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STRATEGIC RESPONSE CAPABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE OF MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The theoretical framework was guided by the resource-based theory, dynamic capability theory and dynamic managerial capability theory and firm growth theory. The study employed the correlational, cross-sectional survey research design to test non-causal relationships between the study variables. The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select a sample size of 204 managers of 51 manufacturing firms from a target population of 416 managers of the 104 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. A pilot study was conducted to ascertain the validity and reliability of the constructed survey questionnaire. A structured self-administered survey questionnaire was used as the means of collecting primary data. The collected data was processed and entered into the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26 to create a data sheet used for analysis. Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The Pearson's correlation results indicated that strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability had positive and significant relationship with the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results indicated that strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability had positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study recommends that the managers and practitioners within the diverse industries should implement the strategic response capabilities to foster the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The policymakers within the diverse industries should initiate policy review to encourage managers and practitioners to implement strategic response capabilities to foster the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study recommends intriguing areas for further research. Future research should examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on firm performance with marketing turbulence as a moderator in other sectors or contexts.

Key Words : *Strategic competitive response capability, Strategic response capabilities, Strategic customer response capability, Firm performance, Manufacturing firms, Kenya*

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INTRODUCTION

The manufacturing sector plays a vital role in the nation's growth and development. It serves as a crucial engine for sustaining economic growth and development, job creation and poverty alleviation (Mboga, Datche, & Kising'u, 2023). The contributions made by the manufacturing sector to the economy and social development is evident (Balala & Kising'u, 2024). The manufacturing sector is well known for its significance in upholding the economic prosperity of many nations (Sulaimon, A. H. A., Onyemaobi, C. A., Ebegbetale, C. I., Gbadamosi, T. O., & Fajimolu, O. C. (2024; Shela, Ramayah, & Noor Hazlina, 2023). The Kenyan manufacturing sector has a huge contribution to the economic development (Mungai & Ndiritu, 2023; Musebe, Awino, & K'obonyo, 2025).

Kenya has termed the manufacturing sector as one of its Big Four Agenda - 2017 to 2022 presidential dispensation goals-aimed at promoting economic development in the country (Baariu, Gathungu, & Ndemo, 2021; Mbudzya, Gido, & Owuor, 2022). The National Economic Survey Report by the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK), revealed that the Kenyan manufacturing SMEs constitute 98% of all the businesses in Kenya contributing to 30% of jobs annually (Macharia, Gathiaka, & Ngui, 2022; Muiruri, 2021). However, there is growing concern about the performance of the manufacturing sector. Some SMEs in the manufacturing sector have been struggling to survive and scale up, due to a host of factors (Albloushi, Alharmoodi, Jabeen, Mehmood, & Farouk, 2023; Datche, Kising'u, & Kalimbo, 2023).

Despite, the interventions put in place in Kenya to foster small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in manufacturing sector, the performance has been poor (Kiiru, Mukulu, & Ngatia, 2023; Were, 2021). Like many other developing countries, Kenya has not managed to develop a robust manufacturing sector and growth has been primarily driven by the agriculture and services sectors respectively (Macharia, Ngui, & Gathiaka, 2022; Kipkirui & Kimungunyi, 2022). The manufacturing sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) has been consistently falling across the last few years (Sinha, Mishra, Manogna, & Prabhudesai, 2023). The Kenya's manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP has significantly declined giving rise to fears of a premature de-industrialization phenomenon (Mungai & Ndiritu, 2023).

The world in which companies operate today is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, thus subjecting contemporary forms to an array of risks that challenge their viability in an increasingly competitive landscape. In a complex and uncertain environment, firms must continually adapt themselves to survive and outperform competition during rapidly changing environments, both predictable and unpredictable (Kangala, 2023). Strategic response capability is the capacity of an organization, in collaboration with its customers and business partners, to (re)configure its resources and operations rapidly and smoothly in response to the business environment or by adopting the right steps (Amanah, Hussein, & Fadhil, 2022). Strategic responses are defined as procedures designed to enable organizations to deal with various environmental challenges and respond to them at high speed (Shlaka & Alkinany, 2024). Strategic responses allow the firm to gain a competitive advantage in the competitive environment over other rivals (Hassan & Wanjala, 2023).

Strategic response capability enables organizations to achieve a competitive advantage in their industry, as organizations in the same industry compete based on general orientation (Amanah *et al.*, 2022). The appropriate strategic responses enable organizations to effectively adapt to the volatile environment and achieve better corporate performance (Shlaka & Alkinany, 2024). Organizations that cling to their traditional ways of operating impede their ability to survive while those able to embrace evolving changes and lever their strategic response capabilities will thrive against the odds (Ettrich & Andersen, 2021). The possession of strategic response capabilities has become a prominent explanation for effective adaptation to the impending changes but is rarely analyzed and tested empirically (Trihudiyatmanto, 2024). However, there is a lack of research examining the measurement and relationship between the strategic response capabilities and firm performance.

Statement of the Problem

Despite their significant role in the economic development of many nations, there is growing concern about the performance of the manufacturing sector. In Kenya, the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP has significantly declined across the last few years, giving rise to fears of a premature de-industrialization phenomenon (Macharia, 2023; Mboga *et al.*, 2023; Mungai & Ndiritu, 2023). Notwithstanding the interventions put in place in Kenya to foster SMEs in manufacturing sector, the performance has been poor (Datche *et al.*, 2023; Kiiru *et al.*, 2023). Like many other developing countries, Kenya has not managed to develop a robust manufacturing sector and growth has been primarily driven by the agriculture and services sectors respectively (Macharia *et al.*, 2022; Kipkirui & Kimungunyi, 2022).

Despite the growing body of research on strategic response capabilities and firm performance, there is no clear answer as to why firms still. The theoretical literature has emphasized that strategic response capabilities play an important role in explaining firm performance outcomes (Ettrich & Andersen, 2021). However, the empirical literature has produced mixed and inconsistent results (Onamusi, 2020a; Onamusi, 2020a). There have been several attempts to provide conceptual insights into the relationship between strategic response capabilities and firm competitiveness of selected paint manufacturers in Lagos State, Nigeria (Onamusi, 2020a) and performance of firms in multiple industries in Oyo State, Nigeria (Onamusi, 2020a). However, there is a lack of empirical research on the effect of strategic response capabilities on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenyan context. Therefore, the general business problem lies in understanding the influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this research was to examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The specific objectives were;

- To determine the influence of strategic competitive response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- To assess the influence of strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

In this research, two null hypotheses were tested.

- $H_0$1: Strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.
- $H_0$2: Strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was guided by the resource-based theory, dynamic capability theory and dynamic managerial capability theory and firm growth theory.

Resource-Based Theory

The resource-based theory (RBT) of the firm (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) provides a framework for understanding how a firm's unique resources and capabilities can be a source of sustained competitive advantage (Alkaraan *et al.*, 2024). The RBT of the firm (Penrose, 2009; Wernerfelt, 1995) suggests that a firm's distinctive resources, which are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) can encompass tangible assets, intangible assets, human capital, organizational capabilities, and other strategic assets that are unique to a firm (Barney, Ketchen Jr, & Wright, 2021). The RBT of the firm (Barney, 1991; Peteraf & Barney, 2003) emphasizes that a firm's VRIN resources can enable the firm to achieve superior

performance and outperform competitors (Utami & Alamanos, 2022). Therefore, the RBT of the firm provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The RBT of the firm is an influential approach in strategic management. The RBT explores heterogeneity in performance across firms through the lens of VRIN resource advantages, and the organization for exploiting their potential (Bosman, 2024). The RBT provides an essential framework to explain and predict the fundamentals of a company's performance and competitive advantage (Barney *et al.*, 2021; Chaudhuri, Subramanian, & Dora, 2022; Datche, Kising'u, & Kalimbo, 2023). Therefore, the RBT of the firm provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain influence of strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Dynamic Capability Theory

The dynamic capability (DC) theory (Barney, 1991; Barney, 2001; Peteraf, 1993; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997a) is a strategic management framework that focuses on a firm's ability to adapt, innovate, and reconfigure its resources and capabilities in response to changing external environments and evolving market conditions (Bosman, 2024). The DC theory (Barney, 2018; Peteraf & Barney, 2003; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997b) posits that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage is derived not only from possessing valuable and rare resources but also from its dynamic capabilities, enabling it to integrate, build, and reconfigure resources to meet the demands of a dynamic market (Alkaraan *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, the DC theory provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The DC theory specifically focuses on how organizations can develop and use their capabilities in a highly dynamic and uncertain environment (Buzzao & Rizzi, 2023; Chen, Michel, & Lin, 2021). The DC theory is suitable for measuring business performance in a dynamic environment, as it focuses on a company's ability to change and adapt to the changing environment (Baía & Ferreira, 2024; Teece, 2023). The DC theory concerns the development of strategies for senior managers of successful companies to adapt to radical discontinuous change, while maintaining minimum capability standards to ensure competitive survival (Yoshikuni, Galvão, & Albertin, 2022). Therefore, the DC theory provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain influence of strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Firm Growth Theory

The theory of the growth of the firm (Lee, 2010; Penrose, 2009) is widely recognized in strategic management (Han & Tong, 2024). The firm growth theory assumes that multifunctional resources enable firms to restructure resources in novel ways to create growth (Ye *et al.*, 2023). The theory of the growth of the firm (Helfat & Eisenhardt, 2004; Penrose, 2009) is one the most commonly used basic theories to explain firm growth and firm performance (Buckley & de la Torre, 2024; Kimeu, Kising'u, & Okello, 2025). Therefore, the theory of the growth of the firm provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain to explain the influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The theory of the growth of the firm proposes that the relationship between multifunctional resources and firm growth is more closely aligned with firm growth theory (Najafabadi, Sajadi, & Davari, 2022; Noormohammadi Najafabadi, Sajadi, & Davari, 2023). The theory of the growth of the firm suggests that the firm represents a collection of productive resources, the disposal of which between different uses and over time is determined by administrative decision (von Nitzsch, Bird, & Saiedi, 2024). The theory of the growth of the firm posits that the effective exploitation of unused resources is central to achieving firm growth and how firm growth depends on entrepreneurs' supply of entrepreneurial services to their firms (Ye *et al.*, 2023). The theory of the growth of the firm posits that the firm resources can be utilized, redeployed or recombined

in different ways to create value (Han & Tong, 2024).

The theory of the growth of the firm postulates that entrepreneurs have to choose between different alternatives of how to allocate resources to achieve growth under uncertainty (von Nitzsch *et al.*, 2024). The theory of the growth of the firm suggests that entrepreneurial judgment plays an important role in firm growth (Nyawa, Wekesa, & Kising'u, 2025; Najafabadi & Sajadi, 2023). Therefore, the theory of the growth of the firm provides a relevant theoretical framework to explain to explain the influence of strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework demonstrates that the performance of manufacturing firms is conceptualized as the dependent variable. However, strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability are conceptualized as the independent variables. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

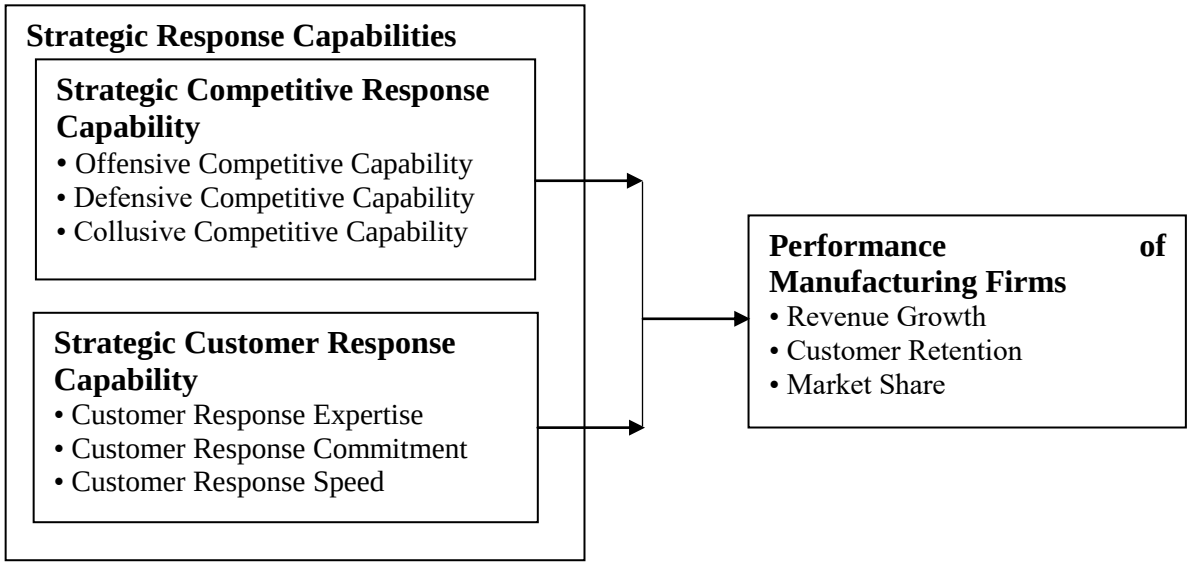

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Review of Literature on Variables

This section presents a review of the literature relevant to variables of the research.

Strategic Competitive Response Capability

Strategic competitive response capability s a firm's ability to sense, respond to, and shape market changes to maintain a competitive advantage. It has been identified as effective factor that harnesses a business ability to utilize all its skills, capabilities and resources in order to gain competitive advantage and thus survive and increase its value over time (Ngugi, 2024a). Strategic competitive response capability focuses on the organization's assets, resources and market position, projecting how well it will be able to employ strategies in the future (Okumu & Kariuki, 2021). Strategic competitive response capability can be conceptualized as the ability of the firm to scan the environment, identify new opportunities, asses its competitive position and respond to competitive strategic moves (Ngugi, 2024b). Therefore, a company's success is significantly influenced by its competitive response strategy (Bett & Avoga, 2023).

In today's cutthroat business world, the ability to respond strategically to competition can make or break an organization (Okumu & Kariuki, 2021). The competitive response strategies essentially aim to steer a business through its uncertain and erratic external environment while enabling it to keep order and efficiency

in its internal operations (Bett & Avoga, 2023). Strategic competitive response capability is a vital factor that leverages business's resources and capabilities, enhances competitive advantage and ensures long-term value growth. However, there is a dearth of studies empirically investigating the relationship between interaction of strategic competitive response capability deployment and organizational performance (Ngugi, 2024a). The gap in knowledge is exacerbated by multiple definitions, ambiguity of constructs, contradicting views and little grounding of the theory in empirical observation (Ngugi, 2024b).

Strategic Customer Response Capability

Strategic customer response capability is an organization's ability to effectively and quickly meet customer needs to gain a competitive advantage. It is an organization's ability to sense, prioritize, and swiftly respond to customer needs (Zhang, Qi, Ma, & Zhang, 2025). Customer response capability refers to the firm's ability to respond to customer needs with speed and accuracy (Qureshi, Arshad, & Ali, 2025). Customer response capability allows a firm to sense and respond to customer needs promptly and accurately (Hassandoust, Techatassanasoontorn, & Tan, 2024). The technology-based service responsiveness has gained increasing importance which making it imperative to understand how customer response capability translates into the effective use of information systems by employees for sustaining competitive advantage (Wünderlich *et al.*, 2025). Therefore, organizations with improved customer response capability are better able to retain customers and financial outcomes (Minhaj & Khan, 2025; Silva-Atencio, 2025).

The rapid advancement of technology requires organizations to adapt and leverage digital tools to meet customer expectations for seamless and efficient service experiences (Wünderlich *et al.*, 2025). The swift growth of digital technologies has changed the way services are delivered and interactions are made with stakeholders (Silva-Atencio, 2025). However, a key challenge in the digitalized environment for the managers is to improve employee performance using IT tools while limited empirical insight to address this issue is available in the existing literature (Zhang *et al.*, 2025). A firm with high customer response capability typically fosters a responsive, customer-centric culture that encourages employees to utilize available technologies to meet service demands efficiently (Hassandoust *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, it is no longer a matter of choice to meet and exceed customer expectations, but a necessity for achieving sustainable growth and building competitive advantage (Minhaj & Khan, 2025).

Firm Performance

Financial performance is the extent to which a company's financial objectives will or have been met (Micieta, Howaniec, Binasova, & Buzalka, 2025). It refers to the measure a firm's overall financial health over a slated period of time. In a wider sense, financial performance is the degree to which the financial objectives of an organization can have been accomplished (Sunday, Onyeka, & Ugorji, 2024). Financial performance is a complete evaluation of a company's overall standing in categories such as assets, liabilities, equity, expenses, revenue, and overall profitability (Azura, Dewi, Yuannitha, Lestari, & Margaretha, 2023; Mboe & Kavale, 2023). It is used as a general measure of a firm's overall financial fitness over a given time frame (Natufe & Evbayiro-Osagie, 2023). Financial performance is the evaluation of a company's financial health over a specific period, indicating how well it generates revenue, manages expenses, and uses its assets to achieve profitability and long-term sustainability (Kayani, Gan, Rabbani, & Trichilli, 2024).

Financial performance is a desirable goal for all profit-oriented companies. It is measured through various business-related formulas that allow users to calculate exact details regarding a company's potential effectiveness (Mboe & Kavale, 2023). Return on equity (ROE) is a financial performance metric that measures how efficiently a firm uses its shareholders' equity to generate profits (Yousif *et al.*, 2025). Return on assets (ROA) is a financial performance metric that measures how efficiently a firm uses its total assets to generate profits (Ogundele & Nzama, 2025). Return on sales (ROS) is a financial metric that measures a company's operational efficiency by showing the percentage of revenue that is converted into operating profit (Ogundele & Nzama, 2025). Return on investment (ROI) is a financial metric that measures an investment's

profitability and efficiency by comparing the gain or loss generated from it to its cost, expressed as a percentage (Dadd & Hinton, 2023). However, the choice of financial indicators as strategic performance indicators is not obvious (Helmold, 2022).

Empirical Review

This section presents the empirical review.

Strategic Competitive Response Capability and Firm Performance

Ngugi (2024) examined the influence of strategic competitive response capability on the performance of commercial organizations listed in the Nairobi Securities Exchange in Kenya. The results showed that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant relationship with the performance of commercial organizations. The results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of commercial organizations.

Bett and Avoga (2023) examined the influence of competitive strategies on performance of selected large supermarkets in Nairobi city county, Kenya. The findings indicated that competitive strategies had positive and significant relationship with the performance of selected large supermarkets. The results showed that competitive strategies had positive and significant influence on the performance of selected large supermarkets.

Ngugi (2024) examined the influence of impact of strategic response capabilities on business success of commercial organizations listed in the Nairobi Securities Exchange in Kenya. The findings indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant relationship with the performance of commercial organizations. The results showed that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of commercial organizations.

Okumu and Kariuki (2021) examined the influence of competitive strategic responses on performance of fast-moving consumer goods manufacturing firms in Nairobi County, Kenya. The findings indicated that competitive strategic responses had positive and significant relationship with the performance of fast-moving consumer goods manufacturing firms. The results showed that competitive strategic responses had positive and significant influence on the performance of fast-moving consumer goods manufacturing firms.

Strategic Customer Response Capability and Firm Performance

Sukanthasirikul and Phornlaphatrachakorn (2021) examined the influence of customer response capability on market success of instant food and convenience food businesses in Thailand. The findings indicated that customer response capability had positive and significant relationship with market success of instant food and convenience food businesses. The results showed that customer response capability had positive and significant influence on market success of instant food and convenience food businesses. The findings showed that customer response capability significantly mediates the relationship between product innovation accounting and market success of instant food and convenience food businesses.

Sajjaviriya and Jhundra-indra (2019) examined the influence of strategic customer response capability on marketing performance of cosmetics businesses in Thailand. The results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant relationship with marketing performance of cosmetics businesses. The findings showed that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on marketing performance of cosmetics businesses. The results showed that strategic customer response capability plays a significant role in creating customer commitment, customer loyalty and marketing performance.

Elessawi and Abd Elghany (2025) examined the role of customer response capabilities on user satisfaction of the online shopping sector in Egypt. The results indicated that customer response capabilities had positive and significant relationship with user satisfaction. The findings showed that customer response capabilities

had a positive and significant influence on user satisfaction. The results showed that customer response capabilities fully mediate the association between consumer behaviour and user satisfaction.

Suthatorn and Charoensukmongkol (2025) examined the influence of customer responsiveness on performance among micro-entrepreneurs in Thailand. The findings indicated that customer responsiveness had positive and significant relationship with firm performance. The results showed that customer responsiveness had positive and significant influence on firm performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research employed the correlational, cross-sectional survey research design to test non-causal relationships among variables without controlling any of the variables. The design was appropriate for collecting data once from many individuals at a single point in time to test statistical relationships between two or more variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them (Haslam, McGarty, Cruwys, & Steffens, 2024; Leavy, 2022).

Target Population

The target population consisted of the 416 managers of the 104 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The target population was as per the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM, 2024)'s database as at 31st December, 2024. The unit of observation was the management staff drawn from finance, operations, human resource and marketing. Table 1 presents the target population.

Table 1: Target Population

Strata	Target Population	Percentage
Finance	104	25.0%
Operations	104	25.0%
Human Resource	104	25.0%
Marketing	104	25.0%
Total	**416**	**100.0%**

Source: Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM, 2024)

Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is the complete and correct list of population constituency of a given population (Thomassen, le Cessie, van Houwelingen, & Steyerberg, 2024). The sampling frame consisted of the list of the 104 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The sampling frame was as per the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM, 2024)'s database as at 31st December, 2024.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

This section presents the sample size and sampling techniques.

Sample Size

The Yamane (1967)'s formula was used to determine the sample size and verify that the sample size is sufficiently large (Hiebl, 2023).

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2)}$$

Where:

n = Sample Size

N = Target Population

e = Sampling Level of Precision

With a target population of 416 managers of the 104 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya, the minimum recommended sample size needed for the study was calculated as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{416}{1+416\ (0.05)^2} = 204$$

Therefore, the minimum recommended sample size consisted of 204 managers of 51 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Extant literature posits that a sample size larger than 30 and less than 500 is deemed appropriate for most research (Bell & Warren, 2023; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2023). Table 2 presents the sample size.

Table 2: Sample Size

Strata	Target Population	Sample Size
Finance	104	51
Operations	104	51
Human Resource	104	51
Marketing	104	51
Total	**416**	**204**

Sampling Techniques

The proportionate stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select a sample size of 204 managers of 51 manufacturing firms from a target population of 416 managers of the 104 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The choice of the proportionate stratified random sampling technique was justified by the heterogeneous target population. The proportionate stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique in which each stratum is given equal chance to be selected randomly in to the sample (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2022; Hiebl, 2023).

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected using a self-administered structured survey questionnaire. The data collection method was appropriate. The choice of the self-administered structured survey questionnaire was justified by its ability to collect a large amount of information in a reasonably quick span of time (Bell, Warren, & Schmidt, 2022; Dubey & Kothari, 2022; Leavy, 2022).

Data Collection Procedures

A cross-sectional survey-based approach was employed for the collection of primary data. The choice of the cross-sectional survey-based approach was justified by its ability to permit the fast collection of primary data from many different individuals at a single point in time. The cross-sectional survey-based approach facilitates the collection of data from many different individuals at a single point in time (Bujang, Omar, Foo, & Hon, 2024). With the help of 3 research assistants, the researcher utilized the drop and pick method to hand deliver the survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was hand delivered to the random sample of 204 managers of 51 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. A continuous follow up on responses was made by the researcher and research assistants.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the constructed survey questionnaire. The pilot study was performed with pilot trial sample size of 20 managers of 5 manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The pilot trial sample size consisted of 10% of the study's sample size. A common rule of thumb for pilot study is that a pilot study should be conducted with a minimum size of at least 10%-20% of the full-scale survey sample size or at least 30-50 respondents (Leong, Hew, Ooi, Tan, & Koohang, 2024).

However, the participants in the pilot study were not be part of the main survey.

Data Processing and Analysis

The collected data was checked for accuracy, completeness and consistency. The data was coded, edited, and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to create a data sheet that was used for analysis. The descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The descriptive statistics were used to compute, summarize the data in respect to each of the study variables and describe the sample's characteristics. The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed to confirm or deny the relationship between the study variables. The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis is performed to determine the nature and the strength of the linear relationship between the variables (Haslam *et al.*, 2024). A multiple linear analysis was performed with performance of manufacturing firms as the dependent variable and strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability as the predictor variables. The standard multiple linear regression analysis provides a means of objectively assessing the magnitude and direction of each predictor's relationship to its outcome variable).

Model Specification

The multiple linear regressions model was specified as:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$ …….…. Model 1

Where:

Y = Performance of Manufacturing Firms

β_0 = Constant Term

$\beta_1 - \beta_2$ = Regression coefficients to be estimated

X_1 = Strategic Competitive Response Capability

X_2 = Strategic Customer Response Capability

ε = Stochastic Error Term

Hypotheses Testing

In this research, two null hypotheses were tested. The $H_0$1 and $H_0$2 were tested at 5% level of significance (α = 0.05; t = 1.960) to statistically help draw acceptable and realistic inferences. Therefore, the decision rule was to reject the H_0i if the $P \leq 0.05$, and otherwise fail to reject the H_0i if the $P > 0.05$. Table 3 presents the hypotheses testing procedure.

Table 3: Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses		Model	Hypotheses Testing	Decision Rule
$H_0$1:	Strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.	$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$ …. Model 1	Standard Multiple regression analysis	$H_0$1: $\beta_1 = 0$ $H_1$1: $\beta_1 \neq 0$ If the $P \leq 0.05$, reject the $H_0$1. If the $P > 0.05$, fail to reject the $H_0$1.
$H_0$2:	Strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.			$H_0$2: $\beta_2 = 0$ $H_1$2: $\beta_2 \neq 0$ If the $P \leq 0.05$, reject the $H_0$2. If the $P > 0.05$, fail to reject the $H_0$2.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

Out of the 204 survey questionnaires distributed for the main study, only 168 valid responses were obtained. Therefore, there was a valid response rate of 82.4%, which was adequate for data processing and analysis. Existent literature posits that survey response rates of 70% or higher are needed if findings are to be considered generalizable (Ericson *et al.*, 2023). Table 4 presents the response rate results.

Table 4: Response Rate

Strata	Frequency	Percentage
Response	168	82.4%
Non-Response	36	17.6%
Total	**204**	**100.0%**

Correlation Results

The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed to confirm or deny the relationships between the study variables. The correlation results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with the performance ($r = 0.787$, $p \leq 0.05$) of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The results showed that strategic customer response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with the performance ($r = 0.769$; $p \leq 0.05$) of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Table 5 presents the correlation results.

Table 5: Correlation Results

Variable		X_1	X_2	Y
Strategic Competitive Response Capability (X_1)	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	n	168		
Strategic Customer Response Capability (X_2)	Pearson Correlation	.543**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	n	168	168	
Performance of Manufacturing Firms (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.787**	.769**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	n	168	168	168

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

Multiple Regression Results

A standard multiple linear analysis was performed with the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya as the dependent variable and strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability as the predictor variables.

Model Summary

From the model summary in table, it is clear that the value of coefficient of correlation (R) was 0.886, suggesting that there was a strong positive correlation between the strategic response capabilities and the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The value of coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.785, suggesting that the overall model as a whole (the model involving constant, strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) was able to significantly predict and explain approximately 78.5% of the variance in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The value of the adjusted R^2 was 0.783, suggesting that the overall model as a whole (the model involving constant, strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) significantly predicted and explained 78.3% of the variance in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The value of the std. error of the estimate was 0.199, suggesting that there could be other factors not included in the model in the current study that could predict and explain the remaining 21.7% of the variance in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, there is in need for future research to discover the other strategic response capabilities not included in the model in the current study that also predict the remaining variance in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County,

Kenya. The value of the Durbin-Watson test was 2.039, falling within the optimum range of 1.5 to 2.5, suggesting that there was no severe autocorrelation detected in the in the residual values in the datasets. Generally, Durbin-Watson statistics falling within the optimum range of 1.5 to 2.5 indicates that there is no severe autocorrelation detected in the in the residual values in the datasets (Bolin, 2022; Hair & Alamer, 2022; Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). Table 6 presents the model summary results.

Table 6: Model Summary[b] Results

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.886[a]	.785	.783	.199	2.039

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Customer Response Capability (X_2), Strategic Competitive Response Capability (X_1)
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Manufacturing Firms (Y)

Analysis of Variance

From the ANOVA table, the overall model as a whole (the model involving constant, strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability), achieved a high degree of fit, as reflected by $R^2 = 0.785$, adj. $R^2 = 0.783$, $F(2, 165) = 301.931$, $p \leq 0.05$. The null hypothesis was that the linear combination of predictor variables (strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) was not able to significantly predict the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. However, the alternative hypothesis was that the linear combination of predictor variables (strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) was able to significantly predict the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The standard multiple linear regression results showed that the linear combination of predictor variables (strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) significantly predicted the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the decision was that the linear combination of predictor variables (strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability) significantly predict the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Table 7 presents the ANOVA results.

Table 7: ANOVA[a] Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.986	2	11.993	301.931	.000[b]
	Residual	6.554	165	.040		
	Total	30.540	167			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Manufacturing Firms (Y)
b. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Customer Response Capability (X_2), Strategic Competitive Response Capability (X_1)

Multiple Regression Coefficients

From the coefficients table, when the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) were substituted to the multiple regression model specified for the study, the final predictive equation was:

$$Y = 1.563 + 0.331X_1 + 0.278X_2$$

The final predictive equation suggested that holding all factors in to account constant (strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability), constant at zero, the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya would be 1.563 in Mombasa County, Kenya. The final predictive equation suggested that with all other factors held constant, a unit increase in strategic competitive response capability would lead to 0.331 unit increase in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Moreover, the final predictive equation suggested that with all other factors held constant, a

unit increase in strategic customer response capability would lead to 0.278 unit increase in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Based on the magnitude of the unstandardized regression coefficients (B) of the independent variables, strategic customer response capability was the best predictor of the variance in the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The multiple regression results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya ($\beta_1 = 0.524$; $t = 12.197$; $p \leq 0.05$) in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms ($\beta_2 = 0.485$; $t = 11.284$; $p \leq 0.05$) in Mombasa County, Kenya. Table 8 presents the multiple regressions coefficients results.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Coefficients[a] Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	1.563	.094		16.715	.000		
Strategic Competitive Response Capability (X_1)	.331	.027	.524	12.197	.000	.837	1.195
Strategic Customer Response Capability (X_2)	.278	.025	.485	11.284	.000	.898	1.114

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Manufacturing Firms (Y)

Hypotheses Test Results

In this research, two null hypotheses were tested. The $H_0$1 and $H_0$2 were tested at 5% level of significance, $\alpha = 0.05$, $t = 1.960$, and 95% confidence level to statistically help draw acceptable and realistic inferences. Therefore, the decision rule was to reject the H_0i if the $P \leq 0.05$, and otherwise fail to reject the H_0i if the $P > 0.05$.

Hypothesis One Test Results

The $H_0$1 predicted that strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The decision rule was to reject the $H_0$1 if the $\beta_1 \neq 0$, $t \geq 1.960$, $P \leq 0.05$, and otherwise fail to reject the $H_0$1 if the $\beta_1 = 0$, $t < 1.960$, $P > 0.05$. The regression results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya ($\beta_1 = 0.524$; $t = 12.197$; $p \leq 0.05$) in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0$1, and then conclude that strategic competitive response capability has a significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

Hypothesis Two Test Results

The $H_0$2 predicted that strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The decision rule was to reject the $H_0$2 if the $\beta_2 \neq 0$, $t \geq 1.960$, $P \leq 0.05$, and otherwise fail to reject the $H_0$2 if the $\beta_2 = 0$, $t < 1.960$, $P > 0.05$. The regression results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms ($\beta_2 = 0.485$; $t = 11.284$; $p \leq 0.05$) in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0$2, and then conclude that strategic customer response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Table 9 presents the hypotheses test results.

Table 9: Hypotheses Test Results

Hypothesis	β	t	Sig.	Decision
$H_0$1: Strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.	.524	12.197	.000	Reject the $H_0$1
$H_0$2: Strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.	.485	11.284	.000	Reject the $H_0$2

Discussions

The purpose of this quantitative correlational research was to examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Specifically, the research sought to examine the influence of strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed to confirm or deny the relationship between the study variables. The correlation results indicated that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. A standard multiple linear analysis was performed with performance of manufacturing firms as the dependent variable and strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability as the predictor variables. The regression results showed that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The findings are consistent with the results of past studies (Ettrich & Andersen, 2021; Kabue *et al.*, 2019; Karanja & Omondi, 2024; Ngugi, 2024a). The results are in harmony with the results of past studies (Ngugi, 2024b; Onamusi, 2020a; Onamusi, 2020b; Orji *et al.*, 2022).

The first specific objective was to determine the influence of strategic competitive response capability on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0$1 predicted that strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's correlation results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0$1, and then conclude that strategic competitive response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The results are in harmony with the results of past studies (Bett & Avoga, 2023; Ngugi, 2024a; Ngugi, 2024b; Okumu & Kariuki, 2021).

The second specific objective was to assess the influence of strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0$2 predicted that strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's correlation results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0$2, and then conclude that strategic customer response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The results were consistent with the results of prior studies (Elessawi & Abd Elghany, 2025; Sajjaviriya & Jhundra-indra, 2019; Sukanthasirikul & Phornlaphatrachakorn, 2021; Suthatorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2025).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this quantitative correlational research was to examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed to confirm or deny the relationship between the study variables. The correlation results indicated that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. A standard multiple linear analysis was performed with performance of manufacturing firms as the dependent variable and strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability as the predictor variables. The regression results showed that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The first specific objective was to determine the influence of strategic competitive response capability on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 1$ predicted that strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The correlation results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0 1$, and then conclude that strategic competitive response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The second specific objective was to assess the influence of strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 2$ predicted that strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The correlation results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the decision was to reject the $H_0 2$, and then conclude that strategic customer response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was performed to confirm or deny the relationship between the study variables. The correlation results indicated that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. A standard multiple linear analysis was performed with performance of manufacturing firms as the dependent variable and strategic competitive response capability and strategic customer response capability as the predictor variables. The regression results showed that the strategic response capabilities had positive and significant influence on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. Therefore, the conclusion was that strategic response capabilities significantly influence the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The first specific objective was to determine the influence of strategic competitive response capability on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 1$ predicted that strategic competitive response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's correlation results indicated that strategic competitive response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic competitive response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 1$ was rejected, providing the empirical support for $H_1 1$. Therefore, the first conclusion was that strategic competitive response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in

Mombasa County, Kenya.

The second specific objective was to assess the influence of strategic customer response capability on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 2$ predicted that strategic customer response capability has no significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The Pearson's correlation results indicated that strategic customer response capability had a strong positive and significant relationship with performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The regression results showed that strategic customer response capability had a positive and significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya. The $H_0 2$ was rejected, providing the empirical support for $H_1 2$. Therefore, the second conclusion was that strategic customer response capability has a significant influence on performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya.

The research recommends that the managers and practitioners should consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of the strategic response capabilities to foster the performance of manufacturing firms. First, the managers and practitioners should consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of strategic competitive response capability to foster the performance of manufacturing firms. Second, the managers and practitioners should consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of strategic customer response capability to foster the performance of manufacturing firms.

The research recommends that the policy makers should initiate policy review to motivate the managers and practitioners to consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of the strategic response capabilities to foster the performance of manufacturing firms. First, the policy makers should initiate policy review to motivate the managers and practitioners to consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of strategic competitive response capability to foster the performance of manufacturing firms. Second, the policy makers should initiate policy review to motivate the managers and practitioners to consider a holistic reassessment and implementation of strategic customer response capability to foster the performance of manufacturing firms.

Limitations and Future Research

The research suggests interesting areas for further research. First, future research should examine the influence of other strategic response capabilities on the performance of manufacturing firms in Mombasa County, Kenya in other regions or contexts. Second, future research should examine the influence of strategic response capabilities on firm performance in other industries, sectors or contexts. Third, future research should examine the moderating influence of marketing turbulence on the relationship between strategic response capabilities and firm performance in other sectors, regions or contexts.

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