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Hotels**

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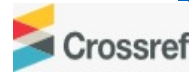


## Significance of Internal Business Processes on Entrepreneurial Orientation in Kenya Business Hotels

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### Article history

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the research was to examine the significance of internal business processes on the entrepreneurial orientation of Business hotels in Kenya.

**Methodology:** The study used a mixed-method design. Both Qualitative methods were used. A survey questionnaire was used and focus group discussions were also employed in the study. The target population was business hotels in Kenya where 246 hotels were sampled. The data was analyzed using, mean and standard deviation and binary logistic regression model to test the significance of business process to entrepreneurial orientation.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that hotels were risk takers when it came to projects involving their business processes. These daring moves were risky because there was no guarantee that the profits would cover the cost of their establishments. Hotels were moderately proactive in initiating and implementing changes as the market demanded. To maximize their returns on process innovations, hotels actively sought new processes, placed emphasis on them, and marketed their process offering to customers. When faced with uncertainties, the hotels took aggressive approaches to maximize

opportunities on business processes. The focus group discussion revealed that although the processes were practiced by employees most hotels did not have documented processes. Hotels with the more structured business process are more likely to be proactive than those with fewer business processes. Business processes were found to be a significant predictor of Entrepreneurial Orientation.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice, and Policy:** The study provides insights into the Entrepreneurial Strategic Posture idea by explaining how the hotel uses its business process to create strategic positioning of its products and services. As a service industry, the hotel industry relies on the processes it employs to provide services in order to create memorable experiences for guests. These processes provide a significant interpretation of service quality to guests, which is critical to the hotel business. Being proactive or reactive to these processes gives hotels a competitive advantage, which benefits hotel performance. Hotels are encouraged to continuously improve and innovate their processes to ensure they remain competitive in their industry competition landscape.

**Keywords:** *Business Processes, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Business Hotels*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

An overall series of operations used to transform resources obtained at the input into a finished good of value to the consumer at the output is known as a business process (process). A consistent, specific sequence of connected tasks known as a "business process" uses a particular technology to turn inputs into outputs in accordance with predetermined rules and specific procedures (Prokopenko, et al., 2020). In today's times of increasing competition and an extremely dynamic economic environment, Bresciani et al (2017) indicate that achieving both efficiency and flexibility to maintain competitiveness is even more important to organizations. In consideration of the internal business processes, there are performance differences where some fail while others are successful. This is due to disparities in resources and capabilities. The resources required for a successful process do not provide a basis for competitive advantage on their own but are more or less input factors. For internal processes to be meaningful as a competitive advantage, the organization must have the capabilities to select, deploy, and establish these resources (Enz, 2011). Business processes should be configured to meet organizational objectives for effective usage of the resources (Hemmatfar, et al., 2010). Barney, et al., (2011) argue that in accordance with the resource-based theory, whenever business processes fail, certain capabilities must be lacking. They opine that resources and capabilities can only be of value if they are exploited in the firm's processes.

Chen, Wang, and Chu (2011) posit that the business process management approach in hotels is critical in running a successful enterprise and aids competitive positioning, creating a management system of the entire property. This entails the recognition of the interaction of the various processes within the hotel, which are defined and managed. Without this, it is probable that the hotel is not able to meet the demands of its internal and external stakeholders. Hellstrom & Eriksson, (2013) further explain that the business process mode of management has an advantage over the model of divisions to functional areas where processes are departmentalized in that the business process model is more efficient. Four groups of users of process orientation were identified, those still fumbling with their application (Fumblers); those talking about their processes (Talkers); those who have mapped their processes (Mappers); and those who manage their processes with designated process owners and measurement systems (Organizers). Victoria, (2016) points out that as market conditions change, in addition to internal factors it is also important to review the tactics and strategies at each step of the process and modify them accordingly to suit the prevailing situation to remain relevant in the market. Once any given hotel has understood the stages of the process, implementation of the strategies and measurement of results becomes simpler and can be easily carried out.

### 1.1 Objective of the Study

To examine the significance of internal Business process on Entrepreneurial Orientation

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theory of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Khandwalla (1977) posits that strategic posture can be nurtured or threatened depending on the design of the organizational structure. Generally, Covin and Slevin's (1991) findings indicate that strategic posture has positive relations with low-level organizational structures and is negatively related to structural complexities caused by high structures. The current paradigm of Entrepreneurial Orientation study results tends to indicate that organizations that adopt a certain

strategic posture have exhibited better performance in their markets (Su, Xie, & Li, 2011). However, these findings are not conclusive, hence, creating the necessity for further studies in this area (Covin & Lumpkin, 2011).

Following Khandwalla's (1977) findings, entrepreneurial orientation was more exposed by Miller (1983) who articulated that strategic posture characteristic as having innovations of products and markets by undertaking risky projects and bearing the aspects of proactiveness in the innovation. He also voiced that firms that have proactive behavior would not only leverage on their financial capabilities or take risk but also had to innovate products, markets and technological utilization. Foundations of strategic posture as was entrepreneurial orientation now referred to was highlighted by the publications of Covin and Slevin (1989) and Lumpkin and Dess (1996). The former contended that a firm that had high echelons of strategic posture realized superior performance. Additionally, these firms are said to participate in innovation, be aggressive to the market and also take risks and act proactively when opportunities are presented. Therefore, the deduction of these works was that the three dimensions, namely innovation, aggressiveness and risk taking determined the strategic posture of establishments. To measure the entrepreneurial (proactive) and conservative (reactive) posture, a nine-point questionnaire was developed by Covin and Slevin (1989) where the mean rating determined the angle of posture of the organization. Covin & Slevin (1989) designed a framework of nine items to measure the strategic posture of a firm. The nine items were divided into three constructs, namely risk taking, innovation and proactiveness. The authors also considered the addition of the competitive aggressiveness construct later modified by Lumpkin & Dess (1996). The mean rating of the items defines the entrepreneurial orientation where higher values would propose a proactive orientation while lesser means would propose a more reserved orientation.

## **2.2 Effect of Business Processes on Entrepreneurial Orientation**

The current turbulent environments in which hotels operate in demand higher levels of organizational performance in terms of quality, time and costs, and flexibility. In reaction to this necessity, it has been observed that many organizations have taken up business process modeling to ensure they remain competitive in the market, (Pavia & Cerovic, 2012). In agreement with this view, Singh, (2012) acknowledges the fact that there is increasing competition globally and falling profit margins, many corporations are adopting various operations strategies to ensure they maintain their share of the market and increase profits. Through business processes, competitive organizations must ensure customer satisfaction by improving the speed of service, being flexible, and capabilities of rapid response to consumers within the changing environment. Researchers and practitioners differentiate limited types of processes. Porter (1998) one of the early researchers developed the paradigm of the value chain, which suggested a separation of primary (operations, services, inbound logistics, and outbound logistics) and support (IT infrastructure, procurement, and human resources management) sections in an organization. He asserts that competitive advantage can be attained in any one of the areas and is not limited to those areas that are directly related to the production of the final product. The ability to also manage the processes efficiently can be a source of competitive advantage. Singh (2012) points out that organizations need to employ system thinking; an interaction of all procedures in existence that defines the way an organization conducts its business. Further, it is important to understand the process, map in totality and be cognizant of the processes that are significant to the customers and create most value for them, which in turn, makes them a source of competitive advantage.

In modern times, Business Process Management (BPM) has been recognized as a critical aspect that drives strategy in organizations. It is one of the tactics that can enable establishments achieve efficiencies and effectiveness by developing and refining its business processes constantly in relation to its business objectives, strategies, and other goals. BPM implementation is acknowledged as a means to maintain and sustain competitiveness by offering solutions to product and service consumers (Singh, 2012). It can therefore be reasoned that dynamic and flexible business processes are essential to all business stakeholders as suggested in the works of Valenca, Alves and Niu, (2013). They further suggest that business processes are established generally to assist organizations to coordinate information flows, optimize resources and as an organizational intelligent structure.

The business process change initiative should be conducted as an organizational strategic venture, which will enhance opportunities for the attainment of desired results (Morrison, Ghose, Dam, Hinge, & Hoesch- Khole, 2011). According to Khoshafian, (2014) nonetheless, it is worth noting that not all BPM implementations are successful and deliver the intended results to be successful. It is also noted that even if improvements in the business process are directed at a specific department, the effect of the change will be felt in the entire organization. As an establishment develops, Kibwage (2012) states that there is a need to continuously examine and improve processes to confirm the business is being done as efficiently and effectively as possible. Continuous improvement of processes provides an organization with a competitive advantage in the global arena. What is of most importance is that processes are planned, they are systematic, and develop a way of doing things that infiltrates the entire organization.

In the hotel standpoint, Prasanna (2013) asserts that hotel business processes are known as standard operating procedures (SOP), which are repetitive activities documented to generate a collection of written instructions, to execute jobs appropriately. The main aim of devising SOP is to improve guest experience, which forms the pillar of the service process and also aids in informing hotel staff on the best way to deal with the varied situations with customers. Therefore, SOP's provide a consistent guest service structure which is clearly thought out by the organization's management. The objective is to ensure that guests get the same quality of service every time they visit the hotel. Another advantage is that it assists hotels to predict the future human resources requirements as each title role is clearly defined, which in turn enhances evaluation of employee performance. The procedural component of service has a significant effect on guest satisfaction in hotels. Panagiotou (2012) highlights that for hotels to ensure high quality of standard is delivered and maintained, the SOP's should be well detailed and precise. The business processes are essential for quality service and also as a guiding framework for the hotel employees to work as they translate requirements to quality service. They also guarantee consistency of product or service every time it is delivered despite the variation of the employee. This has been in use by international brands even in multiple geographical locations, to ensure product and service quality consistency globally. Satisfactory guest experiences and desired business performance is often the result. In addition, hotels are able to identify problems in operational areas and take corrective actions so as to prevent recurrence and maintain quality service consistency.

Krstic, Kahrovic, and Stanisisic (2015) note that to ensure improvements and drastic business performance a new way of thinking must be entrenched in the interaction that involves the guest and the hotel. To be strategic and create an edge, the business processes need to be created, documented, and implemented, and continuous improvement reviews carried out from time to

time. In addition, business processes in hotels can be divided into three main types namely the support processes, the core processes, and the management processes. Support processes, are not directly linked with guest outputs but are important for the efficient operation of the business. Core processes on the other hand produce and deliver directly to the hotel guests while management processes are those that the higher level strategic processes are created by the top management to efficiently run and market the organization as indicated below.

**Table 1: Categorization of Hotel Processes**

| Category of Processes | Examples of Processes   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Management Processes  | Budget Planning and Development<br>Marketing<br>Quality Management<br>Management of the Environment<br>Social Responsibility Management<br>Health and Safety Management |
| Core Processes        | Food and Beverage Production<br>Service of Food and Beverages<br>Guest Reservation and Accommodation<br>Guest Room Cleaning   |
| Support Processes     | Human Resources Management<br>Financial Management<br>Infrastructure Maintenance<br>Information Management<br>Procurement<br>Sales                                      |

It is worth noting that support and operating business processes have several significant characteristics. They both have a set of interrelated undertakings, which go through a transformation of inputs to create outputs as services to guests. They also have a specific beginning and end, with distinct confines with minimal if any overlap. The users of these processes may either be internal or external to the hotel. Innovation in business processes is recognized as one of the main current business drivers in the travel industry and has spilled over to the hotel industry a key player in the larger tourism sector. Guests are increasingly caring more about the process requirements taken to book the facilities desired rather than the actual product or service delivered and if it matters then it comes second to the process (Neumann, 2015).

Strategic intents of a hotel could also catapult a hotel to innovate processes so that they remain competitive if not ahead of the market. Examples of changes mentioned by Kang, Stein, Heyo, and Lee (2014) that have necessitated hotels to introduce new business process management systems, include greening initiatives for tourism, new service requirements, and strategic planning requirements. In terms of standards developments, requirements of services and various commitments as a business and also application of principles while pursuing a competitive advantage in the industry (Macerinskiene & Mikaliuniene, 2014) suggest that process innovations could also be brought out by the interaction with customers both direct and indirect (Vila, et al., 2012).

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the mixed-method research design. The population was drawn from regions zoned by the Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA). The total number of hotels sampled was 246 hotels. The study used stratified sampling based on the TRA zones. Structured questionnaires to collect primary data from the respondents were used. And also focused group discussion to enhance deeper information that had been collected through the questionnaires. The data was analyzed using, mean and standard deviation and binary logistic regression model. The hypothesis was also tested using the binary logistic model.

### 4.0 FINDINGS

**Table 2: Business process and Entrepreneurial Orientation**

| CODE                  | Business processes  | Mean        | Std. Dev   |
|-----------------------|---|-------------|------------|
| <b>Riskiness</b>      |   |             |            |
| BP1                   | My hotel has a strong inclination for high-risk business processes projects.  | 3.8         | 0.9        |
| BP2                   | My hotel believes that owing to the nature of the environment, bold, actions in business processes are necessary to achieve the hotel objectives.       | 4.2         | 0.7        |
|                       | <b>Average</b>  | <b>4.0</b>  | <b>0.6</b> |
| <b>Proactiveness</b>  |   |             |            |
| BP3                   | My hotel initiates business processes, which competitors can respond to.  | 4.1         | 0.8        |
| BP4                   | My hotel is very often the first to introduce new business processes.   | 3.8         | 0.9        |
|                       | <b>Average</b>  | <b>3.95</b> | <b>0.5</b> |
| <b>Innovativeness</b> |   |             |            |
| BP5                   | My hotel favors a strong emphasis on business processes.  | 4.2         | 0.7        |
| BP6                   | My hotel has marketed business processes in the past five years.  | 4.0         | 0.9        |
| BP7                   | The changes in the business processes have usually been quite dramatic.   | 3.7         | 0.9        |
|                       | <b>Average</b>  | <b>3.97</b> | <b>0.8</b> |
| <b>Aggressiveness</b> |   |             |            |
| BP8                   | When confronted with decision making involving uncertainty my hotel adopts an aggressive posture to maximize opportunities regarding business processes | 4.0         | 0.9        |
| BP9                   | My hotel usually adopts the out do the competitor posture in business processes.  | 3.9         | 0.9        |
|                       | <b>Average</b>  | <b>3.9</b>  | <b>0.7</b> |

**Key: BP = Business Processes 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree**

The respondents generally agreed that their hotels had high inclination towards risky business process projects (M=3.8). There was also a strong belief that engaging in bold actions in business processes was necessary to achieve the objectives of the hotel (M=4.2). These bold actions were risky in that there was no guarantee that the returns would cover the cost of their establishments. The results show that hotels were risk takers in terms of the projects they undertook the belief and attitude.

Further, the respondents agreed that their hotels initiated business processes that competitors could respond to ( $M=4.1$ ). This shows that they were leaders of some of the business processes and ideas. Consequently, the hotels strove to be first to introduce new business processes ( $M=3.8$ ). The results show that hotels worked proactively to initiate changes and were not waiting to react to the changes in their competitive environment.

On innovation, the hotels favored and supported strong emphasis on business processes ( $M=4.2$ ). This was supported by the fact that the hotels had marketed their business processes 5 years before the period of the study ( $M=4.0$ ). Also changes in the hotel business processes were dramatic ( $M=3.7$ ). The results show some innovative element in the way the hotels pursued their processes. The hotels actively looked for new processes, held emphasis on them and marketed their process offering to the customers to maximize their returns.

Similarly, the findings on competitive aggressiveness of the hotels were not significantly different. The hotels adopted aggressive approaches to maximize opportunities on business processes when confronted with uncertainties ( $M=4.0$ ) and had an “out-do-the-competitor” mind in their approach to business processes. Thus businesses processes were viewed as tools of competition and were aggressively pursued as the best ways of competing with other hotels in the industry.

During FGDs sessions, most of the employees confessed that a larger percentage (90%) of the hotels did not have documented procedures such as the standard operating procedures. The hotels that had such procedures were mostly in the guest service areas, front offices and in the food and beverage areas. Such procedures were not reviewed frequently and reviews were only prompted by the guest complains or new facilities.

#### **4.1 Focus Group Discussion Results**

A larger percentage estimated by employees to be 90% of hotels do not have documented procedures in hotels known as standard operating procedures. Those that have them present are usually in the guest service areas, front office, and food and beverage areas and the procedures are not frequently reviewed for those who have them. The reviews are prompted by guest complaints or new facilities.

Employees feel the hotel business procedures can be used to place the hotel in a competitive position in the industry because procedures define the way services are carried out. They will provide consistency of services therefore maintaining the standards expected by guests. Due to high turnover of employees and casual employment in hotels, documented processes will assist to maintain standards regardless of the employees providing the service. Technology driven procedures also improves the quality of service. The summary of the responses for business processes focus group discussions as indicated in Table 3 below.



**Table 3: Focus Group Discussion Results**

| Questions   | Responses   |
|---|---|
| Do you have documented processes?                     | 90% of hotels do not have documented processes. 10% have processes on the guest service areas such as reception and restaurants.        |
| Are procedures frequently reviewed?                   | No, processes are not regularly reviewed.   |
| What is the basis of the review of processes?         | It is prompted by guest complaints or new facilities demanding a change of the way tasks are carried out.                               |
| Can business processes keep you ahead of competition? | Yes. They define the way services are carried out. There is the consistency of services. Technology also improves the speed of service. |

Further, from the FGDs discussions, the staff members felt that business processes could keep the hotels ahead of the competition because they defined the way services were carried out. They provide consistency of services, which helps to maintain standards expected by the guests. Also, the use of standard procedures would be useful in maintaining hotels where the turnover is very high regardless of the high changes of employees in the same station. Further, integrating the standard procedures with technology would improve the speed at which customers are served. All these help to keep high-quality services and satisfaction to the customers, which in turn helps to remain competitive in the market.

#### 4.2 Hypothesis Testing

**Table 4: Logistics Model for the Relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation and Business Processes**

| Statistic                       | Value   | Df | Sig  |
|---------------------------------|---------|----|------|
| Predictability of the model (%) | 74.2    |    |      |
| Chi-square (Omnibus Tests)      | 4.732   | 1  | 0.03 |
| 2log likelihood                 | 222.752 |    |      |
| Cox & Snell R square            | 0.141   |    |      |
| Nagelkerke R square             | 0.222   |    |      |

| Model            | B      | S.E.  | Wald  | Df | Sig.  | Exp(B) |
|------------------|--------|-------|-------|----|-------|--------|
| Business process | 1.601  | 0.759 | 4.456 | 1  | 0.035 | 4.96   |
| Constant         | -3.641 | 1.307 | 7.761 | 1  | 0.005 | 0.026  |

The model predicts 74.2% of the responses correctly. For this model, based on the p-value ( $p=0.003<0.05$ ), the chi-square value of 4.732 is significant, so the hypothesis is thus rejected, that the model does not exist. For this model, the Nagelkerke R-square value indicates that 22.2% of the variation in strategic posture is explained by the logistic model. The Wald statistic provides an index of significance of the predictor in the model. Business process was found to be a significant predictor of posture ( $Wald=4.456, p<0.05$ ) and consequently the study rejects the null hypothesis ( $H_{01}$ ) and concludes that business processes have a significant effect on strategic posture. The odds ratio (Exp (B)) for hotels facilities was 4.96. This suggests that hotels with more structured business processes are 4.96 times more likely to be proactive than those with fewer business processes. The fitted model was

$$\log(p) = -3.641 + 1.601_{business\ Process}$$

## **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATION**

### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

The study found that hotels commonly held a high inclination towards risky business process projects. There was also a strong belief and emphasis that engaging in bold and risky actions in business processes was necessary to achieve the objectives of the hotels. Although the hotels had the perception that bold actions needed to be taken to achieve objectives, they were less inclined to actually take the said actions.

On the proactiveness of business processes, results reveal that hotels endeavor to initiate processes to counter competition and that the initialization of processes was done albeit at a moderate level in response to competition. This would be understood to mean that competition among the hotels is a key factor in the initiation of the processes as opposed to the desire to be market leaders in terms of processes.

Being in the service industry, business processes is critical to the sustainability of the business. The study found that the hotels favored and supported undertakings that placed a strong emphasis on business processes. The study also revealed that hotels marketed their business processes and constantly kept making changes to their business processes. These findings imply that processes are a major part of the service and therefore stressed upon, and definitely used to promote the hotels. There is however less attention on the continual improvement of this process. Employees pointed out that although there were processes used, most hotels did not have documented procedures, commonly known as standard operating procedures (SOP's). The hotels which had such procedures were mostly in the guest service areas, front offices and in the food and beverage areas and such procedures were not reviewed frequently unless prompted by guest complains or new facilities.

With regard to aggressiveness in business processes, the study revealed that hotels adopted aggressive approaches to maximize opportunities on business processes when confronted with uncertainties. Further, most hotels approached the hotel industry with an "outdo the competitor" mind. Business processes were viewed as tools of competition therefore the aggressive behavior to pursue the best ways of competing with other hotels in the industry.

The study revealed that business processes are significant in the prediction of the likelihood of the type of orientation a hotel would pursue. This indicates that the hypothesis that holds is that business processes as a resource have an effect on the strategic posture. The business processes can be an item that can be used to strategically position hotels in the market as they are a tool to measure value and quality and should therefore be given attention if a hotel wants to escalate its business performance.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

The study notes that business processes were important in determining the entrepreneurial orientation of a hotel. Hotels being both product and service-oriented organizations, means that the service aspect is represented by the business processes. The business processes will significantly affect the standards of service, as guests will judge these standards of service based on the processes employed which form the interfaces with the customers. Risks are taken by hotels in terms of the processes employed, the hotels are proactive in responding to customers' demands in the processes, this could be seen in the initiative of hotels having applications that make the

hotels effectively and efficiently interact with guests to provide them with the services required. Hotels were moderately proactive to the market in initiating and making changes as the market demanded in hotels. The behavior towards the competition represented by aggressiveness was high as the response to competition would be said to be vigorous so as to stay ahead of competition. The hotels had strong emphasis on business processes and would be said to be continuously improving business processes. Processes create a way of doing things that eventually become norms and behaviors practiced in hotels at both operational and managerial levels.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

The processes employed by the hotels were equally important for business especially for business guests who generally desire quick efficient service. The procedures should ensure smooth flow of activities, ensure continuity in case of turn overs and even ensures effective management of the hotels in general. For the hotels whose processes were documented and constantly reviewed, there was a high likelihood for such hotels to have a proactive posture influenced with a high level by organizational culture. Processes of hotels need to be innovative and proactive therefore continually improved depending on guest feedback and expectations. In other words, risks need to be taken to create unique experiences and also look out for competitors to ensure the hotels remain in the market and in strategic positions. It is recommended that hotels manage their business processes with proficiency and continually improve them so as to strategically position themselves in the market and manage their guest experience.

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