

# Influence of Strategic Leadership Styles on Performance of 3-star Hotels in Mount Kenya East Region

# Annjoy Mukiri Ng'olua<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Nancy Rintari<sup>2</sup>, Ruth Kanyaru<sup>3</sup> <sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Business Administration, Kenya Methodist University Corresponding email: mukiri.annjoy@gmail.com

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### Abstract

The study sought to evaluate the influence of strategic leadership styles on performance of 3star hotels in Mount Kenya East Region. This study adopted a descriptive survey design on a target population of 21 hotels with a 3-star ranking. Census method was used to include 21 general managers, 21 supervisors, and 84 section heads. Quantitative data inform of questionnaires were used to get information from respondents. A pilot study at the Izaak Walton Hotel Embu County was conducted to establish validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean were used to analyze linear regression. Inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation, model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients approaches were also employed. Data was presented using tables, figures, and explanations. The questionnaire findings revealed that 48(50%) of the respondents indicated that most of the management and control of the strategic implementation process of 3-star hotels occurred at top-level management. This was followed by 27(28%) of the respondents who indicated that management and control of strategic implementation process occurred at middle level. Additionally, majority of the respondents 47(50%) indicated very high and 35(36%) indicated that a democratic type of leadership leads to the most effective formulation of the business plan. However, 52(54%) and 30(32%) of the respondents indicated that bureaucratic leadership style was lowly and moderately used. The correlation coefficient of leadership styles r=0.910 at  $\alpha < 0.024$  and 99% significance level. It was concluded that the management has ensured that the leadership provided enabled the hotels to improve performance in regards to quality of services and utilization of shareholder's resources. That notwithstanding, it was noted that most hotels practiced mostly bureaucratic leadership style that did not take into consideration the opinion of the workers on how formulated strategies could be improved. The study recommends that the management should attend leadership courses to learn about other critical leadership styles that can be applied to include junior staff in decision-making. The staff should also show interest in understanding how various strategies are formulated through close interaction with the managers. This would enable them to acquire invaluable knowledge and skills on the reasoning behind specific formulated strategies. The management should also develop institutional policies that encourage a staff representative into the board meetings to enable the opinion of the staff to be heard in an organized and respectful manner.

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# **1.0 Introduction**

A strategic plan is a collection of procedures used to create a variety of strategies that will help the organization achieve its goals (Gagné, 2018). Strategic plans have enabled hotel industry to experience growth and in recent years, the number of hotels worldwide has increased by over 25% (Kingi, 2013). Without hotels, no nation or region can hope to draw tourists, since the hotel business has been viewed as one of the main areas with a positive relationship to the travel industry. In addition to Star Ratings and membership in international hotel associations, the broader pressures brought about by globalization and internationalization have also put hotels under pressure to perform better (Mureithi et al., 2019).

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2012), the present global economic conditions are predicted to drive up the cost of hotel services worldwide. Kenya's hotel sector is dealing with several issues that are having an impact on operations. These difficulties include, among other things, a lack of strategic planning, inadequate organizational procedures, a lack of trained personnel, inadequate infrastructure, and insecurity. Kenya is regarded as one of the top tourist destinations in the world, but recent terrorist attacks and post-election violence have severely hurt the hotel sector (Kurian & Nafukho, 2022). Employee layoffs have resulted from the closure of numerous hotels. Similar to this, the demands of the fast-paced corporate climate have made managing Kenyan hotels more difficult.

Hotels are struggling to keep up with the demands of their owners and keep up with the increasingly complex production and service technology. According to Kamau (2008), Kenya's hotel industry has been confronted with a number of difficulties that have threatened its continued survival. These difficulties include economic difficulties, technical advancements, sociocultural shifts, and competitiveness. Similar to other businesses, hotels are utilizing strategic planned management performance drivers to meet the requirements for worldwide recognition, including star ratings, company of the year honors, standardization certificates, and participation in professional bodies.

The hotel industry is one of Kenya's highest earners and provides direct or indirect income for thousands of families. It is linked to the agricultural, tourism, and transportation industries, making its survival essential to the country's economic growth and development. According to the TRA (2022), Kenya has 63 three-star hotels, 24 five-star hotels, and 60 four-star hotels.

#### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Mt Kenya Region located in Kenya, boasts natural beauty, cultural heritage, and tourism potential. To harness these assets effectively, the county government must strategically plan and manage hotel development. However, challenges persist in achieving optimal hotel formulation strategic planning enables hotels to identify their unique selling points, target specific customer segments, and create a competitive edge (Njue, 2022). Strategic planning allocates resources for road networks, water supply, electricity, and waste management, enhancing hotel accessibility and functionality. Strategic planning integrates eco-friendly practices, waste reduction, and energy efficiency, ensuring sustainable hotel growth. Strategic planning includes training programs, skill development, and employee retention strategies, elevating hotel service standards. Strategic planning assesses financial feasibility, attracts investors, and secures funding for hotel projects (Abdille, 2021).

Prior studies looked at the relationship between the performance of Nairobi City's three-star hotels and strategic management techniques, which prioritized strategic planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Ndung'u, & Kavinda, 2019). How hotel managers establish a strategy and identify crucial success criteria for its creation and implementation



have been studied to get insight into their viewpoints. Qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted at the property level with senior hotel managers in Hong Kong. The findings led to comprehension. Identifying the components needed for a strategy to be implemented successfully in the hotel industry (Köseoglu et al., 2020).

Hotels offer various amenities; their strategic planning status may vary. Each hotel needs to develop a well-defined strategic plan to enhance its performance and sustainability. Strategic planning and formulation are pivotal for Mt. Kenya East Region hotels by addressing these challenges and leveraging strategic insights, the county government can foster a vibrant hotel industry, boost tourism, and contribute to economic growth which is a key Success factor for strategy formulation and implementation. Proper strategic planning is essential for hotels in Kenya to thrive, adapt to changing dynamics, and achieve sustainable success the current study proposed to study the effects of strategic formulation on performance of 3-star Hotels in Mount Kenya East by undertaking a survey of selected Hotels

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

To evaluate the influence of strategic leadership styles on performance of 3-star hotels in Mount Kenya East Region.

#### **1.3 Research Hypothesis**

 $H_01$ : There was no significant influence of strategic leadership styles on performance of 3-star hotels in Mount Kenya East Region.

#### 2.0 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Theoretical Review

James MacGregor Burns was the proponent of leadership theory in the 1970s. James MacGregor Burns found that a leader who prioritized the needs, values, and beliefs of their followers had the power to transform organizations and people alike. Good leadership was essential for influencing company culture, employee engagement, and overall performance in the fast-paced, customer-focused hotel and tourism sector. The focus of transformational leadership was on changing the attitudes, beliefs, and values of followers to inspire and motivate them to go above and beyond their expectations (Bhana & Suknunan, 2022).

Transformational leaders in the hotel industry focused on teamwork, motivation, and empowerment. Positive effects included increased commitment, improved performance, service innovation behavior, and enhanced life satisfaction among employees. The leaders in the hotel industry created a conducive environment for human resource management, promoting human dignity and flourishing. Ultimately, embracing transformational leadership principles benefited both individuals and society through improved sustainability indices (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2021).

Over the past 13 years, research on leadership styles in the hospitality sector has advanced. Nonetheless, there were conceptual and practical similarities between several leadership philosophies. The difficult part of leadership was figuring out how different leadership philosophies contributed in a hotel setting. Research on antecedents factors that influenced leadership behavior had lagged behind studies on leadership styles. Research on the factors that influence leadership effectiveness in hospitality environments was still needed. Combining theories from other academic fields improved our comprehension of leadership. Nonetheless, there was a lack of integration of theories in the hospitality industry. Scholars investigated how leadership theories interacted with organizational culture, guest expectations, and obstacles unique to a certain business. Few research works have looked at narcissistic leadership in the



hospitality sector. For example, research in Turkey's five-star hotels discovered that narcissistic leadership had a detrimental impact on staff embeddedness (Bose & Haque, 2021). Leadership theory was in line to examine how leadership styles influence planned organization formulation on performance of 3-star hotels in Mount Kenya East region.

# **2.2 Empirical Review**

According to Fatimah & Syahrani (2022), the largest obstacle to strategy execution was ineffective leadership. Managers largely relied on planning and organizing activities while implementing strategies. The study looked at 172 Slovenian enterprises as a sample, looking at their strategy execution efforts and roadblocks. Additionally, the results demonstrated that more significant obstacles to strategy execution, such as inadequate managerial skills and staff members' reluctance to share their knowledge, negatively impact performance. Bringing together a diverse team usually produces new and advanced approaches to well-known problems.

The scientific mind in every area attempted to reduce a problem to its most basic form and to construct a conceptual connection with other problems that were similar to it. According to Pham (2023), solid and decisive leadership was necessary to set the direction and guarantee that all staff members comprehended the company's vision and goals, showed dedication, and actively engaged in transforming the strategic plans into actionable tasks with measurable outcomes. According to Taylor, strategic leaders oversaw a radical transformation to greatly improve organizational operations.

These managers used an open style of communication both internally and outside, attempting to create a new culture that encourages employee involvement. In support of this perspective, Bryson (2018) noted that strategic leadership maintains an organization's capacity for innovation and responsiveness by making extra efforts to assist, nurture, and encourage individuals who are eager to advocate for novel concepts, improved services, new goods, and innovative uses of existing products. According to Rigi et al. (2019), in their study "Effect of selected variables on corporate performance," a plan needed to be supported by a committed leadership team to be implemented successfully. The study went on to say that any corporate plan would succeed if the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and team members, who had a comprehensive understanding of the company and its surroundings, provided the analysis and commitment. As a result, the CEO and the management group determined and ultimately were accountable for realizing the company's strategic goal.

To effectively implement the strategic plan in light of the changed circumstances, the CEO and other members of the management team needed to invest a significant amount of time in understanding the consequences of the changes in both their industry and the broader environment. The senior management's ownership and involvement went beyond the stage of strategic planning to include the actual process of putting the intended plans into action. This made it possible for the management team to collaborate as a whole to achieve a common objective and to utilize each team manager's unique entrepreneurial abilities. Samimi (2022) posited that the notion of strategic leadership entailed motivating staff members to enhance their work output by conveying the significance of ambitious goals that offer opportunities for both individual and group contributions.

The number of travelers following the 2017 repeat election, terrorist assaults at the Dusit D2 hotel, and the coronavirus pandemic resulted in a decline in the number of patrons for Nairobi's five-star hotels, as well as a reduction in the facilities and products obtainable and the quality of service. The growth, expansion, sales, and workforce size of Kenya's hotel business had all



been impacted by the decline in patronage. From 2016 to 2020, the industry also experienced a decrease in the quantity of tourism-related activities, which had an impact on customer outreach levels. Thus, the goal of the current study was to assess how Nairobi County, Kenya's five-star hotels operate in relation to their leadership styles.

Resource-based theory served as the study's foundation for the study by Wanjiku and Kungu (2022). This study design employed was descriptive. The senior hotel managers served as the unit of observation, and the five-star hotels in Nairobi City County served as the unit of analysis. A census survey was employed in the research due to the limited sample size of 104 senior managers from whom data were gathered. Primary data was gathered through the use of questionnaires. The data was gathered using the drop-and-pick-later technique. The Cronbach Alpha test was used to assess reliability, while the pilot test was used to assess construct validity and content validity. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were used. Among the descriptive metrics used were frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Two inferential statistics were used to demonstrate the linear relationship between the variables: regression analysis and correlation. Data were displayed as figures or tables. The vast majority of respondents claimed that hotel management has the skills and knowledge necessary to spearhead a program of transformation. The study found that leadership has a beneficial effect on the performance of five-star hotels. Hotels should encourage environmental scanning because it's the only way to lower stress levels when leading (Wanjiku & Kungu, 2022).

# 3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design on a target population of 21 hotels with a 3-star ranking. Census method was used to include 21 general managers, 21 supervisors, and 84 section heads. Quantitative data inform of questionnaires were used to get information from respondents. A pilot study at the Izaak Walton Hotel Embu County was conducted to establish validity and reliability. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean were used to analyze linear regression. Inferential statistics such as Pearson correlation, model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients approaches were also employed. Data was presented using tables, figures, and explanations.

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Response Rate

The study issued questionnaires to 21 general managers, 21 supervisors, and 84 section heads hence a total of 126 respondents from 3-star hotels in Mount Kenya's east region, as provided in Table 1.

Respondents	Sampled	Response	Percentage
General Managers	21	17	81
Supervisors	21	19	90
Section Heads	84	60	71
Total	126	96	76

#### **Table 1: Response Rate**



Table 1 shows that 17(81%) general managers, 19(90%) supervisors, and 60(71%) section heads responded to the study making a response rate of 96. This was a 76% response rate hence a high response proportion. Consequently, a response rate of more than 70% indicates a very suitable research outcome (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The results meant that the study attracted a larger number of respondents since the problem that had limited most hotels to achieve ways in which could formulate their effective strategic planning such that they obtained their unique notch on the market enabling more sales, was lingering. Therefore, most respondents were attracted to the fact that they needed to provide the specific problems affecting their hotels which did not allow them to have a competitive edge and an upper hand on the specific customer segments.

# 4.2 Reliability Results

A pilot study was conducted at Izaak Walton Inn, Embu County. The results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2:	Reliability	Results
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Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Leadership Styles	0.768	5
Performance	0.782	5
Average	0.775	5

Table 2 shows that the Cronbach alpha index for leadership styles is 0.768 and performance is 0.782. The average coefficient is 0.775 which is more than 0.7. Notably, A range of less than 0.7 showed that the instruments are unreliable, whereas a coefficient of 0.7 to 1 says that the instruments were very reliable (Taber, 2018). Consequently, the study's questionnaires were deemed reliable based on their coefficient of 0.775. This meant that the set of questionnaires used had clear questions that addressed the segments that related to strategic formulation aspects like stakeholders, financial resources, leadership styles, and effective communication.

# 4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Performance of 3-star Hotels

Performance of three-star hotels was the dependent variable and it had indicators such as profitability, liquidity, solvency, and repayment capacity. This variable was examined through questionnaires and secondary data as provided in Table 3.



Table 3:	Descriptive	<b>Statistics</b>	of Performance
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Statements N=96	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Increased profitability as a result of various strategies formulated	8 (8%)	20 (21%)	9 (9%)	21 (22%)	38 (40%)	4.29
High liquidity levels due to repeat business	12 (12%)	8 (9%)	8 (9%)	36 (37%)	32 (33%)	4.13
Stable solvency rate	5 (5%)	16 (17%)	36 (37%)	22 (23%)	17 (18%)	3.37
Repayment capacity of loans taken	11 (11%)	6 (6%)	12 (13%)	38 (40%)	29 (30%)	4.22
Strategies formulated have enabled improvement of general performance.	20 (21%)	32 (33%)	10 (10%)	22 (23%)	12 (13%)	3.04

Table 3 reveals that 38(40%) strongly agreed and 21(22%) agreed on a mean of 4.29 that there had been increased profitability in hotels as a result of various strategies formulated. Additionally, 32(33%) strongly agreed and 36(37%) agreed on a mean of 4.13 that hotels were able to maintain their liquidity levels high due to repeated business. However, 20(21%) strongly disagreed, 32(33%) disagreed and 10(10%) were neutral that strategies formulated had enabled the hotels to improve their general performance.

The results implied that profitability of various hotels in Mount Kenya was on improvement plans, especially after coming up with recovery plans during post COVID-19 era. These strategies enabled them to maintain satisfactory liquidity levels since customers were willing to seek accommodation and meals more than once. However, this improvement was not spread across all the services offered in the hotels. According to Murigu et al. (2018), most hotels face a challenge in developing realistic strategies that would enable them to strike a balance on all amenities. That is, hotels were known for one specific kind of service related to accommodation, outside catering, meals, or sports activities e.g. golf. Additionally, Mutindi et



al. (2013) also discovered that the performance of most hotels on Kenyan coast was anchored on a major aspect through which they were well known for. This could be based on suitability of lodging services or meal provision.

# 4.4 Descriptive Statistics of Leadership Styles

Leadership styles comprised the third independent variable with indicators such as democratic, laissez-faire, bureaucratic, transformational, and transactional styles. The study asked the respondents to fill in the questionnaires where they were to identify which management level in the organization handled the majority of the management and controlled the strategic implementation process. Table 4 shows the results.

Respondents	Sampled	Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Top Level	48	50	50
Middle Level	27	28	78
Functional Level	15	16	94
All/Uniform	4	4	98
Impossible to tell	2	2	100
Total	96	100	

### Table 4: Management Levels

Table 4 shows that 48(50%) of the respondents indicated that most of the management and control of the strategic implementation process of 3-star hotels occurred at top-level management. This was followed by 27(28%) of the respondents who indicated that management and control of strategic implementation process occurred at middle level. Notably, only 2(2%) of the study participants had no idea of where management and control occurred in 3-star hotels.

The results therefore meant that most of the key strategic decisions were mainly done by top and middle-level management teams. These senior management teams were effective and experienced in resource allocation and assessment of strategic risk management to ensure that the process of formulation and implementation is well informed. Notably, Gagné (2018) also established that the reason why senior management was able to formulate strategies was due to their rich leadership experience and interconnection aspects which added significant value to the hotel's sustainability. In the same line though Kurian and Nafukho (2022) indicated that through consistent informed decision-making by the senior management, the reliability of operations going on for a foreseeable duration of time was attainable.

The study required the respondents to state the leadership style that led to the most effective formulation of the business plan by the hotels. Table 5 had a Likert scale of 1 to 4 where 1=very high,2=High, 3=Moderate, and 4=Low.



Statements N=96	1	2	3	4	Mean
	6	8	30	52	2.22
Democratic	(6%)	(8%)	(32%)	(54%)	2.23
	11	33	48	4	2.15
Laissez faire	(12%)	(34%)	(50%)	(4%)	3.15
	47	35	3	5	4.00
Bureaucratic	(50%)	(36%)	(3%)	(5%)	4.39
	10	35	45	6	2.24
Transformational	(10%)	(37%)	(47%)	(6%)	3.26
	40	28	8	6	4 12
Transactional	(42%)	(29%)	(8%)	(6%)	4.12

### **Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Leadership Styles**

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents who were 40(42%), indicated 'very high' and 28(29%) indicated 'high' that transactional leadership style was used (mean of 4.12). Additionally, 47(50%) indicated that there was 'very high' and 35(34%) indicated that there was 'high' use of bureaucratic type of leadership. However, 52(54%) and 30(32%) of the respondents indicated that democratic leadership style was lowly and moderately used.

The results implied that most hotel management teams allowed professional interaction with their juniors so that there would be an exchange of skills, knowledge, and resources. Additionally, there was a reliable chain of command that allowed a flow of reliable information on the formulated strategies awaiting to be executed in the implementation stage. That notwithstanding, it was undebatable once a strategy was formulated to be re-evaluated as a result of an opinion from the hotel employees. They were never allowed to critique the strategic decisions made by the management. According to Mariño-Romero et al. (2020), non-involvement of the staff was due to their low experience in providing sound strategic decisions that had been tested over a period to be distinguished as working.

However, Nahuway and Noermijati (2018) noted that some junior employees possessed higher qualifications in terms of experience and academic levels as compared to the management. Therefore, making a general conclusion that they were not fit to provide strategic advice was ill-informed. Notably, Murimi and Wadongo (2021) brought the aspect of accountability into the discussion by indicating that the opinions provided by junior employees were not fit since they had less accountability in regard to the operations of the hotel and the implementation of a misguided strategic opinion from the junior employees would only be liable to the management in general.



# 4.5 Pearson Correlation of Strategic Leadership Styles

The study's research hypothesis indicated that strategic leadership styles did not influence the performance of 3-star Hotels. Table 6 provides the results.

		Performance	Strategic Leadership Styles
	Pearson Correlation	1	.910
Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)		.024
	Ν	96	96
	Pearson Correlation	.910	1
Strategic leadership styles	Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	
	Ν	96	96

# Table 6: Pearson Correlation of Accounting Information System

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

Table 6 indicates that the correlation coefficient of leadership styles r=0.910 at  $\alpha < 0.024$  and 99% significance level. Therefore, since the correlation coefficient was less than 1 and p-value was less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis. Turyahebwa et al. (2022) explore Uganda's hotel business, employee performance, leadership styles, and talent management. ¬Notably, a qualitative research design was used where a total of one hundred and forty-four hotels were used as the target population. Further, the study issued questionnaires to one hundred and ten respondents. Turyahebwa et al. (2022) found that leadership styles had a higher influence on performance of hotels in Uganda. In addition, the study revealed that transformational style of leadership had a significant impact on commitment of employees within their hotels.

# 4.6 Summary

The questionnaire findings revealed that 48(50%) of the respondents indicated that most of the management and control of the strategic implementation process of 3-star hotels occurred at top-level management. This was followed by 27(28%) of the respondents who indicated that management and control of strategic implementation process occurred at middle level. Notably, only 2(2%) of the study participants had no idea of where management and control occurred in 3-star hotels.

Additionally, majority of the respondents 47(50%) indicated very high and 35(36%) indicated that a democratic type of leadership leads to the most effective formulation of the business plan. In addition, 40(42%) indicated very high and 28(29%) indicated high that transactional leadership style was used. However, 52(54%) and 30(32%) of the respondents indicated that bureaucratic leadership style was lowly and moderately used.

The correlation coefficient of leadership styles r=0.910 at  $\alpha < 0.024$  and 99% significance level. Therefore, since the correlation coefficient was less than 1 and p-value was less than 0.05, the study rejected the null hypothesis.



### 5.0 Conclusion

It was concluded that it had a positive influence on improving hotel's performance. This showed that the management has ensured that the leadership provided enabled the hotels to improve performance in regards to quality of services, utilization of shareholder's resources, and general management of people working under them. That notwithstanding, it was noted that most hotels practiced mostly bureaucratic leadership style that did not take into consideration the opinion of the workers on how formulated strategies could be improved. This brought about demotivation to the staff which encouraged high job turnover affecting the performance of the hotels.

#### 6.0 Recommendations

The management should attend leadership courses to learn about other critical leadership styles that can be applied to include junior staff in decision-making. The staff should also show interest in understanding how various strategies are formulated through close interaction with the managers. This would enable them to acquire invaluable knowledge and skills on the reasoning behind specific formulated strategies. The management should also develop institutional policies that encourage a staff representative into the board meetings to enable the opinion of the staff to be heard in an organized and respectful manner.

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