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Influence of Trend Analysis on Organizational Performance of Food Processing Companies in Meru County

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of trend analysis on the organizational performance of food processing companies in Meru County. Descriptive research design was used on a target population of 78 food processing companies in Meru County. Notably, 97 directors, 121 operations managers, 99 quality assurance managers, 116 compliance managers, 132 marketing managers, and 121 risk managers. The respondents were sampled through a simple random method, and the sample size was determined through Slovin's formula. This led to 78 directors, 93 operations managers, 79 quality assurance managers, 90 compliance managers, 99 marketing managers, and 93 risk managers. Directors answered open- and closed-ended structured questionnaires, while the managers answered closed-ended questionnaires. A pilot test was conducted in 8 processing companies in Tharaka Nithi County. The study examined construct, criterion, and content validities. Internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha was examined as a measure of reliability testing. The information from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS software version 27. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean, were conducted. Thereafter, linear regression analysis were done. It was discovered that trend analysis had a positive influence on organizational performance. The processing companies were noted to have invested in training through on-the-job training, e-learning, and workshops for their staff on different methods of analyzing market trends. The management also took time to assess different products to note any abnormality, exposing the company to risk. However, the process of arriving at a strategic decision was rather long due to the insufficiency of market intelligence systems and poor training on resource allocation, hence depriving the company of a chance to capitalize on opportunities. The study recommends that there is a need to support the training programs on market trend analysis. This could be done by increasing funding, benchmarking, and boosting other necessary resources.

Keywords: *Trend Analysis, Organizational Performance, Food Processing Companies, Meru County*

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1. Introduction

The global outbreak of COVID-19 revealed that the unexpected can alter the operations of organizations temporarily or permanently, depending on the established policies to combat such an event (OECD, 2025). The organizations that had not foreseen such an event were pushed out of the market due to low performance. Organizational performance is the process of delivering products and services to the target clients, with the aim of satisfying their demands and superseding their expectations within the shortest duration of time (Gutterman, 2023).

Profitability, productivity, efficient teamwork, time management, and accountability will be the main performance indicators that will be assessed in this study.

Notably, as a company sets out to provide different products and services, unexpected events may arise that cause a swift change in their core operations. Therefore, the ability of the management to set strategies that are based on foresight is essential. Strategic foresight is the process of examining possibility of diverse futures happenings to be adequately prepared through policy establishments, for any change that may take place (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2021). The study assessed different types of strategic foresights, such as trend analysis, scenario planning, horizon scanning, and backcasting (Matti et al., 2025; Observatory of Public Sector Innovation [OPSI], 2021). These types of strategic foresights were selected since they were recommended by UNDP (2018) in their foresight manual for corporates.

Trend analysis is defined as the process of examining different sets of data to note any patterns that may be present and that can be used to determine the possibility of a certain future taking place (Grove et al., 2023).

Globally, processing companies in Spain have closed down due to wrong trend analysis of the operations (European Union, 2023). Regional companies that have specialized in processing food products in Nigeria have faced increased losses due to the risky environment caused by Boko Haram operations. In Kenya, increased cost of operations due to tough regulatory measures from the government (Kenya Association of Manufacturers [KAM], 2021).

Meru County, Kenya. It is within the geographical coordinates of 0.3557° N, 37.8088° E and located on the slopes of Mount Kenya, within the former Eastern province. KIPPRA (2021) revealed that MSMEs, where processing firms were categorized, experienced 46.7% access to the physical market, a 7.3% rate of survival, and 11.4% fair competition when selling their products. This therefore shows that processing companies in Meru have faced challenges related to unfair competition, low survival rates, and low market access. Other concerns that have affected the processing companies in the county include shortages of resources and rapidly changing regulatory frameworks (Gitonga, 2023; Mwito, 2024). These concerns have made it difficult for the companies to operate effectively in Meru County, prompting the sudden closure or scaling down of operations.

1.1 Problem Statement

The performance of processing companies is such a critical component of the economy of the nation. This is because they provide adequate processed products that can be sold locally and internationally to improve the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] of a specific nation (Grove et al., 2023). Therefore, in coping with changing business demands, strategic managers are supposed to develop clear strategic foresights that seek to understand the market through trends and foresee the position of their companies based on different scenarios for planning purposes (Kalra et al., 2023).

However, despite the existence of processing companies in Kenya, there has been increased import of processed food products from 10.04% in 2021 to 10.19% in 2022 on the one hand (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2023). The imports of machinery and equipment for processing have equally declined from 14.35% in 2021 to 11.49% in 2022. In the same line of thought, there has also been a decline in imports of industrial supplies for processing raw materials from 49.2% in 2021 to 47.27% in 2022 (KNBS, 2023). On the other hand, the percentage of exports of food and beverages from Kenya declined from 46.4% in 2020 to 43.1% in 2021 and remained constant at 43.1% in 2022 (KNBS, 2023).

A report by KAM (2024) links this imbalance to increased inflation and unfavorable regulatory measures from the government. The long-term impact has been low capacities to import machinery or industrial supplies so as to process more raw materials by the processing companies. As it currently stands, 20-50% of food supplies from local farmers go to waste since the present food processing companies have no adequate capacities to process huge raw products (KAM, 2024).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

To examine the influence of trend analysis on the organizational performance of food processing companies in Meru County.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

Ho1: Trend analysis has no significant influence on the organizational performance of food processing companies in Meru County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Fielder (1967) was considered the main developer of the contingency theory, which stated that when it comes to leadership, there is no best way to do it or make decisions. What was needed was continuous improvement of decisions while ensuring that risks were minimized as opportunities were being optimized and capitalized. According to Fielder (1967), it was important for the strategic managers to make decisions based on available resources, structures of the institutions, and the environment that surrounds them to attain optimality. Therefore, the ability to be labelled as a good strategic manager was based on the specific context in which strategies were made and the available support system in place (Hammed et al., 2024).

In the context of trend analysis, being able to identify possible patterns that enabled the strategic management to make decisions provided an ambience for success. This was because having market intelligence could not guarantee improved performance unless the management was able to analyse and implement the details to lead to enhanced productivity. Furthermore, optimizing resources, reducing waste, and supporting clear decision-making patterns on viable strategies. Additionally, Chebwai and Kinyuru (2024) indicated that historical data could be a powerful tool that explained volatility to inform management methods to curb sudden increments in price, particularly in the processing companies. Further, contingency theory supported product analysis by the management to enhance improvements based on consumer demands and market competition rates (Matti et al., 2025).

2.2 Empirical Review

Globally, Siswanto et al. (2025) examined how competitiveness in business increased when there was data-based decision-making and trend analysis in the market in Indonesia. The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between market trend analysis, data-driven decision-making, AI, and business competitiveness. The study used an online survey to collect data, which was later distributed to managers involved in decision-making. The results showed that market trend analysis had a positive impact on business performance. It was also noted that product sales volume helped to predict future demand by analyzing how the business was performing previously. Additionally, Siswento et al. (2025) indicated that market analysis helped in decision-making and setting realistic goals. This was because when previous trends were analyzed, they were able to understand the growth rate of the organization. Furthermore, the study also found it was necessary for a business to analyze changes in product prices; this was useful to understand which products were in higher demand

over the previous years, hence improving competitiveness. However, Siswanto et al. (2025) failed to assess the various methods to analyze customer feedback and their effectiveness in understanding their strategic needs.

Regionally, Hammed et al. (2024) examined how trend analysis and causal effect influenced Nigeria's sectoral performance and financial flows. The study used monthly data that ranged from the first month of 2008 to the tenth month of 2022. Additionally, the Toda-Yamamoto causality test was used to check whether there was a relationship between trend analysis and the performance of various sectors, such as food processing in Nigeria. According to Hammed et al. (2024), when trend analysis was implemented in various organizations, such as in food processing, there was increased revenue and general performance. Furthermore, it was noted that analyzing the internal flow of the organization played an important role in ensuring that resources are located effectively in different departments. Additionally, analyzing external flow enhanced proper communication and collaboration between customers and supply partners, thus improving organizational performance. Notably, Hammed et al. (2024) did not consider analysis of volatility as a form of trend analysis.

Locally, Mwangi and Nkuru (2024) examined how Kenya's corporations, especially commercial state ones, were affected by financial performance when there were strategic analysis practices, tracking, and financial reporting. Through a descriptive research design, the study targeted ninety individuals who were sampled to obtain seventy-five participants. Raw data used in the study was collected by use of surveys and auxiliary measurements. The results showed that financial reporting and analysis had a positive impact on how corporations performed in Kenya. It was also noted that analyzing the financial report showed how money flows in the organization, which positively influences budget planning. However, Mwangi et al. (2024) did not assess how the analysis of cash flow statements supported the organizations in tracking their expenditure patterns due to the capital.

3. Methodology

The descriptive research design was used on a target population of 78 food processing companies in Meru County. Notably, 97 directors, 121 operations managers, 99 quality assurance managers, 116 compliance managers, 132 marketing managers, and 121 risk managers. The respondents were sampled through a simple random method, and the sample size was determined through Slovin's formula. This led to 78 directors, 93 operations managers, 79 quality assurance managers, 90 compliance managers, 99 marketing managers, and 93 risk managers. Directors answered open- and closed-ended structured questionnaires, while the managers answered closed-ended questionnaires. A pilot test was conducted in 8 processing companies in Tharaka Nithi County. The study examined construct, criterion, and content validity. Internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha was examined as a measure of reliability testing. The information from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS software version 27. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were calculated. Thereafter, linear regression analysis was done.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

The study sampled various directors and managers from various processing companies in Meru County, are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate

Population	Sampled	Response	Percentage
Directors	78	62	79%
Operations managers	93	79	85%
Quality assurance managers	79	65	82%
Compliance managers	90	78	87%
Marketing managers	99	83	84%
Risk managers	93	77	83%
Total	532	444	83%

Table 1 shows that 62(79%) of the directors and 382(83%) of the managers returned fully completed questionnaires, representing a response rate of 444 (83%). A survey with a 50% response rate is average, that with between 60% and 70% is adequate, and that with over 70% is excellent (Wu et al., 2022). Therefore, a response rate of 444 (83%) was considered excellent and hence adequate for the analysis and conclusions of the study.

4.2 Reliability Results

The study conducted a pilot test at Tharaka Nithi County to test the reliability of the study instruments. Table 2 provides the results.

Table 2: Reliability Results

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Trend Analysis	0.875
Organizational Performance	0.839
Average	0.857

The results in Table 2 show that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for trend analysis is 0.875, and organizational performance is 0.839, and the average Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.857. Since all the variables had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of above 0.7, it was evident that the items used in this study were reliable.

4.3 Results of Organizational Performance of Food Processing Companies

The responses from the questionnaire issued to the managers as the primary respondents are indicated in Table 3. SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

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Table 3: Organizational Performance of Food Processing Companies- Managers

Statements N=382	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
The company rewards consistent profitability in departments	145 (38%)	118 (31%)	43 (11%)	41 (11%)	35 (9%)	2.22	1.304
Employee productivity is enhanced through in-job training	10 (3%)	12 (3%)	16 (4%)	241 (63%)	103 (27%)	4.09	0.817
Team work between the management and the staff has increased the performance	0 (0%)	20 (5%)	298 (78%)	50 (13%)	14 (4%)	3.14	0.573
Time management is keenly monitored to avoid idleness	3 (1%)	5 (1%)	35 (9%)	114 (30%)	225 (59%)	4.45	0.784
There is accountability measures put into place to reduce staff fraud	36 (9%)	31 (8%)	214 (56%)	52 (14%)	49 (13%)	3.12	1.046
There are sustainability programs in place	8 (2%)	10 (3%)	15 (4%)	237 (62%)	112 (29%)	4.20	0.654

The respondents were in general agreement that time management was keenly monitored to avoid idleness (Mean=4.45). They also agreed that there were sustainability programs in place to ensure the company was a going concern (Mean=4.20); and employee productivity was enhanced through in-job training (Mean=4.09). The same respondents had neutral agreement about the efficiency of teamwork between the management and the staff, increasing the performance of the company (Mean=3.14); and accountability measures put into place, reducing staff fraud and resource wastage (Mean=3.12). They were equally in disagreement that the company rewarded consistent profitability in departments (Mean=2.22). From the results presented, time management was noted not to be an issue in food processing companies. This is because 225 (59%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 114 (30%) agreed, at a standard deviation of 0.784.

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Adding to that, the sustainability of programs and staff training was another positive output. The same results on the negative perspective, noted 145 (38%) strongly disagreeing and 118 (31%) disagreeing, with the statement that the company rewards consistent profitability in departments. Therefore, based on organizational performance, it could mean that time management was highly regarded since it increased efficiencies within the departments, but at the same time, the efforts of individual employees were not recognized. This was a misbalance, with most strategic foresight, since the companies treated their staff similarly to machines, with less human recognition of their efforts. In agreement, Alkhafaji (2024) noted that making it a priority to strengthen internal teamwork efforts of the staff should incorporate humane treatment of the staff to enhance the growth of companies.

The responses from the questionnaire issued to the directors as part of the respondents are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Organizational Performance of Food Processing Companies- Directors

Statements N=62	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Profitability has increased due to frequent analysis	5 (8%)	2 (3%)	4 (6%)	27 (44%)	24 (39%)	4.02	1.152
Productivity has improved due to quality horizon scanning	2 (3%)	5 (8%)	42 (68%)	7 (11%)	6 (10%)	3.08	0.635
There is efficiency developed due to teamwork	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	5 (8%)	33 (53%)	20 (32%)	4.03	1.008
Less time is wasted when implementing a strategic plan	21 (34%)	23 (37%)	10 (16%)	6 (10%)	2 (3%)	2.15	1.129
Accountability measures have reduced poor spending patterns	3 (5%)	5 (8%)	44 (71%)	6 (10%)	4 (6%)	3.05	0.789
Management ensures that there is consistency in performance	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	46 (74%)	13 (21%)	4.15	0.539

The respondents were in general agreement that the management ensured that there was consistency in performance to increase the chances of being sustainable for a long time (Mean=4.15). They also agreed that profitability had increased due to frequent analysis of business trends (Mean=4.02), and there was efficiency developed due to teamwork between the management and staff (Mean=4.03). The same respondents had a neutral stance about the improvement of productivity due to quality horizon scanning (Mean=3.08), and accountability measures reducing poor spending patterns and operational costs in their company (Mean=3.05). They were, however, in disagreement that less time was wasted when implementing a strategic plan since its formulation had been developed by all management members (Mean=2.15).

The directors were in belief that continuous performance (13(21%) strongly agreeing and 46 (74%) agreeing) and analyzing business trends (24(39%) strongly agreeing and 27(44%) agreeing) contributed effectively towards increasing departmental efficiency. Nevertheless, horizon scanning and accountability remained a challenge. Furthermore, they were in contrast to the fact that the implementation of organizational strategies was done promptly (21(34%), strongly disagreed, and 23 (37%) disagreed). This could have been interpreted that, probably, the consultation was not from all management members.

In a nutshell, the results may have painted a scenario that even though there was general agreement on the effort to sustain performance through analyzing business trends, it was difficult to include the opinion of all the managers, if time was to be sustained. The neglect to include them led to poor accountability with some of the environmental scans, like Horizon, being taken for granted. However, Mdasha et al. (2023) noted that the top management in large manufacturing firms, were accountable in offering strategic insights but Munga (2024) disagreed with Mdasha et al. (2023) that at times, this may not be religiously followed to external influence like inflation, forcing the management to adopt old models that may omit some crucial steps and environmental scanning methods, especially within the Kenyan space.

4.4 Results of Trend Analysis on Organizational Performance

The responses from the questionnaire issued to the managers in regards to trend analysis, as the primary respondents, are indicated in Table 5. SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; N=Neutral; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.

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Table 5: Trend Analysis on Organizational Performance- Managers

Statements N=382	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
We have systems to enable the company to make accurate market intelligence analysis	5 (1%)	22 (6%)	270 (71%)	64 (17%)	21 (5%)	3.22	0.644
Analysis of products to match customer preferences	15 (4%)	27 (7%)	22 (6%)	126 (33%)	192 (50%)	4.19	1.079
Decision making is structured in a manner that allows employee participation	149 (39%)	87 (23%)	37 (10%)	48 (13%)	59 (15%)	2.41	1.485
Volatility management is done based on the threat level to the company	6 (2%)	39 (10%)	51 (13%)	132 (35%)	154 (40%)	4.05	0.995
All managers have undergone training on how to optimize resources	0 (0%)	22 (6%)	272 (71%)	67 (18%)	21 (5%)	3.23	0.634

The results indicated in Table 5 indicate that respondents were in agreement that every developed product was analyzed to ensure it matched with the customer taste and preferences (Mean=4.19). For instance, 92(50%) of the respondents strongly agreed, and 126(33%) agreed. Further, they also agreed that volatility management was done based on threat level to the company (Mean=4.05). It was thus notable that the companies aligned various food products with what their clientele wanted and ensured that operational risk was effectively managed. In the line of thought, they had two neutral opinions that all managers had undergone training on how to optimize resources (Mean=3.23).

It can be deduced that there was a lack of in-depth training with regard to how resources should be optimized and the spread of explicit knowledge on the market intelligence system within most companies. In comparison, Observatory of Public Sector Innovation (2021) discovered that strategic foresight, which was a critical element of strategic management, was implemented through the provision of learning programs by the management to its workforce. This is with an aim of including them as part of decision makers (Mean of 2.41). Therefore, the fact that the current study's findings note that the employees are hardly involved in decision making could be interpreted as a major point of weakness that requires urgent attention.

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The responses additionally were that there were systems to enable the company to make accurate market intelligence analysis (Mean=3.22). Therefore, from the responses by the managers working at food processing companies, it is notable that there were some attempts to increase this knowledge but from a neutral stand which Grove et al. (2023) disagreed by noting that the management effort to popularize strategic tools in support to market intelligence, was at a higher scale within the companies but from an international perspective. In a nutshell, the results could mean that there may be structural changes incorporated to satisfy customer needs, but highly let down by systems that would have been efficient in gaining market insights.

The responses from the questionnaire issued to the directors as part of the respondents are indicated in Table 6.

Table 6: Trend Analysis on Organizational Performance- Directors

Statements N=62	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
The company conducts quality market intelligence analysis	26 (42%)	16 (26%)	4 (6%)	6 (10%)	10 (16%)	2.32	1.502
Products are analyzed to determine their ability to satisfy the demands of the consumers	3 (5%)	2 (3%)	5 (8%)	17 (27%)	35 (52%)	4.13	1.166
Decision-making patterns are made within a known strategic timeframe	0 (0%)	3 (5%)	46 (74%)	10 (16%)	3 (5%)	3.21	0.604
Volatility management is ensured to manage strategic risk	2 (3%)	4 (6%)	6 (10%)	23 (37%)	27 (44%)	4.11	1.042
There is an optimization of resources to ensure the value addition of raw materials	0 (0%)	4 (6%)	44 (71%)	11 (18%)	3 (5%)	3.23	0.612

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The results reveal that there were different products analyzed to determine their ability to satisfy the demands of the consumers (Mean=4.13). Additionally, volatility management was ensured to manage strategic risk that emanated from increased prices (Mean=4.11). They, however, had two neutral opinions that optimization of resources ensured value addition of raw materials was attained at minimum cost (Mean=3.23). Additionally, they were also neutral that decision-making patterns were made within a known strategic timeframe (Mean=3.21). In total disagreement, they indicated that the company did not conduct quality market intelligence analysis to establish possible strategic opportunities and risks (Mean=2.32) (26(42%) directors strongly disagreed and 16(26%) disagreed).

It is an indication that the process of product assessment was agreed upon by the management to be able to mitigate risks linked to pricing within the companies (27(44%) strongly agreed and 23(37%) agreed). Nevertheless, the timelines taken to arrive at a strategic decision were not assured, nor was the quality of market intelligence effective in acknowledging opportunities and risks. Just like the current study, Mwito (2024) noted that companies were able to utilize strategic foresight to manage rapid and unwarranted changes in prices of their products, as a method of attracting clients. Additionally, the absence of market intelligence negatively affected the process of strategic plans and strategic foresight (International Monetary Fund, 2021).

4.5 Regression Analysis

The study had a model which stated that $Y = \beta_1 + \beta_1 X_1 e$

Where:

Y = Organizational Performance

βi = Coefficients to be estimated

β_1= Constant

$\beta_1 X_1$= Trend Analysis

e = Error term

To determine the model's coefficients, regression weights were computed, as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients of Strategic Foresight on Organizational Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	21.284	1.480		14.379	.000
	Trend Analysis	.134	.047	.151	2.892	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Performance

Table 7 indicates the coefficient for trend analysis is (β=0.134), and when equated to the equation, $Y=21.284+0.134X_1$. The model means that an increase in trend analysis of increases organizational performance by 0.134. Therefore, the model indicated that trend analysis, was important towards improving organizational performance. Strengthening trend analysis has to

do with assessment of various products, gaining insightful market intelligence, and optimizing resources to support informed decisions. Through such approaches, risk is managed through strategic planning to steer through a challenging dynamic business environment.

4.6 Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis stated that trend analysis had no significant influence on the organizational performance of food processing companies in Meru County. The study tested the hypothesis using regression coefficients as pointed in Table 7. The significance value was 0.001, which was less than 0.05, supporting the decision to reject null hypothesis. In other terms, trend analysis had a positive influence on the organizational performance of food processing companies in Meru County.

5. Conclusion

The main conclusion made on trend analysis was that it positively influenced organizational performance. The processing companies were noted to have invested in training through on-job training, e-learning, and workshops for their staff on different methods of analyzing market trends. The management also took time to assess different products to note any abnormality, exposing the company to risk. However, the process of arriving at a strategic decision was rather long due to the insufficiency of market intelligence systems and poor training on resource allocation, hence depriving the company of a chance to capitalize on opportunities.

6. Recommendations

The study recommends that there is a need to support the training programs on market trend analysis. This could be done by increasing funding, benchmarking, and other necessary resources. The study also recommends that the management consider partnering with experts in trend analysis to provide the training programmes at subsidized rates. Furthermore, the study recommends that the directors empower the current policies by sensitizing the managers on the decision-making timelines. This is in realization that the developments within a specific industry are highly dynamic and have a high tendency of becoming obsolete. It is recommended that the directors consider expanding their investments to acquire the most recent systems that will provide market intelligence to various departments. They could also consider boosting their internet connectivity to support access to real-time data.

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