

Organizational Structure and Performance of Large Manufacturing Firms in Kenya: An Empirical Investigation

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Abstract: The paper gives an overview of a conceptual theme first coined by Alfred Chandler (1962), who developed a framework of structure-strategy and performance linkage. He argued in his thesis that structure follows strategy to enhance performance. He strongly believed that a strategy is the long-term plan that an organization should develop, but for its success there has to be an organizational structure in place to provide an avenue for its implementation and enhance performance. The paper has followed a more or less similar pattern within the large manufacturing firms in Kenya — but has only used organizational structure as an independent variable and performance as dependent variable. Strategy has been omitted and not aligned to structure instead structure has been aligned to performance. Since this area provides a knowledge gap this study intends to fulfil. A null conceptual hypothesis for the study has been developed which avers that organizational structure does not positively influence performance of large manufacturing firms. The study used a cross-sectional survey where data was collected from 102 large manufacturing firms. The chief executive officers of these firms were interviewed together with the middle-level and top managers. Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis — it emerged that organizational structure on its own using Return on Assets (ROA) does not influence performance. However a further test using non-financial measures such as internal processes, customer perspective and performance produced a different result which influenced performance of large manufacturing firms. The findings of this study agreed with other previous studies and opens an avenue for further research. It has got an implication in organizations whose performance should not only be viewed using one construct of financial indicators and that non-financial measures may also be considered in the organizational performance — but overall there is clear indication that structure influences performance — even without putting in place the strategy for the organization.

Key words: performance; large; manufacturing; firms; empirical

JEL codes: L1, M1

1. Introduction

Chandler (1962) substantiated “structure follows strategy” thesis based on four case studies of American conglomerates that dominated their industry from the 1920’s onward. The ensuing debate on the contingent relationship between strategy, structure, and firm performance flourished in the 1970s and 1980s. Researchers

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Table of Contents Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya

1. Understanding the eBook Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - User-Friendly Interface

4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya User Reviews and Ratings
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya Free and Paid eBooks
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya Public Domain eBooks
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya eBook Subscription Services
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya Compatibility with Devices
 - Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Interactive Elements Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
8. Staying Engaged with Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Setting Reading Goals Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time

12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Structure And Performance Of Manufacturing In Kenya
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements
 - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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