

Assessment Of Factors That Are Strategic To Guarantee Quality Outsourced Ground Services In Aviation: A Case Of Strami Limited

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Abstract: Outsourcing has become increasingly widespread throughout industrialized societies over the past 20 years as a result of deteriorating economies. The study set out to determine if there is a relationship between outsourcing and the provision of quality ground handling services in the aviation industry. Research data was collected using questionnaires that were administered to 80 randomly selected staff working of Strami Limited. The study was particularly helpful to the ground handling companies operating at JKIA; especially as is proven that there are parameters that affect the quality of service. It was also useful to the customers; in this case the airlines seeking the services of Ground Handling Companies (GHCs). Regression analysis was conducted to determine to relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The findings show that job knowledge, staff motivation, remuneration and staff competencies have a significant effect on the provision of quality ground handling services in the aviation sector. Job knowledge was the significant factor with a regression coefficient of 4.48, staff motivation was the second most significant factor with a regression coefficient of 4.4. The third and fourth in significance were remuneration and job competencies with regression coefficients of 1.54 and 1.29 respectively.

Keywords: Outsourcing, Job knowledge, Remuneration, Motivation, Staff Competencies.

I. INTRODUCTION

The airport ground-handling business is growing. While estimates vary, it is now thought to be worth \$80-100 billion a year, comprising up to a seventh of the total airport industry turnover (Broedner, Kinkel & Lay, 2009). The ground handling business covers everything from baggage handling to aircraft maintenance, in effect everything that happens to the aircraft between landing and take-off. This fast-maturing segment is facing challenges as it evolves. Twenty years ago, the bulk of ground operations were carried out by airlines themselves. Together with airport handlers, they performed more than 80% of the requisite tasks, leaving little room for an independent ground-handling industry to emerge. Before long, however, airlines began to reconsider what counts as their 'core' business. Today, more than 50% of airport ground

handling globally is outsourced to independent players, with around 1,000 companies operating in the space worldwide (Broedner et al., 2009).

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A. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

On analyzing the effects of outsourcing on the organizational performance of fast foods industry in Lagos state, (Akinbola, 2012), the results revealed that the extent to which outsourcing strategy adopted by a firm increases the profitability of fast food companies was 78.7%, an implication that outsourcing strategy adopted by a firm increases the profitability of fast food companies. He went on further to conclude that the role of outsourcing strategies adopted by firms in the fast food industry cannot be separated from the organizational performance. The effects of outsourcing strategies on the performance of organizations could not be over emphasized. Therefore for fast food companies to operate efficiently in the competitive industry, businesses should engage in outsourcing relationships that are well evaluated and scrutinized (Akinbola, 2012). Akinbola's research tends to show that businesses that involves certain processes in the economy are becoming indispensable of the usage outsourcing services being offered by other organizations, Also many fast foods organization argue that the cost of transaction has been minimal since the business environment is so much challenging as they can't afford to do all activities involved in their businesses alone. Many fast foods outsource business processes, knowledge processes and their information technology aspect. Areas that have to do with equipment maintenance like generators, kitchen and confectionaries equipment outsourcing, branding, public relations, advertising, sales operations and allied key business activities was well applauded by the fast foods organizations as discovered in the research of his study. His study also discovered that outsourcing benefitted business organizations to build customer relationship which indirectly boost profitability capacity of the firms in the industry.

On analyzing the strategic responses of commercial banks towards attaining competitive advantage in Kenya, (Chepkiyeng, 2008), Outsourcing was reportedly the most widely practiced form of restructuring as reported by 60 per cent of respondents in banks that had carried out other forms of reorganization. It would help an organization to concentrate on its core businesses, while benefiting from the cost efficiencies of those companies that specialize on the outsourced activity. The constantly changing customer needs require that constant product innovations have to be made and offered ahead of the competition if commercial banks are to maintain or enhance their competitive edge. Product development was the most highly ranked in terms of importance as marketing strategy adopted by most banks. Most respondents in the study also felt that commercial banks were not doing enough in the area of promoting their products, it was of paramount importance that they become more aggressive in advertising, personal selling and sales promotion so as to tap potential consumers who up to date do not have bank accounts. In outsourced setups, this may be a major challenge, especially for personal selling. There was also a commendation that service improvement and

positive change in the way things are done is the way forward in the banking industry since customers play a pivotal role in determining the survival of any business in this era of competition (Chepkiyeng, 2008). The banks should ensure that customer care programme is a central focus in their marketing strategy. They should forever aim at providing customer service that sometimes exceeds customer satisfaction. Meaning that even in outsourced settings, the banks needed to do more to ensure that the quality of services offered was competitive enough for the banks to remain competitive.

In her research on the effect of strategic outsourcing on organizational performance Musau (2016) established that the need to focus on core competencies was a major reason why companies choose to outsource some of the activities. The study further found that outsourcing had enabled companies to concentrate their key resources and capacity on building and expanding its core competencies, which improved its competitive advantage, hence leading to better organizational performance. Therefore, according to the study, strategic outsourcing leads to improved organizational performance in terms of increased profitability, market share, customer satisfaction and sales growth.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) is Kenya's largest aviation facility, and the busiest airport in East Africa. Its importance as an aviation center makes it the pace setter for other airports in the region. Today, JKIA serves a daily average of 19,000 Passengers from Africa, Europe and Asia. JKIA has direct flight connections to Europe, the Middle East, Far East and the African Continent(KAA website).While outsourcing is a powerful tool to cut costs, improve performance, and refocus on the core business (Jerome, 2015), outsourcing initiatives at times fall short of management's expectations. The poor quality of services offered by the ground handling companies has failed to match the expectation of the airlines. This has sometimes led to delay in flights or lost and misplaced cargo belonging to passengers and this has caused airlines to incur huge expenses in compensating passengers for lost cargo and rescheduling of flights. Among the contributing factors to these shortcomings by the ground handling firms are incompetent staff, poor remuneration and low morale among other factors.Over the years, a lot of research work has been done focusing on the effects the concept has had on the core companies that seek to outsource ground handling services in aviation. There is however lack of focus on the companies' offering these services, and over the time, with growth in competition, the companies seeking to offer services especially to airlines have increased. There was therefore a need to look at some of the factors that would help these companies in offering the best services to their clientele, and therefore stay ahead of the pack in the outsourcing business.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective was to assess the key factors that guarantee Quality Outsourced Ground Handling Services in Aviation. The study examined the effect of staff competencies, remuneration, staff motivation and job knowledge on the quality of ground handling services in aviation.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework consists of concepts, and together with their definitions and reference to relevant scholarly literature, existing theory that is used for a particular study (Kothari, 2004). The theoretical framework demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the topic of a research paper and that relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered. This study is premised on the following theories: The Resource Dependency theory, The Game Theory and the Competition Theory by Michael Porter.

A. RESOURCE DEPENDENCY THEORY

Resource dependency theory examines the relationship between organizations and the resources they need to operate. Resources can take many shapes or forms, including raw materials, workers, and even funding. If one company maintains the majority of a resource, then another company will become dependent on it in order to operate, creating a symbiotic relationship. Too much dependency creates uncertainty, which leaves organizations subject to risk of external control. External control may be imposed by the government or other organizations, and can have a significant effect on operations, such as funding or personnel policies. Managers strategize alternative business plans in order to lower this risk (Mcdawl, 2016).

B. COMPETITION THEORY

Porter's Five Forces of Competitive Position Analysis were developed in 1979 by Michael E Porter of Harvard Business School as a simple framework for assessing and evaluating the competitive strength and position of a business organization. This theory is based on the concept that there are five forces that determine the competitive intensity and attractiveness of a market. Porter's five forces help to identify where power lies in a business situation. This is useful both in understanding the strength of an organization's current competitive position, and the strength of a position that an organization may look to move into. Strategic analysts often use Porter's five forces to understand whether new products or services are potentially profitable. By understanding where power lies, the theory can also be used to identify areas of strength, to improve weaknesses and to avoid mistakes (Downey, 2007). The five forces are as follows: Supplier power, Buyer power, Competitive rivalry, Threat of substitution and Threat of new entry.

C. GAME THEORY

Game theory is the process of modeling the strategic interactions between two or more players in a situation containing set rules and outcomes. While used in a number of disciplines, game theory is most notably used as a tool within the study of strategic management. The economic application of game theory can be a valuable tool to aide in the fundamental analysis of industries, sectors and any strategic interaction between two or more firms. The mathematical theory of games was invented by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern in 1944. In understanding the Game theory, a very basic classical example in the business world arises when analyzing an economic environment. Competitive firms are faced with a decision matrix similar to that of a Prisoner's Dilemma. Each firm has the option to accept the basic pricing structure agreed upon by the other companies or to introduce a lower price schedule. Despite that it is in the common interest to cooperate with the competitors, following a logical thought process causes the firms to default. As a result everyone is worse off. Although this is a fairly basic scenario, decision analysis has influenced the general business environment and is a prime factor in the use of compliance contracts (Osak, 2010).

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. OUTSOURCING

Outsourcing refers to the practice of transferring activities traditionally done within a firm to third party providers within the country. Outsourcing decision is variable to the type of the business entity and the structure of the corporate but the cost factor has been dominating and overall lower global cost advantages cannot be ignored (Kakumanu & Portanova, 2006). According to Narayanan (Kocherlakota, 2009), there are four strategic reasons to outsourcing which include, improved cash flow, improved control of payment, scalable staffing and to improve overall business performance. The competition in the world of technology has risen and it is far too difficult for the companies to remain competitive when the competition has lower prices. Outsourcing decision is not solely to bring the cost down but the fundamental objective of the business is to gain and maintain competitive advantage. Low prices and high quality is the demand of the customers and today, customers have even more choices than in the past. For example, in the contact centre, work done in different locations and the calls can be transferred to the centre operating at the particular time of the day.

According to Jiang and Qureshi (2006), companies going for an outsourcing decision also evaluate the cost factor and if the reduction of the present operating cost is achievable through outsourcing then the available resources can be reinvested to gain and maintain competitive advantage. However Kremic, Tukel and Rom (2006) say that many of the firms today are deciding to outsource setting aside the cost factor to focus on core competencies. Despite the potential risks of outsourcing for example, security issues, cultural problems firms hope to benefit from the lower cost.

In the airline industry, outsourcing has been a feature since the early days of commercial aviation. Airlines typically outsource a broad range of business processes: aircraft maintenance, baggage and ground handling and in-flight catering may not be provided or performed by the airline and some or all of its reservation, ticketing and departure control systems will be provided or maintained by service providers on its behalf. According to Marcus (2008), although aviation is one of the most international of industries, it has had some of the most restrictive rules on ownership and control. Since the 1944 Chicago Convention came into force, air traffic rights between countries have generally been regulated by a web of bilateral governmental agreements which cause each home country to defend hard-negotiated rights of access to the other country by prohibiting third-country carriers from operating on routes covered by the agreement. In order to qualify for its home country's international routes, an air carrier must normally have an operating license from the home country, which is issued once the airline has demonstrated that, among other conditions, its ownership and control are in the hands of investors from the home country. This creates a powerful disincentive to merge international carriers, as the resultant loss of control could cause the airlines to lose valuable international routes. The European Union has made inroads into this system, the most significant being the recent Open Skies Agreement with the United States. This has led to much speculation about tie-ups between EU carriers, (Marcus, 2008).

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VI. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Regression analysis was carried out in order to determine the relationships between the independent variables (staff competencies, remuneration, staff motivation and job knowledge) and the dependent variable (provision of quality ground services in aviation). The regression equation model formulated for the purpose of the regression analysis was:

$$Y = a + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3 + B_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y = Quality ground services; a= constant; B₁, B₂, B₃ and B₄ = Régression Coefficients; X₁ = Staff competencies; X₂ = Remuneration; X₃ = Staff Motivation; X₄ = Job Knowledge and ε = error term.

	Coefficients	Stand. Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%
Intercept	4	1.0000	4.0000	0.0155	-8.7062	16.7062
Staff Competencies	1.29	0.3504	0.5436	0.0230	-4.2619	4.6429
Remuneration	1.54	1.2036	-3.1904	0.0217	-19.1331	11.4531
Staff Motivation	4.4	1.0007	4.3967	0.0144	-8.3157	17.1157
Job Knowledge	4.48	1.1173	4.0062	0.0357	-1.7900	1.9500

Table 1: Regression Coefficients

The regression equation with the coefficients substituted is as follows:-

$$Y = 4.0 + 1.29X_1 + 1.54X_2 + 4.4X_3 + 4.48X_4 + \varepsilon$$

According to the equation, taking all factors (staff competencies, remuneration, staff motivation and job knowledge) constant at zero, provision of quality ground services will be 4.0. The regression analysis also shows that a unit increase staff competencies will result in an increase of 1.29 in quality of ground services in aviation industry; a unit increase in remuneration will result in an increase of 1.54 in quality of ground services in aviation industry, a unit increase in staff motivation will lead to an increase of 4.4 in quality of ground services in aviation industry and a unit increase in job knowledge will lead to a 4.48 increase in quality of ground services in aviation industry. This means that the most significant among the four variables was job knowledge followed by staff motivation, then remuneration and finally staff competencies. The regression analysis also show that all the four variables are significant predictors of quality of ground services in aviation because their corresponding p-values are less than 0.05 (<0.05).

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is concluded that staff competencies, motivation, job knowledge and remunerations are among the key factors that can guarantee quality outsourced ground service in Aviation sector. The ground handling firms require staffs that are competent and qualified to do the jobs at hand. Since ground handling services are consumed by major international and local airlines operating at the JKIA, they need to be of high quality and match the same services in other airports across the world. Ground handling firms can only achieve this quality expectation if they have qualified and competent staff working for them. The staffs need to be motivated as motivation is a driver for

improved performance. Ground handling staff can be motivated through increased rewards and compensation and access to trainings locally and abroad. Ground handling firms should also set clear guidelines for progress and promotion as a way of motivating their employees.

Job knowledge is a factor that can contribute to improved performance of the ground handling staff. The staffs need to be knowledgeable about their jobs and this knowledge can only be acquired and improved through continuous training of the staff. Staffs with long years of experience in ground handling services also tend to be more knowledgeable than those that have worked in ground handling firms for few years. When recruiting staff, ground handling firms are advised to go for employees with many years of experience in ground handling services. By employing experienced personnel the ground handling staff will not spend many on training newly employed staffs.

Of equal importance is how well the employees of ground handling firms are remunerated. Adequate remuneration is necessary if the employees are to perform their jobs well. With adequate remuneration the ground handling staff will ensure that their staffs are satisfied and employee turnover will be low. On the other hand, low remuneration will lead to dissatisfied employees and in turn high employee turnover. This means that the firms will be spending more on recruitment of new employees to replace the ones that have exited from the organization. The high employee turnover due to poor remuneration will also impact negatively on the quality of ground handling services.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered to ground handling firms with a view of improving their services in order to meet their customers' expectations. Ground handling firms should continually strive to improve the skills and competencies of their ground handling staff through training. Ground handling firms need to carry out training needs assessments (TNAs) to highlight skills gaps. Ground handling firms must offer adequate remuneration to their ground handling staff to match or surpass the remuneration of ground handling staff working in international airports in other countries. When setting remuneration of their staff, it is advisable for ground handling firms to hire consultants to set the remuneration levels. This will ensure that the set remuneration levels match or surpass those of other ground handling firms that operate in local airports or in airports abroad. Staff motivation strategies should be formulated and implemented by ground handling staff for their employees in order to ensure that the staffs are motivated at all times. Ground handling staff should hire staffs that have the necessary job knowledge and preference should be given to people that have worked in similar positions before. When recruiting, a major factor that should be considered is the number of years the applicants had worked in similar positions before and preference should be given to those with many years of experience. Ground handling firms should solicit feedback from airlines on a regular basis in order to gauge how well they are doing in terms of service provision to the

airlines. Ground handling firms can also hire consultants to perform appraisals on the services they offer to airlines. Such appraisals will highlight strong areas that need to be upheld and also weak areas that need improvement.

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