

Leadership Impact on Change Management Implementation Strategies in Kenyan-Owned Supermarkets in Kenya [Case Study of QK LTD Supermarket]

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Abstract

Role of senior management in creating and implementing change management strategies that improve performance and competitiveness of Kenyan-owned supermarkets and explore challenges that Kenyan-owned supermarkets face when it comes to implementing change management strategies and how organisational leadership can overcome these challenges. Research is aimed to investigate the effect of organisational leadership on change management practices in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya, using a case study approach with QK Supermarket Ltd, Kenya. Study was anchored on a theoretical framework involving Kotters 8 step change management model. The descriptive cross-sectional design was used. The target population for this study comprised of 240 management employees drawn from management levels 01 to 04. A focused study was done for regional managers, and face-to-face interviews were conducted for senior managers, in addition, questionnaires were used to collect data from the sampled employees. Validity tests were used to reduce threat to content validity while reliability tests were used to test consistent, and to ensure the results were free from bias. All the statistical analysis was done using SPSS. Findings obtained indicated that employees do not think that change communication was a key driver of effective change management unless there was communication of purpose, the vision of change, and benefit of change. According to respondents, reward and performance-based culture was very important in change management process. Study seeks to provide insights into how leadership can facilitate effective change management in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya, and how such businesses can leverage unique strengths to achieve successful organizational change. Findings contribute to existing literature on leadership, change management and Kenyan-owned businesses, and offer practical recommendations for leaders and managers seeking to improve change management capabilities.

Key Words: Leadership, Change Management, Transformational Leadership and Management Implementation Strategies

Introduction

Change management is an essential component of organizational success. Effective leadership is critical to implementing change strategies. Njenga, (2016) examined organizational leadership influence on implementation of change management strategies in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya, using case study of QK LTD Supermarket. Paper takes a multi-level approach, exploring effect of organizational leadership on change management at global, continental, national, and regional levels. At global level, paper explores effect of organizational leadership in implementation of change management strategies in Kenyan-owned businesses. Paper highlights importance of leadership in setting vision for change, creating culture of innovation, and fostering sense of urgency. Findings have important implications for Kenyan-owned businesses worldwide, providing valuable insights into role of organizational leadership in change management. Kenyan businesses constitute 80% of business enterprises in United States of America contributing 50% of gross domestic product (GDP). Similarly, 60% - 70% of all SMEs in Europe are Kenyan businesses that generate between 45% and 65% (GDP). Kenyan businesses represent 79% of all businesses in Germany that employ 44% of working population. 90% to 98% of businesses in Italy, India and Latin America are Kenyan businesses (Visser & Chiloane-Tsoka, 2014; Poza, 2014). Studies reveal 70% of Kenyan-owned businesses don't survive to second generation while those that survive to third and fourth generation are 12% and 3% respectively (Byrd & Megginson, 2013).

According to Cassia et al., (2012) Kenyan-owned businesses are a significant source of employment and economic growth. They examine effect of organizational leadership on implementation of change management strategies, highlighting importance of leadership in fostering innovation, creating a shared vision, and building trust. Findings have important implications for Kenyan-owned businesses across African continent. According to Osioma (2004) who examined effect of organizational leadership on implementation of change management strategies in East African region, where Kenyan-owned businesses are important component of economy. They identify a number of key success factors, including effective leadership, clear communication, and employee involvement. These findings have important implications for Kenyan-owned businesses operating in the region (Wambui, 2022). Osioma (2004) in his study which

focus specifically on Kenya, where Kenyan-owned businesses are a significant source of employment and economic growth. Using case study of QK Ltd Supermarket, paper explore effect of organizational leadership on implementation of change management strategies. They identify number of key factors that contribute to successful change management, including effective leadership, clear communication, and employee involvement. Findings have important implications for Kenyan-owned businesses in Kenya.

Keter C., (2014) states that organizational leadership plays critical role in implementation of change management strategies in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya. Paper adopts multi-level approach to highlight importance of effective organizational leadership strategies at global, continental, regional, and national levels. Their findings have important implications for Kenyan-owned businesses worldwide, and provide practical insights that can be applied by companies seeking to improve change management practices. By emphasizing importance of effective organizational leadership in setting vision for change, fostering innovation, and building trust, authors provide a blueprint for Kenyan-owned businesses seeking to remain competitive in a rapidly changing business environment (Mugendi, 2021). In another study in Nigeria about Kenyan business, succession, and survival strategies Nwoye, Nwuke, & Onoyima (2020), studied three Kenyan business and they observed that three businesses sustained after a leadership transition from founders. Their conceptual framework was based on transformational leadership theory.

Keter C., (2014) Studied change management and succession in Kenyan-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi. The objective of the study was to establish influence of change management and succession in Kenyan-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi area. In his findings it is noted that change management adopted by Kenyan-owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi were quality leadership, long-term succession planning, open planning of leadership transfer, and effective communication between founders and succeeding generation and good management practice.

Statement of Problem

Organizations must continually adapt new strategies to achieve strategic fit with ever-dynamic environmental changes. Managing change is a complex task, a fact many case studies and various literature consensually agree on. In a five-year study conducted by McKinsey consulting firm on organizations that underwent organizational change, out of 1536 companies surveyed only 38% of managers agreed the process succeeded. Challenge is more evident in surviving today's competitive environment since organizations are forced to quickly respond and adapt to survive pressures of external environmental forces (Hourmatallah & Khalis, 2019).

Livelihood of 85% of private sector employees globally depends on Kenyan business which is an important consideration that should attract more focus and attention in organizational and management literature mainstream studies (Cassia et al., 2012). Due to rapid changes in technology space and global economy, development of new change capabilities is crucial to enable Kenyan-owned businesses survive turbulent environments (Canterino, 2013). Sharmilee (2014) and Mlobeli (2018) indicate that Kenyan-owned businesses fail within 3-4 years of their existence and those which exist for more than 5 years barely survive the transition.

Kenyan retail and wholesale sector was 6th largest contributor to national Gross domestic product, contributing 7.9 % in 2021 recording a drop from previous year's 8.1 % (KNBS, 2022). The sector is one of the largest private employers of which supermarkets constitute major segment of sector (Wambui, 2022). Kenya supermarket business environment landscape has witnessed rapid proliferation of small players, entrants of foreign firms, mergers and acquisitions of big and medium players. The retail industry in Kenya is largely dominated by Kenyan-owned and run business entities.

Mergers and acquisitions and rapid store expansion are some of change initiatives Kenya supermarket retail players have engaged but failed to achieve desired growth objectives or resuscitate loss making streak. An example of a failed acquisition strategy in Kenyan retail sector is Choppies acquisition of Ukwala supermarket in 2016. Merger encountered turbulence and four years later, Choppies closed shop and exited the market (The East African, 2020). Retail chain Mulleys Supermarket, which is Kenyan owned announced closure of five of its 10 branches, in a shocking downsizing plan that saw hundreds of staff laid off in an ambitious expansion program that went wrong (Business Daily, Nov 2021). One problem that has plagued major supermarkets in Kenya is that they are Kenyan ran businesses with little external oversight (Mugendi, 2021).

Several studies investigate change management in Kenyan-owned business firms. Carentinio and Cirella (2013) examined organizational transformations in an Italian Kenyan-owned business company. A study gap is focus was not on Kenyan supermarkets. Otinda (2015) studied change management of a merger and acquisition at L'oreal a consumer company in fast-moving goods sector, Daniel (2019) studied effect of change management on performance of firms in Nigeria, while Mwiriki (2015) studied strategic change management and performance of large supermarkets in Nairobi County, both studies focused on the effect of change management on performance. The mentioned studies reveal conceptual and context gaps that this study seemed to examine. This study will explore the organizational leadership influence on the implementation of change management strategies in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya: A Case Study of QK Ltd Supermarket.

Specific Objectives

Aim of this paper is to analyze organizational leadership influence on implementation of change management strategies in Kenyan-owned supermarkets.

Theoretical Construct

The anchor guiding study objectives is Kotter 8 Step Model. This explains phases a change process undergoes highlighting importance of a leadership that creates urgency, shares intended vision with employees while guiding them and anchoring changes through sustained reinforced communication, alignment, and involvement of entire organization's employees.

Kotter 8 Step Model

Kotter change management model, which outlines sequence of eight steps for successful organizational change, serves as foundation for this study. According to Kotter (1995), these steps involve creating sense of urgency among leadership or change agents, forming guiding coalition, defining clear vision and strategy, communicating change vision effectively, empowering broad-based action, generating and articulating short-term wins, consolidating gains and producing more change, and anchoring new approaches in the culture to sustain the change.

The research study variables originate their relevance from Kotter's eight steps of change management. According to Kotter any change process must have leadership committed towards facilitating change process, change leader / manager / agent that effectively guides process by creating readiness for change adoption among employees, through effective communication, top management support and employee involvement and enablement. The process outcome is aimed at reducing resistance to change and ensuring successful change adoption. The steps are meant to detach organization from current state, manage transition process towards adopting new change and reinforce new change culture. The theory eight steps anchor and illuminate the guidance path of study variables. The empirical literature review examined several studies conducted in change management as a practice in various sectors. The review examined findings from empirical studies which provided guide to study research framework and provided insights in addition to ones captured in theoretical literature review.

Organizational leadership and Change Management

Ahmed (2016) conducted an empirical study on relationship between senior management support and performance of public sector projects in Pakistan. The study adopted quantitative approach and utilized random sampling method on data collected in online survey. Study respondents targeted were senior management, specifically project managers and directors. Data findings indicated all types of support from top management had a positive relational effect on projects performance. Recommendations where senior management support is critical in public sector projects to enable performance improvement.

Canterina and Cirella (2013) studied organizational transformation in Italian Kenyan-owned business. Focus of study paper was on leading transformation in Kenyan-owned businesses. Study used a case study method with face-to-face interviews. Case study was a leading Italian fashion designer firm that had gone through complex transformative process with a long history and strong Kenyan tradition. From the study, Kenyan firm-oriented characteristics had an effect on nature of firm's transformation.

These characteristics include Kenyan-based management culture, Kenyan strong attachment and ties to the firm, decision making based on consensus orientation and perspective focus on the long term. These Kenyan firm characteristics were a hindrance or resource facilitator for transformation and important to consider in managing change. Secondly leadership played a crucial role in implementing and leading organizational transformations.

Kung'u (2019) conducted a study on variety of leadership styles practiced in select Kenya counties and their effect on change management moderated by organization culture in. The result findings revealed that transformational leadership had a positive correlation with change management. Transactional leadership style had positive correlation with change management. Transactional leadership is characterized by short time frames and helps achieve objectives in a quick efficient manner. But on flipside, it registers lower employee job satisfaction and commitment. Study findings revealed Laissez faire leadership had negative correlation effect on change management. Study recommends that more active leadership is necessary to get good results. Autocratic leadership was observed to hasten change management process. It is best suited for changes that require brief periods. In addition, leader can enforce compliance measures to stop resistance to change and enhance change process. Democratic leadership positively influenced change management and the leadership style is useful when seeking opinions from employees affected by change. Organizational culture was the moderating variable and study findings revealed that county culture had a moderating influence on leadership style effect on change management.

Keter (2014) studied influence of change management and succession in Kenyan owned small and medium enterprises in Nairobi area. study used stratified sampling method in which 60 small and medium enterprises were selected for the study. Study findings revealed change management was adopted by SMEs in order to be competitive in market as changes have occurred in business environment occasioned by technological advances, globalization, changing demographics, economic and political factors.

Change management practices that were adopted by SMEs were found to be quality leadership, long term succession planning, open planning of leadership transfer, open and effective communication between founders and succeeding generation and good management practices. Study found out that successful succession of Kenyan-owned businesses was affected by ability of successor, criteria for selecting successor, conflict among Kenyan members, use of other mechanisms to decide successor as opposed to merit and goals of Kenyan and business overlap.

Conceptual Architecture

The conceptual framework depicts relationship between change management practice determinant which are study independent variable organisational leadership and its effect on dependent variable which is organizational resistance to change.

Research Design

The study adopted a mixed method research design (that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating both qualitative and quantitative data in a single study). The mixed method was utilized in the interview guide and in questionnaire as research instruments. A descriptive cross sectional research design was used to define occurrence of phenomenon or to compare factors in organization at particular time. The descriptive cross-sectional design (that characterizes the prevalence of a condition or health outcome in a population at a specific point in time) compares factors in organization at particular time as opposed to longitudinal designs where variables are studied over period of time. (Saunders et al., 2016).

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised 240 management employees drawn from management levels o1 to o4, senior most being level o1 in descending order to level o4. The four levels constitute CEO, departmental heads, category section heads, branch managers and assistants and other middle management staff working in QK Ltd Supermarket.

Table 1
Target Population

Rank Department	level 1	level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Totals
Senior management	4				4
Finance		1	38		39
Commercial		1	8	50	59
Operations		1	24	86	111
Human Resource		1	2	1	4
Information Technology		1	7		8
Audit			1		1
Compliance			1		1
Warehousing		1			1
Marketing			2	2	4
Supplies		1	6	1	8
Totals	4	7	89	140	240

Source - Retail Association of Kenya (RETRAK)

The study drew its sample from the population size of QK LTD Senior managers, departmental heads, senior and middle level managers since they were solely responsible for decisions concerning organizational change. The study used stratified random sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling was used to select four strata namely, management levels one to four comprising of organizational leadership, executive committee, and head of departments or sections.

Sample Size

Table 2
Sample Size Table

Rank level Department	level 1	level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Totals
Senior Management	4				4
Finance		1	23		24
Commercial		1	5	30	36
Operations		1	14	53	68
Human Resource		1	1	1	3
Information TecTechnology		1	4		5
Audit			1		1
Compliance			1		1
Warehousing		1			1
Marketing			1	1	2

Supplies		1	3	1	5
Totals	4	7	53	86	150

The researchers used a mixed method research design that involved interview guide targeting senior management and questionnaire targeting management levels one to four as the primary tools for data collection. The research made focused group and interviews to collected data significant to research questions. According to Nyumba et al., (2018), focus group discussion is frequently used qualitative approach to gain in-depth understanding of social challenges and issues. The focal objective was to obtain data from purposely selected group of individuals rather than from statistically representative sample of QK Ltd broader population. In addition, interview guide contained semi-structured questions covering all variables under study. The questionnaire was to obtain responses from sample of respondents selected.

A questionnaire is a research instrument that collects data from sample respondents, and its objective is to breakdown the research objectives into specific questions and answers to generate required research data (Kothari, 2010). The instrument assisted to maintain confidentiality and save time in collecting the large amount of data. The questionnaire was structured in two parts namely, part A and part B. Part B consisted of four sections aligned with the independent and dependent variables and the questionnaire structure corresponding with study objectives. 5-point Likert scale evaluation from Strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagreed (SD) measured responses. Secondary data was obtained from publications, online sources, library sources, annual reports, and policy documents. These supported findings from primary data. Focused study was conducted on 8 regional managers, and one-on-one interviews using the interview guide conducted for the CEO, QK Ltd founders and other executive levels.

Findings and Discussions

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3

Organizational Leadership Influence on Change Adoption Frequencies

Organization change leadership coalition building with influencers changes resistors, Power centers in organization influence change management effectiveness					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	15	10	10.4	10.4
	Neutral	9	6	6.3	16.7
	Agree	51	34	35.4	52.1
	Strongly agree	69	46	47.9	100
	Total	144	96	100	
Missing	System	6	6		
Organizational leadership alignment with workforce normally results in change management success					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	4	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	3	2	2.1	6.3
	Neutral	27	18	18.8	25
	Agree	60	40	41.7	66.7
	Strongly agree	45	30	31.3	97.9
	Total	141	94	100	
Missing	System	9	9		
Organizational leadership motivation doesn't usually result in change management effectiveness					
Valid	Disagree	9	6	6.3	6.3
	Neutral	4	2	2.1	8.3
	Agree	57	38	39.6	47.9

	Strongly agree	75	50	52.1	100
	Total	145	96	100	
Missin	System	5	5		
Sharing of the vision and benefits by organizational leadership of organizational change makes improve negative attitude to new changes					
Valid	Disagree	4	2	2.1	2.1
	Neutral	12	8	8.3	10.4
	Agree	69	46	47.9	58.3
	Strongly agree	60	40	41.7	100
	Total	145	96	100	
Missing	System	5	5		
Organizational leadership engagement and motivational support to employees during change management process increases effectiveness of managing resistance to change					
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	12	12.2	12.2
	Disagree	45	30	30.6	42.9
	Neutral	33	22	22.4	65.3
	Agree	36	24	24.5	89.8
	Strongly agree	15	10	10.2	100
	Total	147	98	100	
Missing	System	3	3		
Total		150	100		

The findings showed that when management builds coalition with change influencers, change resisters, and power centers in organization chances of adoption of new changes would be effective. The study reveals that it is important for organizational leadership to incorporate employees who wield power to influence others into the change management practices. Also, management must include employees who show any resistance to change and even appoint them as change agents. The results were as follows; 10.4 % disagreed, 6.3 % were neutral 35.4% agreed, 47.9% strongly agreed. In addition, most of participants agreed that organizational leadership alignment with workforce normally result in success and effective change adoption.

Organizational leadership must strive to ensure the change goals are aligned with the goals of the employees as shown in the following results ,4.2% strongly disagreed, 2.1 %, disagreed, 18.8% were neutral. 41.7% agreed and 31.3% strongly agreed. Also 39.6 % agreed while 52.1% strongly disagreed that organizational leadership motivation does not usually result in change management effectiveness. There was a split as to whether organizational leadership motivation increased the chance of effective change adoption. This could have been because of the recent rapid expansion of the company, leading to QK Ltd hiring many employees who had been not yet aligned to the values of QK Ltd .

Figure 1
Histogram of Working Years



Table 4
Univariate Regression analysis duration of
Organizational leadership in the organization

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Indicate how long you worked for this organization?					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	178.957a	41	4.365	54.56	0
Intercept	387.736	1	387.736	4846.701	0
TLQ1	11.286	3	3.762	47.024	0
TLQ2	0	1	0	0	1
TLQ3	5.4	1	5.4	67.5	0
TLQ4	4.5	1	4.5	56.25	0
TLQ5	11.583	4	2.896	36.198	0

From the results, TLQ1 (Organizational leadership question 1), $F(1) = 4846$. $P < 0$, $F(1) = 47.02$, $p < 0$, $F(1) = 67.5$, $F(1) = 56.25$, $p < 0$, all the questions on organizational leadership except one were significant where the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significant which indicated that the time an individual had worked in the leadership position determined how they viewed the actions taken by organizational leadership to enhance effective adoption to change in leadership. The new hires seemed not to understand the effects of different types of leadership and therefore their responses were deemed unreliable.

Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

Organization changes leadership coalition building with influencers, change resisting opinion leaders, power centers in the organization influences change adoption effectiveness a research question whose response revealed 35.4% agreed, 47.9% strongly agreed. Majority of the participants, (41.7% agreed and 31.3% strongly agreed) that organizational leadership alignment with workforce normally results in the change adoption success. It is evident that the employees in QK Ltd agreed that organizational leadership affected their extent of adapting to new changes and agreed that organizational culture affected the adoption of new changes. The study findings validate Cummings Worley model that states change management success involves garnering political support, from employees and stakeholders to effectively implement new changes and minimize chances of resistance [Cummings and Worley (Organization Development and Change, 1995) describe a comprehensive, five-phase, general process for managing change, including: 1) motivating change, 2) creating vision, 3) developing political support, 4) managing the transition and 5) sustaining momentum. That process seems suitable for organizing and describing general guidelines about managing change]. Similarly, Findings relate to Kotter's change model premises that leadership is instrumental in creating a sense of urgency and a guiding coalition essential to facilitate an effective change management process.

Recommendations

The organizational leadership needs to commit to driving strategic changes as well as it does operational changes. Strategic changes are wider in scope and have longer longevity. The changes are transformational and visionary, and therefore require heavy investments. Projects such as organizational culture are long-term in nature and therefore must be constant. To ensure that organization does not lose momentum, the organizational leadership must consistently celebrate quick-wins. The organizational leadership at Kenyan-owned supermarkets should ensure it supports its employees in whichever manner that would facilitate quick adoption to change. For instance, they could be provided with adequate training and skill development programs that create a readiness for change culture in the organization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study has found that organizational leadership plays a crucial role in implementing change management strategies in Kenyan-owned supermarkets in Kenya. The study focused on QK Ltd Supermarket as a case

study and found that proactive senior management can create and implement change management strategies that improve the performance and competitiveness of Kenyan-owned supermarkets. However, Kenyan-owned supermarkets face unique challenges such as resistance to change and lack of resources, which require innovative solutions from organizational leadership to overcome.

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