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ABSTRACT

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), enacted on May 18, 2000, as Title One of the Trade and Development Act of 2000, was designed to offer sub-Saharan African nations, particularly those enacting economic reforms, preferential access to U.S. markets. The act aimed to enhance trade relations by granting more favorable market access than that offered to other regions without free trade agreements. In 2015, AGOA was extended for 10 more years by President Obama, affecting 49 eligible African countries through the Extension and Enhancement of AGOA Act, signed on June 29, 2015. This study evaluated how strategy control influences the performance of textile firms under AGOA. Data collection involved closed-ended questionnaires, pilot-tested for validity and reliability, representing 10.5% of the target population. Ethical clearance and necessary permits were obtained. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 24. Strategy Control: A positive and significant relationship with performance was observed ($r=0.822$, $p<0.05$), implying that effective strategy control measures are linked to improved performance. The recommendations focus on cultivating proactive foresight and developing agile, adaptable strategies to manage external uncertainties, particularly regarding the future of the AGOA agreement. Firms are also advised to address the implementation gap by focusing on resource mobilization, training, and strategic partnerships, as well as enhancing strategic control through data-driven decision-making and quality management. For policy considerations, the study recommends that the Kenyan government intensify lobbying for AGOA's extension or pursue alternative trade agreements to diversify market access. Additionally, policymakers should support the textile sector by developing local supply chains and implementing policies to reduce production costs, such as addressing high electricity costs.

Keywords: *Strategy, Control, Performance, Textile Firms, AGOA*

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INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is widely recognized as the ultimate measure of a firm's success and sustainability in any competitive market. Performance represents a firm's capacity to accomplish its competitive aims along the course of profitability, market share development, economic efficiency, customer satisfaction, and sustainable competitive advantage. Concerning the manufacturing sector and the textile industry, particularly in terms of performance, such financial metrics refer to export earnings, profitability margins, productivity rates, employment creation, as well as the capacity to maintain operations in a volatile international market. For firms participating in the AGOA Act framework, performance depends on their ability to use preferential trade terms, compete in international markets (especially the U.S. market), and sustain export growth. Despite the positive potential of AGOA, many Kenyan textile firms have not been able to capitalize on AGOA's benefits in terms of performance; this has raised questions about the firm's long-term competitiveness and sustainability in the global textile industry (Gutterman, 2023). Factors related to Performance of AGOA-Based Textile Firms: These include strategic management practices that form the basis for firms to coalesce their resources with market opportunities, and streamline operational processes while minimizing risk. Environmental scanning consists of monitoring external market dynamics to respond to. Firm strategy formulation is the definition of competitive objectives and strategies. Strategy implementation involves translating the strategic plans into operational activities, and strategy evaluation and control is the monitoring of the outcome of the strategies and the subsequent adjustment of the strategy to attain greater performance.

A firm can achieve improved performance to enhance efficiency, respond to market demands, and keep its market edge by being better positioned to do so when it consistently applies comprehensive strategic management practices. On the other hand, if a firm does not have a structured strategic management framework, it is usually inefficient, unprofitable, and the market stagnates. Strategic management is not only a tool for planning but a necessity for survival for Kenyan textile firms based on AGOA (Sandefur & Subramanian, 2024).

This is one of the most dynamic and competitive sectors in the world, globally. In 2022, the global textile market was valued at about USD 1.6 trillion and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7% between 2022 and 2030, as per Grand View Research. The firms' performance in this sector is determined by changing consumer preferences, technological development, the necessity of sustainable development, and changes in trade policies. AGOA has served as the preferential gateway to the US market for Sub-Saharan African countries. This opportunity has been utilized by AGOA-eligible countries to enhance their textile and apparel exports. AGOA plays a vital role in fostering the expansion of textile and apparel exports from Sub-Saharan African nations to markets within the region. Between 2000 and 2020, the SSA region sold over 6 billion USD worth of apparel under AGOA to U.S customers. Lesotho, Mauritius, and Madagascar have joined Kenya as leading nations in completing AGOA opportunities according to the latest USTR report of 2024. Textile firms in SSA perform below their full potential because of multiple business and infrastructure problems. Abdijabar (2023) data show that multiple AGOA textile companies in Africa face similar problems of electrical power interruptions, inadequate transport systems, worker skill shortage, and high production costs. Kenya stands out among AGOA's biggest beneficiaries through its strong success in the textile and apparel business. Statistics from EPZA 2023 show Kenya sent 534.6 million dollars in textile products to the U.S. under AGOA in 2022, but exports dropped to 471.2 million dollars in 2023 by 11.9%. The market reduction happens because businesses buy less from suppliers while costs jump, plus Asian factories compete strongly (Ngulu, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Kenyan textile firms, despite preferential access to the U.S. market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), continue to face significant challenges in achieving long-term sustainability and global competitiveness. These challenges have been substantially amplified by the introduction of a 10% tariff on Kenyan exports to the USA, imposed by the Trump administration, which threatens to undermine the benefits previously gained through AGOA. While AGOA has provided substantial trade benefits, many firms have failed to fully capitalize on these opportunities, primarily due to weaknesses in their strategic management practices (Maureen et al., 2022). In particular, these firms struggle with ineffective environmental scanning, inadequate strategy formulation, poor implementation, and insufficient strategy evaluation.

The expiration of AGOA in 2025 presents a critical turning point, intensifying the need for Kenyan textile firms to reassess their strategic management approaches. Without improvements in these areas, many firms may find themselves ill-prepared for a post-AGOA market environment, jeopardizing their ability to remain competitive on the global stage. This situation calls for urgent attention, as failure to adapt could lead to the loss of market share and hinder future growth opportunities. Thus, this study aims to investigate the relationship between strategic control and the performance of Kenyan textile firms under AGOA. By examining this aspect, the study will provide valuable insights into how improving strategic control can help these firms navigate the challenges they face, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness and ensuring their sustainability in both current and future market landscapes (Owusu & Otiso, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategy evaluation is a continuous and crucial process for Kenyan textile firms operating under AGOA, involving the monitoring and assessment of implemented strategies to enable necessary corrective actions. This ensures that these firms can effectively track their performance in both the U.S. and other markets, identify areas requiring improvement, and adapt their strategies proactively to maintain a competitive edge within the dynamic global environment. The establishment of robust strategy evaluation mechanisms is, therefore, not merely beneficial but essential for sustained success. On a global scale, the textile industry necessitates continuous strategy evaluation for firms to remain competitive and responsive to evolving market trends. Tools such as performance dashboards, key performance indicators (KPIs), and regular strategic reviews play a vital role in enabling firms to monitor their progress against predetermined strategic objectives and implement timely adjustments (Anthony & Govindarajan, 2013). As demonstrated by Lee et al. (2017) research on international apparel retailers, companies with sophisticated Performance monitoring and evaluation systems exhibit greater agility in responding to fashion trends, thereby maintaining their market leadership (Regression analysis, R-squared = 0.81, $p < 0.001$; Longitudinal data, n=150). However, Simons (1995) cautions against an excessive focus on short-term metrics, which can potentially lead to suboptimal long-term strategic decisions.

For Kenyan textile firms specifically operating under the AGOA framework, strategy evaluation must consider the unique performance metrics relevant to the U.S. market. These include critical aspects such as compliance with stringent quality standards, strict adherence to rules of origin, and a high degree of responsiveness to the specific demands of U.S. buyers. Regular and thorough evaluation of export performance, coupled with the active solicitation and analysis of customer feedback, as well as a keen understanding of competitive positioning within the U.S. market, is of paramount importance for maintaining and expanding their market share under AGOA. Furthermore, evaluating performance in regional African markets can provide valuable insights to inform strategic decisions regarding market diversification. The findings of Banda and Zulu (2024) study on textile exporters in Southern Africa underscore this point, revealing that firms

actively monitoring their AGOA export performance and seeking feedback from U.S. buyers achieved higher levels of adaptation and subsequent growth in U.S. market share (Correlation analysis, r = 0.71, p < 0.001; Survey, n=120). Conversely, a lack of systematic performance evaluation can lead to stagnation and an eventual loss of market share (Ndemo & Oduor, 2022; Qualitative interviews, n=10).At the local level within Kenya, the strategy evaluation process for textile firms operating under AGOA necessitates a comprehensive assessment of operational efficiency, the consistent maintenance of high product quality, the achievement of robust cost competitiveness, and strict adherence to all relevant local regulations. Diligent monitoring of these internal performance indicators is crucial in ensuring that these firms not only remain competitive within the domestic market, but also maintain their competitive edge in the crucial export market facilitated by AGOA. The implementation of regular performance reviews and the practice of benchmarking against competitors can serve as effective mechanisms for identifying specific areas requiring improvement and ultimately enhancing overall competitiveness. However, Grant (1991) rightly points out that focusing solely on internal metrics without adequately considering the broader external market dynamics can be inherently limiting. Research conducted by Hast (2024) on Kenyan textile SMEs supports this, indicating that firms implementing regular performance reviews and utilizing benchmarking to pinpoint areas for enhancement demonstrated improved operational efficiency and better export performance under AGOA (Regression analysis, R-squared = 0.55, p = 0.009; Survey, n=100). Conversely, neglecting the critical process of performance evaluation can invariably lead to operational inefficiencies and a subsequent reduction in overall competitiveness (Onyango et al. 2023, Case study, n=7). Empirical studies further underscore the vital role of strategy evaluation in enhancing the performance of Kenyan textile firms under AGOA. Chepkosgei et al. (2020) research on 90 firms revealed that comprehensive performance measurement systems significantly boosted U.S. market share (ANOVA, F = 6.03, p = 0.003; Cross-sectional survey). Barongo (2021) study of 15 successful exporters highlighted the importance of regular performance reviews and U.S. buyer feedback for strategic adaptation. Chebet and Kiprono (2023) longitudinal study of 55 firms demonstrated that adopting a balanced scorecard framework led to a significant increase in U.S. market share and overall competitiveness (Paired t-test, t = 3.51, p = 0.001; Longitudinal survey). These findings collectively emphasize that consistent and effective strategy evaluation is a non-negotiable element for Kenyan textile firms aiming to thrive under the AGOA initiative.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was cross sectional which incorporates a mixed-methods approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Mixed-methods research enables the triangulation of data, which strengthens the validity and reliability of the study's findings by combining different sources of information and analytical techniques. The target population for this study consisted of Kenyan textile firms that are actively participating in AGOA. Currently, there are 38 active textile firms under AGOA in Kenya listed on the Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA). Once the data were collected, quantitative data analysis was performed using regression analysis to assess the relationship between strategic management practices and firm performance. Regression analysis is an effective method for identifying the strength and direction of these relationships. Data was analyzed using SPSS software, a commonly employed statistical analysis program in the social sciences. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations are an integral part of the research process, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research. This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure that all participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Informed consent was obtained from all participants,

ensuring that they fully understood the purpose of the research and their role in it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This construct sought to establish whether strategy control influences the performance of textile firms under AGOA, and the findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Strategy Control

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	S. D
We evaluate our strategies regularly to measure performance.	68	1	5	4.16	.63
KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) are used in evaluating strategic outcomes.	68	1	5	3.77	1.19
Feedback from clients and staff informs our evaluation.	68	1	5	3.33	.71
Lessons from evaluations are used to revise strategic plans.	68	1	5	3.66	.61
Our evaluation process improves the competitiveness of the firm	68	1	5	3.18	.86
Evaluation results are communicated to key stakeholders.	68	1	5	3.93	1.07
Evaluation tools and techniques are reviewed and updated regularly.	68	1	5	3.98	.86
Aggregated Mean and Std Deviation				**3.72**	**0.85**

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics results from this study that sought to establish whether strategy control influences the performance of textile firms under AGOA. The respondents agreed with 5 of the 7 statements given in the strategy control construct. The 5 statements had a mean scora above 3.4. However, the respondents disagreed with the statement that "Feedback from clients and staff informs our evaluation" (mean score: 3.33). This implies a problem where the process of feedback collection may exist, but the lack of transparency in how that feedback is integrated into decision-making could lead to this lukewarm response. Other statements the respondent disagreed with are "Our evaluation process improves the competitiveness of the firm" (mean score: 3.18). This implies that the problem with the evaluation process may be too focused on internal metrics (e.g., employee performance, project completion) and not enough on external metrics factors like market position, competitor analysis, or customer satisfaction. These statements present areas for further improvement to make strategy control efficient.

Firms Performance

This construct was used to get the summary statistics on the dependent variable. These statistics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics on Firm Performance

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	S. D
Our profit has been increasing for the last five years	68	1	5	2.16	0.99
Our customers are always satisfied with our services.	68	1	5	3.89	0.79
We always exceed our export quota.	68	1	5	3.98	1.22
Our customers always come back for repeat purchases.	68	1	5	3.56	1.49
The number of employees had risen in the last five years.	68	1	5	4.00	0.73
We always keep our costs to a manageable level.	68	1	5	4.17	1.31
We do not finance our activities using bank loans.	68	1	5	3.54	0.92
Aggregated Mean and Std Deviation				**3.61**	**1.06**

This study, which aimed to establish the firm's performance of textile firms under AGOA–based firms in Kenyan Textile firms, Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya. The respondents agreed with 6 out of 7 statements given in the Firm's performance construct. All six statements had a mean score above 3.4, which is the borderline between agreement and disagreement. 3.4 and above means agreement, while 3.39 and below represents disagreement. However, participants disagreed with one statement: "Our profit has been increasing for the last five years" (Mean score:2.16). This implies a problem where employees are generally dissatisfied with their compensation or working conditions; they might express this dissatisfaction by disagreeing with positive statements about the firm's performance, even if the statements are factually correct. They might feel that any increased profits are not being shared with them, leading to a cynical or negative response to questions about the company's success. This could be a way for them to implicitly protest or voice their discontent.

Autocorrelation – Durbin Watson

This test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test since the sample size in this study is large enough and greater than thirty objects (n>30).

Table 3

Test for Autocorrelation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.960[a]	.921	.916	.21060	1.525

. Predictors: (Constant), X4, X1, X2, X3

b. Dependent Variable: Y

The study exhibited some autocorrelation, as indicated in Table 3, with a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.525. To mitigate this effect, the data were mean-centered. The Durbin-Watson statistic, which ranges from 0 to 4, suggests the presence of autocorrelation when it's below 2.0 and its absence when it's 2.0 or higher. The value of 1.525, being less than 2.0, confirms the presence of autocorrelation in this study.

Test for Multicollinearity – Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Multicollinearity was tested using the Variance Inflation Factor, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Multicollinearity -VIF

	Collinearity Statistics	
Model	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
X4	.328	3.048

X4 shows the absence of multicollinearity; this was confirmed by the fact that all variance inflation factors (VIFs) were less than 10 and tolerances were greater than 0.1. Heteroscedasticity was not seen in scatterplots. This validates the reliability and statistical correctness of the model. This indicates that the strategic management techniques that have been found are reliable indicators of performance for AGOA textile companies, and the results may be relied upon for formulating policy

recommendations. The case for a comprehensive adoption of strategy control procedures to improve competitiveness in the global textile industry is strengthened by trustworthy diagnostics.

Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Bivariate linear correlation analysis was carried out on all variables to establish how variables are related to the independent variable (Y). Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) ranges from -1 to +1. Zero (0) indicates no correlation at all, while +1 indicates perfect positive correlation, and -1 shows a perfect negative correlation. Correlations are deemed strong when r is greater than 0.700. When r is 0.500 shows moderate correlation, while values below 0.500 indicate weak correlation. The results of bivariate correlation are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Bivariate Correlation Results

		Y	X4
Firm Performance (Y)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed) N	68	
Strategy Control (X4)	Pearson	.822**	1
	Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	68	68

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

Bivariate linear correlation, which is the first stage in the regression analysis, was performed on all variables, and the results are shown in Table 5.

The study found a positive and significant relationship between strategy control (X4) and performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya ($r = 0.822$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that implementing effective strategy control measures is linked to improved performance among Kenyan textile firms under the AGOA framework.

Strategy control does not significantly enhance the performance of Kenyan textile firms under AGA

Bivariate linear regression analysis was performed to test the null hypothesis (H_{04}), and the findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.822[a]	.675	.670	.41698

a. Predictors: (Constant), X4

Strategy Control

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.840	1	23.840	137.115	.000[b]
	Residual	11.476	66	.174		
	Total	35.316	67			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X4

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.119	.251		4.451	.000
	X4	.729	.062	.822	11.710	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y

The findings from bivariate correlation analysis presented in Table 6 indicated that strategy control, as a practice in the planning process, has a positive and significant influence on the performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya (r=0.822, P<0.01). Further tests on bivariate linear regression indicated that risk management on its own explains 67.5% of the total variations in the performance of Textile firms under AGOA in Kenya. The model was also found to be valid (F (1,66) =137.115, P<0.01), and the beta coefficient was positive and significant (β =0.822, P<0.01). Based on the foregoing results, the null hypothesis (H04) stating that strategy control does not significantly enhance the performance of Kenyan textile firms under AGA has no statistical significance on the performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya was rejected. The study concluded that strategy control, in the planning processes in the textile firms, has a significant influence on the organization's performance.

Multiple Linear Regression

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed based on the research model presented:

$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4X4 + \varepsilon$, and the findings were presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Multiple Linear Regression Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.960[a]	.921	.916	.21060

a. Predictors: (Constant), X4, X1, X2, X3

The findings of multiple linear regression in Table 7 show that the variation in total performance of textile firms under AGOA is explained by four independent variables that is, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy control. All four independent variables in a combined relationship, according to this study, explain 92.1% of the total variations in performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya o (R^2=92.1%). The stochastic disturbance error term (e) explains the remaining 7.9% of the total variations.

Model Validity

Table 8 presents a test for model validity as follows:

Table 8

Model Validity

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.522	4	8.130	183.318	<.000[b]
	Residual	2.794	63	.044		
	Total	35.316	67			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X4X1X2X3

The model is deemed valid when the p-value in the ANOVA results is less than 5% significance at a 95% confidence level (P<0.05). Study results in Table 9 indicated that the model is valid at F(4,63) =183.318, P<0.05. The variance shown in the F-statistics in this study is large enough and indicates that all the variables under consideration in the model contribute substantially to the performance of textile firms under AGOA in Kenya.

Regression Coefficients

The regression coefficients provide a numerical estimate of how much the dependent variable is expected to change when an independent variable change by one unit, holding other variables constant. This helps researchers understand the strength and direction of each predictor's effect on the outcome.

Table 9

Regression Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.306	.142		2.162	.34
	X4	.118	.055	.133	2.145	.036

a. Dependent Variable:

The multiple linear regression results illustrated in Table 9 established that if all other factors are held constant, the performance of textile firms under AGOA would be at 0.306, P<0.05. A unit change in strategy control would lead to a substantial increase in the performance of textile firms by a factor of 0.118, P<0.05 at 5% level of significance and 95% level of confidence.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Firms widely engage in strategy control, regularly evaluating performance using key performance indicators (KPIs), incorporating feedback, and using lessons to revise plans. While the mechanics of control are in place and lead to tangible changes, some neutrality was observed regarding whether the evaluation process consistently improves competitiveness or if evaluation tools are regularly updated. This suggests that while firms are identifying deviations, the ultimate effectiveness lies in how quickly and effectively these observations translate into strategic agility.

Enhance strategic control for competitiveness: The evaluation process should evolve beyond procedural compliance to actively drive competitive advantage and foster continuous organizational learning and rapid strategic iteration. Firms should regularly review and update their evaluation tools and techniques to ensure they remain relevant and effective in capturing dynamic market realities and internal performance. Recommendations to use data-driven decision-making and implement total quality management (TQM) at every stage of production for great quality achievement imply the need for robust control mechanisms. To succeed in the competitive U.S. market, firms must have robust quality control and production strategies. Strategic control ensures that textile firms not only meet but exceed the strict quality and compliance requirements of international buyers.

Intensify Lobbying and Diversify Trade Agreements: The government could intensify lobbying efforts for AGOA's long-term extension or actively pursue and develop alternative bilateral/multilateral trade agreements to diversify market access. The success of textile firms heavily depends on their ability to implement and monitor strategic decisions effectively, ensuring they can leverage the trade preferences, navigate challenges, and build a sustainable, competitive industry beyond the current provisions of the act.

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