

STRATEGIC CHANGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF SAFARICOM PUBLIC LIMITED KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Safaricom Public Limited, Kenya, is a leading telecommunications company that has long been hailed as a success story due to its innovative products, market dominance, and robust financial performance. However, in recent years, the company has faced significant challenges in sustaining high levels of financial performance, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and employee engagement, which are key measures of organizational performance. Despite its position as a market leader, Safaricom has been grappling with various issues that threaten its ability to maintain this performance. The study investigated how strategic change management practices affect the performance of Safaricom Public Limited, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to determine the effect of communication plan, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and strategic leadership on effects of the performance of Safaricom Public Limited, Kenya. The study was guided by the following theories: the Balanced Scorecard model, change theory, stakeholders' theory, and Dynamic Capability Theory. A descriptive research design was applied. The target population consisted of 72 senior managers from Kenya's Safaricom Plc. Safaricom Limited's 83 managers were chosen via stratified random sampling. Questionnaires were utilized throughout the study to collect the main data. The piloting phase involved 10% of the study population, and it was utilized to assess the research tool's validity and reliability. The research looked at both content and constructs validity. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to assess the instrument's dependability. In order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, the surveys contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Content analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data. Both descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentages, and

frequencies) and inferential statistics were used in the quantitative data analysis method. To show how the variables relate to one another, inferential statistics like regression and correlation analysis were employed. The findings of the study were calculated and analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences, version 22. The results were presented using tables and charts. Results showed that the communication plan had a positive and significant effect on the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($\beta=0.183$, $p=0.044$). Results also showed that Stakeholders' engagement had a positive and significant effect on the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($\beta=0.282$, $p=0.011$). Further results also showed that capacity development had a positive and significant effect on the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($\beta=0.252$, $p=0.028$). In addition, results also showed that strategic leadership had a positive and significant effect on the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($\beta=0.240$, $p=0.026$). The study concluded that a standardized communication plan provides a consistent framework for interactions, ensuring that information is clear, unambiguous, and delivered effectively to all relevant parties, which is crucial for achieving organizational goals. The study also concluded that increased stakeholder involvement, particularly in decision-making and communication, contributes positively to the firm's competitiveness. In addition, Strong leadership, combined with flexible organizational structures and effective systems, is critical for successful strategy implementation and execution. To improve performance at Safaricom, use diverse communication channels like formal feedback mechanisms (surveys, performance appraisals), digital platforms (internal portals, email), and informal methods (one-on-one meetings, cross-functional teams). Policy makers should create a regulatory framework that actively encourages and supports innovation and investment in the telecommunications

sector, allowing companies like Safaricom to thrive.

Engagement, Strategic Leadership, Strategic Change, Performance, Safaricom Public Company.

Keywords: Capacity Development, Communication Plan, Stakeholders'

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

To remain competitive in the era of globalization, organizations increasingly rely on strategic management as a critical tool for achieving their objectives. Strategic management provides direction through the formulation of strategy, mission, and vision, while guiding the effective allocation of resources to achieve organizational goals (Alamri, 2020). In today's highly competitive business environment, firms not only survive through strategic management practices but also gain a competitive edge and sustain strategic advantages (Cherunilam, 2021). Consequently, the adoption of structured strategic change management approaches is essential to ensure that organizational change is effectively implemented and aligned with improved performance outcomes (Mukhlis & Tyas, 2024).

Organizations must continuously adapt to dynamic environments to remain relevant, as changes in the global economy can quickly erode existing capabilities and advantages (Wangechi, 2019). This necessity for adaptation is evident across industries, including the telecommunications sector, where firms must consistently evolve to maintain competitiveness. Globally, strategic change management has been identified as a key driver of organizational success. In developed economies such as the United States, effective communication and stakeholder engagement play a critical role in reducing resistance to change and enhancing organizational performance (Neill, 2018; Coban et al., 2019). Similarly, in countries like Singapore and India, the growth and competitiveness of the telecommunications sector have been closely linked to strong leadership, innovation, and the ability to respond to rapidly changing market conditions (Kai, 2022; Borah, 2024).

Across Africa, organizations have increasingly adopted strategic change management practices to navigate dynamic and competitive environments. Telecommunications firms such as MTN and Vodacom have emphasized leadership, communication, and stakeholder engagement to sustain performance. However, challenges such as regulatory pressures, infrastructure constraints, and market competition continue to affect sector performance in countries like Rwanda and Nigeria (Kirabo, 2023; Suleiman et al., 2024). At the local level in Kenya, Safaricom Plc demonstrates how effective strategic change management can enhance organizational performance and competitiveness. The company has successfully implemented initiatives focused on technological advancement, stakeholder engagement, and capacity development, supported by strong strategic leadership. Through clear communication of its vision and continuous innovation, Safaricom has maintained its competitive position and

achieved sustained performance, providing a benchmark for other organizations operating in dynamic environments.

Statement of the Problem

Gaining people's commitment to help a company reach its strategic objectives is based on its performance level. Furthermore, the organization's performance determines its health and, by extension, its survival (Rotich & Deya, 2021). In order to improve organizational performance, Aung (2024) argues that good change management is essential. This is because it helps with change initiatives, reduces disruption, increases employee engagement, and, in the end, leads to higher productivity and better achievement of strategic goals.

Despite being the leading mobile telecommunications provider in Kenya, Safaricom Plc's market share has varied during the past five years. During the 2017–2018 timeframe, Safaricom controlled 72.6% of the market. However, this market share has been significantly dropping, and at 65.9% in the year 2023, and further declined to 65.4% in the year 2024. Further Safaricom's operating profit margin declined to 22.3% in 2024 from 25.2% in 2023. In addition, Safaricom's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) declined slightly from Kshs 79.7 billion in the second half of 2023 to Kshs 75.1 billion in the second half of 2024 (Safaricom Financial Report, 2024). Safaricom's strategic management issues have resulted in performance issues. These issues particularly impact areas that are essential to organizational effectiveness in the telecommunications industry, including marketing, financial, operational, and human resource strategies.

Asa, Nautwima, and Khom-Oabes (2023) focused on how strategic change relates to sustainability of academic institutions. A methodological gap is thus illustrated by employing a qualitative approach with an action research design. Sinnaiah, Adam, and Mahadi's 2023 assessed the association between performance and decision-making style. Moreover, the study employed a desktop research approach which was seen as a methodological imperfection. Ekechi and Umar (2020) studied the impact of change management on the performance of the university staff in Nigeria. The study centered on the Nigerian universities which pointed out a contextual gap. Athman (2023) on the other hand, was looking at the change management techniques when Safaricom Plc in Kenya implemented a differentiation strategy. The study pointed out a conceptual gap by bringing up the change management strategies prioritization in carrying out the differentiation strategy. Opar and Mwasiagi (2023) researched on Safaricom Plc's performance in Kenya and the functional-level initiatives. The study had a conceptual gap as it was focusing on strategies and performance at the functional level. Thus, the current research was on the impact of strategic change management practices on the performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya.

Research Objectives

General Objective

The investigation aimed to assess how strategic change management practices affect the performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya.

Specific Objectives

The study sought to;

- i. To determine the effect of the communication plan on Safaricom Plc's performance
- ii. To assess the effect of stakeholder engagement on Safaricom Plc's performance
- iii. To analyze how capacity development affects Safaricom Plc's performance
- iv. To investigate how strategic leadership affects Safaricom Plc's performance

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model

Kaplan and Norton (1992) developed the framework to help businesses assess their performance using both financial and non-financial data. The BSC was created with the intention of improving communication between the business and its stakeholders, connecting daily operations to the organization's long-term objectives, and monitoring the company's progress toward its strategic goals. It supports efficient corporate administration by offering pertinent financial and non-financial data (Kaplan & Norton, 2001). By distinguishing four key areas that need to be looked at when evaluating an organization's success, it helps to encourage the proper behaviors inside it (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). These perspectives cover customer, internal operations, knowledge and development, and financial issues (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). To help with performance improvement, the model integrates the four viewpoints with the mission and vision of the organization (Quesado, 2018).

How the company's solutions satisfy the needs of its clients and other stakeholders is the focus of the customer viewpoint (Kaplan, 2012). These needs vary depending on the circumstances; therefore, companies need to concentrate on sustainably meeting them. In order to evaluate growth and learning, strategic leaders must establish systems that reliably back innovative approaches to improving existing products and services to match customer demands (Quesado, 2018). It is necessary to evaluate every procedure that a strategic leader must concentrate on to satisfy the target population when concentrating on internal business operations. It must outline the strategic leadership practices that an organization needs to implement to control the preferences of its service users. The financial performance standpoint indicates that a company's actions have an effect on its growth through investigating previous data in a quantitative manner (Alhyasat & Sharif, 2018).

The BSC model, however, is widely used, but it gets criticism for its simplifying essentially complicated systems, risk of being regarded as a "quick fix", and inadequacies in coping with changing environments and interests of different stakeholders. Furthermore, its emphasis on financial aspects is considered to restrict innovation (Awadallah, & Allam, 2015). The four primary facets from which a BSC model assesses performance are learning and growth, internal processes, customers, and finances. The organizational success of Safaricom Plc in Kenya will be evaluated from the perspectives of internal business growth, customers, learning and growth, and finances. As a result, the balanced scorecard model plays an important role in underlying performance. The theory is used to illustrate the measures of the dependent variable.

Change Theory

It was Kotter (1996) who first put up this theory. There are eight steps in Kotter's paradigm for managing change. Kotter's idea begins with creating a sense of urgency. A change begins when certain individuals become aware of the organization's vulnerability. These individuals are motivated to take action by the possibility of losing ground in some way, and they try to convey this sense of urgency to the others. According to Kotter, the majority of organizations he has encountered have never been able to generate enough urgency to compel action.

In Kotter's second stage of the theory, a strong ruling coalition is formed. It should continue to expand to incorporate more and more individuals who think the changes are essential, as usually just one or two people begin a project. At this stage, it is critical to assemble a substantial core of change advocates. The third step in Kotter's methodology is to create a vision. A future vision that is appealing to customers, investors, and staff must be relatively simple to convey for change to be effective (Black & Gregersen, 2002). Sharing the vision is the fourth stage. According to Kotter, managers should estimate the amount of vision communication that is necessary. In the end, if the majority of people do not understand value, commit to, and try to make the change happen, the endeavor will fail. The fifth stage of Kotter's concept is to inspire people to implement the goal. Several actions are required in response to this. It is believed that people will begin to act differently and shift their focus at this time. The sixth stage of Kotter's approach is all about making plans and achieving short-term victories. When there is a positive change, leaders take the initiative to plan for and accomplish certain short-term benefits that followers may see and enjoy (Rose & Lawton, 1999). Consolidating advancements and maintaining the momentum for change constitute the seventh phase of the concept (Moran & Brightman, 2001). Anchoring innovative approaches in the culture and incorporating them into the organization's practices and culture constitutes the eighth step. This stage guarantees that the modifications will be maintained over time.

Kotter's 8-Step Change Model has faced criticism for its linear and top-down approach, which may not be suitable for all organizational environments or rapid, iterative changes. Specifically, some argue it lacks sufficient detail, can be too rigid, and may not adequately address individual barriers or cultural nuances. In addition, Kotter's model focuses on organizational barriers but may not adequately address personal, emotional, or psychological barriers that individuals face during change (Rajan, & Ganesan, 2017). The independent variable in this study, strategic change management, is explained by this hypothesis. The reason for this is that the theory offers several concepts and models that explain how businesses could handle the human aspect of change to transition from their existing situation to a desired future one. The theory of change is applied to clarify how Kenya's Safaricom Plc accepts and supports strategic changes aimed at improving organizational performance.

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman laid the groundwork for stakeholder theory (1984), which posits that, for a business to succeed, it must cater to the interests of everyone involved, not just the shareholders (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder theory essentially promotes an ethical, realistic, successful, and efficient method of running businesses in a world that is extremely complicated, dynamic, and

unpredictable. Since ethics underpins all managerial actions and decisions, the theoretical and practical justifications for managing stakeholders are of equal weight. Managers, according to stakeholder theorists, have a web of relationships to tend to, including those with suppliers, workers, and business partners (Freeman et al., 2007), as opposed to agency theory's assertion that managers labor and serve stakeholders.

The decision-making process and the formulation of corporate policy are both influenced by stakeholder groups. Corporations may fail to meet stakeholder expectations due to their competing socially valuable resources. But it's not easy to satisfy everyone's expectations, and decisions could get pushed back because of the volume and length of procedures. Harrison et al. (2010) highlighted that Stakeholder theory has proved its worth and has been applied to manage the shifting expectations within the complex corporate environment.

Although stakeholder theory has been a significant influence in the corporate world, it is still subjected to criticism along the lines of practical implementation, balancing of conflicting interests, and accountability being diluted. For example, some critics stated that it would be hard to make a clear-cut decision on the priorities of different stakeholders which would consequently lead to the establishment of conflicting objectives and the impossibility of identifying who is responsible. On the other hand, some critics counter that the theory itself does not prevent exploitation at all, and they go on to argue that it might be the case that not all parties' interests are taken care of at all (Damak-Ayadi & Pesqueux, 2005).

Ethics, law, and discretion are the three categories of business responsibilities whose fulfillment determines the long-term profit-making ability of any company. Stakeholder theory is used by the researcher to support stakeholder management as an independent variable in this study. To increase performance, telecommunications businesses should ensure that their strategies are routinely reviewed.

Dynamic Capability Theory

Successful companies in today's global market have shown that they can respond quickly to customer needs, innovate products in a flexible and efficient manner, and have strong management skills to coordinate and re-allocate internal and external competencies. Some have noted that companies can amass a lot of valuable technology assets but still lack practical capabilities. Teece (2016) asserts that capacity building is a significant endeavor that attempts to enhance the abilities and expertise of workers in organizations. Building an organization's capacity is often described by the various talents that its personnel possess. Improving employee capability is thus the basis for the development of these skills (capabilities) and the organization's broader goals and objectives have a bearing on individual learning occurring through capacity building processes.

Denrell and Powell (2016) claim that in order for companies to remain on their toes, they have to change and realign their strengths with the new environment. Out of the businesses that have been able to match their capabilities with the changing conditions in the marketplace, the best are those that have survived in the fiercely competitive and turbulent business environment.

Worker competence is one of the factors that determine performance in an organization and it is mainly through capacity building that the enhancement occurs. To be more specific, knowledge and skills are referred to as crucial strategic resources that drive the performance of an organization. The Dynamic Capability Theory (DTC) has, however, been a subject of disparagement for its being not only a tautology but also a measurement problem and an imprecise, not widely accepted definition. Theory has been cited as overgeneralized, repetitive and unable to provide comprehensive solutions by the earlier mentioned sources (Bleady, Ali, & Ibrahim, 2018).

Through such a framework, capacity building is informed by the theory of how organizations can develop, integrate, and reorganize their resources and capabilities to adapt to changing contexts. The theory posits that in constantly changing industries, organizations require being adaptable and agile to maintain a competitive edge. The theory further explains that capacity building would result in the up-skilling of employees, which in turn would enable them to execute their duties and responsibilities better.

Empirical Review

Communication Plan and Organizational Performance

Mohamed and Alili (2025) focused on the impact of the communication process on organizational effectiveness. This is related to the flexibility of the internal elements of the organization, the most important of which is the organizational structure, and the smooth flow of internal information reaching its destination in a timely and appropriate manner. This ensures effectiveness and efficiency in performance across various professional levels, with actual control over all types of internal communications in all directions (upward, downward, and horizontal). Thus, a set of indicators emerges, reflecting the organization's strength or weakness on the practical and organizational levels and the nature of the relationships between its members. The study dependent variable was organizational effectiveness leaving out the aspect of organizational performance.

Lannes (2021) concentrated on how organizational communication affects the environment and efficacy of an organization. A descriptive study design was used. There are noteworthy positive relationships between organizational communication and both organizational effectiveness and organizational climate, according to the results. Organizational effectiveness, excluding organizational performance, was the study's dependent variable.

Pratama et al. (2021) concentrated on the Operation Support System (OSS) Operational Implementation: A Case Study of Telecommunication Company's communication management strategy. The documentation used in this qualitative study came from observations, interviews, and lessons learnt from the project's internal papers. The information escalation procedure, communication flow, projects classification, communication hierarchy, and communication matrix were the primary outcomes of the communication management plan. The present investigation integrated both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, whereas the previous study was qualitative.

Stakeholder Engagement and Performance

According to Suriyapongprapai, Chatjuthamard, Leemakdej, and Treepongkaruna (2022), business performance, military ties, and stakeholder involvement were the main topics. Companies that practice social responsibility take stakeholder engagement seriously. Investigations into Thailand's military, a crucial stakeholder, are, however, infrequent. We use two phases of least squares instrumental variable analysis to allay possible endogeneity and omitted variables worries. According to the study, military links improve corporate performance and have a far greater impact during military-led governments, which is consistent with resource dependency theory. In reality, this relationship is fueled by indirect connections made possible by the National Defense College of Thailand's (NDCT) instruction under typical market conditions. Thailand was the site of the research, and Kenya was the site of the current one.

Simiyu *et al.* (2023) studied the nexus between stakeholder management strategies and performance of Kenyan telecom companies. According to the study's findings, one important element affecting Kenyan telecom providers' performance was their defensive approach. Thus, it was determined that the performance of telecommunications firms and stakeholder management techniques are significantly related. Stakeholder engagement was the sole emphasis of the study.

Management of stakeholders was the primary focus of Nguyen and Mohamed's (2021) research into the connection between stakeholders' characteristics and project outcomes. To fill these knowledge gaps, this study will conduct an empirical investigation of the connection(s) between stakeholder characteristics and project performance, with a focus on the mediating role of stakeholder management. According to the research, legitimate stakeholder behavior, opposing behavior, and conflicting interests all work against achieving both sets of quantitative and qualitative PP. The present inquiry was primarily focused on communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, strategic leadership, and stakeholder engagement, which was the only focus of the previous study.

Using data collected from microfinance institutions in Uganda, Muhangi *et al.* (2024) looked at how managerial skills correlated with financial success. A cross-sectional design and quantitative methods were utilized in the research. This method was selected since, in contrast to a longitudinal design, it is not required to conduct follow-up interviews with the participants. According to the study's empirical findings, the link between managerial qualities and the financial success of MFIs in Uganda can be moderated by stakeholder management. The results show how stakeholder management and managerial abilities combine to impact financial performance. The paper claims that managerial skills and stakeholder management might account for a significant 58% of the variation in MFIs' financial success.

Capacity Development and Organizational Performance

Azwar, Valentina, Saputra, Zetra, Putera, and Mulia (2024) centered on the capacity development of organizational performance, supplying a conceptual framework, future study avenues, and a systematic review. By systematically and methodically evaluating the current

body of research, the current study presents a detailed account of the capacity development of organizational performance. The current study highlights important processes such as innovation, knowledge management, and technology adoption. Capacity development influences the success. This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, while the previous study was quantitative.

Wassem et al. (2019) reviewed the effects of capacity development and managerial support on employee performance. The data was acquired using a convenience sample method. The results demonstrate that capacity development has a favorable and significant impact on employee performance. The performance of employees is not much impacted by managerial support. Nonetheless, managerial support and capacity building have a favorable effect on worker performance, which is considerably mitigated by worker retention. The present study concentrated on communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership, whereas the previous study only looked at one component of strategic management, which was capacity development.

The impact of capacity development on public sector organizations' operational skills was the main emphasis of Umar, Goni, and Satomi's 2019 study. Therefore, the primary goal of capacity development is to boost staff productivity, which will raise company output. The government has made a concerted effort to promote capacity development. To guarantee that the nation has enough workers with the necessary skills, one of these initiatives was the creation of the Industrial Training Fund (ITF). However, low morale, a lack of information, difficulty applying concepts and principles in real-life circumstances, and a failure to evaluate the results of capacity development have been the main issues facing capacity development. In the current research, performance was the dependent variable, while operational capability was the dependent variable of the research.

Strategic Leadership and Performance

The study of Munene and Odollo (2024) was concerned with examining the strategic leadership and performance of telecommunications enterprises in Kenya. The researchers employed a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of eleven telecom companies registered with the Communications Authority of Kenya. The respondents were the executives and managers engaged in decision-making processes. The obtained data suggest that proactiveness in implementation has a large and positive effect on the performance of telecom companies. It is inferred from the data that performance levels in the telecom sector go up with an increase in one unit of the variable that was measured. The current study, however, exclusively focused on Safaricom Ltd., while the preceding study didn't take into account any other telecom company except for one.

The Nigerian telecom sector's strategic leadership was the primary focus of Agbai and Okey's (2024) research. The study had as its objectives to determine the impacts of vision, innovation and organizational culture, which are the primary components of strategic leadership, on the productivity and prosperity of telecom companies in Nigeria, and it used a case study methodology to do so. The case studies evidenced that the sector possessed important

characteristics of innovation and vision, and the founders had a clear notion of the future of the telecom industry. Moreover, it was shown that the operators of the companies were unable to apply their strategic plans because the highly regulated Nigerian Communications Commission's framework considerably restricted the companies' strategic moves.

Wanaswa et al. (2019) researched the strategic leadership aspect and technical innovation in terms of telecommunications firms' competitive advantage. The results indicate that the degree to which technological innovation and competitive advantage are related would be impacted by strategic leadership. This is explained by the significance of organizational leadership's function in large telecommunications companies as decision makers and important facilitators of technological innovation. The study had significant ramifications for the theory, the strategic management practice, and the policy framework in the telecom sector and elsewhere. The current study concentrated on communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership, whereas the previous study only examined one facet of strategic management, which was innovation and leadership.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology of research incorporated to examine the existing relationship between strategic change management practices and performance in Safaricom Private Limited Company, Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted by the study to collect data both qualitative and quantitative. Population targeted comprised of 72 senior managers of Safaricom Plc, Kenya, from which, a sample of 50 managers was selected using a stratified random sampling. Data was gathered using both a structured and semi-structured questionnaire measured using a 5 point-Likert scale. Conducting a pilot study comprised of 5 managers aiming at testing validity and reliability of the instrument, achieving a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.7 and above. This confirmed instrument's internal consistency. Authorization of data collection was done by Kenyatta University, NACOSTI, and Safaricom Plc. Data was both quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed with assistance of SPSS software version 22, Descriptive and inferential statistics addressed quantitative analysis while thematic analysis was employed to analyze qualitative data. Ethical considerations addressed confidentiality of information, respondents' informed consent, data collection exercise with voluntary participation, and transparency which the entire process of research.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data on the respondents' response rate was collected and is presented as illustrated in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	46	92.0%
Unreturned	4	8.0%
Total	50	100%

Source: Research Data (2026)

In total, 46 questionnaires were filled out and returned. The overall response rate was 92.0% as shown in Table 1. Therefore, the total response rate was 92.0% which implies a successful response rate. Babbie (2004) asserted that a response rate above 70% is generally considered excellent in survey research because it suggests that the sample is likely representative of the broader population being studied, minimizing the risk of bias and increasing the reliability of the findings.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is used to organize and summarize collected data in a way that highlights patterns and trends through measures such as frequencies, percentages, and mean values. It helps provide a clear overview of respondents' characteristics and the main study variables, allowing the researcher to present and interpret the findings in a structured and understandable manner.

Communication Plan and Performance

Descriptive results for communication plan are presented in Table 2

Table 2: Communication Plan

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Mean	Std. Dev
The organization's messages are clear, concise, and consistent with the target audiences	21.70%	21.70%	6.50%	30.40%	19.60%	3.04	1.49
The communication channels used in the organization are appropriate.	4.30%	6.50%	15.20%	41.30%	32.60%	3.91	1.07
The company's organizational objectives are communicated clearly.	10.90%	28.30%	4.30%	10.90%	45.70%	3.52	1.56
There are proper communication channels for employees to give their feedback to the management.	8.70%	8.70%	6.50%	56.50%	19.60%	3.70	1.15
The messages adapted for different audiences and communication formats are appropriate.	30.40%	4.30%	8.70%	37.00%	19.60%	3.11	1.57
The communication between the employees and the management is effective.	13.00%	2.20%	10.90%	47.80%	26.10%	3.72	1.26

Aggregate

3.50

1.35

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings indicate that communication positively influenced effectiveness within the firm. The overall responses show that most respondents agreed that communication practices were appropriate and supportive of organizational processes, as reflected by generally moderate to high mean scores ranging from 3.04 to 3.91. The highest rating (M = 3.91, SD = 1.07) was observed on the appropriateness of communication channels, suggesting that employees perceive the channels used as suitable for information dissemination. Similarly, effective communication between employees and management (M = 3.72, SD = 1.26) and the

availability of feedback mechanisms (M = 3.70, SD = 1.15) further demonstrate the role of communication in enhancing interaction and engagement. However, relatively lower mean scores on message clarity and adaptation (M = 3.04, SD = 1.49; M = 3.11, SD = 1.57) indicate some inconsistencies in how information is conveyed across different audiences. The moderate standard deviations suggest fairly consistent responses among participants. Overall, the findings reveal that effective communication contributes to improved organizational functioning, reduced resistance to change, and enhanced employee engagement, consistent with studies by Mohammed (2024), Lannes (2021), Okora (2021), and Sistare (2022).

Stakeholders Engagement and Performance

Descriptive results for stakeholders’ engagement and its effect on performance are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Stakeholders Engagement

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Mean	std. dev
The company incorporates stakeholders’ opinions in strategy formulation.	4.30%	6.50%	15.20%	50.00%	23.90%	3.83	1.02
The company actively involves stakeholders in decision-making processes, allowing them to contribute ideas and influence outcomes.	41.30%	21.70%	6.50%	19.60%	10.90%	2.37	1.47
The company builds partnerships with stakeholders to work together toward shared goals and objectives.	2.20%	8.70%	15.20%	52.20%	21.70%	3.83	0.95
The company has established systems to receive and respond to feedback from stakeholders.	8.70%	6.50%	6.50%	41.30%	37.00%	3.91	1.23
The company seeks stakeholder input through surveys, meetings, and focus groups.	6.50%	19.60%	4.30%	34.80%	34.80%	3.72	1.31
Aggregate						3.53	

1.20

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings indicate that stakeholder engagement practices moderately influenced organizational processes. The overall responses show that most respondents agreed that the

company incorporates stakeholder opinions in strategy formulation and has established systems for receiving and responding to feedback (M = 3.83–3.91), reflecting a positive perception of stakeholder inclusion. The highest agreement was on the presence of feedback mechanisms (M = 3.91, SD = 1.23), suggesting that the company prioritizes stakeholder communication. However, a notable proportion of respondents disagreed that stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making processes (M = 2.37, SD = 1.47), indicating gaps in participatory engagement. The relatively moderate standard deviations (1.02–1.47) suggest some variation in responses. Overall, the results imply that while stakeholder engagement is recognized in strategy formulation and partnerships, there is limited involvement in actual decision-making. These findings align with stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive engagement for organizational success, and are consistent with Simiyu *et al.* (2023), who established a significant relationship between stakeholder management and firm performance.

Capacity Development and Performance

Descriptive results for capacity development are presented in Table 4

Table 4: Capacity Development

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Mean	std. dev
There has been teamwork in the management team.	8.70%	2.20%	15.20%	43.50%	30.40%	3.85	1.15
The management seeks for partnership.	6.50%	4.30%	10.90%	58.70%	19.60%	3.80	1.02
The organization provides employees and managers with opportunities to learn	2.20%	2.20%	13.00%	63.00%	19.60%	3.96	0.79
There have been clear policies and frameworks that support capacity-building efforts in the organization.	2.20%	17.40%	17.40%	52.20%	10.90%	3.52	0.98
There are adequate resources allocated to support capacity-building initiatives.	10.90%	17.40%	8.70%	37.00%	26.10%	3.50	1.35
The organization has fostered a culture of learning and continuous improvement.	15.20%	0.00%	6.50%	45.70%	32.60%	3.80	1.33
Aggregate						3.74	

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings indicate that capacity development positively influences organizational performance. The overall responses show that most respondents agreed that the organization promotes learning, collaboration, and skill development, as reflected by relatively high mean scores. The highest rating was on the provision of opportunities for employees and managers to acquire new skills and knowledge (M = 3.96, SD = 0.79), suggesting strong support for continuous learning initiatives. Similarly, teamwork within management and the pursuit of partnerships were highly rated (M = 3.86 and M = 3.80), indicating a collaborative organizational environment. However, comparatively lower mean scores were observed on the adequacy of resources (M = 3.50, SD = 1.35) and the presence of clear policies supporting capacity building (M = 3.52, SD = 0.98), reflecting some inconsistencies in resource allocation and structural support. The moderate standard deviations suggest relatively consistent responses among participants. Overall, the results demonstrate that capacity development enhances organizational performance through improved skills, collaboration, and continuous learning, consistent with findings by Azwar *et al.* (2024) and Wassem *et al.* (2019).

Strategic Leadership and Performance

Descriptive results for strategic leadership are presented in Table 5

Table 5: Strategic Leadership

Statement	strongly disagree	agree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	Mean	std. dev
Leaders can empower their team members by assigning tasks and responsibilities to focus on strategic priorities.	13.00%	10.90%	6.50%	39.10%	30.40%	3.63	1.37
The leaders always all departments and employees are working towards the same goals and objectives.	4.30%	10.90%	6.50%	39.10%	39.10%	3.98	1.14
The leaders understand the needs and perspectives of employees, stakeholders, and customers.	4.30%	19.60%	4.30%	47.80%	23.90%	3.67	1.17
The leaders encourage creativity and new ideas to stay ahead of the competition.	6.50%	15.20%	6.50%	43.50%	28.30%	3.72	1.22
The company leaders can maintain high ethical standards and build trust.	6.50%	23.90%	8.70%	37.00%	23.90%	3.48	1.28
The company leaders can calculate risks and make tough decisions.	8.70%	17.40%	4.30%	41.30%	28.30%	3.63	1.31
Aggregate						3.69	

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings indicate that strategic leadership positively influences firm competitiveness. The majority of respondents agreed with key leadership practices, as reflected by moderate to high mean scores ranging from 3.48 to 3.98 and standard deviations between 1.14 and 1.37. The highest rating was on the alignment of departments and employees towards common goals (M = 3.98, SD = 1.14), suggesting that strategic coordination is a strong leadership attribute.

Similarly, leaders' encouragement of innovation and understanding of stakeholder needs were rated highly, indicating their role in enhancing competitiveness. However, the lowest mean ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.28$) was observed on maintaining ethical standards and building trust, suggesting relatively varied perceptions among respondents. Overall, the findings demonstrate that strategic leadership practices, particularly goal alignment, empowerment, and innovation, contribute to improved firm competitiveness, consistent with studies by Munene and Odollo (2024) and Agbai and Okey (2024), which emphasize the positive role of leadership in organizational performance.

Performance of Safaricom Plc.

Descriptive results for performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya are presented in Table 6

Table 6: Performance

Statement	strongly disagree	agree	neutral	agree	strongly agree	mean	std. dev
The company's profits have been increasing for the past five years.	13.00%	8.70%	4.30%	26.10%	47.80%	3.87	1.44
The company's ROA has been increasing in the last five years.	6.50%	10.90%	6.50%	41.30%	34.80%	3.87	1.20
The company's ROE has been increasing in the last five years.	13.00%	8.70%	10.90%	17.40%	50.00%	3.83	1.47
Our customers are satisfied with our services.	10.90%	10.90%	15.20%	43.50%	19.60%	3.50	1.24
The number of customers has been decreasing.	4.30%	17.40%	19.60%	23.90%	34.80%	3.67	1.25
We have been able to address most customers' complaints in the past.	15.20%	6.50%	4.30%	47.80%	26.10%	3.63	1.36
Our services to our customers are of high quality.	10.90%	19.60%	17.40%	30.40%	21.70%	3.33	1.32
Our operational efficiency has been increasing.	15.20%	2.20%	10.90%	47.80%	23.90%	3.63	1.31
We offer after-sales services to our customers.	6.50%	15.20%	6.50%	43.50%	28.30%	3.72	1.22
We have developed new products.	4.30%	17.40%	6.50%	41.30%	30.40%	3.76	1.20
We have ventured into new markets.	19.60%	8.70%	15.20%	54.30%	2.20%	3.11	1.23
We have developed our management competency.	4.30%	15.20%	30.40%	28.30%	21.70%	3.48	1.13

Aggregate

3.62

Source: Research Data (2026)

The findings indicate that firm competitiveness has generally improved, as reflected by the aggregate responses across key performance indicators. A majority of respondents agreed that profitability has increased over the past five years ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.44$), with similar agreement observed on growth in return on assets ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.20$) and return on equity

(M = 3.83, SD = 1.47), suggesting positive financial performance trends. Customer-related outcomes also showed moderate improvement, with respondents indicating satisfaction with services (M = 3.50, SD = 1.24) and the ability to address customer complaints (M = 3.63, SD = 1.36). However, perceptions on customer growth were mixed, as some respondents noted a decline in the number of customers (M = 3.67, SD = 1.25). Operational efficiency was perceived to have improved (M = 3.63, SD = 1.31), alongside efforts in after-sales service provision (M = 3.72, SD = 1.22) and product development (M = 3.76, SD = 1.20). Conversely, relatively lower mean scores were recorded for market expansion (M = 3.11, SD = 1.23) and management competency development (M = 3.48, SD = 1.13), indicating areas requiring further enhancement. Overall, the moderate standard deviations suggest fairly consistent responses, and the findings imply that while firms are experiencing improvements in financial performance and operational efficiency, challenges remain in customer growth, market expansion, and managerial capacity development.

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics include both correlation and regression results.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the association between the independent variable thus communication plan, stakeholders engagement, capacity development and strategic leadership and the dependent variable thus performance. This was presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Correlation Results

		Performance	Communication Plan	Stakeholders' engagement	Capacity Development	strategic Leadership
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Communication Plan	Pearson Correlation	.781**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000				
Stakeholders' engagement	Pearson Correlation	.850**	.754**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000			
Capacity Development	Pearson Correlation	.826**	.685**	.748**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Strategic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.832**	.666**	.772**	.789**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

Source: Research Data (2026)

Results showed that communication plan had a positive and significant association with Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya (r=0.781, p=0.000). This denoted that communication plan has a strong positive correlation with Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. The study findings agreed with Lannes (2021) who indicated that there is a noteworthy positive

relationship between organizational communication and both organizational effectiveness and organizational climate, according to the results. The findings also agreed with Okora (2021) who discovered that performance was positively impacted by communication methods.

In addition, results showed that stakeholders engagement had a positive and significant association with Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($r=0.850$, $p=0.000$). This denoted that stakeholders engagement has a strong positive correlation with Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. The study findings agreed with Kimathi and Mungai (2024), who found that monitoring stakeholder involvement and project performance have a moderately significant association, while managing stakeholder engagement has a strong significant relationship. Awino and Mungai's (2024) also found a robust correlation between stakeholder mapping and project performance and between stakeholder involvement assessment and project performance.

Further results showed that capacity development had a positive and significant association with the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($r=0.826$, $p=0.000$). This denotes that capacity development has a strong positive correlation with the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. The study findings agreed with Azwar *et al.* (2024) who indicated that success of firms is affected by capacity development. In addition, Wassem *et al.* (2019) demonstrated that capacity development has a favorable and significant impact on employee performance.

In addition, results showed that strategic leadership had a positive and significant association with the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya ($r=0.832$, $p=0.000$). This denotes that strategic leadership has a strong positive correlation with the Performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. The study findings agreed with Munawaroh *et al.* (2021) who found that business performance is impacted by strategic leadership, and business performance is impacted by organizational culture. Mailu and Kariuki's (2022) also found that strategic direction significantly improves the functioning of NGOs in Nairobi County.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was one of the inferential statistics used to show the relationship between variables. It showed the effect of strategic change management practices on the performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. Regression results were presented in Table 8

Table 8: Regression Results

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std. Error of the Estimate	the	Durbin-Watson
1	0.919 ^a	0.845	0.829	0.203		2.11
F-Statistics						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.213	4	2.303	55.71	.000 ^b
	Residual	1.695	41	0.041		
	Total	10.908	43			
<p>a. Dependent Variable: Performance</p> <p>b. Predictor: (Constant), Communication Plan, Stakeholders' Engagement, Capacity Development, Strategic Leadership</p>						

Source: Field Observations (2026)

Results showed that the R was 0.919. This implies that strategic change management practices had a strong correlation with performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya. In addition, the R square was 0.765. This infers that cargo security protocols explain 84.5% of the variations in the dependent variable which was performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya.

From Table 8, it is a clear indication that strategic change management practices were a good predictor of performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya as represented by an F statistic of 55.71 and the reported p value of 0.000, which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level. This implies that the strategic change management practices have statistically significant effect on performance of Safaricom Plc, Kenya at a 95% confidence level.

Table 9: Regression of Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.226	0.247		0.915	0.365
Communication Plan Stakeholders' engagement	0.183	0.088	0.204	2.079	0.044
Capacity Development	0.282	0.105	0.309	2.68	0.011
Strategic Leadership	0.252	0.111	0.250	2.278	0.028
	0.240	0.104	0.261	2.318	0.026

Source: Research Data (2026)

The estimated parametric values in the regression model produced the presented statistical equation

$$\text{Performance} = 0.226 + 0.183 \text{ Communication Plan} + 0.282 \text{ Stakeholders' Engagement} + 0.252 \text{ Capacity Development} + 0.240 \text{ Strategic Leadership} + \epsilon$$

With respect to communication plan as the predictor variable of performance, the study shows that a well-structured communication plan positively influences Safaricom Plc’s performance. The regression analysis indicates that for every unit improvement in communication planning, performance increases by 0.183 units, holding other factors constant. This suggests that timely, clear, and effective communication during strategic change initiatives enhances coordination, clarity, and responsiveness within the organization. Empirical studies (Lannes, 2021; Muragijimana *et al.*, 2024; Musheke & Phiri, 2021; Okora, 2021) support this finding, highlighting that assertive, integrative, and well-designed communication channels contribute to better organizational outcomes, consistent with the dynamic capabilities theory which emphasizes continuous internal process reconfiguration in changing environments.

In terms of stakeholders’ engagement as a predictor variable, it emerged as the strongest predictor of performance, with a regression coefficient of 0.282. This indicates that effective involvement, consultation, and participation of key stakeholders significantly improve

Safaricom Plc's performance. Literature (Awino & Mungai, 2024; Kimathi & Mungai, 2024; Muhangi et al., 2024; Simiyu et al., 2023) corroborates these findings, showing that robust stakeholder involvement enhances project and firm outcomes, and moderates the relationship between managerial capabilities and performance. These results align with dynamic capabilities theory and the balanced scorecard approach, emphasizing that firms achieve superior performance by continuously sensing stakeholder expectations and adjusting internal processes accordingly.

In terms of capacity development as a predictor of performance, the regression model estimated indicates clearly that when communication plan, stakeholders' engagement, and strategic leadership are all held at zero, the model constant term remains at 0.226. This is a reflection of performance baseline of Safaricom Plc in absence of explanatory variables. Capacity development positively impacts performance, with a coefficient of 0.252, suggesting that investment in employee skills, training, and organizational learning strengthens Safaricom Plc's outcomes during strategic change. Previous research (Azwar *et al.*, 2024; Mutunga *et al.*, 2022; Umar *et al.*, 2019; Wassem *et al.*, 2019) confirms that knowledge management, innovation adoption, and structured skill-building initiatives significantly enhance organizational success. These findings reflect the dynamic capabilities perspective, which holds that firms improve performance by continuously building, integrating, and reconfiguring internal capabilities, ensuring employees are adaptive and capable in responding to environmental changes.

As for strategic leadership, the predictor variable, the model proposed demonstrates clearly that when plan on communication, engagement of stakeholders, and development of capacity are collectively held constant at a zero value, the resulting model slope determination is 0.240. Empirical studies (Agbai & Okey, 2024; Munene & Odollo, 2024; Wanaswa *et al.*, 2019) in telecom and large firms demonstrate that leadership effectiveness drives innovation, strengthens competitive advantage, and improves overall firm outcomes. This aligns with dynamic capabilities theory, suggesting that effective leaders enable organizations to sense opportunities, implement strategic initiatives, and reconfigure internal capabilities to navigate dynamic business environments successfully.

Qualitative Analysis

Respondents indicated that Safaricom Limited's performance is positively influenced by communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership. Effective and well-planned communication enables the company to engage a wide range of stakeholders, strengthening relationships and market share. Stakeholder engagement enhances performance by improving brand reputation, influencing public policy, boosting employee engagement, and fostering innovation, thereby supporting long-term sustainability. Capacity development drives performance through innovation, higher employee morale and retention, and the company's transition toward a more agile, technology-focused organization. Strategic leadership contributes by motivating employees, driving innovation, managing change effectively, and cultivating an adaptive organizational culture, ensuring efficient use of resources and better overall outcomes.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study examined strategic change management practices as predictors of organizational performance at Safaricom Plc, Kenya. Performance was measured in terms of overall organizational outcomes, while strategic change management was operationalized through four dimensions: communication plan, stakeholders' engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership. The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between strategic change management and performance ($R = 0.919$), with the model explaining 76.5% of the variation in performance ($R^2 = 0.765$) and proving statistically significant ($F = 55.71$, $p < 0.001$). Regression results indicated that all four dimensions positively influenced performance, with stakeholders' engagement having the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.282$), followed by capacity development ($\beta = 0.252$), strategic leadership ($\beta = 0.240$), and communication plan ($\beta = 0.183$). These findings suggest that effective planning, stakeholder involvement, skill development, and leadership practices collectively enhance Safaricom's organizational outcomes, a conclusion further supported by qualitative data showing improvements in market share, employee engagement, innovation, and adaptability. The results align with dynamic capabilities theory, highlighting that firms achieve superior performance by continuously building, integrating, and reconfiguring internal capabilities to respond to changing environments.

Conclusion

Respondents indicated that Safaricom Limited's performance is positively influenced by communication, stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership. Effective and well-planned communication enables the company to engage a wide range of stakeholders, strengthening relationships and market share. Stakeholder engagement enhances performance by improving brand reputation, influencing public policy, boosting employee engagement, and fostering innovation, thereby supporting long-term sustainability. Capacity development drives performance through innovation, higher employee morale and retention, and the company's transition toward a more agile, technology-focused organization. Strategic leadership contributes by motivating employees, driving innovation, managing change effectively, and cultivating an adaptive organizational culture, ensuring efficient use of resources and better overall outcomes.

Recommendations

To enhance performance at Safaricom, the company should adopt diverse communication channels, including formal feedback mechanisms, digital platforms, and informal interactions, ensuring employees are heard, motivated, and aligned with organizational goals. Stakeholder engagement processes should be tailored to each group, with insights systematically integrated into decision-making and sustainability strategies to strengthen collaboration and organizational outcomes. Management should foster a culture of innovation by supporting research and development, providing career development programs, and cultivating a strong employer value proposition to attract and retain talent. Additionally, top managers should harmonize roles within the management committee to implement strategies effectively, while policymakers should establish clear frameworks promoting accountability, transparency,

ethical practices, and employee development, thereby ensuring long-term performance improvement and value creation.

Areas for further research

Future research should explore additional strategic change management practices beyond communication planning, stakeholder engagement, capacity development, and strategic leadership, such as training and development, resistance management, and organizational learning. Studies should replicate findings across other telecommunication firms in Kenya and comparable regional markets to enhance external validity. Examination of potential mediating factors, including employee motivation, organizational culture, technology adoption, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, is recommended. Further theoretical refinement of dynamic capabilities theory, balanced scorecard frameworks, and change management models within the telecommunications sector warrants scholarly attention.

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