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CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF MULTINATIONAL TEA COMPANIES IN SOUTH RIFT REGION, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Continuous Improvement (CI) is a core dimension of Total Quality Management grounded in W. Edwards Deming's Theory of Profound Knowledge, which emphasizes system optimization, process control, and incremental improvement through the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle. In the competitive tea industry of Kenya's South Rift Region, multinational tea companies have increasingly adopted continuous improvement initiatives to enhance product quality, operational efficiency, and overall organizational performance. However, variations in performance outcomes raise questions regarding the extent to which continuous improvement practices translate into measurable organizational gains. This study examined the effect of continuous improvement on the performance of multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region, Kenya, guided exclusively by Deming's systems-based philosophy. Anchored on a positivist paradigm and correlational research design, data were collected from 222 middle- and top-level managers selected through stratified random sampling from a population of 499 respondents. Structured questionnaires were used, and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, particularly linear regression analysis. Reliability of the instrument was confirmed (Cronbach's α = 0.814), and diagnostic tests verified compliance with classical regression assumptions. The findings revealed that continuous improvement had a positive and statistically significant effect on organizational performance ($\beta = 0.644$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that practices such as process optimization, regular employee training, incremental innovation, and quality enhancement significantly improve productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness of multinational tea firms. The study concludes that embedding continuous improvement within organizational systems, as advocated by Deming's Theory of Profound Knowledge, is critical to achieving sustained performance outcomes in the tea sector.

KEYWORDS: *Continuous Improvement; Organizational Performance; Total Quality Management; Deming's Theory of Profound Knowledge; Multinational Tea Companies; South Rift Region, Kenya.*

INTRODUCTION

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management philosophy that seeks to enhance organizational effectiveness through continuous improvement of processes, products, and services in response to customer and market demands (Iyer, 2018). Among the core principles of TQM, continuous improvement (CI) is regarded as a central driver of sustainable organizational performance. Continuous improvement refers to the ongoing effort to enhance operational processes through incremental changes aimed at reducing waste, minimizing defects, improving quality, increasing productivity, and lowering operational costs (Barinua & Apochi, 2022). It emphasizes regular employee training, process refinement, quality monitoring, and systematic performance evaluation to ensure sustained competitive advantage.

Globally, continuous improvement has evolved from a quality control tool into a strategic performance mechanism. Organizations that institutionalize continuous improvement practices within their TQM frameworks report superior financial performance, operational efficiency, innovation capability, and market share growth (Dahlgaard et al., 2019). However, modern business environments characterized by technological disruptions, digital transformation, and global competition require organizations to strengthen continuous improvement systems through data-driven quality control and adaptive management structures (Rocha & Kissimoto, 2022).

Empirical studies provide mixed but largely positive evidence regarding the relationship between continuous improvement and organizational performance. Khan *et al* (2019), in a study on Pakistani firms, established that continuous improvement initiatives such as employee training and innovation significantly enhanced productivity, reduced defects, and improved product quality, thereby strengthening competitive positioning. Similarly, Jimoh et al. (2019), while examining medium and large construction companies in Nigeria, found a significant positive relationship between continuous improvement and operational performance, particularly in cost efficiency and quality metrics. Their study further revealed that continuous improvement played a mediating role in strengthening the overall impact of TQM practices on performance outcomes.

In the Philippines, Dipasupil and Dipasupil (2018) investigated the influence of TQM strategies on financial performance among manufacturing firms and found that while several TQM practices showed insignificant financial impact, continuous improvement demonstrated a meaningful association with firm viability. This finding underscores the strategic importance of persistent process refinement in enhancing sustainability and long-term performance. Likewise, Keinan and Karugu (2018), in a Kenyan context, established that TQM practices including continuous improvement positively influenced performance at Bamburi Cement Limited, particularly in meeting customer expectations and improving operational efficiency.

Within the tea industry, competitiveness is heavily influenced by quality consistency, cost management, timely delivery, and responsiveness to market demands. However, multinational tea companies operating in Kenya face significant performance challenges. The Directorate of Tea (2021) reported a decline in tea revenues compared to previous years, reflecting pressures from global market fluctuations, production inefficiencies, and increased competition. Additionally, overproduction relative to global consumption (International Tea Committee, 2019) has intensified the need for cost-effective operations and quality differentiation. These dynamics suggest that strengthening continuous improvement mechanisms may be critical for enhancing operational efficiency and financial performance in the sector.

Despite global evidence supporting the performance benefits of continuous improvement, empirical findings remain inconsistent across sectors and regions. Some studies report strong positive associations between TQM implementation and organizational performance, while others indicate weak or insignificant relationships, particularly when performance is measured solely using financial indicators. Moreover, most prior research has focused on manufacturing industries outside Kenya, with limited sector-specific evidence from multinational tea companies operating in the South Rift Region.

Multinational tea companies in Kenya, including Brown East Africa Plantations plc and Williamson Tea Kenya, have adopted TQM frameworks aimed at improving operational standards and product quality. However, revenue fluctuations and operational challenges indicate potential gaps in the effective implementation of continuous improvement practices. Inadequate training, inconsistent process monitoring, and limited integration of improvement initiatives across production units may constrain performance outcomes.

Given the strategic importance of tea to Kenya's economy and the increasing competitiveness of global tea markets, there is a need to empirically establish whether continuous improvement practices significantly influence the performance of multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region. This study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between continuous improvement and organizational performance, using both financial and non-financial performance indicators to provide comprehensive sector-specific evidence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical and empirical foundations underpinning the study on the relationship between continuous improvement and performance of multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework explains the logical relationships among variables considered critical to a research problem (Sekaran, 2003). This study is anchored primarily on Deming's Theory of Profound Knowledge**,** which provides a systematic explanation of continuous improvement as a mechanism for enhancing organizational performance.

Deming's Theory of Profound Knowledge, formally articulated by W. Edwards Deming in 1993, is a foundational Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy emphasizing systemic thinking, knowledge development, variation control, and psychology in organizational management (Deming, 1993). The theory emerged from Deming's work

in post-war Japan, where companies such as Toyota, Sony, and Fuji successfully applied its principles to achieve global competitiveness through superior quality and operational excellence.

Deming proposed that organizations operate as interconnected systems composed of processes and people, and that performance improvement must focus on optimizing the entire system rather than isolating individual performance deficiencies. Central to the theory is the concept that most organizational problems arise from system failures rather than employee shortcomings. Consequently, sustainable improvement requires redesigning processes, reducing variation, and enhancing systemic coordination (Heyns & Boikanyo, 2019).

A critical operationalization of Deming's philosophy is the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, originally developed from Walter Shewhart's quality control model. The PDCA cycle provides a structured mechanism for continuous improvement through iterative stages: planning objectives and interventions, implementing actions, evaluating results against set standards, and institutionalizing corrective measures before repeating the cycle. This cyclical model promotes incremental improvement, process refinement, and evidence-based decision-making, which directly enhance productivity, quality consistency, and cost efficiency.

Deming's theory also integrates four interrelated components: appreciation for a system, knowledge of variation, theory of knowledge, and psychology. Understanding variation is particularly relevant to continuous improvement, as reducing process variability leads to improved product quality and operational predictability. In manufacturing-intensive sectors such as tea processing, minimizing variation in leaf quality, blending, packaging, and logistics is critical for performance outcomes.

Although Deming's theory has been criticized for overemphasizing statistical tools and quantitative control mechanisms at the expense of broader organizational culture and leadership dynamics (Cohen, 2004), its systemic orientation and focus on ongoing process refinement remain highly relevant. In the context of multinational tea companies, where performance is influenced by operational efficiency, quality consistency, and cost management, Deming's framework provides a strong theoretical basis for examining the relationship between continuous improvement and organizational performance.

Empirical Review

2.3.1 Continuous Improvement and Organizational Performance

Continuous improvement (CI) refers to the systematic and incremental enhancement of processes, products, and employee competencies to achieve sustained performance gains. It typically involves quality enhancement, regular employee training, increased productivity, defect reduction, and cost optimization (Barinua & Apochi, 2022). Within TQM frameworks, CI is considered a strategic driver of competitiveness and long-term sustainability.

Khan et al. (2018) examined the influence of continuous improvement on organizational performance across four manufacturing industries in Pakistan, including textile and surgical equipment sectors. Using regular training, employee involvement, and quality product enhancement as CI indicators, the study applied regression analysis using SPSS to evaluate the relationship between CI and performance outcomes. The findings revealed that continuous improvement significantly improved employee performance, productivity, and product quality. However, the study did not explore the tea sector nor examine multinational firms within an African context, limiting generalizability to the Kenyan tea industry.

Similarly, Yuen (2016) investigated continuous improvement within Singapore's maritime transportation industry, focusing on cost reduction, employee training, and productivity enhancement. Using hierarchical regression modeling on data collected from 223 shipping firms, the study found that firms with strong CI capabilities were better able to translate corporate social performance into improved financial outcomes. The study highlighted that gradual and consistent implementation of CI initiatives optimizes performance. While the findings affirm the positive association between CI and performance, the industry-specific focus and service-oriented setting differ significantly from tea processing operations in Kenya.

Jimoh et al. (2019) explored the relationship between continuous improvement and operational performance in Nigerian manufacturing firms. The study used increased productivity and product quality as proxies for CI, while operational performance was measured in terms of cost efficiency and quality metrics. Employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings established a statistically significant positive relationship between CI and operational performance. Moreover, the study demonstrated that continuous

improvement mediates the broader impact of TQM practices on performance. However, the study was conducted in construction and manufacturing sectors outside Kenya, leaving a contextual gap regarding multinational tea firms in the South Rift Region.

In the Kenyan context, Keinan and Karugu (2018) examined TQM practices and performance at Bamburi Cement Limited. Using a descriptive research design and stratified sampling, the study found that quality improvement and increased productivity enhanced the firm's ability to meet customer needs and improve performance. While the study provides local empirical evidence supporting CI-performance linkage, it was conducted in the cement manufacturing industry rather than the tea sector, limiting sector-specific conclusions.

Further evidence from Dipasupil and Dipasupil (2018), studying small and medium manufacturing firms in the Philippines, found that continuous improvement was the only TQM component significantly associated with firm viability and financial sustainability. Although other TQM practices showed weak or insignificant financial impact, continuous improvement demonstrated a meaningful relationship with long-term organizational performance. This suggests that incremental and sustained process refinement may be more influential than isolated quality initiatives.

Collectively, these studies indicate that continuous improvement positively influences various dimensions of performance, including operational efficiency, productivity, product quality, and financial sustainability. However, the findings are not entirely conclusive due to contextual, sectoral, and methodological differences. Most studies have focused on manufacturing, shipping, construction, or cement industries outside Kenya. Additionally, many measure performances predominantly using financial indicators, overlooking non-financial metrics such as productivity efficiency, quality consistency, and customer satisfaction, which are highly relevant to tea processing firms.

Research Gap

Despite substantial empirical evidence linking continuous improvement to organizational performance, limited research has specifically examined this relationship within multinational tea companies operating in Kenya's South Rift Region. Existing studies are predominantly conducted in other industries and geographical contexts, making it difficult to generalize findings to the tea sector, which faces unique challenges such as fluctuating global demand, climate variability, quality control pressures, and cost competitiveness.

Furthermore, inconsistencies in empirical findings—where some studies report strong positive relationships while others show insignificant effects—underscore the need for context-specific investigation. The current study therefore seeks to empirically establish whether continuous improvement significantly influences the performance of multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region, Kenya, using both financial and non-financial performance indicators.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy, grounded in the assumption that reality is objective and measurable through empirical observation. A correlational research design was employed to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between continuous improvement and organizational performance, with organizational learning capability as a moderating variable. The study targeted middle and top-level managers from four multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region of Kenya: Brown East Africa Plantations plc, Williamson Tea Kenya, Eastern Produce Kenya, and Global Tea & Commodities Ltd. From a population of 499 managers, a stratified random sample of 222 respondents was selected using Yamane's (1967) sampling formula to ensure proportional representation across managerial levels. Primary data were collected using structured, self-administered Likert-scale questionnaires, supplemented by secondary data from company reports and official records.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 26. Multiple regression models were applied to test hypothesized relationships, while diagnostic tests—including Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), Shapiro–Wilk normality test, ANOVA for linearity, Durbin–Watson statistic for autocorrelation, and Levene's test for homoscedasticity—confirmed that classical linear regression assumptions were satisfied. Reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the 0.7 threshold (aggregate $\alpha = 0.814$), and validity was ensured through expert review, pilot testing, and construct alignment with study objectives. Ethical compliance was maintained through institutional approval, informed consent, confidentiality

assurance, and research authorization from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Results of Continuous Improvement

Based on a Likert scale of 5 point, frequency percentages, mean and standard deviation were obtained. This were presented in Table 1 to provide the summary for continuous improvement.

Table 1: ***Continuous Improvement***

Continuous improvement	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
The firm has put in place mechanism for cost production to enhance productivity and performance	0.0%	2.0%	6.5%	58.2%	33.3%	4.23	.65373
Low and balanced cost of production has enabled our firm to function continuously hence real and time performance	0.5%	6.5%	21.9%	62.2%	9.0%	3.73	.73
The firm has worked to ensure production of quality products to keep performance goal as it ought to	8.0%	7.5%	15.4%	41.3%	27.9%	3.74	1.18
Quality products has attracted more consumers of our products which has led the firm performing continuously	3.0%	5.5%	26.4%	43.3%	21.9%	3.76	.96
The management of our firm has been advocating for quality product production to keep our customers as consumers of the service provided performing	0.0%	4.0%	24.4%	41.8%	29.9%	3.98	.84
Through quality products the firm has been able save on cost	1.5%	6.0%	13.9%	45.3%	33.3%	4.03	.92
Timely periodic checking of performance has been embraced by our organization to ensure real time performance	0.0%	9.0%	12.9%	59.2%	18.9%	3.88	.82
The management has come up with timely goal to improve productivity	0.5%	5.0%	18.4%	61.7%	14.4%	3.85	.74
Return on investment has been progressive in our firm in all years which has led to improve performance	0.0%	4.0%	26.9%	60.2%	9.0%	3.74	.67
Return on investment has helped our organization measure their performance	0.0%	4.0%	25.9%	54.2%	15.9%	3.82	.74
The profit margin has enabled the firm be in a position to increase its asserts leading to continuous performance	1.5%	7.0%	25.9%	41.8%	23.9%	3.80	.93
Aggregate						3.87	.25

The results in Table 1 reveal that continuous improvement practices are generally well embraced in the firm, as reflected by the overall aggregate mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.25), which is close to “Agree” on the Likert scale. This suggests that most respondents perceive that the firm has established systems that promote quality, efficiency, and sustainability in performance. Mechanisms for cost production (Mean = 4.23, SD = 0.65) received the strongest agreement. This indicates that the firm has put in place deliberate strategies to manage production costs effectively, thereby enhancing productivity and organizational performance.

Quality as a driver of performance also emerged as a major theme. For example, the statement that management advocates for quality product production to retain customers scored a mean of 3.98, while quality products helping the firm save on cost scored 4.03. These findings imply that respondents strongly associate quality improvement with customer satisfaction, cost reduction, and sustained performance. Return on investment (ROI) was moderately rated (Mean = 3.74–3.82). While the majority agreed that ROI has been progressive and useful in measuring performance, the lower means compared to cost-control and quality measures suggest that financial outcomes are recognized but perhaps not yet maximized to their full potential.

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Periodic checking of performance and goal setting also received considerable agreement (Means = 3.85–3.88). This demonstrates that the organization values monitoring and evaluation as a way of ensuring real-time performance and productivity improvements. Interestingly, the lowest mean was recorded on the perception that the firm has worked to ensure production of quality products to keep performance goals as it ought to (Mean = 3.74, SD = 1.18). The relatively high standard deviation indicates mixed perceptions among respondents, suggesting that while many believe in the quality efforts, a notable portion remains unconvinced about their adequacy or consistency.

The findings highlight that cost management, quality assurance, and continuous monitoring are the strongest drivers of performance improvement in the firm. However, the variations in responses on quality consistency and return on investment point to areas where management could strengthen practices to achieve a more uniform and sustainable approach to continuous improvement.

Descriptive Results of Organizational Performance

The study sought to assess the extent to which organizational performance had been realized within the firms under study. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: ***Organizational Performance***

Organizational Performance	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5 SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Customer satisfaction has been achieved in our firm	0.0%	7.0%	9.0%	77.6%	6.5%	3.84	.64
Customer satisfaction enables the firm to improve their performance	0.0%	8.0%	24.9%	52.7%	14.4%	3.74	.80
Job satisfaction techniques has been aligned to firm's policies	0.0%	3.5%	29.9%	55.7%	10.9%	3.74	.69
Through job satisfaction firms' performance has gone up	0.0%	3.5%	36.5%	36.8%	23.4%	3.80	.84
Financial performance of the firm is high	0.0%	4.5%	14.9%	70.1%	10.4%	3.87	.65
The firm has been able to support community through projects such as roads, schools and clean water provision	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	68.2%	0.5%	4.13	.56
Performance in our firm has been increasing due market expansion	0.0%	1.0%	16.9%	65.2%	16.9%	3.98	.62
The firm has set aside funds for corporate social responsibility	1.0%	0.5%	11.9%	60.7%	25.9	4.10	.69
Aggregate						3.90	.29

The findings reveal that most of the respondents agreed that their firms had achieved customer satisfaction (Mean = 3.84, SD = 0.64). This implies that customer needs and expectations were largely being met, which is a crucial driver of competitiveness and market retention. Furthermore, respondents indicated that customer satisfaction has significantly contributed to improvement in firm performance (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.80). This suggests that organizations that continuously meet client expectations tend to enhance both their market position and operational efficiency.

In terms of internal alignment, a large proportion of respondents affirmed that job satisfaction techniques had been aligned to firm policies (Mean = 3.74, SD = 0.69), with many indicating that this alignment has led to improved organizational performance (Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.84). These findings underscore the role of employee satisfaction in boosting productivity, reducing turnover, and driving organizational success.

On financial aspects, most respondents agreed that the firms were performing well financially (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.65). High financial performance is not only an indicator of profitability but also provides firms with the capacity to reinvest in innovation, employee development, and community initiatives. The results further revealed that firms had significantly supported communities through projects such as roads, schools, and clean water provision (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.56). This reflects the firms' commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR), which enhances reputation, goodwill, and stakeholder trust. Similarly, the findings show that firms had set aside funds for CSR activities (Mean = 4.10, SD = 0.69), a strong indicator of sustainability and long-term social value creation.

Moreover, performance in the firms was noted to be increasing as a result of market expansion (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.62). This implies that firms were not only focused on retaining their existing markets but were also

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successfully penetrating new ones, thereby ensuring growth and resilience in a competitive business environment. The overall aggregate mean score of 3.90 (SD = 0.29) confirms that organizational performance across the surveyed firms is generally high. This finding suggests that customer satisfaction, employee job satisfaction, financial stability, CSR initiatives, and market expansion are critical drivers of firm performance. The results resonate with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory which emphasizes that organizations achieve superior performance by effectively leveraging their internal resources and capabilities.

In summary, the findings indicate that the surveyed firms are performing well both financially and socially. This performance is anchored on effective customer satisfaction strategies, enhanced job satisfaction, robust financial management, commitment to CSR, and deliberate market expansion efforts.

H_{01}: There is no statistical significant relationship between continuous improvement and the performance of multinational tea companies in South Rift Region, Kenya.

The results of the second hypothesis (H02) reveal that continuous improvement (CI) has a statistically significant and positive effect on organizational performance (OP) of multinational tea companies in the South Rift Region, Kenya.

Table 3: *Model Summary*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.569[a]	.323	.320	.23708

a. Predictors: (Constant), CI

The model summary shows that CI explains 32.3% of the variance in organizational performance ($R^2 = 0.323$), reflecting a moderate contribution of continuous improvement practices to performance outcomes.

Table 4: *ANOVA*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.343	1	5.343	95.059	.000[b]
	Residual	11.185	199	.056		
	Total	16.528	200			
a. Dependent Variable: OP						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CI						

The ANOVA results further confirm the model's statistical significance ($F = 95.059$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that CI is a reliable predictor of organizational performance. Therefore, the continuous improvement had a significant influence on organization performance.

Table 5: *Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.411	.256		5.510	.000
	CI	.644	.066	.569	9.750	.000
a. Dependent Variable: OP						

From the coefficients table, the unstandardized coefficient of CI is 0.644 ($t = 9.750$, $p < 0.001$), which means that a unit increase in continuous improvement efforts is associated with a 0.644-unit increase in organizational performance. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected, and it is concluded that continuous improvement significantly enhances organizational performance.

These findings are consistent with those of Khan et al. (2018), who investigated the influence of CI on organizational performance across four industries in Pakistan. They established that regular training, employee involvement, and quality product delivery enhanced productivity and reduced defects, which in turn improved overall firm performance. This resonates strongly with the current study, as multinational tea companies that embed CI practices—such as consistent staff training and process refinement achieve better efficiency and competitiveness.

Similarly, Yuen (2016), in the maritime transportation sector in Singapore, reported that firms with a strong culture of CI were better able to transform corporate social performance into improved organizational outcomes. His results underscore that CI drives not only financial and operational outcomes but also broader sustainability goals. This aligns with the current study's findings by suggesting that tea companies in Kenya, which are heavily reliant

on global export markets, can sustain competitive advantage by embedding CI practices into production and quality management systems.

In Nigeria, Jimoh et al. (2019) found that CI indicators such as productivity enhancement and quality improvements were vital mediators in strengthening the effect of TQM strategies on organizational performance. Their findings concur with the present study, particularly in confirming that CI practices are central to bridging the gap between quality management philosophy and tangible performance outcomes. However, unlike Jimoh et al. (2019), who emphasized the mediating role of CI, the current study directly tested its predictive influence and found it to be a significant standalone determinant of performance.

In the Kenyan context, Keinan and Karugu (2018) studied TQM strategies at Bamburi Cement and revealed that quality product development and enhanced productivity contributed positively to firm performance. Their findings mirror the results of this study, particularly in highlighting that CI practices are indispensable in manufacturing-intensive sectors. However, while their research was confined to a single cement company, the current study expands the scope by focusing on multinational tea firms, thereby broadening contextual understanding within Kenya's agricultural export sector.

Overall, the reviewed literature (Khan et al., 2018; Yuen, 2016; Jimoh et al., 2019; Keinan & Karugu, 2018) collectively underscores the importance of CI across industries and contexts, showing consistent positive effects on performance. The present study contributes new insights by confirming that CI significantly enhances organizational performance in multinational tea companies in South Rift Region, Kenya. This evidence is particularly important given the global competitiveness of the tea industry, where continuous process optimization, regular training, and product quality assurance are essential for sustaining market leadership.

Therefore, the results of this study concur with previous empirical findings in affirming that CI is a critical driver of organizational success. However, by situating these insights within the Kenyan multinational tea industry, the study fills an existing gap in literature, demonstrating that CI is not only relevant but also indispensable for agribusiness firms competing in global value chains.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Results

The study established that customer focus has a significant positive relationship with the performance of multinational tea companies. Regression analysis showed that customer focus accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in organizational performance. This indicates that practices such as customer feedback mechanisms, product quality enhancement, responsiveness to market needs, and alignment of services with consumer expectations directly contribute to improved competitiveness, market share, and profitability.

Conclusions

The study established that continuous improvement is a key driver of performance in multinational tea companies. The findings indicated that firms which consistently review processes, adopt modern technologies, and encourage innovation achieve superior efficiency and productivity. Continuous improvement was found to positively influence not only output quality but also employee engagement and adaptability, reinforcing its critical role in sustaining competitiveness in the tea sector.

Recommendations

Management of tea companies should institutionalize a culture of continuous improvement by investing in employee training, technology adoption, and process re-engineering. Continuous improvement programs should be aligned with international quality standards to ensure that firms remain globally competitive.

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