

# **An Assessment of the Significance of Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies for Strategic Growth in the Telecommunication Industry: A Study of Safaricom Kenya Ltd.**

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## **Abstract**

“Business seek unique economic principles and strategies that support proactive strategic management and decision making by producing actionable information that enables the identification of emerging challenges and organizational growth thus the need for Business Intelligence.(BI)”The purpose of the study was to assess the significance of Business Intelligence strategies and technologies for strategic growth of Safaricom Kenya Ltd. The specific objectives of the study were: - to ascertain the Business Intelligence strategies employed by Safaricom for strategic growth, to examine how Business Intelligence relates to information-intensive managerial activities of Safaricom, and to assess Business Intelligence’s contribution to ensure strategic growth in Safaricom. This research was conducted to fill the research gap in studies relating to Business Intelligence specifically on Safaricom. The study employed a descriptive survey design which enabled the researcher to collect data from the respondents. The area of study was Safaricom head office (Nairobi). The study targeted 1510 employees and employed purposive sampling. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics that summarized the data collected by working out the weighted averages, percentages, frequencies, pie charts and bar graphs. The findings will help in the development of Business Intelligence policies directed at driving growth in the telecommunication industry. This study will contribute to the existing literature in the field of management of Business Intelligence, thereby improving organizational performance significantly. It will further act as a stimulus for further research to extend the present study especially in Kenya. The study established that competitor analysis, monitoring stock movement, customer performance analysis, and call-center support lead to strategic growth to a great extent. However, customer relationship management, technical data analysis, and score carding and dashboards need particular attention so that they are popularized and utilized fully to influence growth within the telecommunication industry.

**Keywords** - Business Intelligence, Strategies and Technologies, and Strategic Growth

## **Introduction**

The concept of Business Intelligence (BI) is a management philosophy and tool that is used to help companies to manage and refine business information and to make more effective business decisions (Ghoshal and Kim 2013, Gilad and Gilad 2013). It refers to various processes, products, techniques, or tools that support the making of faster and better decisions. Typically, Business Intelligence (BI) may be defined as a managerial concept or a tool that is used to manage and enrich business information and to produce up-to-date knowledge and intelligence for operative and strategic decision-making (Ghoshal and Kim, 2013). The concept is not unambiguous but is at least dualistic, referring to the refined information and knowledge that describes the business environment, a company itself, and its state in relation to its markets, customers, competitors, and economic issues; and the process that produces insights, suggestions, and recommendations for the management and decision-makers.

Business Intelligence provides many benefits to companies utilizing it. It can eliminate a lot of guesswork within an organization, enhance communication, and enable companies to respond quickly to changes in financial conditions, customer preferences, and supply chain operations. BI improves the overall performance of the company using it.

Information is often regarded as the second most important resource a company has (a company's most valuable assets are its people). So when a company can make decisions based on timely and accurate information, the company can improve its performance. Business Intelligence also expedites decision-making, as acting quickly and correctly on information before competing businesses do which often result in superior performance. It can also improve customer experience, allowing for the timely and appropriate response to customer problems and priorities. Furthermore, Business Intelligence also enables firms to gather information on the trends in the marketplace and come up with innovative products or services in anticipation of customers' changing demands. Competitors can be a huge hurdle on a firm's way to success. Their objectives are the same as the firms,' that is to maximize profits and customer satisfaction. In order to be successful, firms must stay one step ahead of the competitors. In business, we don't want to play the catch up game because we would have lost valuable market share. Business Intelligence for strategic management tells what actions our competitors are taking, so one can make better informed decisions, (Ghoshal and Kim, 2013).

However, it is important to note that the peculiarity of Business Intelligence and the difference between BI and related intelligence concepts often vacillates because the way intelligence is managed and enriched stays mainly the same and the term applied refers to the specific type of intelligence required in a particular organization or situation. Hence, activities in managing and enriching information and knowledge remain essentially the same regardless of the designation. Related Business Intelligence concepts include competitive intelligence, competitor intelligence, customer intelligence, market intelligence, strategic intelligence, product intelligence, and environmental intelligence. Several of these intelligence concepts are sometimes used in a context similar to Business Intelligence. On the other hand, almost all of these intelligence concepts share the same purpose as BI, Miller, S. H. (2005).

With specific reference to this study, it is important to note that telephony has undergone a revolution. This fast changing environment presents unique challenges for managers. Customers are becoming more and more fluid as things change (Muturi, 2011). This assertion is true of the telecommunication industry in Kenya where cut-throat competition form the backdrop of survival and the day-to-day operation. Consequently, managers are constantly forced to make quick decisions based on imperfect or even incomplete data. Consumer trends and preferences change with every new season, new competitors emerge from previously remote markets, and we see product and service life cycles shrinking with new technologies and approaches. Being able to act quickly and appropriately on these changes is the key to creating competitive advantage.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A price war has characterized Kenya's mobile communications market in recent years, following the market entry of the third and fourth company, Yu (formerly Econet Wireless Kenya), and Telkom Kenya under the Orange brand. Subscriber growth is now forecast to slow gradually over the coming years, and rapidly falling average revenue per user (ARPU) levels have driven one of the incumbents, Airtel, deeper into negative earnings, leaving only the market leader, Safaricom, with a net profit, although reduced. This notwithstanding, Safaricom has been a never ending success story of superlatives: More than 80% market share, the biggest profits any company has ever made in the entire East African region, pioneer of new services such as 3G mobile broadband, 4G and mobile banking (M-Pesa), ARPU more than 50% above its nearest rival. This means that the company must be doing more than one thing right: While its nearest competitor Airtel made heavy losses for years and was eventually sold to Bharti of India, Safaricom stayed in the black throughout the global economic crisis, although with reduced profits for the first time. Now profits are rising again, and the rapid decline in ARPU has been stopped. There is need therefore to assess the significance of Business Intelligence (BI) strategies and technologies for strategic growth of Safaricom.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study was to assess the significance of Business Intelligence (BI) strategies and technologies for strategic growth of Safaricom. The specific objectives of the study were: - To ascertain the Business Intelligence strategies employed by Safaricom Kenya Ltd for strategic growth, to examine how Business Intelligence relates to information-intensive managerial activities of Safaricom Kenya Ltd, and to assess Business Intelligence's contribution to ensure strategic growth in Safaricom Kenya Ltd.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive survey design was used in conducting the study. The participants were 98 employees of Safaricom Kenya Ltd: 10 managers from 10 different departments, 23 from human resource, 22 from business unit, 22 from retail, 21 from corporate strategy, 21 from financial services, 18 from customer care, 17 from risk management, 16 from finance, 15 from learning and development), and 15 from technical (ICT). Questionnaires for all the participants were used to provide data. Data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The researchers identified sub-groups in the target population of 1510 and the sample size was determined by Nasiuma (2000) where;  $n = \{Nc_v^2\} / \{c_v^2 + (N-1) e^2\}$  arriving at a total number of 188 respondents.

## Results

### Popularity of Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies

Table 1: Rate of Popularity of Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies

Business Strategies	Intelligence	Most Popular 5	Very Popular 4	Popular 3	Less Popular 2	Least Popular 1	$\sum f_i$	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\sum f_i w_i / \sum f_i$
Call Centre Support		147	11	3	2	1	164	793	4.84
Customer Relationship Management		128	18	13	3	2	164	759	4.63
Competitor Analysis		117	21	22	1	3	164	750	4.51
Monitoring Stock Movement		112	27	20	3	2	164	736	4.49
Periodical Reports		101	39	22	1	1	164	730	4.45
Customer Preference Analysis		84	61	19	0	0	164	721	4.4
Open-door Communication		97	40	22	3	2	164	719	4.38
Trend Analysis		87	31	25	18	3	164	673	4.1
Performance Measurement		90	46	18	6	4	164	671	4.09
Score carding and Dashboards		59	67	29	5	4	164	664	4.05
Technical Data Analysis		64	61	23	9	7	164	658	4.01

#### Source (Research Data 2014)

From Table 1, the greatest number of employees (4.84) indicated that call-centre support was the most popular strategy employed by Safaricom to ensure strategic growth. Customer relationship management was most popular with (4.63), competitor analysis with (4.51), monitoring stock movement with (4.49), and periodical reports which had (4.45). Customer preference analysis recorded (4.40), open-door communication garnered (4.38), trend analysis (4.10), performance measurement (4.09), score carding and dashboards garnered (4.05), while technical data analysis earned (4.01) all falling under very popular category.

These statistics clearly indicate that call-centre support, customer relationship management, and competitor analysis were the most popular business intelligence tools with Safaricom while monitoring stock movement, periodical reports, customer preference analysis, open-door communication, trend analysis, performance measurement, score carding and dashboards, and technical data analysis were considered very popular strategies and technologies employed to sustain competitive advantage which translates to strategic growth. These results show that though some business intelligence strategies and technologies are most popular while the rest are very popular, all are popular and therefore all should be utilized fully in the telecommunication industry to ensure strategic growth. This implies that these strategies may be replicated by other firms within the telecommunication industry to influence growth.

### Factors Influencing the Choice of a Particular Business Intelligence Strategy

The study undertook to determine the influence of demand, computer networking issues, internet, legislation, external information sources and operation systems on the overall performance of Safaricom. Table 2 summarized this.

Table 2: Factors Influencing the Choice of a Particular Business Intelligence Strategy

Table 2 shows the factors influencing the choice of a particular Business Intelligence strategy.

Table 2: Factors Influencing the Choice of a Particular Business Intelligence Strategy

Moderating Variables	Most Influential 5	Very Influential 4	Influential 3	Less Influential 2	Least Influential 1	$\sum f_i$	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\sum f_i w_i / \sum f_i$
Operational Systems	146	7	5	4	2	164	783	4.77
Demand	111	37	13	2	1	164	749	4.57
Computer Networking Systems	118	18	18	4	4	164	728	4.44
Legislation	84	46	21	7	6	164	687	4.19
Internet	67	52	22	17	6	164	649	3.96
External Information Sources	47	61	22	19	15	164	598	3.65

#### Source (Research Data 2014)

From Table 2, it was ascertained that the company's operational systems was the most influential factor (4.77) followed by demand level (4.57). Computer networking systems recorded (4.44) while legislation had (4.19).

The internet garnered (3.96) followed by external information sources which had (3.65). This result clearly indicates that internal operation systems and demand were the most influential factors on the choice of a particular business intelligence strategy. The result also showed that all the other variables were very influential on the choice of a particular business intelligence strategy. This implies that the telecommunication industry should enhance its operational systems accordingly because this most influences the choice of particular business intelligence strategies and technologies.

### Management's Response on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth

The study sought to establish which business intelligence strategy and technology lead to strategic growth and to what extent. This is as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Management's Response on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

In line with the third objective, the study summarized the management's response on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth. Table 3 gives a summary of this.

Business Intelligence Strategies	To A Very Great Extent	To A Great Extent	To A Moderate Extent	To A Less Extent	To A Least Extent	$\sum f_i$	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\frac{\sum f_i w_i}{\sum f_i}$
	5	4	3	2	1			
Performance Measurement	8	1	1	0	0	10	47	4.7
Open-door Communication	7	2	1	0	0	10	46	4.6
Trend Analysis	7	2	1	0	0	10	46	4.6
Periodical Reports	7	1	2	0	0	10	45	4.5
Competitor Analysis	7	1	2	0	0	10	45	4.5
Monitoring Stock Movement	6	2	2	0	0	10	44	4.4
Customer Preference Analysis	7	1	1	1	0	10	44	4.4
Call Centre Support	6	2	2	0	0	10	44	4.4
Customer Relationship Management	6	2	1	1	0	10	43	4.3
Technical Data Analysis	5	3	2	0	0	10	43	4.3
Score carding and Dashboards	6	2	1	1	0	10	43	4.3

**Table 3: Management's Response on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

**Source (Research Data 2014)**

According to Table 3, performance measurement leads to strategic growth to a very great extent (4.7) followed by both trend analysis (4.6) and open door communication (4.6). The other strategies which lead to strategic growth to a very great extent were competitor analysis (4.5) and periodical reports (4.5). Customer preference analysis (4.4), monitoring stock movement (4.4), and call-centre support (4.4) lead to strategic growth to a great extent while customer relationship management (4.3), technical data analysis (4.3), and score carding and dashboards (4.3) also lead to strategic growth to a great extent. This result indicates that all these business intelligence strategies and technologies influence strategic growth at Safaricom. This confirms that all the strategies and technologies listed lead to strategic growth although performance measurement, open-door communication, and trend analysis are best placed in the role of influencing growth in the telecommunication industry thus need to be enhanced and properly utilized.

**The Level to which Business Intelligence Relates to Information-Intensive Managerial Activities**

The study also undertook to determine whether business intelligence relates to information-intensive managerial activities. This was captured in Table 4.

**Table 4: Level to which Business Intelligence Relates to Information-intensive Managerial Activities**

Table 4 summarized how business intelligence relate to information-intensive managerial activities

**Table 4: Level to which Business Intelligence Relates to Information-intensive Managerial Activities**

Managerial Activities	Most High 5	Very High 4	Moderate 3	Low 2	Very Low 1	$\sum f_i$	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\sum f_i w_i / \sum f_i$
<b>Strategic Management</b>	118	14	18	10	4	164	724	4.41
<b>Knowledge Management</b>	86	50	22	5	1	164	707	4.31
<b>Managerial Accounting</b>	95	41	11	13	5	164	698	4.26

Source (Research Data 2014)

From Table 4, it is certain that business intelligence relates to all the three information-intensive managerial activities. Business intelligence’s relationship with all the three factors was deemed very high with strategic management taking (4.41), knowledge management (4.31), and managerial accounting (4.26). Therefore, it is important to note that managerial accounting, knowledge management, and strategic management are quite interrelated and/interdependent. They all aim to enhance information’s utilization, speed up decision-making, refine information, and maximize organizational performance by gathering, processing, and sharing information and knowledge.

**Employees’ Response on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

The study also sought to establish which business intelligence strategy and technology leads to strategic growth and to what extent. This is summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5: Employees’ Response on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

Table 5 summarized of the extent to which Business Intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth.

Business Strategies	Intelligence	To A Very Great Extent	To A Great Extent	To A Moderate Extent	To A Less Extent	To A Least Extent	$\sum f_i$	$\sum f_i w_i$	$\sum f_i w_i / \sum f_i$
		5	4	3	2	1			
<b>Call Centre Support</b>		94	35	25	6	0	154	697	4.53
<b>Open-door Communication</b>		89	38	23	10	0	154	686	4.45
<b>Periodical Reports</b>		97	27	23	7	0	154	676	4.39
<b>Customer Preference Analysis</b>		93	32	21	8	0	154	672	4.36
<b>Customer Relationship Management</b>		96	23	27	8	0	154	669	4.34
<b>Performance Measurement</b>		92	28	26	8	0	154	666	4.32
<b>Competitor Analysis</b>		90	31	24	9	0	154	664	4.31
<b>Trend Analysis</b>		82	42	20	10	0	154	658	4.27
<b>Technical Data Analysis</b>		86	34	24	10	0	154	658	4.27
<b>Score carding and Dashboards</b>		75	48	23	8	0	154	652	3.23
<b>Monitoring Stock Movement</b>		80	38	26	10	0	154	650	4.22

**Table 5: Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Leading to Strategic Growth**

Source (Research Data 2014)

Table 5 shows that call-centre support leads to strategic growth to a very great extent (4.53) followed by open-door communication (4.45), periodical reports (4.39), customer preference analysis (4.36), customer relationship management (4.34), performance measurement (4.32), competitor analysis (4.31), trend analysis (4.27), technical data analysis (4.27), score carding and dashboards (4.23), and finally, monitoring stock movement (4.22). All these data indicated that business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth either to a very great extent or to a great extent. The implication is that the telecommunication industry should utilize all these business intelligence strategies and technologies and fully enhance their utilization for strategic

growth within the telecommunication industry.

**Comparative Responses from both the Management and Employees on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

A comparison was made on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth. Both the management’s responses and that of employees were used as indicated in Table 6

**Table 6: Comparative Data for Top Management and Employees’ Responses on the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

Table 6 gives a summary of the responses on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth.

**Table 6: The Extent to which BI Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

	To A Very Great Extent	To A Great Extent	To A Moderate Extent	To A Less Extent	To A Least Extent	Total
<b>Management</b>	72	19	16	3	0	110
<b>Other Employees</b>	974	376	262	94	0	1706
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,046</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1816</b>

**Source (Research Data 2014)**

Table 6 shows that 72 out of the possible 110 responses from the management favoured the fact that business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth to a very great extent. This represents 65.45% of the total responses. The respondents who thought these strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth to a great extent were 19, (17.27%). 974 out of 1706 responses from employees representing 57.09% show that business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth to a very great extent while 395 responses from employees representing 23.15% indicated that business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth to a great extent. These findings indicate that business intelligence strategies and technologies clearly lead to strategic growth to a very great extent. A further analysis was done using Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test to determine whether the view on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth was the same for both the management and the rest of the employees and also ascertain if the above noted difference is statistically significant. The results are as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Computation of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) Value for the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

Table 7 shows the computation of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value for the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth.

**Table 7: Computation of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) Value for the Extent to which Business Intelligence Strategies and Technologies Lead to Strategic Growth**

	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
<b>MANAGEMENT</b>			
To a very great extent	72	63.36	1.18
To a great extent	19	23.93	1.02
To a moderate extent	16	16.84	0.04
To a less extent	3	5.88	1.41
To a least extent	0	0	0
<b>EMPLOYEES</b>			
To a very great extent	974	982.64	0.08
To a great extent	376	371.07	0.07
To a moderate extent	262	261.16	0.00
To a less extent	94	91.12	0.09
To a least extent	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 3.89</b>

**Source (Research Data 2014)**

The table value of Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) for 4 degrees of freedom at 5 percent level of significance is 9.488. The calculated Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) value (3.89) is much smaller than the table value. This means that the opinions of the managers and the employees of Safaricom on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth were similar. This implies that both hold it that business intelligence is a necessary ingredient for strategic growth in the telecommunications industry. This therefore means that the



business intelligence practices (strategies and technologies) should be enhanced for purposes of ensuring strategic growth.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to establish the significance of business intelligence for strategic growth. The contribution of this study to knowledge is based on the examination of the research topic in question and the improvement in the knowledge and understanding of the business intelligence tools and technologies, their relationship with information-intensive business activities and their significance with regard to strategic growth. One of the theoretical contributions of the study is the comprehensive definition of business intelligence business intelligence-related concepts. The connections between business intelligence and its related intelligence concepts have been quite confused, and well-established definitions have been lacking in companies and in literature. Also, this study presents several approaches to business intelligence and connects this to theories of information management and business information therefore the study improves the knowledge of a fairly new research area by presenting core disciplines that aid business information management. The study further produces more detailed concepts and insights on business intelligence and makes it clear that the telecommunication industry employs business intelligence tools and technologies to create a competitive edge and enhance strategic growth in the business prism. This study recommends that the telecommunication industry conducts more research touching on Business Intelligence strategies and technologies to ensure that there is enough information that will enable the industry to utilize these tools accordingly for strategic growth. Equally, this industry should ensure that their organizations set funds aside that will ease the utilization, and systemization of these strategies and technologies for information management and decision-making which will, in the end, translate to strategic growth.

### Recommendation

From the response on the extent to which business intelligence strategies and technologies lead to strategic growth, table 4.5 clearly shows that performance measurement (4.7), open-door communication (4.6), trend analysis (4.6), periodical reports (4.5), and competitor analysis (4.7) confirm the fact that all these mechanism lead to strategic growth to a very great extent (4.62). This study therefore recommends that the telecommunication industry to conduct more research touching on these strategies and technologies to ensure that there is enough information that will enable the industry to utilize these tools accordingly and maximally for strategic growth. Equally the telecommunication industry should ensure that their organizations set funds aside that will ease the utilization of these strategies and technologies for strategic growth. On the other hand the study established that customer preference analysis (4.4), monitoring stock movement (4.4), customer performance analysis (4.4), and call centre support (4.4) lead to strategic growth to a great extend (4.4). However, customer relationship management, technical data analysis, and score carding and dashboard need particular attention so that they are popularized and utilized fully to influence growth within the telecommunication industry. All these strategies and technologies should therefore be improved, utilized and systemized for information management and decision making which will, in the end, translate to strategic growth.

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### Areas of Specialization and Research Interests

- Specialization
  - ✓ Business Administration
- Research Interest
  - ✓ Project management
  - ✓ Entrepreneurship
  - ✓ Financial aspects of business
  - ✓ Marketing and management