reduces the extent to which findings can be generalized to other businesses. Thematically, the study also restricted its focus to customer focus strategies as a change management practice. Other aspects of business management that influence performance of Cooperative Bank of Kenya were not given attention in this study.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

Future researchers may consider replicating the topic of this study to wider populations across larger geographical locations. Given that this study was carried as partial fulfilment for academic purposes, the limited context and number a small sample can be excused. However, studies meant for purposes of informing policies require large samples of about 1,000-2,000 respondents and based on intercompany comparisons. Other factors that may influence performance of the bank such as internal politics, the quality of marketing and ability of the bank to support its investments could also be investigated in future research.

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