STRATEGIC PROCUREMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF TEA PROCESSING COMPANIES IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

[1] Anyoso Judith Joan, [2] Dr. Ndeto Charles

[1] Masters Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

[2] Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

ABSTRACT

Tea processing companies play a vital role in the economy of Kenya, particularly in Kiambu County, which is one of the leading tea-growing regions in the country. However, tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya, face a variety of challenges that significantly impact their performance. The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of strategic procurement on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to establish the influence of procurement planning on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya and to assess the influence of supplier management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. This study was guided by Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) and Social Exchange Theory. The study used a descriptive research approach. This study targeted tea processing companies in Kiambu County. This study therefore targeted the management employees in these companies. In every company, the study targeted 1 top manager, 3 middle level managers and 5 lower level managers. The total target population was therefore 594 respondents. The study used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula to arrive at the sample size. The study sample size was 170 employees. The study's primary data collecting tool was questionnaires, which included both open and closed-ended questions. The questionnaires were pre-tested by the researcher to evaluate the data's reliability and validity. The research yielded both quantitative and qualitative results. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application version 21 was utilized for analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the link between the independent and dependent variables. The study concludes that procurement planning has a significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. Further, the study concludes that supplier management has a significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the management of tea processing companies in Kenya should enhance supplier relationship management. Establishing long-term partnerships with reliable suppliers can lead to better procurement outcomes by ensuring consistent quality, timely deliveries, and favorable pricing. In addition, the study recommends that the management of tea processing companies in Kenya should implement a comprehensive risk assessment framework that includes both internal and external risks. This framework should involve regularly identifying and evaluating potential risks, such as fluctuations in tea prices, climate change, supply chain disruptions, and labor shortages.

Key Words: Strategic Procurement, Procurement Planning, Supplier Management, Performance Of Tea Processing Companies

Background of the Study

The manufacturing sector plays a crucial role in driving economic growth and development by transforming raw materials into finished goods through various processes, including assembly, fabrication, and production (Ul Sadiqeen, Ullah & Bano, 2023). It encompasses a wide range of industries such as automotive, electronics, textiles, and machinery, contributing significantly to job creation and technological advancements. Tea processing companies play a vital role in the global tea industry by transforming freshly harvested tea leaves into various types of tea, including black, green, white, and oolong (Corbos, Bunea & Jiroveanu, 2023). These companies operate through a series of processes such as withering, rolling, fermenting, drying, and sorting to enhance flavor, aroma, and quality. The techniques used vary depending on the type of tea being produced, with each method influencing the final product's characteristics (Sobhani, *et al*, 2020). Additionally, tea processing companies are essential in maintaining quality control, ensuring consistency, and adhering to health and safety standards. In an increasingly competitive market, these companies are also investing in sustainability initiatives, ethical sourcing, and innovative packaging to meet consumer demand for environmentally friendly and socially responsible products (Swen, 2021).

Tea processing companies play a pivotal role in the global tea supply chain, acting as the bridge between tea cultivation and the end consumer. Their primary responsibility is to transform freshly plucked tea leaves into the final product, which involves several intricate stages of processing (Manta, Bunea & Ismail, 2023). These companies handle the critical steps of withering, rolling, fermenting, drying, and sorting the leaves to produce various types of tea, such as black, green, white, and oolong. Each type of tea undergoes a different processing method, which impacts its flavor, aroma, and overall quality (Chinogwenya & Utete, 2023). For example, black tea is fully fermented, while green tea is minimally processed to preserve its green color and delicate taste. The precision and expertise applied during these processes ensure the consistency and high quality that consumers expect (Orio, 2020).

Tea processing companies also uphold stringent quality control standards, ensuring that the final product meets both regulatory requirements and consumer preferences. This often involves monitoring moisture levels, controlling oxidation, and conducting taste tests to maintain consistency across batches (Adda, 2023). These companies are also key players in maintaining the integrity of the supply chain by managing logistics, packaging, and distribution to ensure that the tea reaches global markets in optimal condition. Moreover, with the growing demand for sustainable and ethically sourced products, many tea processing companies are adopting environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing water usage, minimizing waste, and using eco-friendly packaging (Irakoze & Akumuntu, 2024).

In recent years, tea processing companies have become more involved in promoting social responsibility and sustainability. This includes working directly with tea farmers to ensure fair wages, improving working conditions, and supporting local communities (Assam, *et al*, 2023). By investing in these practices, tea processing companies are not only enhancing their brand image but also meeting the rising consumer demand for ethical and sustainable products. As a result, these companies are playing an essential role in shaping the future of the tea industry, balancing traditional methods with modern innovations and meeting both consumer and environmental expectations (Oliech & Mwangangi, 2023).

Strategic procurement refers to the process of identifying, acquiring, and managing the resources and services that an organization needs to achieve its long-term goals and objectives. It goes beyond traditional purchasing by aligning procurement activities with the overall business strategy, focusing on creating value rather than merely minimizing costs (Omari & Mungai, 2022). This approach involves careful planning, supplier relationship management, risk assessment, and continuous improvement, ensuring that the procurement function

contributes to the organization's competitiveness and sustainability (Owino & Juma, 2023). By leveraging market insights, fostering collaboration with suppliers, and implementing innovative sourcing practices, strategic procurement helps businesses secure quality products and services, optimize supply chains, and drive operational efficiency (Wambui & Barasa, 2024).

Procurement planning involves analyzing demand, defining specifications, estimating costs, and creating a timeline for procurement activities. A well-structured procurement plan ensures that resources are acquired at the right time, within budget, and with minimal disruption to operations (Basueti & Achuora, 2020). Risk management identifies potential risks such as supply chain disruptions, price volatility, or legal challenges and develops strategies to mitigate them, including creating contingency plans and diversifying suppliers (Ul Sadiqeen, Ullah & Bano, 2023). Supplier management focuses on building strong, collaborative relationships with key suppliers to ensure quality, reliability, and mutual benefit. This includes assessing supplier performance, monitoring delivery schedules, and fostering innovation. Contract management involves creating clear, legally sound agreements that define the terms of supply, performance expectations, penalties for non-compliance, and dispute resolution mechanisms (Corbos, Bunea & Jiroveanu, 2023). Proper contract management ensures that both parties fulfill their obligations, protecting the organization from legal risks and helping to maintain positive supplier relationships (Sobhani, *et al*, 2020). This study sought to examine the influence of strategic procurement on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Tea processing companies play a vital role in the economy of Kenya, particularly in Kiambu County, which is one of the leading tea-growing regions in the country. Tea is one of Kenya's top agricultural exports, contributing significantly to the nation's foreign exchange earnings (Wambui & Barasa, 2024). The tea industry supports millions of livelihoods, including small-scale farmers, factory workers, and other stakeholders in the supply chain (Basueti & Achuora, 2020). Beyond its economic value, tea processing companies also play a key role in rural development, providing employment opportunities, improving local infrastructure, and boosting the agricultural sector's overall productivity. The success of these companies directly impacts the national economy, making them a crucial part of Kenya's economic growth and development (Oliech & Mwangangi, 2023).

Tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya, face a variety of challenges that significantly impact their performance. These challenges are particularly evident in areas such as profitability, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction, which are critical factors for the sustainability and growth of these companies (Omari & Mungai, 2022). Tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya, are confronted with several challenges that hinder their growth and affect their performance. A key challenge is profitability. Despite Kenya being one of the largest producers of tea globally, the profitability of tea processing companies in Kiambu has been under pressure (Owino & Juma, 2023). According to the Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA), Kenya's tea exports dropped by 8.4% in 2022, largely due to fluctuating global tea prices and competition from other tea-producing countries like India and Sri Lanka (Wambui & Barasa, 2024). The average price for Kenyan tea at the auction in 2022 was $2.29 per kilogram, which was a significant decrease from previous years, where the price had averaged around $2.80 per kilogram. This price volatility leaves companies vulnerable, as fluctuations in prices directly affect their profit margins (Oliech & Mwangangi, 2023). Furthermore, the cost of inputs such as labor, energy, and transportation has been rising. The industry's profit margins have consequently decreased, with many companies reporting lower returns on investment and struggling to break even (Basueti & Achuora, 2020).

The issue of cost reduction is also a major hurdle for tea processing companies in Kiambu. The rising costs of raw materials, labor, and energy have significantly affected the financial viability of tea factories (Omari & Mungai, 2022). According to the Central Bank of Kenya, fuel prices in the country have increased by 15-20% over the past two years, while electricity tariffs have also risen by 10%. These increases in energy costs directly affect tea processing companies, which are energy-intensive operations. Furthermore, the cost of labor has increased due to a rise in the minimum wage (Owino & Juma, 2023). The average monthly wage for tea pickers in Kenya is approximately KES 15,000 ($100), but this varies based on location and market conditions. This rise in labor costs combined with energy expenses makes it difficult for tea companies to reduce overall costs. Moreover, according to a 2022 report from KTDA, labor costs account for up to 40% of the total operational expenses in tea processing factories (Wambui & Barasa, 2024). Consequently, many companies in Kiambu County are forced to explore new ways to reduce costs, such as improving operational efficiency or investing in automation technologies, which require high capital investment (Oliech & Mwangangi, 2023).

Customer satisfaction is another significant challenge faced by tea processing companies in Kiambu County. With increasing competition in both local and international markets, it is essential for companies to meet consumer expectations for quality, packaging, and timely delivery (Basueti & Achuora, 2020). A survey by the Kenya Tea Packers Association (KTPA) found that 72% of consumers in the domestic market have shown a preference for premium quality tea, placing pressure on local tea processors to improve their product offerings. To cater to this demand, companies must invest in quality control and innovative processing methods, which significantly increase costs (Omari & Mungai, 2022. Additionally, logistical challenges related to transportation and supply chain disruptions have been reported in the industry. In 2022, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture revealed that 15% of tea processors in Kiambu County experienced delays in fulfilling orders due to supply chain inefficiencies, particularly during periods of poor weather and labor shortages (Owino & Juma, 2023). Furthermore, climate-related factors like droughts have significantly reduced the yield of tea leaves. For example, in 2021, Kenya experienced a 10% drop in tea production due to drought conditions, which directly affected the ability of companies to meet customer demand and maintain satisfaction. Delayed deliveries and inconsistent supply of high-quality tea are major reasons for customer dissatisfaction in the industry (Wambui & Barasa, 2024).

Strategic procurement, which refers to the process of planning, sourcing, and acquiring goods and services in alignment with an organization's goals, has a profound influence on organizational performance (Owino & Juma, 2023). Various studies have been conducted in different parts of the world on strategic procurement and organization performance. For instance, Oliech and Mwangangi (2023) examined on the effect of strategic procurement management on performance of level five hospitals. Omari and Mungai (2022) researched on strategic procurement practices and organizational performance in the construction industry and Owino and Juma (2023) conducted a study on strategic procurement practices and procurement performance of state corporations. However, none of these studies focused on procurement planning, risk management, supplier management and contract management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. To fill the highlighted gaps, the current study sought to examine the influence of strategic procurement (procurement planning, risk management, supplier management and contract management) on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to examine the influence of strategic procurement on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya

Specific Objectives

i. To establish the influence of procurement planning on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya
ii. To assess the influence of supplier management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE)

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) Theory is a framework developed to understand and analyze the costs associated with economic transactions and how they influence organizational structure and decision-making (Yanık, 2020). Developed by Ronald Coase (1937), TCE Theory posits that the costs incurred in conducting transactions are a critical determinant of how firms organize their activities and choose between different forms of governance, such as market transactions, hierarchical structures, or hybrid arrangements (Basheka, 2020). At its core, TCE Theory argues that transactions are subject to costs beyond the simple price of goods and services. These transaction costs include expenses related to searching for information, negotiating and drafting contracts, monitoring and enforcing agreements, and dealing with uncertainties and opportunistic behavior (Ogubala & Kiarie, 2020). The theory emphasizes that firms seek to minimize these transaction costs when deciding how to organize and conduct their economic activities. The choice between using the market, forming a contract, or internalizing activities within the firm depends largely on which option minimizes transaction costs (Mutoro, Makokha & Namusonge, 2020).

One of the central concepts in TCE Theory is the idea of asset specificity, which refers to the degree to which investments made in a transaction are specialized and cannot easily be redeployed to other uses without loss of value (Mutai & Osoro, 2024). High asset specificity increases the risk of opportunistic behavior and the costs of enforcing contracts, leading firms to prefer hierarchical governance structures, such as vertical integration, over market transactions. In contrast, transactions involving lower asset specificity may be efficiently managed through market mechanisms (Yanık, 2020). Another important element of TCE Theory is the concept of bounded rationality, which acknowledges that individuals and organizations have limited cognitive capacities and cannot foresee all potential future contingencies or make perfectly informed decisions. This limitation necessitates the use of contracts and governance structures to manage the uncertainties and risks inherent in economic transactions (Basheka, 2020). Opportunism, or the possibility that parties may act in their self-interest at the expense of others, also plays a critical role. TCE Theory suggests that firms need to design governance mechanisms that protect against opportunistic behavior and ensure fair dealings (Ogubala & Kiarie, 2020).
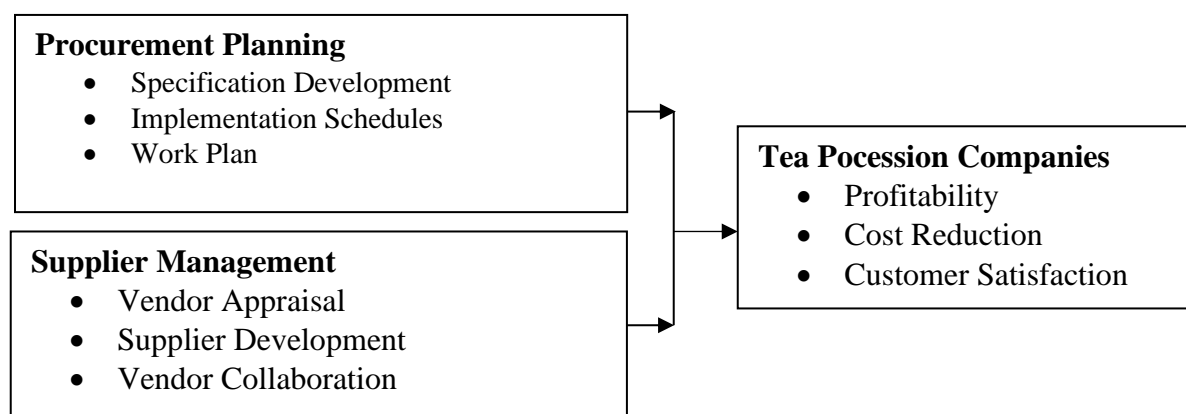
TCE Theory also highlights the significance of transaction attributes such as frequency, uncertainty, and complexity. Transactions that are frequent, involve high uncertainty, or are highly complex are likely to incur higher transaction costs and may thus be better managed through internal coordination rather than market transactions. The theory proposes that firms will vertically integrate or create hybrid forms of governance when these transaction attributes make market transactions inefficient or too costly (Mutoro, Makokha & Namusonge, 2020). This theory was used to establish the influence of procurement planning on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) developed by George Homans (1958) is a sociological and psychological framework that explains social behavior in terms of the exchange processes that occur in interpersonal relationships. The theory posits that individuals engage in social interactions with the expectation of receiving rewards that are proportional to the costs incurred (Marco & Nicola, 2020). This framework operates on the principle of maximizing benefits while minimizing losses, suggesting that human relationships are formed and maintained based on the perceived balance of these exchanges (Okori, 2021). At its core, SET is grounded in the idea that people make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis. When entering a relationship, individuals assess the potential rewards—such as emotional support, companionship, and social status—against the costs, which might include time, effort, and emotional vulnerability (Kosgei & Gitau, 2020). This evaluation influences whether they choose to initiate, maintain, or terminate a relationship. Consequently, relationships that provide a favorable balance of rewards over costs are more likely to be sustained, while those that do not may lead to dissatisfaction and eventual dissolution (Wachira, 2020). Additionally, SET emphasizes the importance of comparison levels, which are the standards individuals use to evaluate the outcomes of their relationships. These standards are shaped by past experiences, societal norms, and individual expectations (Magiri & Barasa, 2024). If the outcomes of a current relationship meet or exceed these comparison levels, individuals are likely to feel satisfied; if not, they may reconsider their involvement. This aspect of the theory highlights the dynamic nature of relationships, as perceptions of costs and benefits can change over time, influenced by external circumstances and personal growth (Marco & Nicola, 2020). This theory was used to assess the influence of supplier management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a structured system of concepts and ideas that guide research, decision-making, or problem-solving within a particular field (Cooper, & Schindler, 2019). It provides a foundation for understanding and analyzing a specific phenomenon or issue. In this study, the conceptual framework presents the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (Creswell, 2019). The independent variables are procurement planning and supplier management while the dependent variable is performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Procurement Planning
- Specification Development
- Implementation Schedules
- Work Plan

Supplier Management
- Vendor Appraisal
- Supplier Development
- Vendor Collaboration

Tea Pocession Companies
- Profitability
- Cost Reduction
- Customer Satisfaction

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Procurement Planning

Procurement planning is the process of identifying and organizing the resources, activities, and timelines necessary to acquire goods and services for a project, organization, or business (Ogubala & Kiarie, 2020). It involves assessing the needs of the organization, determining the best procurement strategy, and establishing a clear plan for how the procurement process will be carried out. This includes setting budgets, defining the specifications for the required products or services, selecting suppliers or contractors, and determining the appropriate contracts and terms (Mutoro, Makokha & Namusonge, 2020). The goal of procurement planning is to ensure that the right resources are available at the right time and cost, while minimizing risks and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations and organizational policies. Specification development involves clearly defining the technical, functional, and performance criteria that the items or services must meet (Mutai & Osoro, 2024). Specifications serve as a clear communication tool between the buyer and the supplier, ensuring that both parties have a shared understanding of the expectations and requirements. Properly developed specifications minimize ambiguity, reduce the likelihood of errors, and help suppliers submit proposals or bids that are aligned with the buyer's needs (Yanık, 2020). These specifications may include descriptions of quality standards, materials, dimensions, delivery requirements, and compliance with relevant industry standards or regulations. Clear specifications are essential for ensuring that the procurement process runs smoothly, meeting both cost and quality expectations (Basheka, 2020).

Implementation schedules are detailed timelines that outline the sequence of tasks, milestones, and deadlines required to complete a project or procurement activity. This schedule is an essential tool for planning and managing the timing of procurement activities, ensuring that all resources are available when needed and that project objectives are met within the agreed-upon time frame (Ogubala & Kiarie, 2020). An implementation schedule typically includes specific dates for procurement actions such as issuing tenders, evaluating bids, awarding contracts, and receiving goods or services. It also outlines key milestones, such as the completion of deliveries, inspections, and final payment processes. Having a well-structured schedule helps to coordinate activities across different teams, track progress, and identify potential delays or risks, allowing for proactive adjustments to keep the project on track (Mutoro, Makokha & Namusonge, 2020).

A work plan is a comprehensive document that outlines the tasks, responsibilities, and timelines required to accomplish a project or procurement objective. It serves as a roadmap for organizing and managing the workflow, ensuring that every step of the process is well-coordinated (Mutai & Osoro, 2024). The work plan details the activities involved in procurement, from planning and specification development to supplier selection, contract negotiation, and delivery. It identifies who is responsible for each task and sets deadlines for their completion (Yanık, 2020). The work plan also helps to allocate resources effectively, monitor progress, and identify potential issues before they become major problems. By breaking down the entire project into manageable tasks, the work plan ensures that all components of the procurement process are completed efficiently and according to plan, supporting the successful achievement of project goals (Basheka, 2020).

Supplier Management

Supplier management is the process of overseeing and managing relationships with suppliers to ensure that the goods and services they provide meet the organization's needs, quality standards, and performance expectations (Kosgei & Gitau, 2020). This involves selecting the right suppliers, negotiating contracts, establishing clear communication channels, and continuously monitoring and evaluating supplier performance. Supplier management also includes managing risks related to supply chain disruptions, ensuring compliance with

contractual obligations, and fostering long-term, mutually beneficial relationships (Wachira, 2020). Effective supplier management aims to optimize costs, improve quality, and enhance overall supply chain efficiency, ensuring that an organization has reliable access to the resources required for its operations. Strong supplier relationships also encourage collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement, contributing to the organization's success (Magiri & Barasa, 2024).

Vendor appraisal is the process of evaluating and assessing potential or existing suppliers to determine their capability to meet an organization's requirements. This process involves gathering and analyzing data on suppliers' financial stability, reputation, quality standards, delivery performance, compliance with regulations, and overall reliability (Marco & Nicola, 2020). Vendor appraisal helps organizations make informed decisions when selecting suppliers and ensures that they are capable of fulfilling contracts according to the desired quality, timeframes, and budget (Okori, 2021). The evaluation can be carried out through supplier audits, reviews of past performance, customer feedback, and reference checks. A thorough vendor appraisal helps mitigate risks associated with poor supplier performance, ensuring that the organization partners with suppliers who can reliably deliver value (Kosgei & Gitau, 2020).

Supplier development is the proactive process of working with suppliers to enhance their capabilities, improve their performance, and strengthen the relationship between the organization and the supplier (Wachira, 2020). This can involve providing suppliers with training, resources, and guidance to help them meet quality standards, reduce costs, or improve lead times. Supplier development also includes collaboration on process improvements and innovations that benefit both parties (Magiri & Barasa, 2024). By investing in the growth and development of suppliers, organizations can ensure a more resilient and efficient supply chain, reduce dependency on alternative sources, and build long-term strategic partnerships. Supplier development ultimately aims to create a more competitive supply base that supports the organization's business objectives and ensures consistent delivery of high-quality products or services (Marco & Nicola, 2020).

Vendor collaboration refers to the process of working closely with suppliers to create a partnership focused on achieving shared goals and solving common challenges. Unlike a transactional relationship, vendor collaboration emphasizes open communication, mutual trust, and joint problem-solving (Okori, 2021). This can involve working together on product design, forecasting demand, reducing costs, or addressing supply chain issues. By collaborating with vendors, organizations can improve their operational efficiency, drive innovation, and respond more effectively to market changes (Kosgei & Gitau, 2020). Collaborative relationships can lead to better-quality products, faster delivery times, and more flexible agreements, benefiting both parties. Successful vendor collaboration is built on transparency, shared risk, and a commitment to continuous improvement, creating a win-win situation for both the organization and the supplier (Wachira, 2020).

Empirical Review

Procurement Planning and Performanceof Tea Processing Companies

Yanık (2020) conducted a study on the effect of integrated procurement and transportation planning for purchased components: a case study in turkey. This study is about an integrated procurement and transportation planning system for purchased components of a consumer-durables manufacturer. As a result it is shown v that proposed method decrease the total inventory and transportation cost of the system even though the first aggregate problem cannot be solved to optimality. The study concluded that proposed method use the advantage of the coordinated replenishment and transportation of the imported components which decrease the sum of inventory holding and transportation costs of the company

Basheka (2020) conducted a study on the effect of procurement planning and local governance in Uganda: a factor analysis approach. Procurement planning is one of the primary functions of procurement with a potential to contribute to the success of local government operations and improved service delivery. A total of 99 respondents out of the expected 150 respondents returned the survey instruments, a response rate. The findings are from a study conducted among key political and administrative stakeholders from 11 local governments in Uganda. The paper concludes the vast resources local governments spend on the function of buying goods, services and works essential for their operations requires adequate procurement planning.

Ogubala and Kiarie (2020) conducted a study on factors affecting procurement planning in county governments in Kenya: a case study of Nairobi City County. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that affect procurement planning in County Governments in Kenya a case study of Nairobi City County with an aim of making recommendations on proper procurement planning. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires to collect data. The data collected was analysed using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study concludes that, inadequate competencies of procurement staff, lack of management support, ICT tools and budgeting procedures affect procurement planning

Mutoro, Makokha and Namusonge (2020) conducted a study on the factors affecting procurement planning in Bungoma county government in Kenya. The purpose of the study was to determine factors affecting procurement planning in Bungoma County Government in Kenya. A target population census of forty three included procurement County officers and staff from Bungoma County Government. The study found that validity of the instrument was done through pilot study and subjective judgments by the experts/supervisors while reliability was determined by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The conclusion was that service delivery had significant positive influence on procurement planning

Mutai and Osoro (2024) conducted a study on the effect of procurement planning and performance of state corporations in Kisii County, Kenya. This study endeavours and explore on procurement performance of state corporations in Kisii County, Kenya. The study found that the study used primary data which will be obtained by use of semi-structured questionnaires. A pilot test was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the research instrument as well as to address ambiguous, misinterpreted or misunderstood questions. The study concludes that there is a positive relationship between user needs identification and performance of state corporation in Kisii County; Speciation identification, periodic design assessment, continues improvement and proactive assessment are among the user needs identification factors that significantly influenced the performance of State corporation, Kenya

Supplier Management and Performanceof Tea Processing Companies

Marco and Nicola (2020) conducted a study on the effect integration techniques in customer–supplier management: An empirical research in the Italian industry of household appliances a classification of relevant integration techniques and tools is provided: techniques are grouped into the operations, technological and strategic domains, while tools are divided into the information technology, management and organization classes. The study found that the most adopted are the techniques related to operations management, coherently with the industry priorities, while the diffusion of technological and strategic techniques is low it concluded that this paper presented a review of managerial practices in supply chain relationships and assessed) their diffusion in the Italian industry of household appliances.

Okori (2021) conducted a study on the effect supplier management and organizational performance in the petroleum industry in Uganda: a case study of Hashi energy Uganda limited. This study sought to examine the relationship between Supplier Relationship Management and the Organizational performance in Petroleum Industry in Uganda, a case study of Hashi Energy

Uganda Limited It was evident from the findings that Supplier Relationship Management at Hashi Energy Uganda Limited was effectively conducted as indicated by 99% of the responses. The findings from the research confirmed the need to establish a strong evaluation system, which will supervise, monitor and appraise suppliers' performance. The study conclude a positive and significant relationship between supplier relationship and organizational performance.

Kosgei and Gitau (2020) conducted a study on the effect supplier management on organizational performance: a case study of Kenya airways limited. The study looked at two parameters; trust and commitment the research involved a cross sectional study design that was carried out in Kenya Airways, where a sample of 82 respondents was selected from a target population of 272 KQ employees to answer research questions of interest. Stratified random sampling was used to come up with the sample size since the population in different departments at KQ was considered to be heterogeneous. The primary data for the study was collected using the questionnaires. The results of the study were presented using frequency tables. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and regression statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21.0). The study established that understanding and practicing of supply chain management with key focus on supplier relationships is an essential prerequisite for staying competitive in the global race and enhancing profitably in the market. The study also found out that there was a great opportunity for organizations to improve its performances through proper use of SRM strategies

Wachira (2020) conducted a study on the effect supplier management and supply chain performance in alcoholic beverage industry in Kenya. The study of the business process that provides the structure for how relationships with suppliers are developed and maintained the findings also revealed that: competitive pressures; the need to consider sustainability and risk; the need to achieve cost efficiency in order to be cost competitive; and the need to develop closer relationships with key suppliers who can provide the expertise necessary to develop innovative new products and successfully bring them to market. The study concluded it is evident that firms in the alcohol beverage industry are moving towards collaborative relationships with their suppliers to improve on their supply chain performance

Magiri and Barasa (2024) conducted a study on the effect of supplier management practices on organizational performance of supermarkets in Kenya: A case of Naivas supermarkets in Nakuru County. This research sought to understand whether information sharing, buyer-supplier trust, supplier collaboration and supplier commitment positively contribute to organizational success and performance. SRM practices make organizational performance better however, there's limited empirical evidence on their impact within supermarkets in Kenya, which presents a research deficiency that the research desired to fill The study concluded that Naivas supermarkets in Nakuru consider practicing the objectives as this will lead to increased performance

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The overall approach for integrating the many components of the study in a cohesive and logical fashion to successfully solve the research topic is referred to as research design. It is the plan on how to answer research questions (Dunn, 2018). The different types of research designs include: exploratory design, descriptive design, case study, experimental research design, longitudinal studies among others (Kasomo, 2019).

Because the study collected quantitative data that explains the nature and features of the influence of strategic procurement on performance of tea processing companies, the study therefore used a descriptive research approach. According to Neuman (2019), a descriptive

survey research design is one that is used to gather data on the current state of a phenomenon in order to explain what is present in terms of variables or circumstances in a scenario.

This design is deemed acceptable by the researchers since it allows for the collection of trustworthy data that explains connections between the independent and dependent variables. It also aids in the development of quantitative measures that aid in the inference of probable connections among study variables (Patron, 2019).

Target Population

Target population is the entire set of individuals (or objects) having the same characteristics as pointed out in the sampling criteria used for the study (Quinlan, 2019). This study targeted tea processing companies in Kiambu County. Currently there are 66 operational tea factories under the KTDA (MS) Ltd management, each managed by a board of directors elected by and from among the growers of the specific factory catchment (KTDA, 2024). This study therefore targeted the management employees in these companies. In every company, the study targeted 1 top manager, 3 middle level managers and 5 lower level managers. The total target population was therefore 594 respondents.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sampling frame is a list used to define a study population of interest. The sampling frame defines a set of elements from which a study can select a sample of the target population (Kothari, 2019). The sampling frame for this study was the list of management level employees at telecommunication companies in Kenya. It is from this list that the study sample was selected from.

Sampling as described by Geteria, (2019) is the process of choosing the units of the target population which are to be included in the study in such a way that the sample of selected elements represent the population. The study used Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula to arrive at the sample size. The selection formula was as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+(N-1)e^2}$$

Where n= the required sample size

N = is the Target Population (594)

e = accuracy level required. Standard error = 5%

Sample calculation

$$n = \frac{594}{1+(594)0.05^2}$$

n=170.44

n=170 respondents

According to Mugenda and Mugenda, (2019), a population sample of between 10-30% is enough representation of the characteristics of the target population. As stated by Walpole, and Myers (2019), a sample is derived from a subdivision of the populace that is being reviewed. The sample details elements that are picked from the accessible population. The size of the sample sought to represent effectiveness, representativeness, dependability plus flexibility of the entire population. The study sample size was 170 employees. Stratified random sampling was applied to get the respondents. The study then used simple random sampling to select respondents from each stratum. In simple random sampling, every respondent had an equal chance of participating in the study.

Table 1: Sample Size

Category	Target Population	Sample Size
Senior level management	66	19
Middle Level Management	198	57
Low Level Management	330	94
Total	**594**	**170**

Data Collection Instruments

The study's primary data collecting tool was questionnaires, which included both open and closed-ended questions. Questionnaires are used since they are efficient data collecting tools allowing respondents to express a large portion of their thoughts on the study topic (Dempsey, 2019). As per Kothari (2018), data acquired using questionnaires is devoid of bias and researcher interference, resulting in reliable and genuine data. The questionnaire was preferred because it allows participants to give their thoughts or ideas in a much more honest way.

According to Agresti (2019), the questionnaire method of data collection is beneficial because the streamlined and indifferent configurations of a questionnaire provide homogeneity and aid in the impartial data collection; participants' privacy and confidentiality are ensured, and they are capable of completing them at their leisure (Kasomo, 2018). Data on the influence of strategic procurement procedures on performance of energy firms was gathered using questionnaires.

Data Analysis and Presentation

A researcher can analyze data using a variety of approaches, including descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. The research yielded both quantitative and qualitative results. The numerical data obtained was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics (Kothari, 2018).

For the analysis of research variables, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) application version 21 was utilized. It contains descriptive statistical capabilities that help with variable response comparability and show response frequency clearly. It has a lot of data handling capabilities and a lot of statistical analyzing processes that can analyze tiny to huge data statistics, and it's more stable (Orodho, 2019). This method provides concise summaries of the sample data as well as manageable quantitative descriptions.

Correlation analysis was used to determine the link between the independent and dependent variables. The goal of correlation is to enable the researcher to forecast how a measure varys from the norm. The size and orientation of the link between a single independent variable in the model was determined using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) (Ngechu, 2017). Correlation coefficient values are always between -1 and +1. A correlation coefficient of +1 shows that the two parameters are perfectly related in a positive linear sense, whereas a correlation coefficient of 0 indicates that there is no relationship.

By fitting a linear equation to the observed data, multiple linear regression aims to describe the connection between two or more explanatory factors and a response variable, where each value of the independent variable is linked with a value of the dependent variable (Ogula, 2015). As a result, this research was a good match for the approach and test. The proportion of variation in the predicted variable explained by variance in the predictor variables is known as R^2, and the greater it is, the better (Kombo & Tromp, 2019).

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Pilot Testing

The questionnaires were pre-tested by the researcher to evaluate the data's reliability and validity. The purpose of this exercise was to determine the respondents' degree of knowledge of the specifics in the questionnaire, as well as to see if the feedback from the pre-test supplied the sort of information required or if any of the questions were misinterpreted. Some questionnaire items were removed after this exercise, while others were enhanced. A pilot test is used to discover flaws in the design and equipment, as well as to give proxy data for probabilistic sampling procedure (Cooper & Schindler, 2019).

Descriptive Statistics

Procurement Planning and Performance

The first specific objective of the study was to establish the influence of procurement planning on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to procurement planning and performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown in Table 2. From the results the respondents agreed that the company develops clear specifications before procurement (M=3.892, SD= 0.898). In addition, the respondents agreed that specifications are regularly reviewed and updated to meet changing needs (M=3.871, SD= 0.881). Further, the respondents agreed that the procurement schedule is realistic with clear deadlines (M=3.866, SD= 0.532). From the results, the respondents agreed that goods and services are delivered on time as per the schedule (M=3.762, SD= 0.815). In addition, the respondents agreed that the procurement work plan defines roles and responsibilities (M=3.749, SD= 0.578). Further, the respondents agreed that procurement follows a detailed work plan for efficiency (M=3.733, SD= 0.677).

Table 2: Procurement Planning and Performance

	Mean	Std. Devi.
The company develops clear specifications before procurement.	3.892	0.898
Specifications are regularly reviewed and updated to meet changing needs.	3.871	0.881
The procurement schedule is realistic with clear deadlines.	3.866	0.532
Goods and services are delivered on time as per the schedule.	3.762	0.815
The procurement work plan defines roles and responsibilities.	3.749	0.578
Procurement follows a detailed work plan for efficiency.	3.733	0.677
Aggregate	**3.813**	**0.730**

Supplier Management and Performance

The third specific objective of the study was to assess the influence of supplier management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to supplier management and performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown in Table 3.

From the results the respondents agreed that the company regularly conducts thorough appraisals of its vendors (M=3.842, SD= 0.914). In addition, the respondents agreed that the company uses clear and objective metrics in vendor evaluations (M=3.817, SD= 0.781). Further, the respondents agreed that the company actively supports suppliers in improving their capabilities (M=3.736, SD= 0.842).

From the results, the respondents agreed that supplier development programs are aligned with the company's long-term goals (M=3.722, SD=0.897). In addition, the respondents agreed that the company collaborates closely with vendors to improve product quality (M= 3.679, SD= 0.680). Further, the respondents agreed that communication with vendors is transparent and consistent (M=3.681, SD=0.545).

Table 3: Supplier Management and Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
The company regularly conducts thorough appraisals of its vendors.	3.842	0.914
The company uses clear and objective metrics in vendor evaluations.	3.817	0.781
The company actively supports suppliers in improving their capabilities.	3.736	0.842
Supplier development programs are aligned with the company's long-term goals.	3.722	0.897
The company collaborates closely with vendors to improve product quality.	3.679	0.680
Communication with vendors is transparent and consistent.	3.681	0.545
Aggregate	**3.746**	**0.777**

Performance of Tea Processing Companies in Kiambu County,Kenya

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown in Table 4.

From the results the respondents agreed that the company consistently achieves its revenue and profit targets (M=3.779, SD= 0.966). In addition, the respondents agreed that the profitability of the company shows consistent growth over the last few years (M=3.756, SD= 0.712). Further, the respondents agreed that the company regularly implements cost-reduction strategies without compromising product quality (M=3.743, SD= 0.765).

From the results, the respondents agreed that the organization actively seeks ways to minimize production costs and improve operational efficiency (M=3.676, SD= 0.621). In addition, the respondents agreed that customers are consistently satisfied with the quality and taste of the tea products offered by the company (M=3.644, SD=0.871). The respondents also agreed that the company actively collects and addresses customer feedback to improve products and services (M=3.592, SD=0.888).

Table 4: Performance of Tea Processing Companies

	Mean	Std. Dev.
The company consistently achieves its revenue and profit targets	3.779	0.966
The profitability of the company shows consistent growth over the last few years.	3.756	0.712
The company regularly implements cost-reduction strategies without compromising product quality.	3.743	0.765
The organization actively seeks ways to minimize production costs and improve operational efficiency.	3.676	0.621
Customers are consistently satisfied with the quality and taste of the tea products offered by the company.	3.644	0.871
The company actively collects and addresses customer feedback to improve products and services	3.592	0.888
Aggregate	**3.698**	**0.804**

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics in the current study focused on correlation and regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength of the relationship while regression analysis was used to determine the relationship between dependent variable (performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya) and independent variables (procurement planning and supplier management).

Correlation Analysis

The present study used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength of association between independent variables (procurement planning and supplier management) and the dependent variable (performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya). Pearson correlation coefficient range between zero and one, where by the strength of association increase with increase in the value of the correlation coefficients.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

		Organizatio Performance	**Procurement Planning**	**Supplier Management**
Organizatio Performance	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	148		
Procurement Planning	Pearson Correlation	.864	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		
	N	148	148	
Supplier Management	Pearson Correlation	.876[**]	.184	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.021	
	N	148	148	148

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

From the results, there was a very strong relationship between procurement planning and performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. (r = 0. 864, p value =002). The relationship was significant since the p value 0. 002 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the findings of Ogubala and Kiarie (2020) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between procurement planning and organization performance.

Further, the results revealed that there is a very strong relationship between supplier management and performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya (r = 0. 876, p value =0. 001). The relationship was significant since the p value 0. 001) was less than 0.05 (significant level).The findings are in line with the findings of Okori (2021) that there is a very strong relationship between supplier management and organization performance.

Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (procurement planning and supplier management) and the dependent variable (performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya).

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.871	.759	.758	.1034

a. Predictors: (Constant), procurement planning and supplier management

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The r-squared for the relationship between the

independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.759. This implied that 75.9% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya) could be explained by independent variables (procurement planning and supplier management).

Table 7: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	120.267	2	60.133	939.58	.000[b]
1	Residual	9.375	145	.064		
	Total	129.642	147			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya
b. Predictors: (Constant), procurement planning and supplier management

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 455.561 while the F critical was 2.435. The p value was 0.000. Since the F-calculated was greater than the F-critical and the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05, the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of procurement planning and supplier management on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.237	0.061		3.885	0.000
	procurement planning	0.381	0.099	0.382	3.848	0.000
	supplier management	0.372	0.097	0.373	3.835	0.001

a Dependent Variable: performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya

The regression model was as follows:

$$Y = 0.237 + 0.381X_1 + 0.372X_2 + \varepsilon$$

According to the results, procurement planning has a significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya, β_1=0.381, p value= 0. 000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0. 000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Ogubala and Kiarie (2020) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between procurement planning and organization performance.

Furthermore, the results revealed that supplier management has significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya, β_1=0.372, p value=0. 001). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0. 001) was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Okori (2021) that there is a very strong relationship between supplier management and organization performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that procurement planning has a significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study findings revealed that

specification development, implementation schedules and work plan influences performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Further, the study concludes that supplier management has a significant effect on performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study findings revealed that vendor appraisal, supplier development and vendor collaboration influences performance of tea processing companies in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the management of tea processing companies in Kenya should enhance supplier relationship management. Establishing long-term partnerships with reliable suppliers can lead to better procurement outcomes by ensuring consistent quality, timely deliveries, and favorable pricing.

Further, the study recommends that the management of tea processing companies in Kenya should establish clear performance metrics and regular evaluation processes for suppliers. By setting defined standards for quality, delivery timelines, and cost efficiency, and conducting periodic assessments, companies can ensure that their suppliers consistently meet expectations.

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