GOVERNANCE
OF THE COMPANIES
IN TERMS OF VOLATILE
MARKET CONJUNCTURE

SECTION 4

EXPORT STRATEGY RISKS AND GOVERNANCE IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This paper investigates the export strategy implementation risks in Zimbabwe's clothing sector with a view to build a framework for improving strategy implementation and governance. The government of Zimbabwe has formulated a five year export strategic blue-print to resuscitate the clothing value chain. However, to date, no visible movement towards implementing the export strategy has materialised. The sector is on the brink of collapse putting the welfare and livelihood of over two million people dependent on the sector at risk. A desk research and key informant interviews were conducted to understand the barriers causing inertia in the implementation of the export strategy. Cotton farmers' unions' representatives, the cotton ginners association members, the spinning industry members and garment manufacturers representatives, clothing retailers' representatives, workers' unions' members and government officials were important sources of information towards the discovery of the risks. From the research, six of the strategy implementation risks were linked to human elements. Leadership, consensus and commitment deficiencies militated against the implementation of the export strategy in the clothing value chain. There is also a lack of trust among the value chain actors leading to the dislocation of efforts to resuscitate the sector.

Keywords: Export Strategy, Value Chain, Upgrading, Clothing Industry, Trust Building, Strategy Implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 20th Century, a constant theme for African governments has been how to attain inclusive and transformative development for African countries. Export driven industrialization as opposed to the previously dominant import substitution industrialization (ISI) is now the most advocated strategy for economic transformation in most African countries. The clothing industry, being one of the largest, most globalized and most essential industries in the world (Jasson and Power, 2010) is regarded as the most promising industry to spearhead this kind of economic development. Since most African nations have the capacity to produce clothing components for both domestic consumption and the vast international apparel market, and also owing to the industry's legacy in national industrial upgrading (Gereffi and Fredrick, 2010), the clothing industry is important for these countries. Furthermore, due to low fixed costs and the emphasis on labour intensive manufacturing (Gereffi, 1999; Gereffi and Fredrick, 2010; Kunagai, 2008), the growth of clothing exports elsewhere outside Africa, has been marked as the starter industrial policies for countries climbing the industrialization ladder. Recognizing such potential in the sector, the clothing export strategy has become an essential component of both a country's macroeconomic and microeconomic development. From a microeconomic point of view, clothing exports offer the prospect of new markets, more sales, better profits and a greater spread of customers. Without a clear strategy, however, none of these benefits are likely to be realized. In Southern Africa, efforts by countries and the region as a whole, in formulating clothing export strategies are well documented McCormick and Rogerson, 2004; Jauch and Traub-Merz, 2006; Keane and Velde, 2008). Zimbabwe, being part of the Southern Africa Development Community, accepted the adoption of export driven strategy and accordingly has also targeted the clothing value chain as one with greatest potential to foster industrialization with inclusive and transformative outcomes. The whole thrust of this strategy is premised on identifying value options, designing and implementing value based opportunities while mitigating the attendant strategy risks. To reduce the risk of failure, a government and national market perspective is a prerequisite strategic posture. On its part, the government of Zimbabwe has crafted a five year export strategic blue-print for the resuscitation of the clothing value chain. However, despite having a perfect document that answers the clothing industry's export success needs, the document largely remains a dead document with the risk that it might never be implemented as espoused in the strategy plan. At the same time, while the export strategy remains unimplemented, the livelihood of over two million people dependent on the sector is severely threatened due the continued poor performance of the sector. The problem that lingers, therefore, is how to reduce the risk that is entailed by the non-implementation of the export strategy. Given this scenario, a deeper understanding of the export strategy implementation risks could be important as a first step towards improving the export strategy performance. There is dearth of published literature on the implementation risks associated with an export strategy and how such risks can be addressed along value chains. For example, Alexander (1985) claimed that the overwhelming majority of the literature has been on the formulation side of the strategy and only "lip service has been given to the other side of the coin, namely strategy implementation risks". Such a lack of knowledge of strategy risks hinder further development of the clothing industry and may explain the low value generated for the value chain participants. Accordingly, this study was carried out to explore how an understanding of the strategy implementation risks within Zimbabwe's clothing industry could help to improve the implementation of export strategy. The second aim was to build a framework that could be used to mitigate the risks associated with strategy implementation.

This paper is organized as follows: First an overview of the literature on strategy risks as developed in a number of strategic management theories is discussed. Next is the methodology applied in this study followed by the discussion of the results. Lastly we present our conclusions and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of strategy

Strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long-term, used to achieve advantage through the configuration of resources within a challenging environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfil stakeholder expectations (Johnson and Scholes, 2008; Musyoka, 2011). Implied here is that strategy indicates where the business is trying to get to in the long- term; the markets it should invest in and the kind of activities involved in such markets; how the business can perform better than the competitors in those markets; the resources (skills, assets, finance, relationships, technical competence, facilities) required to enable it to compete; the external environmental factors that affect the business' ability to compete, and the values and expectations of those who have power in and around the business. In turn, strategy implementation is a process or paths taken to be or reach the organizational objectives. Musyoka (2011) describes strategy implementation as the process or path that leads to where the organization sees itself in the future and is largely an internal administrative activity that involves working through others, organizing, motivating and culture building. In addition, strategy implementation entails delicate and sensitive issues such as resource mobilization, restructuring, cultural changes, technological changes, process changes, policy and leadership changes.

2.2. Strategy implementation risks

Strategy risks can be described as those factors that obstruct, prevent, block or hinder the process of strategy implementation (Niven, 2002; Scholes and Johnson, 2002; Noble, 1999). These factors are an impediment or blockages which make it hard to achieve or to realise espoused goals of people or organizations. Strategy implementation risks can either be from internal or external sources within organizations or entire industries. For Kaplan and Mikes (2012), such strategy risks usually depend on the type of strategy, type of organization and prevailing circumstances. The lack of understanding of a strategy and the inability to connect strategy formulation and implementation has an impact on successful implementation. According to Harvard Business School Publishing (2003), there are numerous risks present when organizations try to implement strategies. The next sections focus on the risks that detract organizations from successfully implementing their strategies.

2.2.1. Internal source

Literature identifies the internal source as comprising many strategy implementation risks in most industries and organizations. Many of the risks are a result of complacency whereby organizations and their people resist any strategic changes being introduced. They would rather maintain the status quo than embrace the unknown changes. The following have been cited as serious internal strategy implementation risks:

- Poor strategy formulation: Several studies, (Fourie, 2010; Alio, 2005) stress that the kind of strategy developed and how that strategy was developed inevitably influences the execution of such strategy. The basis of strategy implementation process- vague or poorly formulated strategy limits implementation.
- Weak relationships among different units/functions and different strategy levels: Zero sum mentality distorts the strategy implementation fundamentals.
- Incompetent executors: The quality of strategy execution is affected by the quality of these actors (Shank and Covindarajan, 2004).
- Poor communication: Reluctance to share information and poor vertical communication are the core barrier as it not only hinders execution but also the discussion of the barriers themselves (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000).
- Lack of consensus: Consensus means unity of views. Consensus is the starting point for officiating

and internalization of cohesion enabling behaviour. It provides a unifying frame of reference that in turn becomes a rallying point for galvanizing members' support for strategy implementation. Without consensus, the organization cannot successfully implement a strategy (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997).

- Lack of commitment: Commitment is the parties' intention to act and their attitude towards working with one another. It also imply the stamina, ability and eagerness to endure setbacks. Lack of this attribute is characterized by quick withdrawal at the slightest hint of an obstacle thereby hurting strategy implementation (Kohtamäki *et al.*, 2012).
- Weak structure and administrative systems: According to Olson et al (2005), structures are isobars that depict information flows, pressure points, hot spots and constrictions, Structure and administrative systems articulate and support the vision and mission. These are the vehicles for translating strategy to value. Weak structures and administrative systems have the capacity to derail the strategy implementation effort.

2.2.2. Systemic risks

Acharya et al. (2010) claim that systemic strategy risks can manifest when organizations or people indirectly do not support a formulated strategy. As a result of systemic strategy risks, the process of strategy implementation start to lag behind. Also there can be unanticipated risks at the time of strategy implementation such as when strategy implementation goes beyond the planned time, rigid and bureaucratic structure and insufficient financial resources to execute the strategy. For any strategy to be fully implemented, it requires well trained and competent manpower. But the cost of training the staff, lack of qualified people to train and limitation in time may act as an obstacle to strategy implementation. A times strategy, implementation is resisted because it was introduced by certain people or organizations. Opposition of anything from such people can be seen as a way to retain the existing structures and comfort zones. According to Arkowitz. (2002), resistance to change normally leads to delays, additional costs and destabilizes the organization's change process.

2.2.3. Behavioural risks

These kinds of risks may be found at an individual or group level in an organization. Guth and MacMillan(1986) have shown that mistrust, narrow-minded self-interest, misunderstanding, intolerance and formed opinions give rise to the behavioural strategy implementation risks. In addition, lack of direction from leadership leads to followers not knowing what is expected of them. Consequently, a part of the followers could build their own goals aligned to the organizational goals. However, a risk can develop if the organization's goals are different from how the followers have understood them and set the goals. Motivation problems can also make some followers put their own interest over that of the organization. A motivational problem arises also when there is a tendency of favouritism, making the not favoured groups to boycott any strategic direction by the by the leadership. Followers may also compare what and how other leaderships are doing and build an expectation of at least the same level for themselves. The prevailing culture can act as strategy implementation risk. Coupled with inappropriate systems employed during operationalization, institutionalization and control of the strategy can cause systemic challenges when the strategy is being implemented. Lack of leadership from top executives arises when the top managers and leaders do not commit themselves to the process of strategy implementation. Buluma et al., (2013) posit that the planning of strategies dictates the direction of an organization. Therefore, to be able to achieve targeted strategic objectives the entire membership of organizations should be involved. Strategic plans may fail to produce the desired results as noted by (Noble, 1999) who said that "organizations may have formulated the best strategies but the strategies may fail to produce the desired results if they are not implemented in the right way". Various studies that have focused on institutional related factors that hinder the implementation of strategies such as Herbiniak and Snow (1982)indicated that, the participation and the interventions among the highest level of management promotes greater commitment levels in the implementation of a firms vision and strategies which in turn promotes success in the implementation of a selected strategy. Smith and Kofron (1996) believed that leadership plays a major role not only in the formulation, but in the implementation of the strategy while Nutt (1986) suggested that the tactics used in leadership styles may play important roles in overcoming obstructions from the lower levels that sometimes my appear in the implementation of strategies. Nutt and Backoff, (1987 noted that strategic decisions formulated by the leaders may be administratively imposed on lower-level levels while inadequately considering the resulting functional level perceptions. The implementation of strategies therefore, may suffer if the lower levels are not adequately informed on issues concerning the implementation of strategies, moreover, where the information passes through several leadership levels may lead to a lack of consensus concerning the information hence creating an obstacle that hinders the successful implementation of a strategy (Noble, 1999). According to Alexander (1985)'s findings, communication is among the most frequently mentioned item behind the promotion of a successful strategy implementation. Therefore, lack of an effective communication that should explain clearly the new responsibilities, duties and tasks which are to be done can cause strategy implementation failure. Lihalo's (2014) study indicates that focusing attention to marketing and involvement of all involved in the strategy implementation process can significantly realize higher percentages of strategy implementation. Therefore, Lihalo(2014) proposed that leadership should focus on improving relationships with counterparts by advocating for written communication and reward systems which are aligned to the strategy hence putting more emphasize on a two way process based dimension. Anything less will obstruct the strategy implementation process. Heide, Gronhaug and Johannessen (2002) on the other hand observed that there existed various communication related challenges. The communication related issues could have been brought about by the structure of the organization which in turn presents serious risks to the implementation of the planned strategic activities. Rapert, Velliquette and Garretson (2002) observed that shared communication and understanding among all involved is an important aspect in the strategy implementation process. For instance, through communicating vertically, the shared understanding about the prioritized strategies are likely to be enhanced hence leading to improvements. More recently, Canhada and Rese (2011) seem to confirm that the risks to strategy implementation are related to lack of consensus, understanding and transparency regarding the meaning of the enterprise mission and vision, lack of relation between strategic content and strategic process, lack of coherence between strategic planning and resource allocation, lack of strategic feedback, a relatively inflexible formal structure, lack of involvement and using models that are ill-suited to prevailing organizational reality.

2.2.4. External sources

According to Guth and MacMillan (1986), there are also strategy risks which are external to the organization and include risk factors that are of economic, politico-legal, social, technological and environmental nature. These risks have an adverse effect on strategy implementation. Economic factors comprise the people purchasing power, a dependent variable of their current income, savings, prices and credit availability. Changes in the economic environment affect the overall financial performance of an industry. Social environmental factors relates to the changes in social values, behaviours and attitudes regarding childbearing, marriage, lifestyle, work, ethics, sex roles, racial equality, and social responsibilities among others will have effects on industrial development (Pearce and Robinson, 2003).

Politico-legal relates to unanticipated changes in the government policies such as taxation, changes in legislation, incentives, environmental protection and education policies. The entrance of important new competitors into the industry may upset the profit margins in the industry. Anticipated new substitute or competing products may render the products uncompetitive (Pearce and Robbinson, 2003). Operating environment changes, such as in the customer profiles, need to be anticipated and strategies adjusted to match customer expectations (Pearce, and Robbinson, 2003). The challenge of advances in innovation technology means the need for continuous new updates. The resources required in order to implement the strategy can be beyond the organizations capability thus leading to the strategy not being implemented.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a combination of primary and secondary sources of data. It was done in two stages. First a desk study of an exploratory nature to allow for the discovery of the important principles, hypotheses and solutions about the problem at hand. This study investigates the strategy implementation risks in clothing value chain of Zimbabwe with a view to develop a framework for improving strategy implementation success. Thus, a desk research was conducted with data coming from the internet, newspapers, books; trade and industry magazines. This stage identified the key implementation risks that were likely to be faced in the organization or industry. Wordstat, a thematic content analysis software was used to analyze the qualitative data. This led to the extraction of the various themes regarding strategy implementation risks.

In the second stage, a key informant survey was conducted with semi-structured interview as the instrument for collecting data to understand the strategy implementation risks in the Zimbabwean clothing industry value chain. Cotton farmers' representative bodies, cotton ginners association, the spinning industry and garment manufacturers, clothing retailers, workers' unions and government representatives were important sources of information. The quality of the key informants is crucial for the quality of the outcomes of any empirical research. The interview questions in this study required an informed opinion. However only a limited number of all individuals working in the clothing industry value chain could qualify as key informants. Purposive sampling was done by targeting those industry players with intimate knowledge about the industry. Thus, in this study key informants were selected on the basis of three criteria:

- Job position. Individuals with a job that required an understanding of strategy formulation and implementation are likely to be knowledgeable about strategy implementation risks. The majority of senior positions with organizations participating in the clothing value chain were ideal key informants.
- Experience in the clothing industry value chain. Newcomers to the industry are not likely to have accumulated sufficient knowledge about the industry. Only those with substantial experience in the industry segments were selected for survey.
- Involvement in the governance of the clothing industry value chain. Senior members of the trade associations (farmers, ginners, workers unions, and clothing manufacturers, clothing retailers) were selected since they were more likely to be knowledgeable with regard to strategy implementation risks.

As indicated in Table 1 below, the majority of the key informants were involved in the governance of the clothing industry value chain. They were also experienced in the working of the industry value chain.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of the respondents is as presented in Table 1. The largest organizational group that participated in the study was the clothing retailers (44.0 percent) with the smallest group that participated in the study being clothing manufacturers (4.0 percent). In terms of experience, the participants had an average of 10 years working in the clothing industry value chain. Over ninety percent of respondents were involved in the governance of the clothing industry value chain. This suggests that the sample is representative of the main population of companies engaged in strategic planning decisions and implementation in the clothing industry value chain and therefore could understand the strategy risks and how to reduce their occurrence.

4.1. Most frequent strategy implementation risks

Over thirty percent of the respondents identified ten strategy implementation risks that were frequently, if not always, occurring during implementation. These problems are listed in descending order of frequency in table 2.

Table 1. Clothing industry value chain experts

Key informant group	*Number*	*Participating & response rate*	*Percentage involved in governance*	*Average years of experience*
Farmers'representaitives	12	N=10; 83%	90%	15
Ginners	7	N=4; 57%	100%	8
Clothing retailers	22	N=15; 68%	88%	10
Workers representatives	4	N=4; 100%	100%	6
Clothing manufacturers	2	N=2; 100%	100%	15
Government officials	3	N=2; 67%	100%	10

Source: research survey

Table 2. Ten most common Implementation risks

Implementation risk	*Percentage*
Lack of consensus among industry players	39.2
Poor communication among stakeholder in the industry	37.9
Lack of strategic leadership	35.6
Lack of proper training	33.3
Lack of commitment to strategy	33.2
Lack of trust among the value chain actors	33.1
Inadequate physical and financial resources	31.8
Stiff competition from abroad	31.6
Lack of understanding of the role in the execution process	30.4
Resistance to change	30.2

Source: research survey

Previous studies indicate that human related issues are foremost in mitigating strategy implementation risks. It is noteworthy, that in this study the six most occurring implementation risks also relate to people. They suggest that organizations fail to adequately anticipate the needed human relations mechanisms needed to galvanize the people into action. Moreover, the formulators of strategic plans drop out of sight thus failing to exercise strategic leadership to spearhead implementation of the strategy. Results also indicate that there is generally a mismatch between anticipating the required training for executing the activities which results in people unable to carryout assigned tasks during the implementation phase. In all likelihood, the lack of commitment to the strategic plan is linked to the lack of industry players' motivation for executing the plan thus rendering the strategic implementation inertia. The lack of trust among the value chain actors leads to the dislocation of efforts to resuscitate the sector. Also, it is apparent that organizations fail to adequately provide requisite resources to support tasks for implementation. Overall, these results imply a tendency towards minimum concern about implementation of the strategy.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ten frequent strategy implementation risks found in this study strongly suggest the need to adopt certain guidelines and mechanisms to reduce these risks in realizing successful strategy implementation of the crafted export strategy. Table 3 provides an evocative list for each of the strategy implementation risks.

The governance guidelines revolve around the need to identify, inform, involve and incentivize. This entails: (a) A more sophisticated risk identification, delineation and role clarity strategy.(b) Better information and communication systems and feedback mechanisms. (c) Involvement in both the crafting and implementation of strategies and (d) incentives linked to strategy implementation success.

Table 3. Strategy implementation problems and Suggested adoptive mechanisms

Strategy Implementation Risk	*Suggested adoptive mechanisms*
Lack of consensus among industry players	Have higher involvement of lower level structures in strategic planning inputs and feedback
Poor communication among stakeholder in the industry	Spend more time and analysis on identification of problems in implementation
Lack of strategic leadership	Appoint cross-functional/supply chain teams for implementation purposes
Capabilities of implementers involved were insufficient	Train implementers in strategic implementation skills
Lack of proper training.	
Leadership and direction provided by departmental managers were inadequate	Link performance to implementation and effective feedback mechanisms
Lack of commitment to strategy.	Clarify and prioritize information on key implementation tasks and activities
Lack of trust among the value chain actors.	Continuously disseminate information on implementation of major tasks and activities
Inadequate physical and financial resources.	Source and provide requisite resources.
Stiff competition from abroad	Protect organizations from unfair competition from abroad
Lack of understanding of the role in the execution process	Involve key implementers in the development of implementation tasks
Resistance to change	Tie incentive and reward systems to success in implementation of formulated strategies

Source: survey results

The research suggests that strategy planners should put emphasis on strategy implementation risks at the time of strategy formulation. Most of these strategy risks are preventable when they are accounted for during the strategy formulation stage. Many strategic plans fail to realize the anticipated benefits due to problems and difficulties faced during implementation. Specific implications drawn from this study for the governors in the clothing industry in Zimbabwe can be outlined as follows:

- Industry and government should ensure that a good information system is in place so that strategy implementers are updated on implementation tasks at all times.
- Trust building is of great essence for infusing general consensus and commitment among the clothing industry value chain players. This is particularly important for the enhancement of the effectiveness of coordination during strategy implementation processes.
- All clothing industry players have to be involved in order to maintain their focus during the strategy implementation processes.
- The government and industry leadership must ensure that the supportive infrastructure and financial resources are in place during the implementation stage.

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