

## The Effect of Strategic Management Practices on the Growth of Small and Medium Agri-Business Enterprise: A Case of Selected Farms in Lusaka and Chisamba

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This study explored the effect of strategic management practices on the growth of small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMAEs) in Lusaka and Chisamba, focusing on strategic planning, formulation, and implementation. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combined both quantitative and qualitative data to assess how these practices influenced business performance and growth.

The quantitative analysis showed that strategic planning significantly affected business growth, with a high mean score of 4.78, reflecting its positive influence on competitive positioning and market expansion. Regression results further supported this, indicating a strong correlation between strategic planning and growth outcomes (p-value of 0.000). Strategic formulation was equally critical, achieving a mean score of 4.94, with innovative ideas playing a key role in driving growth. Regression analysis confirmed the significant impact of strategic formulation on business performance (p-value of 0.000).

Strategic implementation was also crucial, with a mean score of 4.84. However, anomalies in data regarding the effective utilization of resources suggested potential issues, warranting further investigation. Despite this, regression results showed that effective implementation significantly impacted growth and performance (mean scores of 4.76 and 4.74, p-value of 0.000).

Qualitative insights, gathered through interviews and case studies, revealed that digital platforms, data analytics, collaborative models, and diversification strategies enhanced market access, operational efficiency, and productivity. Government support and strategic partnerships were vital for increasing competitiveness and capacity.

In conclusion, the study underscored the importance of refining strategic management practices to optimize growth potential for SMAEs. It highlighted the need to address resource allocation variability, ensure accurate data reporting, and leverage digital tools and strategic partnerships to improve business performance. The research called for further investigation into the effective implementation of strategic practices and the potential challenges businesses faced in utilizing resources efficiently.

**Keywords:** strategic management practices, strategic planning, strategic formulation, strategic implementation

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## 1. Introduction

Small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMAEs) play a vital role in the economic development of Zambia, particularly in rural and agriculture-dependent areas. These enterprises contribute significantly to job creation, food security, and rural incomes, while also driving innovation in the agricultural sector. Despite their importance, SMAEs face significant challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability. Many of these businesses struggle to compete in a rapidly changing and globalized market, with a high failure rate of 60% within their first few months of operation and most not surviving beyond five years (Mwaanga, 2023).

A key factor contributing to this high failure rate is the lack of effective strategic management practices. Strategic management, encompassing planning, formulation, and implementation, is crucial for guiding businesses through challenges and ensuring long-term growth. However, many SMAEs in Zambia do not effectively utilize strategic management practices, which results in inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and poor adaptability to changing market conditions and external pressures.

Strategic planning helps businesses align their goals and resources, while strategic formulation sets clear, actionable objectives. Effective strategy implementation turns these plans into reality, but without these elements, businesses struggle to grow and achieve their goals. This study seeks to explore the impact of strategic management practices on the growth of SMAEs in Lusaka and Chisamba, focusing on the role of strategic planning, formulation, and implementation. By identifying the gaps in current practices and providing evidence-based recommendations, the research aims to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of agribusinesses in Zambia.

Ultimately, the study underscores the need for SMAEs to adopt and refine strategic management practices to enhance their growth potential and contribute more effectively to the country's economic development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Strategic Management Practice on the Growth of Small and Medium Agribusiness

The relationship between strategic management practices—specifically strategy planning, formulation, and implementation—and the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has been widely studied. The effectiveness of these practices significantly influences the success and performance of SMEs, with proper implementation leading to improved growth outcomes (Ali & Qun, 2019). Over time, empirical research in strategic management has focused on identifying which strategies and practices can help organizations achieve growth and economic success. An efficient and effective strategic management system can lead to both economic and social growth.

Several studies have explored the impact of strategic management on performance and sustainability, both within Zambia and internationally. Lawal et al. (2012) examined the effect of strategic management on organizational performance and found that the adoption of strategic management techniques significantly improved performance and helped organizations navigate societal and political challenges. Similarly, Ajao and Grace (2012), cited by Mohamud et al. (2019), conducted a study in Nigeria with a sample of 283 organizations. They found that effective strategic planning and implementation positively impacted organizational growth and performance.

In Somalia, a study by Mohamud et al. (2019) revealed a positive relationship between the growth and performance of SMEs and the effective implementation of strategic management practices. Heugens (2003) also examined the relationship between strategic management activities and organizational outcomes in Dutch food firms during the introduction of genetically modified ingredients. The study showed that the implementation of strategic management practices had a significant positive effect on organizational performance, particularly when firms faced societal or political challenges.

### 2.2 Strategic Planning on the Growth of Small and Medium Agribusiness

Muogbo (2013), cited by Mohamud et al. (2019), studied the impact of strategic management on the growth and development of manufacturing firms in

Anambra State, Nigeria. The findings indicated that strategic management practices were not commonly adopted, but when implemented, they had a significant positive effect on competitiveness, growth, employee performance, and productivity. The study concluded that strategic management was a valuable tool for enhancing the competitiveness and performance of firms, contributing to their structural development.

### **2.3 Strategic Formulation on Growth of Small and Medium Agribusiness**

Wheelen and Hunger (1995) asserted that strategic formulation is the development of long-range plans for the effective management of environmental opportunities and threats in the light of corporate strengths and weaknesses. Barnat (2014) and The Saylor Foundation (2017) have defined strategic formulation as a process of establishing the organization's mission, objectives, and alternative strategic selection to achieve the organizational goals. This essential process provides a framework for the organizations and their executives to take the actions leading to the anticipated results (Pearce and Robinson, 2000)

### **2.4 Strategic Implementation**

Implementation of the strategy is a part of strategic management which success is conditioned by managers, employees, their organization, as well as by the transformation of company's culture. The main task of implementation of the strategy is to bring the strategy into the life as a part of everyday decision-making process of the company. It is necessary to find appropriate indicators characterizing company activities and a system for measurement to eliminate deficiencies in the implementation of the strategy. In connection with strategic implementation is important to define strategy as a basic element of strategic management of the company. The strategy translates into the functional politics which specify how should be allocated resources and which way should be implemented goals of the company (Cisko & Klieštík, 2009)

## **3. The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

### **Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory:**

The RBV theory posits that a firm's strategy is shaped by the resources it possesses,

which are more critical than the industry's structure in gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage. Resources such as physical, financial, human, and experiential capital contribute to an organization's efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately leading to superior performance. The strategic management practices of SMEs, particularly in the construction sector, are influenced by the resources they possess, and their performance is linked to the resources available to them (Njeru, 2015; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2004).

### **Contingency Theory:**

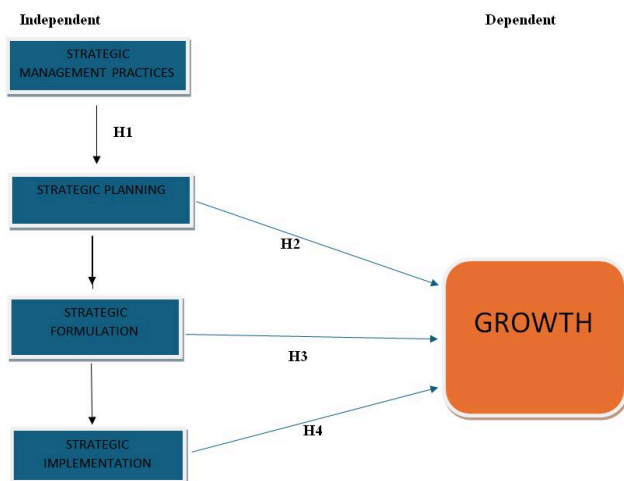
Contingency theory suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to management; instead, the most effective strategy depends on internal and external circumstances. It emphasizes aligning a firm's strategy, culture, goals, and external environment to achieve the best fit. Unlike classical management theories, contingency theory asserts that what works for one organization may not work for another, and managers should adapt strategies based on situational factors. This theory is particularly useful in agribusinesses, where managers can tailor their strategies to align with the specific environment for success (Wren, 2005; Purcell et al., 2007).

### **Economic Theory of Entrepreneurship:**

The economic theory of entrepreneurship emphasizes that economic conditions, such as access to credit, investment opportunities, fiscal policies, and the availability of resources, are key drivers for entrepreneurial activities. Economic incentives, including taxation policies, industrial policies, and availability of resources like labor and capital, influence the growth and success of entrepreneurship. According to this theory, entrepreneurship thrives when economic conditions are favorable, leading to increased economic growth (Casson, Kirzner, 2013).

### **Conceptual Framework:**

Figure 1



## 4. Research Methodology

### a) Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the impact of strategic management practices on the growth of small and medium-sized agri-business enterprises (SMAEs) in Lusaka and Chisamba, Zambia. By using both types of methods, the study aimed to gather comprehensive data that provides a deeper understanding of the research problem.

### b) Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology used in this study. The approach was designed to gather data on how strategic management practices influence the growth of agri-businesses. Both quantitative data, which can be numerically analyzed, and qualitative insights, which offer detailed perspectives, were collected through surveys and interviews. The methodology follows Saunders et al.'s (2009) "research onion" approach, which involves selecting a research philosophy, approach, strategy, and methods appropriate to the research questions.

### c) Research Philosophy

The study follows a **pragmatic philosophy**, which allows for flexibility in the choice of methods. This approach emphasizes practical solutions and allows both quantitative and qualitative methods to be used together. By focusing on the research question and what works best for it, pragmatism facilitates the integration of various techniques and tools that offer a complete picture of the research problem.

### d) Research Design

The study employed a **mixed-method design**:

- **Quantitative** data was collected through questionnaires, which were designed to assess the impact of strategic management practices on the growth of SMAEs. The survey method was used to obtain measurable and generalizable results.
- **Qualitative** data was collected through semi-structured interviews, which allowed the researcher to explore participants' deeper insights and experiences related to strategic management practices.

### e) Study Area

The study was conducted in Lusaka and Chisamba, two districts in Central Province, Zambia. These districts were chosen because they have a high concentration of small and medium-sized agri-businesses, which are the focus of this research. The researcher selected these areas for their relevance to the agricultural sector and their proximity, which facilitated data collection.

### f) Data Collection

**1. Quantitative Data:** A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to farm employees in Lusaka and Chisamba. Out of these, 50 responses were received, representing 85% response rate. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions to gather data on strategic management practices.

**2. Qualitative Data:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 managers from the selected farms. The interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights into how strategic management practices are implemented and their perceived impact on business growth.

### g) Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Data:** Data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This included measures like averages and percentages to summarize responses. The data was analyzed using SPSS to identify patterns and trends.

- **Qualitative Data:** Thematic analysis was used for the interview data. This involved identifying common themes and patterns from the responses to understand the deeper insights regarding the strategic management practices.

## h) Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study:

- **Reliability:** The study ensured reliability by conducting pilot testing of the questionnaires and interviews. The data collection process was standardized to minimize errors.
- **Validity:** Content validity was ensured by consulting experts during the design of the questionnaires and interview guides. Pre-testing was also done to ensure the questions were clear and relevant to the research focus.

## i) Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical principles throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the research and voluntarily agreed to participate. The confidentiality of respondents was maintained, and the data collected was only used for the study's purposes.

# 5. Results

## 5.1 Firm Characteristics

In this study, the response rate represents the total number of questionnaires that were completed and submitted by the respondents. A total of 60 questionnaires were received from the various farms in the Chisamba representing 85% as shown in table 1.

Participants' Response Rate

Sample Size	Actual Response	Response Rate
60	50	85%

**Table 5.2:** Demographic Info. of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender				
Male	30	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Female	20	40.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Age Group				
21-30	18	36.0%	36.0%	36.0%
31-40	24	48.0%	48.0%	84.0%
41-50	8	16.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Total	50	100.0%	100.0%	

The demographic breakdown of respondents in this study, which examined the impact of strategic management practices on the growth of small and medium agri-business enterprises in Lusaka and Chisamba, revealed key insights about the sample composition.

- **Gender Distribution:** 60% of the respondents were male, while 40% were female. This gender distribution was significant because male entrepreneurs may have had different approaches or access to resources compared to female entrepreneurs. Since strategic management practices could have varied based on gender, this demographic factor might have influenced how strategies were implemented in the selected farms. The predominance of male respondents could have reflected the gender norms or opportunities in Zambia's agricultural sector, where male dominance in agricultural enterprises was common.
- **Age Distribution:** A large portion of respondents (48%) fell within the 31-40 age group, followed by 36% in the 21-30 age range. Only 16% of respondents were in the 41-50 age group. This age distribution was critical for understanding the strategic management practices in the agri-business sector. Younger entrepreneurs (21-40 years) were generally more open to adopting innovative, modern approaches to management, technology, and operational strategies. Given that most respondents were in their early to mid-career stages, the study reflected a more dynamic and progressive outlook on strategic management. These entrepreneurs were likely to have adopted practices that could have driven growth, such as digital tools, sustainability initiatives, and collaborative partnerships, which were crucial for the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in agriculture.

**Description of Farms Visited**

Name of Farm	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2010 FARMS	5	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
AGORA FARMS	1	2.0%	2.0%	12.0%
BENE AGRO FARMS	3	6.0%	6.0%	18.0%
BULAYA AND FAMILY	9	18.0%	18.0%	36.0%
KWESEKA	4	8.0%	8.0%	44.0%
MIDWAYS FARM	3	6.0%	6.0%	50.0%
NJABANA FARMS	1	2.0%	2.0%	52.0%
ROSEDEL FARMS	2	4.0%	4.0%	56.0%
SIMUZIYA FARMS	5	10.0%	10.0%	66.0%
TIYESEKO FARMS	1	2.0%	2.0%	68.0%
TUZINI	10	20.0%	20.0%	88.0%
TWALUMBA FARMS	5	10.0%	10.0%	98.0%
TWIKATANE FARMS	2	4.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Total	50	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The table presents a summary of the frequency and distribution of farm names among respondents. The farm Tuzini is the most represented, accounting for 20% of the sample with 10 respondents. Close behind is Bulaya and Family, which represents 18% of the sample with 9 respondents. Other significant farms include 2010 Farms, Simuziya Farms, and Twalumba Farms, each constituting 10% of the respondents. Several other farms, such as Agora Farms, Njabana Farms, and Tiyeseke Farms, have a lower representation, each making up 2% of the sample. The cumulative percentages indicate that a small number of farms dominate the sample, with the top four farms alone accounting for 58% of the respondents.

Objective	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
To examine how strategic planning influenced the impacts on growth and the growth of SMAEs	Strategic planning has influenced the growth and performance of business	4.78	0.46	72.739	0.000	4.65 to 4.91
To assess the impact of strategic formulation on the growth of SMAEs	Strategic formulation is a critical factor in the growth of business	4.94	0.24	145.608	0.000	4.87 to 5.01
	Strategic formulation influences the growth and performance of the business	4.28	0.76	39.979	0.000	4.06 to 4.50
To investigate how strategic implementation impacts on the growth of SMAEs	The successful implementation of strategic plans is crucial for the growth of business	4.84	0.37	92.415	0.000	4.73 to 4.95

The analysis reveals that strategic management practices—planning, formulation, and implementation—significantly contribute to the growth of small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMAEs). Respondents strongly agreed that strategic planning positively influences business growth (mean of 4.78), with a high t-value and statistical significance. Strategic formulation was seen as a critical factor in business growth,

scoring 4.94, and had a similarly strong impact on performance (mean of 4.28). Furthermore, strategic implementation, particularly the successful execution of plans, was considered crucial for growth, with a mean score of 4.84 and high statistical significance. These findings highlight the importance of each strategic management phase in driving the growth and performance of SMAEs.

Resp.	Role	Responsibilities	Verbatim	Theme	Sub-theme	Code
Resp. 1	Executive Member (Zambia Association of Farmers)	Overseeing policy advocacy, farmer engagement, and organization growth	"I oversee our advocacy for policies that support farmers, engage them in the process, and help the organization grow."	Strategic Mgmt.	Policy Advo.	SMAE 1
Resp. 2	Policy Analyst (Zambia Association of Farmers)	Research on policy impacts, coordination with farmers, data analysis	"I focus on understanding how policies impact the farmers and coordinating with them to ensure their voices are heard."	Policy Impact	Farmer Engag.	SMAE 2
Resp. 3	Agri-business Develop. Manager (Zambia Association of Farmers)	Strategy develop., stakeholder engagement, training programs	"I develop strategies that drive business growth, engage stakeholders, and lead training programs for farmers."	Business Growth	Strat. Devel.	SMAE 3
Resp. 4	Director of Operations (Fruits and Vegetable Assoc.)	Managing supply chain, marketing strategies, and quality control	"My role involves managing our supply chain, creating marketing strategies, and ensuring product quality."	Operat. Efficien.	Supply Chain Mgmt	SMAE 4
Resp. 5	Head of Agri-business Develop. (Ministry of Agri.)	Policy formulation, strategic planning, and program implement.	"I formulate policies, create strategic plans, and ensure programs effectively implemented to benefit agribusinesses."	Policy Formul.	Strat. Plann.	SMAE 5

The table outlines the roles and responsibilities of key respondents in agribusiness development. Respondent 1 focuses on policy advocacy and organizational growth,

while Respondent 2 works on policy research and farmer coordination. Respondent 3 emphasizes strategy development and stakeholder engagement. Respondent 4 handles supply chain management and quality control, and Respondent 5 is involved in policy formulation and strategic planning. Together, these roles highlight the importance of strategic management, policy advocacy, operational efficiency, and program implementation in driving the growth of small and medium agribusiness enterprises in Zambia.

### Comparative Analysis of Strategic Management Practices in SMAEs

Aspect	Lusaka	Chisamba	Supporting Sources
Strategic Planning	70% of SMAEs use formal strategic planning tools (e.g., business plans).	40% of SMAEs use formal strategic tools; reliance on informal practices.	Emmanuel Ng'andu. (2018); Study Findings.
Adaptability	45% engage in diversification strategies (e.g., crop and livestock integration).	65% adopt diversification strategies to mitigate risks.	Banda and Mulenga (2020); Study Findings.
Access to Finance	80% face difficulties due to high interest rates and lack of collateral.	80% face similar challenges, with no regional variation.	International Trade Centre (2023); Study Findings.
Market Access	75% report connections to urban markets (wholesalers, retailers).	50% depend on local markets and community exchanges.	Study Findings. MUSIKA (2019)
Infrastructure	Better access to roads, electricity, and ICT facilities.	Limited infrastructure increases operational costs.	International Trade Centre (2023).

The comparative analysis of strategic management practices in small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMAEs) in Lusaka and Chisamba highlights some key differences and similarities. In Lusaka, 70% of SMAEs use formal strategic planning tools, such as business plans, whereas only 40% in Chisamba adopt such formal methods, relying more on informal practices. In terms of adaptability, Lusaka shows a lower adoption of diversification strategies (45%) compared to Chisamba, where 65% engage in crop and livestock integration to mitigate risks. Both regions face significant challenges in accessing finance, with 80% of businesses in each area struggling due to high interest rates and lack of collateral.

Market access also differs, with Lusaka SMAEs having better connections to urban markets (75%), while only 50% in Chisamba are linked to local markets and community exchanges. Finally, infrastructure plays a major role, as Lusaka benefits from better roads, electricity, and ICT facilities, while limited infrastructure in Chisamba increases operational costs. These findings underline the regional disparities in resources and practices, affecting the growth and competitiveness of SMAEs.

## 6. Discussion

The analysis based on the objectives of examining strategic planning, formulation, and implementation in the growth of small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMAEs) provides key insights:

**Impact of Strategic Planning:** Strategic planning is recognized as a significant factor in the growth of SMAEs. Respondents strongly agree that it influences business performance, competitive positioning, and market expansion. However, there is some variation in how well it supports resource allocation, highlighting the need for improvement in this area.

**Impact of Strategic Formulation:** Strategic formulation is considered a critical factor for business success, with respondents emphasizing the importance of innovation and clear strategies for resource allocation. The process of formulating strategies is viewed as integral to achieving growth objectives, though opinions on resource allocation strategies remain diverse.

**Impact of Strategic Implementation:** Strategic implementation is viewed as crucial for achieving the desired growth and performance. Respondents agree that its success significantly impacts business outcomes. However, there is an anomaly in the data concerning resource utilization, suggesting a need for further investigation into this area.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

### To Examine How Strategic Planning Impacts the Growth of SMAEs

The study shows that strategic planning significantly influences the growth of SMAEs, with respondents indicating a strong belief in its positive impact on business performance.

The high mean score of 4.78 highlights the critical role strategic planning plays in enhancing competitive positioning, expanding into new markets, and driving overall business growth. However, opinions on its effectiveness in resource allocation were more varied, suggesting room for improvement in this area.

#### **To Assess the Impact of Strategic Formulation on the Growth of SMAEs**

Strategic formulation is perceived as a vital factor for SMAE growth, with a mean score of 4.94 indicating strong agreement among respondents. This process is seen as integral to fostering innovation and developing clear, actionable strategies that contribute to long-term success. Although there is some variability in opinions about its role in resource allocation, strategic formulation is widely recognized for driving business growth through innovative approaches.

#### **To Investigate How Strategic Implementation Impacts the Growth of SMAEs**

Strategic implementation is crucial for achieving the growth objectives of SMAEs, with respondents emphasizing its importance in translating plans into actionable steps. The high mean score of 4.84 indicates widespread agreement on its positive impact. However, discrepancies in data regarding resource utilization suggest the need for further investigation. Overall, the findings affirm that effective implementation of strategic plans is essential for business growth and performance.

#### **Recommendation**

#### **To Examine How Strategic Planning Impacts the Growth of SMAEs**

It is recommended that SMAEs enhance their focus on formal strategic planning to further drive growth. While strategic planning is already perceived as having a positive impact, businesses could improve resource allocation and ensure their plans are more comprehensive to address market dynamics effectively.

#### **Objective 2: To Assess the Impact of Strategic Formulation on the Growth of SMAEs**

SMAEs should continue to prioritize strategic formulation by incorporating innovative strategies and clearly defining their business models.

To enhance effectiveness, greater emphasis on resource allocation and scenario planning could further strengthen the impact of strategic formulation on long-term growth.

#### **To Investigate How Strategic Implementation Impacts the Growth of SMAEs**

SMAEs should focus on improving the implementation of their strategic plans by ensuring efficient resource utilization and addressing any gaps in operational execution.

Regular monitoring, clear communication, and training programs could help overcome implementation challenges and maximize growth potential.

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