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The Role of Strategic Evaluation and Control in SME Performance: Lessons from Empirical Evidence in Kabwe District

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of strategic evaluation and control (SEC) in the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kabwe District, Zambia. Based on the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), the research explores how SMEs assess and adjust their strategies over time to align with internal and external environmental changes. A mixed-methods approach was employed, collecting quantitative data from 202 SME owners and managers through structured questionnaires and qualitative data via semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that strategic evaluation and control positively affect SME performance, particularly in terms of sales, profits, and customer satisfaction. However, qualitative findings indicate inconsistencies and a lack of structured frameworks in implementing evaluation and control processes. The study recommends enhanced training, collaboration, and access to financial resources to improve the strategy evaluation and control mechanisms within SMEs in Kabwe District.

Keywords: Strategic evaluation and control, SMEs, performance, Resource-Based Theory, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Kabwe District

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to this research

Kaponda et al. (2023:651) contended that, "efficient and effective business processes are the lifeblood of successful organizations." Mwange et al. (2022) went to opine that, to remain competitive and meet evolving customer demands, businesses must continuously evaluate, improve, and redesign their processes. In that vein, the studies by Kaponda et al. (2023), and Mwange et al.(2022) though explicit about strategy evaluation and control, are a pinnacle in spearheading a narrative that organizations herewith cited as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), that do not control and evaluate their businesses are likely to yield downward performance, a similar view also held by Bredfeldt et al. (2014) and Dubihlela & Sandada, (2014).

In view of the foregoing, the fourth stage of strategic management process is conceptualized as Strategic Evaluation and Control, (Ahmed & Mukhongo, 2017). Conceptually, Ali & Qun, (2019) advanced that, strategic evaluation and control is based on theoretical underpin that Environmental Scanning/Analysis, strategy formulation or implementation are not a once-and for-all-time task since even the best formulated and implemented strategies can become obsolete as circumstances could arise within a firm's external and internal environments, (Bredfeldt et al. 2014; Dubihlela & Sandada, 2014; Elshamly, 2013) that can necessitate corrective adjustments on strategies already planned, a view also held by many other scholars, (Maroa & Muturi, 2015; Monday et al, 2015; Muogbo, 2013; Onwe, 2014; Popa & Brito, 2012; Tunji, 2013). Managers urgently need to understand when specific strategies are not functioning as required and strategy evaluation is the essential means for getting this information, (Mutambo et al., 2022). This is because, as stated in Muriithi, (2017), the implementation and control initiatives undertaken are the significant aspects of an effective strategic management practices for corporations. It is vital to any organization's well-being, most especially if timely as it can alert management to likely situations before they become critical (Lawal, et al., 2012; Williams et al. 2019).

Further, Ahmed & Mukhongo (2017), Hieu and Nwachukwu (2019:43) contended stated that none of strategy formulation or implementation is not a once-and for-all-time task since even the best formulated and implemented strategies can become obsolete as circumstances could arise within a firm's external and internal environments that can necessitate corrective adjustments on strategies already planned. A well-developed strategy coupled with proper execution is crucial for an organization to remain competitive in its environment and make growth of the firms certain, (Tunji, 2013; Hunger & Wheelen, 2011).

Underpinned by the Resource Based Theory (RBT) which stresses the vitality of resources both tangible and intangible in the running of organizations, (Hillman et al., 2009; Banda, M., and Mwange, 2023), and the Dynamics Capabilities Theory (DCT) which invigorates the cardinance of the external environmental in the functionality of the businesses, (Teece, 2016; Teece et al. 2016; Teece, 2018; Samsudin & Ismail, 2019), herewith conceptualized as SMEs, this paper investigated the critical role of Strategic Evaluation and Control in SME Performance with lessons from Kabwe District, Zambia. The study was premised against the backdrop that Zambian SMEs, especially those in central jurisdiction, Kabwe district, continue to face devastating ramifications in operations, (Mwaanga et al. 2021; Ministry of Commerce Trade and Industry, 2020; Mukosa et al. 2020; Mwaanga et al. 2020; Mwewa, 2018; Mwika et al. 2018).

1.2 Objectives

1. To investigate the duration of assessment of the SMEs objectives, goals, and aims in Kabwe District, Zambia.
2. To explore the extent of performance in terms of sales, profits, customer and employee satisfaction satisfactions among SMEs in Kabwe District, Zambia.

2. Literature Review

The success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) hinges on their ability to adapt and thrive within dynamic and competitive environments. Strategic management, a framework encompassing strategic formulation, implementation, and evaluation, plays a pivotal role in guiding SMEs towards sustainable growth. This literature review delves into the multifaceted relationship between strategic evaluation and control and SME performance, examining empirical evidence from diverse geographical contexts.

2.1. The Significance of Strategic Evaluation and Control for SME Success

Strategic evaluation and control, the processes of assessing the effectiveness of strategic decisions and monitoring progress towards achieving strategic goals, are fundamental to ensuring that SMEs remain on track and achieve desired outcomes. By evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies, SMEs can identify areas for improvement, adjust their course of action, and maximize their chances of achieving success (Adudu et al., 2022; Bassey & Isayas, 2022; Okwemba & Njuguna, 2021). Studies across various regions provide compelling evidence of the positive relationship between strategic evaluation and control and SME performance. Ruzindana and Irechukwu (2023) in Rwanda found that effective strategic formulation significantly contributes to the sustainability of SMEs in the processing and manufacturing sector. Similarly, Adudu et al. (2022) in Nigeria demonstrated that strategy evaluation consistency, suitability, feasibility, and acceptability positively influence the performance of SMEs. Aliyu et al. (2022) in Nigeria found a direct correlation between strategy evaluation and performance, indicating a 9.6% increase in performance for every 1% increase in strategy evaluation.

Furthermore, studies from Norway by Olsen & Berg (2022) and Johansen & Olsen (2020) revealed a positive impact of strategy evaluation and control on SME performance, with the relationship moderated by firm size and industry. Okwemba & Njuguna (2021) in Kenya identified a strong positive correlation between strategy evaluation and performance in the Chemelil Sugar Company, emphasizing the practical relevance of this relationship.

Beyond the studies cited above, studies in developing countries such as Bangladesh (Mohammad & Wang, 2019) and Ghana (Alex & Agyei, 2021) underscore the significance of strategic evaluation and control for driving SME growth and contributing to economic development.

2.2. Challenges and Contradictions in the Relationship

While numerous studies highlight the positive impact of strategic evaluation and control, certain research findings suggest a more nuanced relationship. Alex and Agyei (2021) in Ghana found a negative relationship between strategy evaluation and SME growth. Bassey & Isayas (2022) in Nigeria acknowledged the significant impact of strategy evaluation but noted that many SMEs evaluate their strategies ineffectively, hindering their ability to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. These contradictory findings highlight the need for further investigation into the factors influencing the effectiveness of strategic evaluation and control.

2.3. The Interplay of Strategic Evaluation and Control with Other Strategic Management Practices

Strategic evaluation and control are not isolated processes but are interconnected with other strategic management practices, such as strategic formulation and implementation. The effectiveness of strategic evaluation is contingent upon the quality of strategic formulation and the successful implementation of strategic plans (Ruzindana & Irechukwu, 2023). In conclusion, the extensive body of literature reviewed clearly highlights the importance of strategic evaluation and control as a vital element for SME success. By systematically evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of their strategies, SMEs can make informed decisions, adapt to changing circumstances, and maximize their chances of achieving sustainable growth. However, the implementation of effective strategic evaluation and control requires a holistic approach that encompasses organizational culture, leadership commitment, resource allocation, data quality, and a continuous learning mindset. By embracing these principles and implementing practical recommendations, SMEs can transform strategic evaluation and control into a powerful engine driving performance and sustained success.

3. Methodology

Underpinned by the delineation of Epistemological thought which is the nature, sources of knowledge or facts, (Creswell, 2015, Saunders, 2019), the study was invigorated in the realm of the pragmatic philosophy herewith the consequences of actions, (Dudovskiy, 2018; Dawadi et al., 2021; Saunders et al. 2016; Muzata, 2017). Additionally, Deductive (Testing), (Murphy et al., 2014; Muzata, 2017), and Inductive (Theory), Muzata (2017) were applied. Compounded by concurrently presentation, (Muzata, 2017, Creswell, 2015, Creswell, 2014a), the researcher applied both Explanatory-Relationships and Effect, (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Boyd & Casper, 2021) and, Exploratory-In-depth Investigation, (Creswell, 2014) generated within the domain of descriptive case study (Brondy, 2020; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2019). The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formulation, (Rosner, 2016), which produced; $n = N/(1+Ne^2) = 500/1+500(0.05^2) = 220$; n thus, approximated sample was 220 SMEs though 202 was determined as the final sample size through response rate. Furthermore, data was obtained via Likert Scale Questionnaire, and Semi-Structured Interview Guide and analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in IBM. SPSS version 27 and IBM SPSS AMOS version 23, (Mwansa et al. 2022; Mwaanga, 2022; Hair et al, 2006; Hair, 2010; Kenny, 2020), for quantitative data and Directed Content Analysis (DCA), (Shawa 2021) for qualitative data.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

An evaluation of SEC1 asserts that the majority of the participants (78.7 %) agreed while the minority (0.5%) disagreed. Findings from SEC3 showed that the majority (71.3%) of the participants agreed while a few (8.4%) were undecided. SEC 4 showed that 71.8% agreed while 1.0% disagreed. SEC5 elucidated that the majority of the participants (75.7%) agreed while 4.0% were undecided. In the last indicator, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents agreed (69.3%) agreed while the minority (0.5%) disagreed. SEC6 revealed that 69.3% agreed while, 0.5% disagreed. The findings thus showed significantly that the SMEs conduced strategy evaluation and control of strategies in their business operations.

4.2. Structural Equation Modelling

This report presents a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the findings from the survey of SMEs in Kabwe District, Zambia. The CFA aimed to test a hypothesized model of underlying factors influencing SME performance, based on the seven measured indicators (KSF_SI5, KSF_SI5, KSF_S7, KSF_SI8) provided. The results showed that Factor Loadings of SEC2, p=0.726, p=1.0; SEC3, p=0.671, p=1.0; SEC4,p=0.846, p=1.0; SEC5, p=0.817, p=1.0; SEC6, p=0.848, p=1.0 depicting a good correlation of between key success factors in strategy and the performance of SMEs as espoused by Hair et al. (2010), Child (2006), suggesting a strong relationship between strategy control and evaluation and the indicators in the study. Additionally, the mode Fit saw indices with acceptable fit to excellent across generally indicated by CMIN/Df chi2 (X^2) $p< 3$ (1.689); RMSEA, $p< 1$, (0.059); Pclose, $p>0.05$, 0.030; CFI, $p\geq 0.09$, 0.914; TLI, $p\geq 0.09$, 0.901; IFI, $p\geq 0.09$, 0.916; PCFI, $p\geq 0.50$, 0.791; PNFI, $p\geq 0.50$, 0.706; AGFI, $p\geq 0.50$, 0.784; SRMR, $p<0.08$, 063. Generally, the CFA provide valuable insights into validity and reliability of research findings underlying factors influencing SME performance in Kabwe.

4.3. Qualitative findings

How often SMEs assessed the Effectiveness of their Strategies in achieving Organizational Objectives and Goals

A review of the findings reveals a myriad of patterns. Accordingly, the results indicated that the majority of the respondents assessed the effectiveness of their strategies on a Monthly basis 46. This was followed by 39 who could not state the period but acclaimed that they did so regularly. On the other hand, 30 revealed that they conducted strategy evaluation and control on a Quarterly basis. Additionally, a handful of SMEs promulgated that they evaluated and controlled their strategies Daily, Weekly, Annually or sometimes while 13 could not give a duration. Deductively, it could be concluded that the majority of SMEs assessed the effectiveness of the strategies on a Monthly basis which stood at 24 response rate. In that vein, these findings are supported by P59, P74, P78, P95 who posited that:

> *"Daily, potently because we are confronted by competition" (P59)*

"Monthly basis" (P74)
"Daily and weekly and even monthly" (P78)
"Quarterly" (P95)

An analysis of the findings epitomized that the majority of SMEs conducted the assessment of their strategies on a monthly basis representing 46, quarterly 5, annually 30. In that vein, these findings are significant in the context that strategy evaluation is a process that can be done over a period of monthly, quarterly to annually to be conducted over a period of time. Whereas these findings are significant, they are in minority. Most of the respondents responded daily, weekly, sometimes, regularly, a period that is limited to assess the effectiveness of the strategies. In general, most of the SMEs did not understand the process of strategy evaluation and control.

Involvement in Strategy Evaluation and Control in SMEs in Kabwe District

An analysis of the findings reveals that in the majority of the SMEs, Managers (70) were at the helm of evaluation and control. In the same vein, and this was followed by (59) of the SMEs where the Manager and Employees were involved. In this context, it was found that Owners and Stakeholders had less involvement in the strategy evaluation and control. Specifically, these findings are supported by P15, P86, P, P92, P19, P34 who opined that:

"The chief executive officer and top management" (P87)
"Immediate managers and drivers" (P92)
"Owner and employees" (P34)
"All workers" (P19)
"Manager" (P15)
"Owner" (P86)

An examination of the findings propagates that in the majority of the SMEs, Managers 37.8% were at the helm of evaluation and control in 31.9% of the SMEs, he Manager and Employees were involved. Generally, this finding is significant as it provides a baseline on the nature and discourse of strategy evaluation and control in SMEs. In literal interpretation, managers and employees are central in designing the course of actions for an organization hence their involvement in the evaluation and control of the strategies is central as they understand the undertones of the business in terms of process and what lagging behind. However, an evaluation of the statistics invigorates that in most of the SMEs, (as the participation of employees and managers collectively is less than 50%) reveals that the participants did not fully understand the gist of the nature and discourse of strategy evaluation and control in most of the SMEs.

Activities involved in strategy evaluation and control in SMEs in Kabwe District

The findings indicated that the SMEs reviewed Sales Reports, Cash Flow, Profits, Strategies and Performance against expected outcome. These are explained and exemplified below.

Sales Reports Review

The participants indicated they reviewed sales on a timely basis which ranged from monthly to quarterly. This was evidenced by P55, P17, P35, P40, P64, and P184 who promulgated that:

"Monthly, quarterly and annually review of the sales reports" (P55)
"Checking quarterly sales, restocking new products" (P17)
"Reviewing our monthly reports about the sales….. (P35)
"Quarterly sales report review" (P40)
"Sales reports assessments" (P64)
"Monthly sales report review" (P84)

Cash Flow Review

In the same vein, the findings further revealed that SMEs assessed the cash flow on a timely basis. In light of that, the participants asserted that they review expected income through sales over a period of time. This was in congruent with P32, P67 who asserted that:

"Expected income review for a period of time" (P32)
"Cash flow review and expenses" (P67)

Profits Review

The findings further indicated the SMEs reviewed the profits released in conformity with realized income against expected profits. This was advanced by P53, P11 who radiated that:

"Look at our anticipated profits" (P53)
"Checking on the profits" (P11)

Strategies Review

The participant went on to assert that they looked at the performance of the laydown strategies. In line with that, they discarded strategies that were not contributing to the growth of their SME and replaced them with new ones at an interval. This was done after comparing results obtained against expected outcome. In line with that, P9, P12, P29, P51, P79 who propagated that:

"We look at what is working for us or not by brainstorming as a business" (P9)

"We conduct comparison with the set or expected results e.g planned results to the actual results scored" (P12)

"Compare expected results with actual results, take corrective actions to ensure that performance conform to plans" (P29)

"We look at areas where we are performing below pace and change the mode of operation. If workers are a challenge to work, we look at these issues" (P51)

"We review monthly, weekly and annually performance and make adjustments" (P54)

"Looking at where we are, looking behind like reviewing the brands e.g if in a month we stock, we compare monthly" (P79)

Performance Review

In this context, the findings indicated that participants reviewed the performance through the assessment of business by having meetings with the employees on a timely basis. These meetings were meant to discuss the performance of the departments within the SMEs and to check the contribution of the employees to the growth of the SMEs. In line with that, P19, P22, P42, P52 expounded that:

"Timely/periodic business performance review" (P19)

"Reviewing working objectives, reviewing sales performance and reviewing which products are on demand for restocking" (P22)

"PTA meetings, open days, and departmental meetings" (P42)

"We often have meetings to discuss the performance of our business. We examine our strategies that borders on marketing" (P59)

An analysis of the findings promulgated that SMEs evaluated and controlled Sales Reports, Cash Flow, Profits, Strategies and Performance against expected outcome. In this context, the participants asserted that a review of these business activities resonated evaluation and control. However, valid as the activities maybe, the findings indicated that they were narrowly propagated among the SMEs, an indication that majority of the SMEs failed to conceptualize the activities that were involved in strategy evaluation and control. Furthermore, despite having a consortium of activities herewith cited, the general perspective was that these activities were not exemplified to indicate the exact process that permeated evaluation and control. By design, the study found that the participants were merely commenting on the activities involved in strategy evaluation and control in their SMEs.

How SMEs measured the effectiveness of strategy evaluation and control in Kabwe District

The findings indicated that SMEs measured the effectiveness of strategy evaluation and control through, Customer Feedback; Profits; Customer Satisfaction; Sales; and, Customer Retention. This is explained in subsections below.

Customer Feedback

Customer feedback was found to be a great source of data for strategy evaluation and control. Accordingly, the participants asserted that the information provided by the customers on the goods and services provide gave them (SMEs) an insight to control and evaluate the performance of their SMEs. This was verified by P1, P71, P17 who reiterated that:

"We rely on feedback from our clients who are major stakeholders by checking our progress and where we are lagging behind" (P1)

"Pass rates, good pupil performance academically, parent feedback" (171)

"......................feedback and also alumni impact in society" (P17)

Profits

According to the respondents, the more income they realized provided a consortium of data to understand the performance of their SMEs. Thus, P79, P8, P32, P57, espoused that:

"When you make profits, you are able to tell that there is a progress in the business strategy" (P79)

"Through profits" (P8)

"Through income generation" (P32)

"Through profits" (P57)

Customer Satisfaction

Similarly, customer satisfaction was cited to be commensurate with the effectiveness of strategic evaluation. This was advanced by P68, P34:

"Through customer satisfaction....." (P68)

"Clientele satisfaction" (P34)

Sales

The more sales the SMEs they had, the more they asserted the effectiveness of strategic evaluation and control. According to the respondents (P15, P28, P85), sales promulgated the success of the SME thus they disseminated that:

"......through increased sales" (P15)

"When we have more sales" (P28)

"We look at the monthly sales" (P85)

Customer Retention

In the similar vein, the findings indicated that customer retention was consisted with the effectiveness of strategic evaluation and control. In light of that, P46, P51, P99, posited that:

"More customers" (P46)
"When we have more customers" (P51)
"Through high enrolments due to pupil pass rates" (P99)

An analysis of the findings propagated that SMEs measured the effectiveness of Strategy Evaluation and control through Customer Feedback, Profits, Customer Satisfaction, Sales and Customer Retention. By design the findings deduced that a positive significance of the measurement of strategy evaluation and control because once the process is conducted in an SME, it viable that such SMEs should see the fruits through business growth indicators herewith cited. While these findings are significant, they are in minority on one hand and on the hand, they lack practical inferences. By design, the respondents were not complicit to exemplify the extent to which such measurement of strategy control and evaluation were effective by way of giving the actual occurrences or rather experiences in their SMEs. The researcher takes the narrative that respondents were merely commenting academically.

Marketing and advertising

The employees were cited to be directly involved in marketing the SMEs brand and products. Employees engaged in marketing activities, when empowered to participate in developing and executing strategies, will feel a sense of ownership over the brand and its success. This ownership fosters innovative thinking and a greater commitment to achieving marketing goals. The participants elucidated that they involved their employees in advertising the SMEs products. Involving employees in the creative process of advertising campaigns allows them to feel invested in the outcome. This fosters a sense of ownership over the brand's message and resonates with the audience, leading to more effective advertising strategies. According to the RBT, Employees with expertise in strategic advertising, creative design, and media targeting contribute to the development of effective campaigns that resonate with the target audience. This specialized knowledge becomes a valuable resource for building brand awareness and generating sales.

.........They are also involved in marketing, (Participant 1)
We are involved in varied energies thus our employees are involved in advertising, ... the market, (Participant 17).
.........Marketing of the products of the SME, (Participant 57)
.... marketing of the fish and fish products...... (Participant 63)
.... also marketing of the SME products....(Participant 89)
........Marketing ...... of our plan. They are central in delivery of operation plan, (Participant 95)

4.4. Discussion

The Puzzle: Contradictory Findings and the Need for Deeper Understanding

At the heart of the study lies a seemingly contradictory set of findings. A statistically significant relationship exists between strategy evaluation and control and SME performance. The majority of respondents agree, and a minority strongly agree, that these practices contribute to their success, the findings which are supported by literature which envisaged that, by evaluating the effectiveness of chosen strategies, SMEs can identify areas for improvement, adjust their course of action, and maximize their chances of achieving success (Adudu et al., 2022; Bassey & Isayas, 2022; Okwemba & Njuguna, 2021). Studies across various regions provide compelling evidence of the positive relationship between strategic evaluation and control and SME performance. Ruzindana and Irechukwu (2023) in Rwanda found that effective strategic formulation significantly contributes to the sustainability of SMEs in the processing and manufacturing sector. Similarly, Adudu et al. (2022) in Nigeria demonstrated that strategy evaluation consistency, suitability, feasibility, and acceptability positively influence the performance of SMEs. Aliyu et al. (2022) in Nigeria found a direct correlation between strategy evaluation and performance, indicating a 9.6% increase in performance for every 1% increase in strategy evaluation. Furthermore, studies from Norway by Olsen & Berg (2022) and Johansen & Olsen (2020) revealed a positive impact of strategy evaluation and control on SME performance, with the relationship moderated by firm size and industry. Okwemba & Njuguna (2021) in Kenya identified a strong positive correlation between strategy evaluation and performance in the Chemelil Sugar Company, emphasizing the practical relevance of this relationship. However, despite this perceived positive impact, the study uncovers a disjointed implementation of strategy evaluation and control. SMEs exhibit uneven and inconsistent evaluation practices, ranging from daily reviews to infrequent, occasional assessments. This inconsistency suggests a lack of structured and systematic approach, undermining the validity of the quantitative findings.

Critically, in this context, the study's findings suggest a potential mismatch between the perceived need for strategy evaluation and control and the actual resources available to SMEs in Kabwe District. SMEs might lack the necessary resources, both tangible (e.g., financial capital) and intangible (e.g., knowledge, skills), for effective implementation of sophisticated evaluation and control practices. This could explain why some firms adopt informal, ad-hoc approaches, while others struggle to engage in more rigorous assessments. The lack of systematic strategy evaluation and control may indicate a gap in the SMEs' capabilities, particularly in areas such as data analysis, strategic planning, and performance measurement. These findings agree with the assumption of other scholars from the literature where the researcher assert that while numerous studies highlight the positive impact of strategic evaluation and control, certain research findings suggest a more nuanced relationship. Alex and Agyei (2021) in Ghana found a negative relationship between strategy evaluation and SME growth. Bassey & Isayas (2022) in Nigeria acknowledged the significant impact of strategy evaluation but noted that many SMEs evaluate their strategies ineffectively, hindering their ability to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. These contradictory findings highlight the need for further investigation into the factors influencing the effectiveness of strategic evaluation and control.

Owners might prioritize short-term gains over long-term strategic objectives, leading to a reluctance to invest resources in comprehensive evaluation practices. Managers, in turn, may lack the necessary incentives or pressure to engage in rigorous evaluation and control, potentially leading to a focus on operational tasks over strategic analysis. Owners and managers may possess differing levels of understanding and knowledge about strategy evaluation and control. This could result in inconsistent interpretations of its importance, leading to a lack of alignment on implementation strategies. The study's findings suggest a lack of mechanisms to effectively capture, analyze, and utilize feedback from strategy evaluation.

A synergy of the findings

A review of quantitative exemplified that the majority of the respondents agreed with the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that assumed that there is a relationship between Strategy Strategic Evaluation and Control and business Performance of SMEs in Kabwe District. By implication, it was noted that the findings were significant enough to describe Strategy Strategic Evaluation and Control and the performance of SMEs. By default, the quantitative findings invigorated that there was a relationship between strategy evaluation and control with the business performance of SMEs in kabwe district as posited by SEC2, p=0.726, p=1.0; SEC3, p=0.671,p=1.0; SEC4,p=0.846, p=1.0; SEC5, p=0.817, p=1.0; SEC6, p=0.848, p=1.0). In view of the foregoing, the researcher further interacted with the respondents in order to cement the validity and reliability of the research findings, and indeed the hypothesis. In that vein, the findings indicated that most of the respondents responded daily, weekly, sometimes, regularly, a period that is limited to assess the effectiveness of the strategies. Additionally, an evaluation of the statistics invigorates that in most of the SMEs, (as the participation of employees and managers collectively is less than 50%) reveals that the participants did not fully understand the gist of the nature and discourse of strategy evaluation and control in most of the SMEs.

Furthermore, despite having a consortium of activities herewith cited, the general perspective was that these activities were not exemplified to indicate the exact process that permeated evaluation and control. By design, the study found that the participants were merely commenting on the activities involved in strategy evaluation and control in their SMEs. By design, the respondents were not complicit to exemplify the extent to which such measurement of strategy control and evaluation were effective by way of giving the actual occurrences or rather experiences in their SMEs. The researcher takes the narrative that respondents were merely commenting academically. Generally, positively as the responses may have been, they were affected by lack of practical inference which made the researcher question the validity of achievement in the aforementioned business growth indicators.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study reveals that strategic evaluation and control (SEC) is crucial for the sustained performance of SMEs in Kabwe District. SMEs that regularly assess and adjust their strategies based on internal and external feedback tend to perform better. However, many SMEs lack a formalized SEC framework, leading to inconsistencies in tracking and measuring strategic outcomes. A more structured approach to SEC could help SMEs improve their performance by ensuring continuous alignment between strategic goals and operational activities.

Recommendations

- SMEs should adopt formalized strategic evaluation and control frameworks to monitor and adjust their strategies regularly.
- Business associations and government bodies should provide resources and tools to assist SMEs in developing effective SEC processes.
- Promote the use of technology and performance management systems to enable SMEs to track their strategic progress in real-time.
- Encourage peer learning networks where SMEs can share best practices and experiences regarding strategic evaluation and control.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicting interests

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Ethical considerations

The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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