

Technology Communication and Firm Performance of Kenya Tea Producers Companies

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Abstract:- The study sought to examine the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. The study reviewed theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. The conceptual framework was discussed to show the relationship between Technology Communication (independent variable) and firm performance (dependent variable). Positivism philosophy guided this study. The study used cross-sectional survey design to establish the role of Information Technology strategic alignment on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. In this study, the target population was identified as tea producer companies that are members of the East Africa Tea Trade Association (EATTA) in Kenya. This choice was made on the premise that these entities are likely to possess pertinent and accurate information relevant to the research. Specifically, the population encompassed all 29 tea producer members of EATTA. Respondents' population comprised of six top managers from each organization translating to 174 top managers. The sample size was 121 top managers. They were targeted because top managers of organizations mostly handle strategic management issues. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. The study mainly relied on primary data. The study used a questionnaire with diverse set of questions for the respondent to answer. A pilot study was carried out in order to ascertain the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics in the form of means and standard deviations were computed on the Technology Communication and performance measurement scales to provide an initial outline of the distribution of the participants' responses. The study concluded that Technology Communication has a positive and statistically significant influence on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. Based on the findings, this study recommends that the management of Tea Producer companies should ensure effectiveness in adopting information technology and using it in governance of their organization. In addition, the management of Tea Producer companies should ensure their employees are well equipped with information technology skills to improve their productivity.

Keywords:- Technology Communication, Performance of Tea Producers Companies.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic business landscape, the integration and alignment of business operations with IT strategies stand out as paramount concerns for top management. This recognition stems from the imperative to effectively adapt to the evolving operating environment. Information technology has emerged as a potent strategic asset in the rapidly changing realm of business. IT-business strategic alignment, as delineated by Henderson (1999), refers to the harmonization between an organization's IT strategy and its overarching business strategy. This alignment is pivotal for organizations seeking to leverage their IT resources optimally in service of their broader business objectives. By achieving strategic alignment, organizations can unlock several advantages: maximizing the impact of IT investments, streamlining the integration of IT and business processes, and ultimately enhancing competitiveness, revenue generation, and profitability. Despite the undeniable importance and potential benefits of alignment, research indicates that relatively few organizations manage to achieve it successfully (Hinkelmann & Pasquini, 2014). This gap between recognition and implementation underscores the complexity and challenges inherent in aligning IT and business strategies effectively.

The ability of an organization to maintain a competitive edge hinges on its capacity to acquire and deploy resources that align seamlessly with its competitive requirements (Parto, Sofian, & Saat, 2016). Beffers (2018) suggested that firms could enhance their performance by aligning with the business environment and internally aligning with both resources and infrastructure. Hence, strategic alignment emerges as a crucial determinant of organizational effectiveness and efficient resource utilization. However, according to Benbya, Nan, Tanriverdi, and Yoo (2020), a tight integration between IT and business strategies may lead to reduced strategic flexibility and an inability to respond effectively to environmental changes. Schallmo and Brecht (2016) discovered that some companies fall into an "alignment trap," where seemingly high levels of IT-business alignment do not translate into organizational effectiveness and improved performance.

The effectiveness of communications can be gauged by the degree and efficiency of the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information between IT and business organizations. This exchange enables both parties to comprehend each other's strategies, plans, business

environments, IT landscapes, risks, and priorities (Bani, 2011). According to a research study by Jerry Luftman in 2004, spanning over two decades, business-IT strategic alignment has consistently ranked as a top concern for management.

Business and IT executives continually seek best management practices to align their respective strategies. This emphasis on strategic alignment has only intensified over time, as dynamic business strategies and rapidly evolving technologies necessitate closer integration between business and IT (Chebrolu, 2010).

Effective communication is essential for achieving alignment, and its validity is contingent upon the receiver's understanding of the information provided by the sender (Izzati, Adnan, & Jambari, 2016). In recent years, the rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought about significant changes in practices such as Supply Chain Management (SCM), leading to positive outcomes in equipment management (Biniazi et al., 2011). Communication technologies have demonstrated beneficial effects on the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, prevailing socio-economic conditions within districts often influence preferences for communication technology, thereby shaping its impact on business performance. Communication technologies are increasingly recognized for their pivotal role in fostering local economic growth (Sanchez & Bayona-Oré, 2020). Additionally, effective communication is underpinned by leadership, support from senior management, and conducive working relationships (Navedo-Samper, Ferrer, & Rivera-Ruiz, 2013).

In the current turbulent and fiercely competitive business landscape, simply surviving, let alone achieving success, has emerged as a significant challenge (Bass & Chakrabarty, 2014). At the core of any business strategy lies the imperative to align Information Technology (IT) with overarching business objectives. It is imperative for a company to establish clear business goals and utilize its IT infrastructure to precisely realize these objectives. While a company may invest substantial resources in developing state-of-the-art IT systems or websites, their effectiveness hinges on their alignment with the original business goals. Without this alignment, such investments risk being ineffective, if not entirely futile.

Effective communication of knowledge and information between management and employees plays a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and willingness of employees to engage. This communication is instrumental in driving the success of alignment processes aimed at achieving business goals, while also mitigating resistance from both users of IT services and IT employees. It is essential that intentions and goals are effectively conveyed in a manner that ensures understanding among recipients (Tafti et al., 2019). To foster cooperation, it is imperative that individuals comprehend their roles and the expectations placed upon them. At the operational level, business units must share a unified perspective on the established business

processes designed to fulfill operational objectives, thereby contributing to overarching business goals (Tarhini et al., 2015). It falls upon management to communicate the requisite processes necessary to support specific functions, with IT processes serving as a conduit through which management can facilitate these business processes (Panda & Rath, 2018).

Numerous scholars, such as Luffman (2000) and Poelen; Stamper et al. (2012), have emphasized communication as a vital factor linking IT-business alignment to SMEs' performance. Similarly, researchers like Helaly (2012), Naidoo (2011), Gutierrez et al. (2009), and Sledgianowski & Luftman (2005) have underscored the significance of communication in fostering company success. Given its recurrent mention by various authors, communication stands out as an essential factor. For years, information technologies have been viewed merely as tools for implementing business objectives (Li et al., 2016). However, the growth of information and communication technologies has led to the establishment of dedicated teams and departments focused solely on leading IT projects within enterprises (Baina et al., 2008). The goal of IT strategy is to contribute positively to the development of new business strategies or to enhance existing ones (Schallmo & Brecht, 2016). This is often achieved by exploring various types and scopes of IT systems and capabilities potentially available to the organization. Tighter integration between business and IT offers numerous benefits, including enhanced decision-making and corporate agility (Patterson, 2020).

In today's business landscape, Information Technology (IT) plays a pivotal role in the implementation of companies' strategic plans. It has become imperative for organizations to enhance and streamline their services in order to remain competitive (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011). Ensuring alignment between business strategy and IT strategy is crucial for business users to comprehend how enterprise systems align with business information integration (Sarhandi et al., 2011). IT and Information Systems (IS) are integral to various business processes, including planning, design, analysis, operations management, and strategic decision-making. Alignment entails the judicious and timely utilization of IT resources in accordance with business objectives, strategies, and requirements (Yayla & Hu, 2012). Business and IT alignment is achieved when strategies are seamlessly integrated to ensure that the right actions are taken, leading to greater organizational value. This underscores the importance of a reciprocal relationship between IT and business, where both entities contribute to and benefit from alignment (Infosys, 2012). This study therefore sought to examine the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As noted by Gerow et al. (2015), Luftman& Ben-Zvi (2018), and Orozco et al. (2019), strategic alignment empowers organizations to derive value from substantial investments in Information Technology (IT) and allocate critical IT resources to core areas. This, in turn, enables companies to address business challenges effectively and enhance business value (Chau et al., 2020). However, research conducted on manufacturing and producer companies in Kenya has revealed that although these firms have implemented Information Technology to some extent, their performance has not seen significant improvement (Ellis, 2019; K'Aol, 2018). External factors, such as market conditions and infrastructure limitations, have been identified as contributing to this discrepancy (Johnson, 2014; Akoten et al., 2006; Ellis, 2019).

Despite the acknowledgment that businesses function within both external and internal environments, the internal aspects of the business environment have not received sufficient scrutiny. Particularly underexplored are the dynamics of information technology strategic alignment, including communication, IT governance, value, partnership, technology scope, and skills, and their role in enhancing organizational performance. This gap presents a compelling area for further research (Chou et al., 2015; Yayla& Hu, 2019; Tallon& Kraemer, 2017; Croteau et al., 2017).

Over the past two decades, production firms in Kenya have experienced a decline in performance, as noted by Mwangi (2020). Specifically, the tea industry, which was once the second-largest contributor to the country's GDP, has now been relegated to the third position. Furthermore, its contribution to the GDP has been on a downward trajectory, with the sector's share dwindling over time. Until 2018, the tea sector in Kenya accounted for an average of 60% of foreign exchange earnings, but this figure dropped significantly to 25% (Machuki, 2019). Despite substantial investments in Information Technology (IT) by production firms, only a few studies have demonstrated the desired positive impact (Schwarz et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2012). Consequently, senior management is facing mounting pressure to reduce IT spending while simultaneously enhancing the business value derived from IT investments (Coleman & Chatfield, 2011). Productivity indicators have also pointed to stagnating growth or even slowdowns in productivity at the aggregate level (DeJager, 2015; Almajali&Dahalin, 2011). The tea industry is a significant contributor to Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), accounting for 4% of the total GDP and 15% of the Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (Tea Board of Kenya, 2022). This study therefore sought to assess the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya.

A. General Objective

To examine the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya

➤ Theoretical Framework

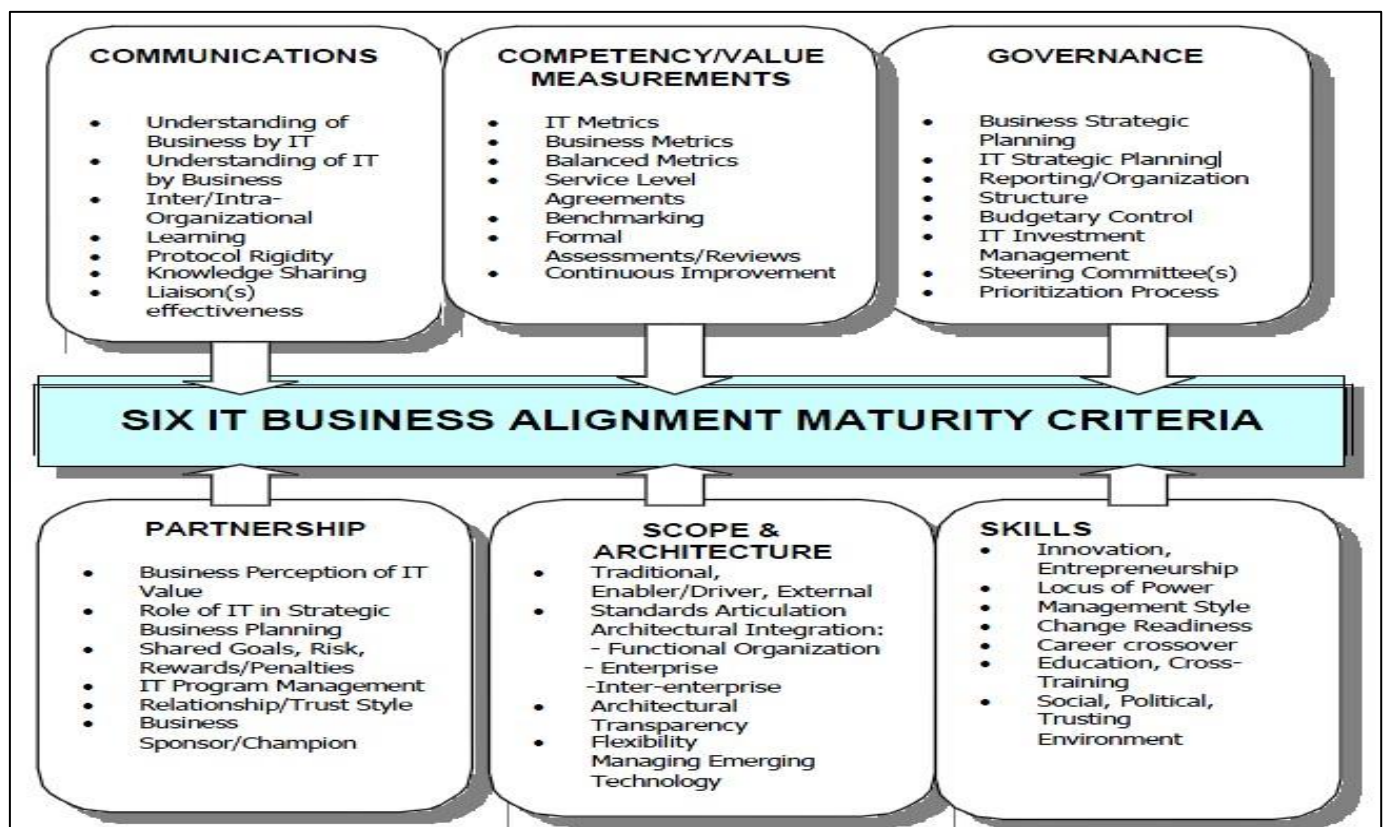


Fig 1: Strategic Alignment Maturity

B. Alignment Maturity Criteria Modle (Luftman J. N 2000)

Several previous studies have scrutinized the validity and practicality of the Strategic Alignment Maturity (SAM) model, consistently affirming its efficacy as a predictor of alignment and firm performance (Luftman and Kempaiah, 2007; El-Masri et al., 2015; Luftman et al. 2017). The SAM model also resonates with Peppard et al.'s (2014) assertion that strategic management research should shift from a macro to a micro focus, emphasizing the day-to-day activities, contexts, processes, and content pertinent to strategic outcomes. Furthermore, Sledgianowski et al. (2006) developed and validated the SAM model to gauge the maturity of IT-business strategic alignment mechanisms, while Chen (2010) conducted cross-validation to assess

company alignment maturity. Additionally, Belfo and Sousa (2013) highlighted SAM as one of the most promising instruments in IT-business alignment research in terms of its validity. The forthcoming study will leverage the six dimensions of Strategic Alignment Maturity to evaluate Information Technology Strategic alignment and investigate its impact on performance.

➤ Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between the independent variable (technology communication) and the dependent variable (firm performance)

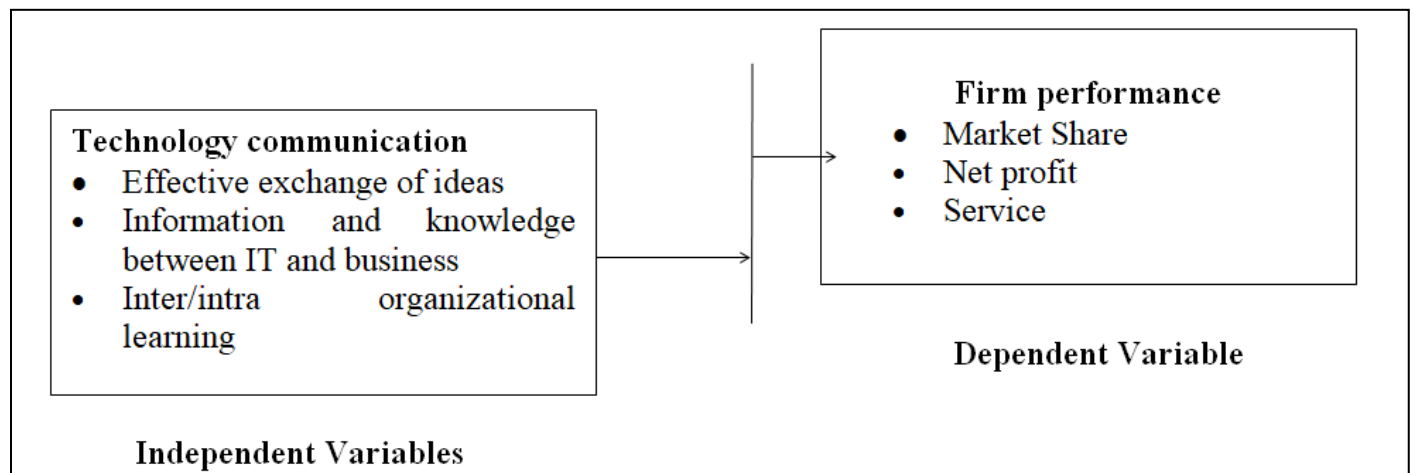


Fig 2: Conceptual Framework

C. Empirical Review

➤ Technology Communication

Communication plays a critical role in facilitating the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and information between IT and business organizations. This exchange enables both entities to comprehend each other's strategies, plans, business and IT environments, risks, and priorities (Bani, 2011). Jerry Luftman's research study in 2004 highlights that for over 20 years, business-IT strategic alignment has consistently ranked as a top management concern. Business and IT executives continually seek best management practices to align their respective strategies. This emphasis on strategic alignment has only intensified over time, as business organizations strive to bridge the gap between business and IT in the face of dynamic business strategies and rapidly evolving technologies (Chebrolu, 2010).

Effective communication is essential for achieving alignment, and its validity hinges on the receiver's understanding of the information conveyed by the sender (Izzati, Adnan, & Jambari, 2016). In recent years, the rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has brought about significant changes, particularly in practices like Supply Chain Management (SCM), where positive outcomes can still be achieved in equipment management (Biniazi et al., 2011). Communication technologies have proven to be

beneficial for the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), particularly considering the prevailing socio-economic conditions that influence technology preferences within districts. These conditions significantly shape the impact of communication technology on business performance, with communication technologies playing a vital role in driving local economic growth (Sanchez & Bayona-Oré, 2020). Furthermore, effective communication encompasses leadership, support from senior management, and fostering good working relationships (Navedo-Samper, Ferrer, & Rivera-Ruiz, 2013).

In the current volatile and fiercely competitive business landscape, merely surviving, let alone achieving success, has emerged as a significant challenge (Bass & Chakrabarty, 2014). The fundamental strategy that every business must adopt is to align Information Technology (IT) with its business goals. It is imperative for companies to establish clear business objectives and utilize their IT systems to precisely accomplish these goals. Even if a company invests substantial resources in building a state-of-the-art IT system or website, it will be ineffective, if not entirely useless, if it does not accurately represent the original business goals.

Effective communication of knowledge and information between management and employees significantly influences employees' attitude and willingness

to participate (Tafti et al., 2019). This communication plays a vital role in achieving alignment with business goals, mitigating resistance from both IT service users and employees, and ensuring that intentions and goals are clearly understood by all recipients. To foster cooperation, it is essential for individuals to comprehend their roles and responsibilities (Tarhini et al., 2015). At the operational level, business units must share a common understanding of the established business processes aimed at achieving operational objectives, thereby contributing to overarching business goals. It is the responsibility of management to effectively communicate the processes required to support specific functions, and through IT processes, management can facilitate the execution of these business processes (Panda & Rath, 2018).

Numerous scholars, including Luffman (2000) and Poelen; Stamper et al. (2012), have underscored communication as a crucial factor linking IT-business alignment to SMEs' performance. Similarly, researchers such as Helaly (2012), Naidoo (2011), Gutierrez et al. (2009), and Sledgianowski & Luftman (2005) have emphasized the pivotal role of communication in driving company success. Communication has been singled out as one of the essential factors due to its critical role, as highlighted by multiple authors. For years, information technologies have primarily been viewed as tools for implementing business objectives (Li, Liu, Belitski, Ghobadian, & O'Regan, 2016). However, the growth of information and communication technologies has necessitated the creation of dedicated teams and departments exclusively focused on leading IT projects within enterprises (Baina et al., 2008). The overarching aim of IT strategy is to contribute positively to the development of new business strategies or to enhance existing ones (Schallmo & Brecht, 2016). This is often achieved by exploring various types and ranges of IT systems and capabilities potentially available to the organization. Tightening the link between business and IT offers numerous benefits, including improved decision-making and corporate agility (Patterson, 2020).

In contemporary business dynamics, Information Technology (IT) plays a pivotal role in executing companies' strategic plans, becoming indispensable for organizations aiming to enhance and streamline their services (Weiss & Thorogood, 2011). The alignment of business strategy and IT strategy is imperative to ensure that business users grasp the coherence of enterprise systems with business information integration (Sarhandi et al., 2011). IT and Information Systems (IS) play crucial roles across various business processes, including planning, design, analysis, operations management, and strategic decision-making. Alignment entails the judicious and timely application of IT in harmony with business objectives, strategies, and requirements (Yayla & Hu, 2012). Achieving alignment involves interweaving the respective strategies of business and IT in a manner that ensures both the right things are done and they are done right, thereby delivering greater value to the organization. Successful alignment is thus depicted as a reciprocal relationship, involving a give and take between IT and business (Infosys,

2012). Communication has been singled out as a critical factor due to its indispensable role, as emphasized by numerous authors. It is considered an essential element for adopting factors of IT-business alignment and ensuring successful integration (Infosys, 2012).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Philosophy

Positivism philosophy guided this study. According to Kothari (2011) positivism philosophy emphasizes the importance of empirical evidence and scientific methods in understanding the world and acquiring knowledge. Positivism holds that knowledge can only be gained through observable facts and phenomena, and that scientific inquiry should be based on objective observation and experimentation rather than subjective interpretation or speculation. Positivism emphasizes the role of empirical observation in acquiring knowledge about the world. It asserts that knowledge should be based on sensory experience and verifiable data obtained through systematic observation and experimentation (Saunders et al. 2009).

B. Research Design

According to Waiganjo (2013), a research design is a detailed plan or framework that outlines the specific methods and procedures to be employed in conducting a research study. It serves as a roadmap for researchers, guiding them through the entire research process from the formulation of research questions to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. This study used cross-sectional survey design. A cross-sectional survey design is a research method used to collect data from a sample of individuals or units at a single point in time. In this design, data is collected from participants at a specific moment, providing a snapshot of the population's characteristics, opinions, or behaviors at that particular time (Creswell, 2014).

Cross-sectional surveys are often quicker and more cost-effective compared to longitudinal or experimental designs, as they require data to be collected only once from each participant. This efficiency allows researchers to gather data from a large sample of individuals or units within a relatively short period of time. Cross-sectional surveys provide a snapshot of the characteristics, opinions, or behaviors of a population at a specific point in time. This allows researchers to assess the prevalence of certain traits or phenomena within the population and identify patterns or trends (Saunders, 2013; Theuri 2015).

C. Target Population

A target population is defined as a collective of events, individuals, or items sharing a distinct common characteristic (Kothari, 2012). In this study, the target population was identified as tea producer companies that are members of the East Africa Tea Trade Association (EATTA) in Kenya. This choice was made on the premise that these entities are likely to possess pertinent and accurate information relevant to the research. Specifically, the population encompassed all 29 tea producer members of EATTA. Within this population, the focus was on top

managers, given their pivotal role in strategic management within organizations. Accordingly, the respondents' population was delineated as comprising six top managers from each organization, resulting in a total of 174 top managers included in the study.

D. Sampling Frame

A sampling frame is a list or an enumeration of all the elements or units in a population from which a sample is to be drawn (Ng'ethe, 2013). It essentially serves as the basis for selecting a sample that represents the entire population accurately. The sampling frame should ideally cover every member of the population without any omissions or duplications, ensuring that every individual or element has an equal chance of being selected for the sample (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). The sampling frame for this study consisted of a list of all 29 tea producers EATTA members from Kenya shown in Appendix IV.

E. Sample Size

A sample is a subset of the population of interest (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Respondents' population comprised of six top managers from each organization translating to 174 top managers. The top managers were targeted because top managers of organizations mostly handle strategic management issues. Slovin's formula (1960) was applied as illustrated:

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2),$$

Where;

n = Sample Size

N = Total Population

e = Error of Tolerance with a confidence level of 95 % (giving a margin error of 0.05)

$$n = 174 / (1 + 174 * 0.05^2) = 121$$

Hence, the sample size was 121.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select top managers of the 29 tea producers company. According to Bryman (2012) purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, is a non-probabilistic sampling technique where researchers deliberately choose specific individuals, groups, or elements from a population based on predefined criteria or their expert judgment.

F. Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized a comprehensive questionnaire featuring a diverse range of questions designed for respondents to address. Additionally, secondary sources were leveraged to both shape problem formulations and identify potential avenues for further research. This approach enabled the researcher to pinpoint issues and identify gaps within the existing literature across various segments within the research area.

Secondary data encompassed an evaluation of findings from primary data collection efforts conducted by other researchers, sourced from a wide array of mediums including company annual reports, technical manuals,

governmental and trade publications, as well as books and journals. Notably, this study drew upon resources from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to access up-to-date and credible data on tea production, consumption, volume, and trade. Furthermore, it referenced literature concerning Information Technology strategic alignment and firm performance to enrich the research framework.

G. Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to assess the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Participants in the pilot study were distinct from those involved in the final research to mitigate potential research fatigue and response bias. The questionnaire was administered to three senior managers from each of four tea producer companies, selected randomly from the 29 member companies of the EATTA in Kenya, totaling twelve top managers. This sample size represents 10% of the intended study sample. The decision to involve 10% of the sample size in the pilot study aligns with Kothari's (2014) recommendation of selecting a sample size ranging between 10% and 20% for such preliminary investigations. The selection of companies was randomized to ensure a fair representation within the pilot study group.

H. Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis can be performed on structured or unstructured data and may involve descriptive statistics to summarize and visualize data, as well as inferential statistics to make predictions or test hypotheses. The ultimate aim of data analysis is to extract actionable insights and knowledge from data, leading to informed decisions and improved understanding of the underlying phenomena. This study used both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics for data analysis. This was done with the help of (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics entailed frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. On the other hand, inferential statistics entailed correlation and regression analysis.

This study conducted tests for normality, autocorrelation, and multicollinearity. The normality test aimed to determine whether the collected data used in the analysis exhibited a normal distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed for this purpose. According to Hair et al. (2006), normality represents a fundamental assumption in multivariate analysis. It pertains to the shape of the distribution of individual metric variables and their adherence to the normal distribution, which serves as the standard for statistical methods. The assumption of normality is crucial in the estimation process, as highlighted by Bai (2005).

In addition to testing for normality, the study also conducted examinations for autocorrelation to gauge the correlation between independent variables and assess their collective impact. Multicollinearity was evaluated through measures such as the Variance Inflating Factor (VIF) and Tolerance. Utilizing a multiple regression model, the study sought to determine the significance of predictor variables in influencing the dependent variable. This approach has been

previously employed by Valipour et al. (2012) in their examination of the impact of cost leadership and product differentiation strategies on firm performance in India, as well as by Pawaskar (2009) to test hypotheses regarding diversification and performance improvement in Malaysian firms. Furthermore, the study showcased regression results elucidating the relationship between Technology Communications and IT Skills performance within the tea production sector.

IV. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

A. Descriptive Statistics Analysis

➤ Technology Communication and Firm Performance

The objective of the study was to establish the role of Technology Communication on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to Technology Communication and performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. A 5 point Likert scale was used where 1 symbolized strongly disagree, 2 symbolized disagree, 3 symbolized neutral, 4 symbolized agree and 5 symbolized strongly agree. The results were as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Technology Communication and Firm Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
IT understands the organization's business environment (e.g., its customers, competitors, processes, partners/alliances)	3.983	0.981
Business departments understands the IT environment (e.g., its current and potential capabilities, systems, services, processes)	3.966	0.850
Organizational learning occurs through formal, unifying, bonding methods, with feedback measures to monitor and promote effectiveness of learning	3.931	0.914
There is formal knowledge sharing at the functional unit level, at the corporate level, and with business partners/alliances	3.896	0.947
We regularly use liaisons to facilitate the transfer of IT knowledge to the business and external partners and business knowledge to IT.	3.889	0.856
There is better coordination and integration of information flow and activities within and/or between firm boundaries	3.841	0.911
We have improved communication and productivity between the business and IT department.	3.798	0.830
There is an effective exchange of ideas	3.753	0.912
Aggregate	3.788	0.873

From the results, the respondents agreed that IT understands the organization's business environment (e.g., its customers, competitors, processes, partners/alliances)(M=3.983 SD = 0.981). In addition, the respondents agreed that business departments understands the IT environment (e.g., its current and potential capabilities, systems, services, processes)(M=3.966, SD = 0.850). Further, the respondents agreed that organizational learning occurs through formal, unifying, bonding methods, with feedback measures to monitor and promote effectiveness of learning(M=3.931,SD = 0.914).

The respondents also agreed that there is formal knowledge sharing at the functional unit level, at the corporate level, and with business partners/alliances(M=3.896,SD = 0.947). Further, the respondents agreed that they regularly use liaisons to facilitate the transfer of IT knowledge to the business and external partners and business knowledge to IT(M=3.889, SD = 0.856).

From the results, the respondents agreed that there is better coordination and integration of information flow and activities within and/or between firm boundaries(M=3.841, SD = 0.911). In addition, the respondents agreed that they

have improved communication and productivity between the business and IT department (M=3.798, SD = 0.830). Further, the respondents agreed that there is an effective exchange of ideas(M=3.753, SD = 0.912).

Numerous scholars, including Luffman (2000) and Poelen; Stamper et al. (2012), have underscored communication as a vital factor linking IT-business alignment and SME performance. Others, such as Helaly (2012), Naidoo (2011), Gutierrez et al. (2009), and Sledgianowski & Luftman (2005), have similarly emphasized the role of communication in fostering organizational success. This consensus has led to the inclusion of communication as a key factor due to its recurrent endorsement by various authors.

Traditionally, information technologies have been viewed as tools for executing business objectives (Li, Liu, Belitski, Ghobadian, & O'Regan, 2016). However, the proliferation of information and communication technologies has necessitated the establishment of specialized teams and departments dedicated to overseeing IT projects within enterprises (Baina et al., 2008). The overarching aim of IT strategy is to contribute positively to

the formulation of new business strategies or enhance the support for existing ones (Schallmo& Brecht, 2016).

Effective communication is crucial for alignment, and its validity hinges on the recipient's comprehension of the sender's message (Izzati, Adnan, &Jambari, 2016). Communication technologies have been shown to enhance the success of SMEs, with the prevailing socio-economic conditions often influencing technology preferences and shaping the impact of communication technologies on business performance. Rufai (2014) suggests that communication technologies play a significant role in

driving local economic growth. In the realm of management, it is incumbent upon leaders to communicate the processes necessary to support specific functions, and IT processes management plays a pivotal role in facilitating these business processes (Panda &Rath, 2018).

B. Performance of Tea Producers Companies in Kenya

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Performance of Tea Producers Companies in Kenya

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has improved quality of service	3.996	0.865
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has Improved production efficiency	3.979	0.945
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has improve processes in the company	3.938	0.611
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has led to new Product development	3.931	0.908
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has reduced pricing of products and Cost of operation	3.893	0.865
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has led to product diversification	3.854	0.945
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has enhanced product differentiation	3.795	0.661
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has introduced new markets	3.754	0.918
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has improved Image and client loyalty	3.689	0.852
Information Technology Strategic Alignment has increased sales growth	3.654	0.915
Aggregate	3.772	0.841

From the results, the respondents agreed that information technology strategic alignment has improved quality of service (M=3.996, SD = 0.865). In addition, the respondents agreed that information technology strategic alignment has Improved production efficiency(M=3.979, SD = 0.945). The respondents also agreed that information technology strategic alignment has improved processes in the company(M=3.938, SD = 0.611). The respondents agreed that information technology strategic alignment has led to new Product development(M=3.931, SD = 0.908).

From the results, the respondents agreed that information technology strategic alignment has reduced pricing of products and Cost of operation(M=3.893, SD = 0.865).In addition, the respondents agreed that information technology strategic alignment has led to product diversification (M=3.854, SD = 0.945). The respondents also agreed that IT Strategic Alignment has enhanced product differentiation (M=3.795, SD = 0.661). Further, the respondents agreed that IT Strategic Alignment has introduced new markets(M=3.754, SD = 0.918). The respondents agreed that IT Strategic Alignment has improved Image and client loyalty(M=3.689, SD = 0.852).The respondents agreed that IT Strategic Alignment has increased sales growth(M=3.654, SD = 0.915).

Several scholars have highlighted the pivotal role of strategic alignment between Information Technology (IT) and business objectives in shaping firm performance. Henderson and Venkatraman (1991 & 1993) argue that optimizing IT operational effectiveness and aligning IT services with business needs can significantly impact a firm's performance. Studies by Floyd and Woolridge (1990),

Powell (1992), Chan et al. (1997), and Cragg et al. (2002) support this notion, indicating that strategic IT alignment can lead to enhanced profitability beyond industry norms and strategic variables alone.

Research has identified numerous benefits of strategic alignment, including heightened operational efficiencies, increased innovation, competitive advantage, and overall improved performance (Almajali&Dahalin, 2011; Chan, Sabherwal, & Thatcher, 2006; Henderson &Venkatraman, 1993; Kalkan et al., 2011; Raymond & Bergeron, 2008; Wagner, 2014). Conversely, failure to achieve alignment may result in adverse consequences such as resource inefficiency, diminished financial performance, and organizational setbacks (Alaceva&Rusu, 2015; Chen et al., 2010; Ravishankar et al., 2011).

Sabherwal and Chan (2001) observed a significant correlation between alignment and perceived business performance, although they noted that this relationship is contingent upon business strategy. Tallon (2003) found that while 70% of companies experienced cost reductions or improved sales and customer service after enhancing strategic alignment, 30% saw no improvement or even a decline. This discrepancy was attributed to the inflexibility of alignment plans, which hindered adaptability to change. Similarly, Palmer and Markus (2000) found no clear relationship between alignment and performance when studying the adoption of Quick Response technology in the retail sector.

Critics argue that these ambiguous or negative findings may stem from inadequate control variables in the analyses. Chan et al. (2006) highlighted the impact of factors such as industry, organizational size, and strategic approach on the performance outcomes of alignment. Byrd et al. (2006)

discovered that strategic alignment serves as a moderator between IT investment and business performance, emphasizing its role in optimizing the value of IT investments for firms.

C. Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients

		Organization Performance	Technology Communication
Organization Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	116	
Technology Communication	Pearson Correlation	.910**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	116	116

The results revealed that there was a very strong relationship between Technology Communication and performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya ($r = 0.910$, p value $= 0.000$). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the results of Izzati, Adnan, and Jambari, (2016) who revealed that there is a very strong relationship between Technology Communication and organization performance

D. Test for Hypothesis One

The objective of the study was to find out Technology Communication has no significant role on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. The corresponding hypothesis was:

H_{01} : Technology Communication has no significant role on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya.

Table 4: Model Summary for Technology Communication

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.471 ^a	.222	.219	.70542

a. Predictors: (Constant), Technology Communication

A univariate analysis was therefore conducted to test the null hypothesis. From the model summary findings in Table 4, the r -squared for the relationship between Technology Communication and performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya was 0.222 ; this is an indication that at 95% confidence interval, 22.2% variation in performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya can be attributed to changes in Technology Communication.

Therefore, Technology Communication can be used to explain 22.2% change in performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. However, the remaining 77.8% variation in performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya suggests that there are other factors other than Technology Communication that explain performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya.

Table 5: ANOVA for Technology Communication

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	42.179	1	42.179	225.55	.000 ^b
Residual	21.311	114	.187		
Total	63.49	115			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya

b. Predictors: (Constant), Technology Communication

The analysis of variance was used to determine whether the regression model is a good fit for the data. From the analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings in Table 4.25, the study found out that that $\text{Prob} > F_{1,131} = 0.000$ was less than the selected 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that the model as constituted was fit to predict performance

of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. Further, the F -calculated, from the table (225.55) was greater than the F -critical, from f -distribution tables (3.924) supporting the findings that Technology Communication can be used to predict performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya.

Table 6: Beta Coefficients for Technology Communication

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.142	.035	4.0571	.000
	Technology Communication	.411	.094	4.372	.000

a. Dependent Variable: performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya

From the results in table 6, the following regression model was fitted.

$$Y = 0.142 + 0.411 X_4$$

(X_4 is Technology Communication)

The coefficient results showed that the constant had a coefficient of 0.142 suggesting that if Technology Communication was held constant at zero, performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya would be at 0.142 units. In addition, results showed that Technology Communication coefficient was 0.411 indicating that a unit increase in Technology Communication would result in a 0.411 unit improvement in performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. It was also noted that the P-value for Technology Communication was 0.000 which is less than the set 0.05 significance level indicating that Technology Communication was significant. Based on these results, the study rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative that Technology Communication has positive significant influence on performance of TeSa Producers companies in Kenya.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

The study concludes that Technology Communication has a positive and statistically significant influence on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. Findings revealed that effective exchange of ideas, information and knowledge between IT and business and inter/intra organizational learning influences performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. This implies that a unit improvement in Technology Communication would lead to improvement in performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya.

B. Recommendations

The study found that Technology Communication has a positive and statistically significant influence on performance of Tea Producers companies in Kenya. This study therefore recommends that the management of tea Producer companies should embrace effective exchange of ideas, information and knowledge between IT and business and inter/intra organizational learning to enhance performance.

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