

Effect of Strategic Orientation on Organizational Efficiency of Floriculture Farms In Naiveta Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract: *Strategic orientation is important in making an organization enhance performance and gain a competitive advantage in its operating environment. The floriculture farming and export industry is experiencing increasing competitive and legislative pressure, and the firms have had to react in some strategic fashion to cushion themselves from the new developments as well as increase their organizational efficiency as a means of competitive advantage. However, their strategic orientation to the new developments remains unknown, as previous studies have only focused on factors influencing strategy implementation and performance in flower firms in Kenya. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Strategic orientation on organizational efficiency in Floriculture Farms in Naivasha Sub-County. The specific objective of the study was to establish the effect of aggressive orientation on the organizational efficiency of the floriculture firms in Naivasha Sub-County. The Resource Based View guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and targeted 185 management members from 37 Floriculture Farms in Naivasha Sub-County. Purposive and random samplings were used to obtain a sample size of 112 respondents. Data was collected through questionnaires and data sheets. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to analyse the data. The findings revealed that aggressive orientation had the greatest influence on firm efficiency. The study recommended that firms ought to adopt aggressive strategies only if they have a sound risk strategy to cushion them from their agility.*

Key words: *floriculture firms, Naivasha Sub-County, organizational efficiency, strategic orientation,*

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I. Introduction

Globally the rising competition, breakthrough technological, changing demand patterns and other changes have increased the responsibility to managers to deliver superior performance and enhance market value to shareholders. It could be fatal for companies to ignore these changing conditions. Therefore, organizations are striving to improve performance by developing and implementing effective business strategies that exploit opportunities in the marketplace while capitalizing on available resources and capability [1].

A firm's strategy can have a major impact on its structure, its activities, its investment, its relation to the market, and its business performance. A strategy can also provide a framework that allows an organization and its managers to assemble specialized assets, to identify opportunities for providing valued products and services to customers, and to deliver those products and services for higher profits in the marketplace [2]

Strategic orientation refers to the broad outlines of the organization's strategy while leaving the details of strategy content and strategy implementation to be completed [3]. Strategic orientation is defined as decision-making styles, processes and activities which determine business orientation in relation to surroundings [4]. This interaction can be reflected in the form of establishment of new businesses, entering international markets or formation of organizational strategies. Strategic orientation is viewed as factors which influence organizational activities and direct them [5].

To understand the implications of strategic orientation, their interrelations and effect on innovation performance, the four dominant strategic orientations (resource orientation, market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and learning orientation) that are apparent in today's strategy literature [6, 7] are discussed in this section. These perspectives differ on how companies create superior competitive advantage and how they match resources with the environment. Thus, it can be said that strategic orientation is the pattern of responses that an organization makes to its operating environment to enhance performance and gain competitive advantage [8]

An organization's efficiency depends on its employees and how well they are committed to the company's goals and priorities [9]. Employees must be clear about their roles and responsibilities, and the company needs to implement programs to enhance employee skills. The company also needs to encourage and

motivate its employees. To make sure that employees are content and that they remain efficient, business owners need to acknowledge and compensate employees for their efforts. They also can outsource specific tasks in their operations for added efficiency [10]. Companies can increase their efficiency by running production processes well. By using state-of-the-art technology and eliminating processes that don't add value to their products, they can lower production costs [11].

Majority of the flower firms are in Nakuru county Particularly Naivasha, and Rongai area is accounting for more than half of the flower firms in the country. This is due to the availability of vast land that allows large scale flower farming through the green-house technology. This is coupled with the availability of water from Lake Naivasha and cheap labor, which are the critical resources in this industry. Like all other organizations operating in a competitive environment, the cut-flower firms have embraced different strategic orientations which are expected to deal with the vagaries of the environment.

Statement of the Problem

The Cut flower industry is a fast-growing agricultural sub-sector that contributes about half of the fresh horticultural exports in Kenya, has a big financial impact in foreign exchange earnings. It also employs directly about 50,000 people, and 500,000 more are depending on it through indirect employment. Despite its significance in the Kenyan economic growth trajectory, the cut flower industry continues to fluctuate in terms of quality on the global market. Cost containment issues and the understanding and quick response to the market environment are some of the critical factors affecting the performance of cut flower firms [12]. To improve their performance cut flower firms, need to apply models for responding to the environment they operate in to increase performance and competitiveness. Cut flower firms particularly need to be proactive to develop market leadership, develop and nurture behaviors aimed at increasing efficiency through cost containment, invest their resources in developing their market share. An investigation of research literature reveals that strategy orientation has positive impacts on innovation, competitiveness and organizational performance. As important as this sector is to this country and even though, the flower industry's environment is very competitive and heavily regulated. Naivasha Sub County is home to over 100 floriculture firms making it the area with the largest concentration of such firms in the country. The high concentration means that the firms operate in a very competitive environment especially regarding access to the increasingly scarce production resources. Also, most firms have to develop and market their products on their own, and this can be quite challenging especially in the light of the recent removal of the preferential status of exports from Kenya into the EU markets. As a consequence, the firms have had to react in some strategic fashion to cushion themselves from the new developments and also increase their organizational efficiency as a means of competitive advantage. However, their strategic orientation to the new developments remains to be known as previous studies have only focused on factors influencing strategy implementation and performance in flower firms in Kenya. Little attention has been paid to the strategic view towards the market and how it can result in an increase of productivity and guarantee the long-term survival of these firms. To fill this obvious gap, therefore, the researcher will examine the effect of strategic orientation on organizational efficiency in the context of cut-flower firms in Kenya

Objective of the Study

To assess the effect of aggressive orientation on organizational efficiency of in Floriculture Firms in Naivasha Sub-County

Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: Aggressive orientation does not significantly affect organizational efficiency of in Floriculture Firms in Naivasha Sub-County.

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by the resource-based view theory. The Resource Based View (RBV) theory emphasizes the internal resources of the organization in formulating a strategy to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage in its markets. Firms that possess and exploit resources and capabilities that are valuable and rare will attain a competitive advantage [13]. The resource-based theory seeks to delineate the set of market frictions that would lead to firm growth and sustainable economic rents (via isolating mechanisms). If the organization is seen as made of resources which can be restructured to provide it with competitive advantage, then its perspective does indeed become inside out. In other words, its internal capabilities determine the strategic choice it makes in competing in its external environment. Organizational capabilities are combinations of human skills, organizational procedures and routines, physical assets, and systems of information and incentives that enhance performance along with a particular dimension. The theory is relevant to study as it gives the researcher an insight on how strategy formulation influences strategic orientation of the flower firms in Naivasha

Empirical Review

The aggressive approach involves the use of resources for the improvement of the market situation. This dimension of strategy orientation requires much investment and emphasizes on the development of market share [14]. A company is aggressive when it uses its resources to excel competitors and looks for market share increase to win the competition [15, 14] and tends to have a strong challenge with competitors for acquiring efficiency [16]. This is the most aggressive of the four strategies. It typically involves active programs to expand into new markets and stimulate new opportunities. New product development is vigorously pursued, and offensive marketing warfare strategies are a common way of obtaining an additional market share. They respond quickly to any signs of market opportunity and do so with little research or analysis.

A large proportion of their revenue comes from new products or new markets. They are often highly leveraged, sometimes with a substantial equity position held by venture capitalists. The risk of product failure or market rejection is high [17]. Their market domain is constantly in flux as new opportunities arise and past product offerings atrophy. They value being the first in an industry, thinking that their “first mover advantage” will provide them with premium pricing opportunities and high margins. Price skimming is a common way of recapturing the cost of development [18]. They can be opportunistic in headhunting key employees, both technical and managerial. Advertising, sales promotions, and personal selling costs are a high percentage of sales [19]. Typically, the firm will be structured with each strategic business unit having considerable autonomy. The industry that they operate in tends to be in the introduction or growth stage of its life cycle, with few competitors and evolving technology [20].

Aggressiveness dimension measures the business ability to engage organizational resources in executing aggressive strategies and the pursuit of increased market share as a means to achieving business unit profitability. The firm aims to possess higher market share ahead of competitors [21]. This strategy takes the form of cost leadership [22, 23, 24, 25]. Explosion and expansion strategy described by product innovation [26, 27], price and image differentiation [28].

Another study investigated the relationship between strategic orientation, growth strategies, and market share performance [29]. The study showed that the more aggressive firms, prospectors, are likely to implement growth strategies using both new and current services while focusing on both new and current market areas. Analyzers, while using current services or both current and new services for growth in equal amounts, are also more likely than expected to implement growth strategies emphasizing both current and new services. Analyzers are a bit more conservative, with most firms emphasizing current markets for growth. Nevertheless, they are more likely than expected to include new markets in growth efforts as well. The least aggressive firms, reactors, act oppositely to prospectors, focusing their growth efforts mostly on current services and at current market groups.

Moreover it was revealed that aggressive approach influences organizational performance [30]. Of course, this dimension has the smallest influence on organizational performance. Strategies like price war, widespread advertisements, presentation of similar products with higher quality and more innovation, ignorance of short-term profits in favor of long-term success. Furthermore, companies which are market challengers are also recommended to follow strategies above. Another study of aggressive strategies in Taiwanese firms revealed that firms that had invested in building infrastructure, training employees in environmental consciousness and aggressively exploring opportunities within the company for green innovation [31]. This quick internal restructuring of the manufacturing process and the active introduction of many innovative measures, coupled with the superb capability of establishing a new environmental accounting system, not only helped the company respond readily to the demands of downstream supply chain buyers. A regional study examined the impact of strategic orientation dimensions on new product development in Agro-based Nigerian firms [32]. Their study, however, did not find any significant association between aggressiveness dimensions was found not to have any effect on new product development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 shows the functional relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study conceptualizes as independent variable, aggressive orientation as critical to the realization of organizational efficiency in floriculture firms in Naivasha Sub County. This is individually expected to influence the organizational efficiency of the flower firms which is characterized by increased production, improved access to markets and comparatively lower operating costs and profitability.

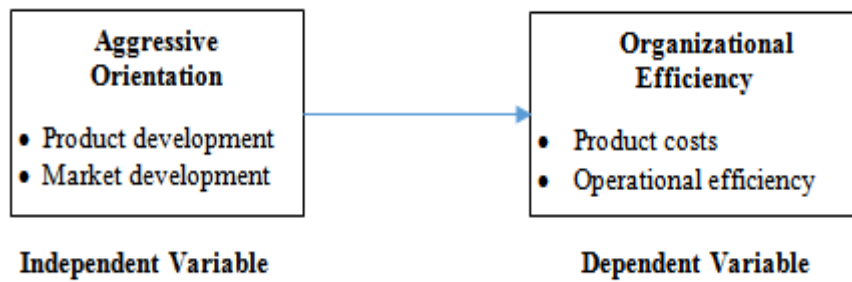


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

II. Methodology

This part discusses the study design, the target population, the sample size and the sampling procedure the researcher will discuss the research instruments and how instrument reliability will be ensured, data collection techniques and data analysis techniques.

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. This type of design was appropriate for gathering information, summarizing, presenting and interpreting it for clarification. Descriptive survey research design generates accurate information for a large number of people over a wide area using a small sample. It is used to explore relationships between variables and allows generalizations across populations. Since this study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information on the effect of Strategic orientation on organizational efficiency in Floriculture Farming in Naivasha Sub-County, the descriptive research design enabled the researcher to expose the respondents to a set of standardized questions to allow comparison.

The researcher utilized both Qualitative and Quantitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are scientific in nature and consist of an investigation that; seeks answers to questions, uses a predefined set of procedures, collects evidence and produces findings that are not determined in advance. They are also effective in determining intangible factors such as; social norms, social, economic status, gender roles, and religion [33]. This research method uses open-ended and closed-ended instrument formats. Quantitative research methods address an investigation that; seeks to confirm a hypothesis about phenomena, uses highly structured methods such as Questionnaires, surveys, and structured observations.

Target Population

Population is a well-defined set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households under investigation [34]. 37 flower firms operating as subsidiaries of multinationals are members of the Kenya Flower Council. The accessible population of interest of this study comprised of the management of the firms at various departmental levels such as the Production Manager, Marketing Manager, Logistics Manage, Human Resource Manager and the Finance Manager. The accessible population is therefore 185 as shown in Table 1.

Sample Frame

A sample frame is an exhaustive list that comprises of all members of a study population from which a sample is drawn.

Table 1: Sample frame

Respondent category	Population
HR Managers	37
Production Managers	37
Marketing Managers	37
Logistics Managers	37
Finance Managers	37
Totals	185

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling Technique

Sampling is defined as a procedure of selecting members of a research sample from the accessible population which ensures that conclusions from the study can be generalized to the study population [34]. The

ideal sampling technique for this study is stratified random sampling followed by random sampling in each category because specific persons in the firms are involved in the planning, executions, and management of the firm's strategies. These are key informants and can give more accurate and reliable information on the status and performance of the strategies. The main factor considered in determining sample size is the need to keep it manageable while being representative enough of the entire population under study. The use of the two sampling methods as opposed to other sampling designs has been informed by the need for respondent specificity and also the need for introducing randomness [35].

Sample Size

This study employed the following formula to calculate the required sample size from the target population of 185, thus;

$$n = \frac{Nc^2}{c^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

Where n = sample size, N = population size, c = coefficient of variation ($\leq 50\%$), and e = error margin ($\leq 3\%$). This formula enables the researchers to minimize the error and enhance the stability of the estimates. Substituting into the formula we got;

$$n = \frac{185 * (0.5)^2}{(0.5)^2 + (185 - 1) * (0.03)^2} = 111.28 \approx 112$$

Thus, a sample size of 112 respondents was obtained from the above formula.

Research Instruments

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was important as it involved creating "new" data and this was collected from respondents. Data collected was based on the perceptions and attitude of the respondents towards the subject of the items in the questionnaires. Secondary data was also collected to supplement the primary data. This was not collected directly by the researcher but was obtained from the diverse store of information in both print and electronic media to aid in interpretation of respondent views. The study used questionnaires as data collecting instruments. The questionnaire was structured containing closed ended items. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data to be collected, time available and the objectives of the study. It has quite some advantages which include: confidentiality; time saving; and reduced interviewer bias. Questionnaires also have the advantages of low cost, easy access, physical touch to widely dispersed samples and also the fact that the results are quantifiable. However, the use of questionnaires requires careful preparation as it could easily confuse the respondents, or discourage them, or simply fail to capture important information needed in the study [36]. It was to enable the researcher to reduce both researcher and respondent biases.

Data Collection Procedure

The Researcher acquired the necessary permissions to conduct research from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology and from the Naivasha Sub-County Administrator. The questionnaire was then administered directly by the researcher using a drop and pick up later technique where respondents will be given at least one day to fill them. Data to be collected was based on the perceptions and attitude of the respondents towards the subject of the items in the questionnaires

Pilot Test

This study used questionnaires after pilot testing them for correctness and accuracy on 10 non-participatory respondent sample. Piloting was done in flower firms in Rongai Sub County in Nakuru County which has similar demographic patterns. It is stated that 10% of the sample is adequate for piloting.

Validity of Research Instruments

The study adopted content validity which will be used to show whether the test items represented the content that the test was designed to measure. To ensure that all the items used in the research instrument are consistent and valid, the instruments were then subjected to scrutiny and review by the researcher's supervisors at JKUAT. The items were rephrased and modified where necessary to avoid ambiguity before being used for data collection.

Reliability of Research Instruments

The researcher used the internal consistency method to check the reliability of the research instruments. Reliability analysis will be calculated the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all the sections of the questionnaire from the results of the pilot study. A value of 0.7 or below of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient will show low

internal consistency. Subsequently, modifications, additional questions and any shortcomings that was found in the questions were corrected at this stage.

Table 2: Reliability Test Results

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Aggressive Orientation	8	.731
Floriculture Firm Efficiency	8	.722

Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis is the process of looking at, analyzing and summarizing data with the intent to extract useful information and develop reliable conclusions. Data obtained from the questionnaires was first cleaned and edited before being coded and subjected to further analysis. The Likert scales in closed ended questions in the questionnaires was converted to numerical codes and be scored on 1-5 point scale in order of magnitude of the construct being measured, then be entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive analysis was done using means and standard deviations to describe the basic characteristics of the population. Inferential statistics involved the use of Pearson’s Product Moment correlation and multiple regression models to determine the nature of the relationship between the variables. The multiple regression models may assume to hold under the equation;

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

Where;

- Y = Organizational Efficiency
- β_0 = Constant
- X_1 = Aggressive Orientation
- β_1 = Regression Coefficient
- ϵ = Error term

Results, Interpretations and Discussions

This section covers data analysis, interpretation and presentation of the findings. It includes response rate, descriptive statistic for each individual objectives of the study and inferential statistics.

Response Rate

From the study, 112 questionnaires were administered to respondents 100 were successfully filled and returned which translated to a response rate of 90 %. A response rate of 70% and above is considered adequate for generalization in literature.

Descriptive Statistics

The study established descriptive statistics to explain the respondent’s perceptions regarding the various study variables.

Aggressive Orientation and Organizational Efficiency

The study set out to assess Aggressive orientation as used in achieving organizational efficiency in Floriculture Firms. The table 3 below shows findings of the assessment.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Aggressive Orientation

	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
To increase our efficiency in the market, we often forgo profitability to gain market share	100	2.58	.496
We strategically lower our prices so as to increase our market share	100	2.96	.764
We do practice price skimming to enable us recapture the cost of development	100	3.16	.861
We pursue different approaches to the market that can enable us to expand into new markets and stimulate new opportunities	100	2.56	.499
We vigorously pursue new product development using technology so as to increase our efficiency	100	3.75	1.058
We always try to capture new market frontiers in the most efficient way	100	3.92	.813
We head-hunt highly performing employees to as to enable us achieve high levels of efficiency	100	3.64	1.010
We spend a considerable proportion of our revenue on advertising in our markets	100	3.47	1.114

As shown in Table 3, the respondents were in agreement that aggressive orientation has an effect to organizational efficiency. This is revealed by efficient market operations (M=3.92; SD=0.813), innovative product development (M=3.75; SD=1.058), and aggressive talent head hunting (M=3.64; SD=1.01). According to the findings it is evident that the floriculture firms in Naivasha Sub-County respond to the environment aggressively although they still need to be agile.

Organizational Efficiency

The study also sought to describe organizational efficiency measures of floriculture firms as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational efficiency

	n	Mean	Std. Dev
Our productions costs have been decreasing with increasing production	100	3.93	.807
We are now capable of producing more per unit time	100	3.57	1.066
Our exports volumes have increased for the same input	100	3.47	1.114
Our output-to-output ratios are impressive	100	3.45	1.218
Our inputs have reduced for the same output	100	2.95	.821
We are able to access markets faster than before	100	2.58	.535
The markets are able to absorb a high amount of our products than before	100	3.57	1.114
Our new efficiencies enable us to attend to other issues of significance to our operations	100	3.45	1.218

The findings as shown in Table 4 reveal that in floriculture firms in Naivasha Sub-County, production costs have been decreasing with increasing production (M=3.93; SD=0.807) since the firms are now capable of producing more per unit (M=3.57; SD=1.066). At the same time the markets are able to absorb more of firm's products than before implying that there is an improvement in quality as well despite efficiency gains.

Inferential Statistics

The study sought to establish the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. Correlation and regression analysis were completed to help establish the nature strength and direction of the relationships between independent and dependent variable.

Correlation analysis

Responses were transformed into a composite score of their means and a zero order biserial correlation coefficient was used to establish the relationship between aggressive orientation and firm efficiency. The findings from the analysis were presented in Table 5. The values (r=0.292; p <0.05) indicated that there was a positive, weak but statistically significant relationship between aggressive orientation and firm efficiency.

Table 5: Correlation between aggressive orientation and organizational efficiency

Aggressive Orientation	Organizational Efficiency	
	Correlation Coefficient	.292**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
n	100	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Influence of aggressive orientation on organizational efficiency

The study further examine the influence of aggressive orientation on organizational efficiency by adopting a simple linear regression analysis. The results to this effect as illustrated in Table 6. The influence of the aforesaid efficiency on organizational efficiency is represented by the regression coefficient (β₁) as shown in Table 6. The simple regression model was interpreted as illustrated hereunder.

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

$$Y = -1.002 - 0.315X_1$$

The results showed that for organizational efficiency to be increased by 1 unit, a change of -0.315 unit had to be effected on aggressive orientation while holding other factors constant (β₀ = -1.002).

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.002	.510		-1.963	.053
	Aggressive orientation	-.315	.156	-.181	-2.027	.045

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Efficiency

Hypothesis Testing

The results indicated in Table 6 showed that aggressive orientation predicts organizational efficiency among floricultural firms since $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. The results led to rejecting the null hypothesis and affirm that there is enough evidence to conclude that aggressive orientation is useful as a predictor of organizational efficiency of floricultural firms in Naivasha Sub-County.

III. Conclusions

The study concluded that aggressive orientation predicts organizational efficiency and as such Floriculture firms should adopt this orientation by engaging in efficient market operations particularly in product development and talent management. However they should engage cautiously as the influence is negative. This is in line with Studies on aggressive orientation which reveals that this dimension of strategy orientation requires much investment and emphasizes on the development of market share [14]. A company is aggressive when it uses its resources to excel competitors and looks for market share increase to win the competition. Hence they should put in place a risk strategy to cushion themselves from the dangers of agility. This should also use of technology to achieve efficiency. The study also concludes that together with risk taking orientation, aggressive orientation can achieve more gains for less resources and increase output to output ratios.

IV. Recommendations

The study recommends that aggressive orientations should be used by Floriculture managers as a way to respond to the environment. Firms however need to be more agile to changes that might promise quick gains as they will need to sacrifice short term earnings to build market share. The study also recommends the use of technology to aid in deploying aggressive strategies to minimize risks. Thirdly based on the conclusion on proactive Orientation Floriculture firm managers should do more to reap greater benefits. They need to combine with other orientations and not only prospect for new acquisition and product development but instill a culture of value creation and innovativeness to support proactiveness.

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