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Influence of Relationship Management on Organizational Performance among Insurance Companies in Kenya

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A B S T R A C T

Over the years most insurance companies have experienced a steady decline in their performance. Others have bowed to pressure and exited the market while some have collapsed due to poor management of their employees and lack of relationship management. This study sought to establish the influence of relationship management on organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya. The study was anchored on competency theory. The research philosophy adopted for the study was positivism. Descriptive and explanatory cross-sectional research designs were adopted with the study population comprising of the management staff of all the 55 registered insurance companies in Kenya and a sample size of 208 participants drawn from lower, middle and top level management using stratified sampling technique. Data was collected with the help of semi-structured questionnaires. Analysis of collected data was conducted using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. The findings indicated that: (i) Relationship management was adopted to a moderate extent in insurance companies in Kenya as shown by a mean score of 3.152, (ii) There was a strong positive correlation between organisation performance and relationship management (0.823), (iii) Relationship management had significant influence on the performance of insurance companies in Kenya as shown by a P-Values of 0.000 and a coefficient of determination (R_2=0.677) suggesting that relationship management predicted 67.7% of all variations in organizational performance. The study concluded that relationship management has a significant influence on organizational performance. Based on this conclusion, the study recommends that the management of insurance companies should always seek to establish the ability of the employees and management staff in terms of relationship management. The study suggests that other studies be conducted based on other organisations other than those in the insurance industry to determine if similar results would be obtained.

Introduction

Over the years most insurance companies including those in Kenya have experienced a steady decline in their performance while others have bowed to pressure and exited the market. Majority of these companies that collapse do so due to poor management of their employees as observed by Mwangi and Murigu (2015). Insurance firm's managers have therefore sought to establish competences required for superior organizational performance (Spreitzer & Porath, 2012; Felício & Rodrigues, 2015). The Kenyan insurance industry has faced hard economic times with a penetration rate of under 3%. Consequently, this has resulted in a number of insurance companies such as Kenya National Assurance Company (KNAC), Lakestar Insurance, Trinity Life Assurance Company, United Insurance, and Blue Shield Insurance to bow to pressure and exit the market (IRA, 2016). Owing to these challenges, competency mapping has gained significant importance in today's competitive scenario and it has become one of the avenues that human resource managers can exploit to maximize organizational performance.
In the process of competency mapping, the management seeks to establish among others relationship management skills. Relationship management skills, which is viewed by Brackett, Rivers and Salovey (2011) as a wide range of abilities and tools used to build and

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maintain effective communications with other people in work, sets an employee apart from the rest in terms of performance. Additionally, Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2013) concluded that relationship management involves interpersonal communication skills, which allows one to get to know others, build relationships with them and assist them to become better by influencing and inspiring them and helping them solve conflicts in a more amicable manner. Thus, for organizations to achieve superior performance then the employees and the management need to possess relationship management skills (Birasnav, 2014). The study thus sought to establish the influence that understanding, stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication have on organizational performance based on the insurance companies in Kenya.

The study adopted positivism research philosophy as the researcher was objective and could not manipulate the existing facts and the data was both qualitative and quantitative. Further, the philosophy enabled the researcher to carry out tests of hypothesis to determine the influence relationship management on organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya. Descriptive and explanatory cross-sectional research designs were adopted in the study. The target population consisted of all the 55 registered insurance companies in Kenya by February 2017, from which a sample of 208 respondents was drawn from the management staff using stratified sampling technique. The paper is organised into six sections; introduction outlining the background information of the study, literature review, which provided adequate literature on the study variables, methodology adopted, results and discussions, conclusion and finally recommendations.

Literature Review

The postulations of competency theory, on which the study finds anchorage, is built on the view that firms are open systems that become successful due to the strategies provided by their management and processes that allow for them to operate successfully (Qiao, Zhang & Cheng, 2016). The theory does relate to the current study because it allows for the linkage between relationship management and the performance of companies in the insurance sector in Kenya.

Empirical studies recently conducted in Kenya by researchers such as Ndura (2010), Ntinyari (2014) and Mwangi and Murigu (2015) have shown that among the reasons why some insurance companies were insolvent, were changing interest rates, mispricing of insurance policies, natural catastrophes, changes in legal framework and false claims by fraudulent customers aided by unscrupulous employees among others. Based on the reviewed literature this study finds that the numerous studies conducted on relationship management have concentrated on customer relationship management or supplier relationship management and have therefore ignored other important relationships that exist between the firm and other stakeholders such as employees. The study also establishes that among the studies conducted on relationship management, most of them were linked to other variables such as relationship marketing (Nkanda, 2012), customer retention (Wanjiku, 2014; Wang'ombe, 2014), operational performance (Kiarie, 2017) and service quality (Njuguna & Mirugi, 2017).

Axelsson and Olausson (2007) conducted a study on Customer Relationship Management (CRM) from a buyer's perspective in a Business to Business (B2B) relationship.in a study to determine how Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is used in a B2B setting. They showed that CRM can be used to create healthy relationships between the company and its customers and suppliers. Though the study shows that a positive relationship may be created through CRM, the findings are based on a case study of one organization only. Moreover, findings of this study also suffer from applicability because the study was not conducted in Kenya. Thörnblad, Ahlmén and Jönsson (2012) conducted a research to determine the effect commitment, trust and customer satisfaction had on word of mouth referrals and customer retention in the industry. Using descriptive research analysis, the study showed that companies within the speciality stores industry can achieve word-of-mouth communication if they ensured customers were satisfied. According to a study done by Fernando (2015) on customer relationship management in B2B organizations, customer relationship management in B2B context focuses on the organizational aspects of customer relationship management. Further, Nkanda (2012) conducted a study that looked at the impact relationship marketing (RM) had on the performance of private security firms using Bobby Morgan (BM) security firm located in Nairobi as a case study and established that RM has positive effects on the performance of BM Security Services Ltd .

Exploring the impact customer relationship management had on customer retention in commercial banks. Wanjiku (2014) sought to analyse the customer relationship management strategies used by Kenya commercial bank to retain and attract new customers, the study found that, brand and promotion were used frequently by the firm which resulted in more profits and enhanced customer retention. Further, the study revealed of the need to build lasting bonds between the financial institution and the customers. Additionally, Kiarie (2017) concluded that a significant and favourable relationship did exist between supplier relationship management practices and organizational performance among Kenyan manufacturing firms. This study has established that there are numerous studies that have been conducted on relationship management in different sectors. However, based on the reviewed literature this study opines that the numerous studies conducted on relationship management have concentrated on customer relationship management or supplier relationship management and have therefore ignored other important relationships that exist between the firm and other stakeholders such as employees. The study also establishes that among the studies conducted on relationship management, most of them were linked to other variables such as relationship marketing (Nkanda, 2012), customer retention (Wanjiku, 2014; Wang'ombe, 2014), operational performance (Kiarie, 2017) and service quality (Njuguna & Mirugi, 2017). Therefore, the study has established that there is limited literature that link relationship management and the overall organisation performance in the insurance industry in Kenya. This study therefore seeks to establish the influence of understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication on the organization performance among insurance companies in Kenya.

Research and Methodology

This study adopted a positivism research philosophy which maintains that knowledge should be based on facts and no abstractions, thus knowledge is established based on observations and experiments. Under this philosophy, the researcher and the researched are independent of each other and therefore the researcher could not influence the researched. The study adopted descriptive and explanatory cross-sectional research designs. Descriptive survey design allows the researcher to assess the study variables. On the other hand explanatory research design aids the researcher in assessing the effects of specific changes in order to explain the pattern in the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

The population for the study consisted of the lower, middle and top level management staff of all the 55 registered insurance companies in Kenya as at 28th February 2017, which are regulated by the Insurance Regulatory Authority, from which a sample size of 208 participants was selected using stratified random sampling technique. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using semi-structured questionnaires containing both open and closed-ended questions while secondary data was obtained using a secondary data collection sheet from the company's financial statements and the Insurance Regulatory Authority.

The study used descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS software to carry out data analysis. Descriptive statistics specifically frequencies, the mean, and standard deviation were computed. According to Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) descriptive statistics allows the researcher to come up with meaningful scores that uses few indices. Inferential data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis (multiple regression analysis). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to establish if the model was significant and the extent to which each of the independent variables explained the changes in the dependent variable. F-statistic was determined at a confidence level of 95% to determine if a significant association existed between understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, effective communication, and performance of the insurance companies in Kenya. Analysed descriptive and inferential data were presented using tables and graphs.

Results and Discussions

The study sought to establish the influence of understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication (independent variables) on the performance of insurance companies in Kenya (the dependent variable).

The study adopted both descriptive and inferential analysis (correlation and regression analysis) to form the conclusions thereof. Regarding descriptive analysis, the respondents were required to indicate the extent to which their organisation undertook each of the statements in a 5-point Likert scale where 5 represented very high extent, 4 represented high extent, 3 represented moderate extent, 2 represented low extent and 1 represented no extent. The descriptive results were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Relationship Management

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
We always seek feedback from our stakeholders on how they are treated.	153	1	5	4.12	.814
It is the policy of our company to observe healthy competition with competitors	153	1	5	4.05	.894
Our staff seek to understand our customers	153	1	5	3.90	.937
Our staff seek to understand our suppliers	153	1	5	3.85	1.025
Our management is enthusiastic about understanding stakeholder requirements	153	1	5	3.12	1.186
Conflict resolution is a highly emphasised in dealing with stakeholder's disputes in our organisation	153	1	5	2.97	1.161
We endeavour to uphold effective communication strategies while dealing with stakeholders	153	1	5	2.71	1.196
As part of our induction process, communication skills are emphasised on how to deal with stakeholders	153	1	5	2.31	1.120

We always seek to create a good rapport with our various stakeholders	153	1	5	2.25	1.171
Our representatives do not engage in unnecessary confrontations with our clients	153	1	5	2.24	1.128
Aggregate Score				**3.152**	**1.0632**

Source: Authors' Study

The descriptive results in Table 1 indicated that insurance companies always sought feedback from their stakeholders such as customers and suppliers as shown by the statements average score and standard deviation at 4.12 and 0.814 respectively. The study also found that as a policy, many insurance companies observed healthy competition with competitors to a great extent as observed from the average score and standard deviation at 4.05 and 0.894 respectively, the staff in the insurance companies always seek to understand their customers to a great extent. This is because the average score and standard deviation was shown to be 3.90 and 0.937 respectively and at the same time their staff seeks to understand their suppliers to a great extent due to the scores at 3.85 and 1.025 representing the average and standard deviation respectively. The results in Table 1 showed that the management of insurance companies in Kenya are enthusiastic about understanding stakeholder requirements but to a moderate extent. The results shows a score of 3.12 and 1.186 for average and standard deviation respectively, highly emphasise conflict resolution in dealing with stakeholders to a moderate extent as proofed by the scores of 2.97 and 1.161 for average and standard deviation respectively and the management endeavours to uphold effective communication while dealing with stakeholders to a moderate extent as shown by the scores at 2.71 and 1.196 for average and standard deviation respectively.

Moreover, the results indicated that communication skills and creating good rapport with stakeholders are emphasised to a low extent as can be seen by the scores at 2.31 and 2.25 and 1.120 and 1.17 for average and standard deviation respectively. Finally the results showed that insurance companies in Kenya encourage their representatives not to engage in unnecessary confrontations with their clients but to a low extent due to the scores of 2.24 and 1.128 for average and standard deviation respectively. On aggregate the results showed that insurance companies in Kenya undertook to map relationship management competence to a moderate extent as indicated by the scores at 3.152 and 1.0632 for average and standard deviation respectively. This means that the management considered relationship management to have a moderate influence on the performance of the insurance Companies in Kenya.

Through regression analysis, the study tested the null hypothesis that relationship management has no significant influence on organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted in which organisation performance was regressed against relationship management. The findings of this test were interpreted using the R_2, F-statistic, T-test statistics and the P-values. The model summary results were as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.823_a	0.677	0.666	0.49905

a. Predictors: (Constant), Effective communication, Good rapport with stakeholders, Understanding stakeholder requirements, Conflict resolution, Healthy competition

Source: Authors' Study (2018)

The results posted in Table 2 showed that the correlation coefficient between relationship management and organizational performance was 0.823 indicating a strong and positive correlation between relationship management and organizational performance. The coefficient of determination, which measures the percentage of the changes in the dependent variable that were explained by the variations in the independent variable (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015), as shown by the adjusted R Square (R_2) was 0.666 meaning that understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication explained 66.6% of the changes in organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya and therefore, 33.4% of the variations in organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya were explained by other factors other than relationship management. The results thus shows that relationship management had a strong contribution to organizational performance.

The study further conducted the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the fitness of the model to predict the organizational performance. The results of the ANOVA were as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: $ANOVA_a$

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	78.932	5	15.7864	61.707	0.000_b
	Residual	37.607	147	0.256		
	Total	116.539	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Organisation Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Effective communication, Good rapport with stakeholders, Understanding stakeholder requirements, Conflict resolution, Healthy competition

Source: Authors' Study (2018)

From the findings as indicated in Table 3, the linear regression F-test statistic was 61.707 which was greater than the F-critical value (F at 5,147 at 0.05 significance level =2.2757). The study therefore concluded that on the basis of the F-test statistic, the model was fit in predicting the performance of Kenyan insurance firms. In addition, the study found that the P-value for the F-test statistic was 0.000 which was less than the 0.05 significance level and therefore the study concluded that the model was fit in predicting organization performance.

To determine if understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication were significant in influencing performance among insurance companies in Kenya, the study conducted a T-test. The outcomes were as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4: Coefficients[a]

Model Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	2.399	.362		6.632	0.000
Understanding Stakeholder Requirements	0.121	0.041	0.162	2.951	0.003
Good Rapport with Stakeholders	0.114	0.019	0.108	6.000	0.000
Healthy Competition	0.075	0.012	0.053	6.250	0.000
Conflict Resolution	0.172	0.067	0.164	2.567	0.011
Effective Communication	0.457	0.115	0.373	3.974	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Organisation Performance

Source: Authors' Study (2018)

The findings in Table 4 above showed that the constant had an unstandardized coefficient of 2.399 meaning that holding understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication constant at zero (0), the performance of Kenyan insurance firms would be equal to 2.399. The t-statistic for the constant was found to be 6.632 which was greater than the t-critical value (at 152 df and 0.05 significance level= 1.655). The results also showed that the beta coefficient for understanding stakeholder requirements was 0.121, that of good rapport with stakeholders was 0.114, healthy competition had a coefficient of 0.075, conflict resolution 0.172 while effective communication had a coefficient of 0.457.

The results implied that if all factors were held constant, increasing understanding stakeholder requirements by a single unit would result in a 0.121 increase in the performance of insurance companies in Kenya. The results also suggest that holding all other factors constant, a unit increase in good rapport with stakeholders would result in a 0.114 increase in performance of insurance companies in Kenya. Further, holding all other factors constant and improving healthy competition by one unit would lead to 0.075 increase in performance of insurance companies in Kenya. Moreover, the results suggest that holding all other factors constant, increasing conflict resolution by a unit would lead to a 0.172 increase in performance of insurance companies in Kenya. Finally, holding all other factors constant, increasing effective communication by a unit would lead to 0.457 increase in performance of insurance companies in Kenya.

The t-test statistic for understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication were 2.951, 6.000, 6.250, 2.567 and 3.974 respectively. The t-statistics were greater than the critical value (t-critical at 152 df and 0.05 significance level= 1.655). Consequently the study concluded that on the basis of t-statistics, all the coefficients were significant in predicting performance of insurance companies in Kenya. The study also established that the P-values for the variables were 0.003, 0.000, 0.000, 0.011, and 0.000 for, understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication respectively. The P-values were all less than the 0.05 significance level. Thus on the basis of these results, the study concluded that all the variables were significant in predicting the performance of insurance companies in Kenya. On the basis of these results, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that relationship management had a significant influence on organizational performance among insurance companies in Kenya.

The model was thus summarised as follows:

Organisation Performance = 2.399 + 0.121 Understanding Stakeholder Requirements + 0.114 Good Rapport with Stakeholders + 0.075 Healthy Competition + 0.172 Conflict Resolution + 0.457 Effective Communication + ε

The results found on this hypothesis were concurrent with the existing empirical literature that postulates that there is a favourable association between relationship management and organization performance. For instance, Marucha (2012) found that there is a significant association existing between core competencies such as relationship management and decision making skills and competitive advantage of insurance firms in Kenya. The argument behind this position was that once a firm achieves a competitive advantage it can sustain it by proper management of their relations with stakeholders. Similar conclusions were made by Brackett, Rivers and Salovey (2011), who viewed relationship management as a wide range of abilities and tools to build and maintain effective communications with other people in work and that for organizations to achieve superior performance then the employees and the management need to possess relationship management skills to deal with customers and suppliers.

The study further conducted correlation analysis to deduce if the variables in the study were correlated with each other. To do this Karl Pearson's correlation was conducted. The conclusion on the strength or weakness of the correlation coefficient was determined in regard to the Sekaran and Bougie (2010) who stated that if correlation coefficient is equal to 1, then perfect correlation exists, if correlation coefficient lies between 0.7-0.9, there is a strong correlation, if correlation coefficient lies between 0.4-0.6 there is moderate extent correlation, if correlation coefficient lies between 0.1-0.3, there is weak correlation and if correlation coefficient is 0, then there is no correlation. The outcomes of the correlation analysis were as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlations coefficients

		Organisation Performance	**Understanding stakeholder requirements**	**Good rapport with stakeholders**	**Healthy competition with competitors**	**Conflict resolution**	**Effective communication**
Organisation Performance	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	153					
Understanding stakeholder requirements	Pearson Correlation	.588**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002					
	N	153	153				
Good rapport with stakeholders	Pearson Correlation	.539**	.196*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.015				
	N	153	153	153			
Healthy competition with competitors	Pearson Correlation	.436*	.352**	.143*	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.077			
	N	153	153	153	153		
Conflict resolution	Pearson Correlation	.517*	.404**	.064*	.369**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.001	.000		
	N	153	153	153	153	153	
Effective communication	Pearson Correlation	.457**	.480**	.287**	.543**	.478**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Authors' Study (2018)

From the outcomes in Table 5, the correlation coefficient between organisation performance and understanding stakeholder requirements was 0.588, the correlation coefficient between organisation performance and good rapport with stakeholders was 0.539, between organisation performance and healthy competition with competitors was 0.436, between organisation performance and conflict resolution was 0.517 while the correlation coefficient between organisation performance and effective communication was 0.457. These results suggests that there was a strong positive correlation between organisation performance, understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, conflict resolution, and effective communication. On the other hand, there was a weak positive correlation between organisation performance and healthy competition. However, all coefficients were significant suggesting that relationship management was a significant predictor of organisation performance.

Conclusion

The results showed that the management of insurance companies in Kenya opine that relationship management only has a moderate influence on performance of their companies. The results also imply that the management of insurance companies have underscored the relevance of relationship management in driving performance of insurance companies in Kenya. This is because, relationship management as measured through understanding stakeholder requirements, creating and maintaining good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication were deployed to a moderate extent. It was established that there was a strong positive correlation between organisation performance, understanding stakeholder requirements, good rapport with stakeholders, conflict resolution, and effective communication but there was a weak positive correlation between organisation performance and healthy competition. This conclusion was consistent with the existing empirical literature which suggested that a positive, significant, relationship existed between relationship management and firm's performance.

Results showed that understanding stakeholder requirements, creating and maintaining good rapport with stakeholders, healthy competition with competitors, conflict resolution, and effective communication had significant influence on performance of insurance companies in Kenya. Based on these results, the study concluded that relationship management had a significant influence on organizational performance as measured through sales volume and profitability. However, these results were based on data obtained from insurance companies in Kenya. It follows that the results may not be generalised to other sectors such as manufacturing and agricultural sectors. The study thus suggests that other studies should be conducted in these sectors in Kenya and beyond to establish if similar results will be obtained.

Recommendations

Since relationship management has a significant influence on organizational performance of insurance firms in Kenya, the management of insurance companies should always seek to establish the ability of the employees and management staff in terms of relationship management. Moreover the management of insurance companies should ensure that they cultivate, create and maintain good rapport with stakeholders, seek to understand each stakeholder requirements, observe healthy competition with competitors, encourage amicable conflict resolution where grievances arise and enhance effective communication within and outside the organisation. However, healthy competition should be economically justified since it had least relationship with performance.

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