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Strategic Recruitment and Competitive Advantage of Safaricom Public Limited Company in Kenya

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Abstract
This study examined how strategic recruitment influences competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC, Kenya. Anchored in the Resource-Based View, Human Capital Theory, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the study adopted a descriptive and explanatory research design within a cross-sectional case study approach using a quantitative methodology. From a target population of 6,462 employees, a sample of 377 respondents was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation across functional departments, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum. Structured questionnaires were administered, yielding 257 completed responses and a response rate of 68.2 per cent. The data were examined using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient and regression analysis. The results showed that strategic recruitment was positively and significantly related to competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.443$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that strategic recruitment is a critical organisational capability for enhancing competitive advantage through the attraction and selection of employees whose skills, competencies and values align with organisational requirements. It recommends that Safaricom PLC strengthen its recruitment practices by systematically identifying, attracting and selecting highly skilled employees aligned with its strategic objectives. The study advances the literature on strategic human resource management by presenting empirical findings on the link between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage. It also provides practical guidance for organisational leaders on utilising human capital to enhance competitive positioning within Kenya's telecommunications industry.

Keywords: Competitive advantage, Kenya, Safaricom PLC, strategic recruitment, telecommunications industry

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INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications industry operates within an increasingly dynamic environment characterised by rapid technological advancement, intensified competition and evolving customer expectations. These developments require firms to continually align their organisational capabilities with strategic priorities to sustain competitive advantage (Soekiman, 2024; Song et al., 2024). Within this environment, strategic recruitment has become increasingly important because the ability to attract and select employees with appropriate knowledge, skills, competencies and organisational fit strengthens the human capital required to compete effectively. Firms that fail to secure appropriately qualified talent may experience reduced organisational responsiveness, weaker innovation capacity and diminished competitive positioning (Hammad et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2022).

Globally, telecommunications firms face increasing pressure to acquire talent capable of responding to technological disruption, cybersecurity risks, digital transformation and changing customer demands. Strategic recruitment enables organisations to align workforce capabilities with emerging business requirements by identifying and selecting employees whose competencies support organisational objectives (Song et al., 2024). The quality of human capital acquired through recruitment can influence organisational agility, innovation and service responsiveness, making recruitment a strategically significant organisational capability rather than merely an administrative human resource function (Hammad et al., 2022; Lukitasar et al., 2024). Consequently, telecommunications firms require recruitment systems that are strategically aligned with organisational priorities and capable of securing scarce and specialised talent.

The importance of strategically acquiring human capital is particularly evident in developing and emerging telecommunications markets, where firms operate under intense competitive and technological pressures. African telecommunications companies have experienced substantial market transformation arising from digitalisation, changing consumer preferences, infrastructure requirements and increasing competition (International Finance Corporation, 2023). These conditions heighten the importance of attracting employees with competencies that enable firms to respond effectively to market changes and sustain service competitiveness. Weaknesses in human resource practices can constrain organisational effectiveness and competitiveness, particularly where employee capabilities are not adequately aligned with changing organisational requirements (Orji et al., 2022; Kuse & Wanyoike, 2022). Strategic recruitment is therefore critical to ensuring that telecommunications firms acquire the human capital necessary to sustain their competitive positioning.

In Kenya, the telecommunications industry has become increasingly competitive as technological advancement, changing consumer preferences and market rivalry reshape the basis of competition. Safaricom PLC has maintained a strong market position, but competitive pressures from Airtel Kenya and other digital service providers continue to challenge its traditional sources of competitive advantage. The increasing importance of mobile financial services, digital platforms and data-driven business models has further intensified the need for organisations to attract employees with specialised and strategically relevant capabilities (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2026). Strategic recruitment is consequently important in ensuring that Safaricom acquires human capital capable of supporting its organisational objectives and sustaining its competitive position.

Safaricom PLC provides an important context for examining the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage because of its position within Kenya's highly competitive telecommunications industry. The organisation's continued expansion into technology-enabled services requires employees whose capabilities correspond with evolving strategic and operational demands. At the same time, reported concerns surrounding recruitment processes demonstrate the importance of fairness, transparency and appropriate employee selection in recruitment decisions (Kiplagat, 2021). These concerns highlight the need for recruitment systems that are not only procedurally sound but also strategically aligned with organisational requirements. Effective recruitment can therefore help Safaricom acquire employees whose capabilities support innovation, service delivery and the achievement of its strategic objectives.

Despite recruitment's strategic importance, its specific contribution to competitive advantage remains insufficiently established in Kenya's telecommunications sector. Previous studies have examined strategic human resource management practices and their association with organisational performance and other organisational outcomes, but few studies have empirically isolated strategic recruitment as a determinant of competitive

advantage (Kiragu & Marwa, 2022; Jarrar, 2022; Mishra et al., 2022). Existing studies have largely focused on broader human resource management practices or employee-related outcomes, leaving insufficient understanding of how strategically attracting and selecting employees contributes to competitive positioning. Furthermore, evidence from other institutional and national contexts may not adequately explain this relationship within Kenya's telecommunications industry (Almuslamani & Daud, 2022; Soekiman, 2024). This conceptual and contextual gap warrants an investigation of the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC.

The gap is particularly significant because sustaining competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving telecommunications environment requires employees whose knowledge, skills, competencies and values align with organisational objectives. Ineffective or misaligned recruitment may result in skills gaps, reduced organisational responsiveness, limited innovation and weakened service differentiation, potentially undermining competitive positioning. Although Safaricom PLC operates in an increasingly competitive market shaped by technological advancement and changing customer expectations, the extent to which its strategic recruitment practices contribute to competitive advantage remains insufficiently established. Addressing this gap requires organisation-specific empirical evidence on the relationship between recruitment practices and competitive outcomes. Accordingly, the present study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional case study design, stratified random sampling and statistical analysis to examine the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage among employees of Safaricom PLC, Kenya.

The study sought to evaluate the effect of strategic recruitment on the competitive advantage of Safaricom PLC, Kenya. Specifically, it addressed the following research question: What is the relationship between strategic recruitment and the competitive advantage of Safaricom PLC, Kenya?

Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The investigation was based on basic theories articulated below.

Resource-Based View Theory

The RBV was introduced by Wernerfelt (1984) and further advanced by Barney (1991), pointing out that the continued competitive advantage of the institution is derived from its unique, VRIN internal resources. These resources may encompass human capital, technological capacities and intellectual capital (Song et al., 2024; Mishra et al., 2022; Cahyani & Agusria, 2023). The basis of the theory was on the premise that firm performance is not necessarily determined by positioning, but by the SHRM and deployment of these resources. Organisations that leverage resources to support strategic objectives can outperform other organisations and differentiate themselves. These practices enhance employees' capacity, which competitors are hard pressed to emulate and, consequently, enable better firm performance and innovation. It attributes competitive advantage to owning and effectively using resources that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and impossible to substitute. In the present study, strategic recruitment is a mechanism through which Safaricom PLC acquires human resources that strengthen its distinctive organisational capabilities. The theory therefore explains why strategically recruited employees may contribute to competitive advantage by providing competencies that competitors may find difficult to replicate. Its principal contribution is establishing the strategic value of human resources as a source of organisational differentiation.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) was added to the RBV by Teece et al. (1997). The concept is that in a dynamic market, firms obtain a competitive benefit when they continuously improve, build and recombine internal and external capabilities to deal with new opportunities and threats. Some of the key propositions are: the ability to detect opportunities, the ability to seize resources, and the ability to transform capabilities to meet market conditions. DCT believes that resources are not enough to achieve long-term success; therefore, companies need to have the ability to continuously change their capabilities. For Safaricom Limited, DCT implies that HR is essential in detecting technological and market opportunities, acquiring relevant skills, and adapting the use of skills in its workforce to keep it competitive in the market. Unlike RBV, which emphasises the strategic value of resources, DCT highlights the organisation's

capacity to adapt those resources to evolving technological and market conditions. For Safaricom PLC, strategic recruitment can facilitate the acquisition of employees with competencies suited to digital transformation, innovation and changing customer needs. DCT therefore explains how recruitment can support organisational adaptation and the preservation of competitive advantage in a dynamic telecommunications industry.

Human Capital Theory

HCT was first proposed by Becker (1964), and later developed by Schultz (1961). The principle is that people's knowledge, skills, competencies, and experience are a form of capital that can be monetised for the individual and the organisation. For example, key propositions are that investment in education, recruitment, professional development and training improves production, innovation and performance. The theory postulates that HR are not simply expenses and represent assets that can be developed to provide long-term returns. It also assumes that knowledge and skills can be shared, measured, developed, and enhanced systematically to contribute to organisational goals and competitive advantage. Human Capital Concept is very relevant for this assessment because it suggests a positive association between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage, namely SHRMP (Mishra et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2023). Effectively utilising employees' knowledge, skills, and competencies can enable Safaricom Limited to enhance productivity, foster innovation, and improve organisational adaptability, thereby sustaining its competitive advantage in the dynamic telecommunications industry (Song et al., 2024; Lukitasar et al., 2024). The theory explains the value created by strategically attracting and selecting employees whose competencies correspond with Safaricom PLC's operational and strategic requirements. Whereas RBV explains the strategic significance of human resources and DCT emphasises adaptation, Human Capital Theory clarifies how employees' individual competencies contribute to organisational value creation. It consequently provides the human-capital-level explanation linking strategic recruitment to the capabilities that may strengthen competitive advantage.

Complementarity of the Theories

The three theories provide complementary rather than interchangeable explanations of the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage. Human Capital Theory explains the value of employees' knowledge and competencies; RBV explains how these resources can become sources of competitive differentiation; and DCT explains how organisations adapt and redeploy their capabilities as competitive conditions change. Collectively, they provide a multilevel theoretical foundation for examining how strategic recruitment at Safaricom PLC may contribute to competitive advantage.

Empirical Review

Strategic Recruitment and Competitive Advantage

Egessa (2026) investigated how SHRM practices affect performance in the public sector after devolution under the 2010 Constitution, using Western Kenya county governments as a context. The focus of the evaluation was on recruitment, performance management, training, and retaining talent as factors underpinning service delivery, accountability and employee motivation. Results from the quantitative analysis using multiple linear regression indicated that the practices of SHRM had significant effects on performance success, with training and performance management as the main success predictors. The study, however, had a contextual limitation since it was conducted with county governments, and thus mixed methods should be used in corporate organisations like Safaricom PLC for a proper investigation.

Shrestha and Prajapati (2024) examined the influence of SHRMPs on staff retention in commercial banks and insurance entities in Nepal. A total of 240 questionnaires were sent to senior executives (HR and branch managers), and 167 were returned, yielding a 69 per cent response rate. The researchers applied a quantitative survey research approach and included recruitment, training, performance assessment, compensation and career management as factors for retention. The results revealed that recruitment, compensation and career management were significant positive predictors of employees' stay, whereas training and performance appraisal were negative predictors. The study, however, did not examine Kenyan telecom companies but financial institutions in Nepal, which is another context that needs to be explored in organisations like Safaricom PLC.

Verma et al. (2022) addressed the aspects of SHRM practices which are necessary for TQM in a Tire manufacturing company located in India. The focus of the assessment was to determine which are the main SHRM practices and which are the most important relationships between these practices in order to enhance the entity's performance. Semi-structured interviews with

10 experts from the companies were conducted. Twelve SHRM practices were ranked using the SLR and TOPSIS approach. Results showed that planning and staffing, partnership and leadership development were the most important practices, and in contrast, performance valuation and evaluation, work design and scrutiny and promotion were the least important. Despite this, the investigation is geographically confined to the Indian manufacturing industry. A critical evaluation points out that there is a methodological gap, since the investigation was conducted on expert interviews and there is no quantitative modelling or panel data analysis used to assess the causal link.

Kiragu and Marwa (2022) investigated the connection between SHRMPs and employee retention in a private commercial bank in Kenya. The assessment was aimed at investigating the implications of career management, training, and recruitment on retention. The study design used was descriptive cross-sectional, with sampling target reaching all bank workers number of 198. A simple random sampling was used, so that 93 participants were selected, and first-hand insights were gathered by means of questionnaires. Discoveries unveiled a significant positive link between recruitment and retention, career management and retention ($r = 0.230$, $p = 0.000$), and training and retention. However, the evaluation is limited by its cross-sectional format and self-report perspective.

Aliyev (2024) studied the role of SHRM in the creation of competitive advantage in modern institutions. The study involved the study of activities such as talent management, training, and performance management and how they contribute to the capability of the entity when aligned with business goals. The research methodology was a comprehensive literature review in compliance with the RBV and VRIO Framework, and the research method in this investigation was based on empirical and theoretical studies conducted in various countries around the world. Results revealed that strategic alignment and good human capital management give rise to unique and complex capabilities that enhance organisational performance and competition. However, the lack of primary quantitative data and context-specific analysis in Kenyan telecom companies like Safaricom PLC shows gaps in concepts and methods which demand empirical investigation using a mixed-methods approach.

Bangbon et al. (2023) investigated the consequence of SHRM on organisational performance in Thai higher education institutions in Bangkok. The evaluation focused on employees, using a quantitative study method, and a sample size of 350 employees. Structured questionnaires were used to source data, and analysis was done using percentages, means, SD, correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results of the discoveries indicated that HRP has the greatest positive impact on organisational performance, followed by development and learning, selection and recruitment, benefits and compensation and employee retention. However, the assessment highlights the need for HR policies to be strategically designed to deliver the best outcomes for the institution. The contextual gap is the fact that the research was not conducted in Kenya, and the conceptual gap is that the study failed to incorporate current digital HR practices or analyse the longer-term effects using more panel data.

The empirical literature generally indicates that strategic recruitment contributes to competitive advantage by enabling organisations to attract and select employees whose competencies align with organisational objectives (Hammad et al., 2022; Song et al., 2024). Nevertheless, differences in research contexts and findings suggest that the contribution of recruitment practices to competitive advantage may vary across organisations and industries. Methodologically, previous studies have relied on diverse research designs and have frequently examined broader human resource management practices or employee-related outcomes rather than isolating strategic recruitment as an independent determinant of competitive advantage. Contextually, evidence from international settings may not adequately represent the competitive and technological dynamics of Kenya's telecommunications industry. Consequently, a conceptual and contextual gap persists regarding the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC. The present study addresses this gap by specifically examining this relationship, as illustrated in the conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework

This visual illustration shows the key constructs and their hypothesised links, providing a blueprint for understanding how different elements interact to influence the outcome of interest. Consequently, this investigation presents a visual diagram to enhance clarity and comprehension by illustrating the associations between variables. The diagram guides the research to systematically address the objectives and hypotheses while providing a coherent representation of the theoretical and practical underpinnings. The independent

variable is strategic recruitment, and the dependent variable is competitive advantage.

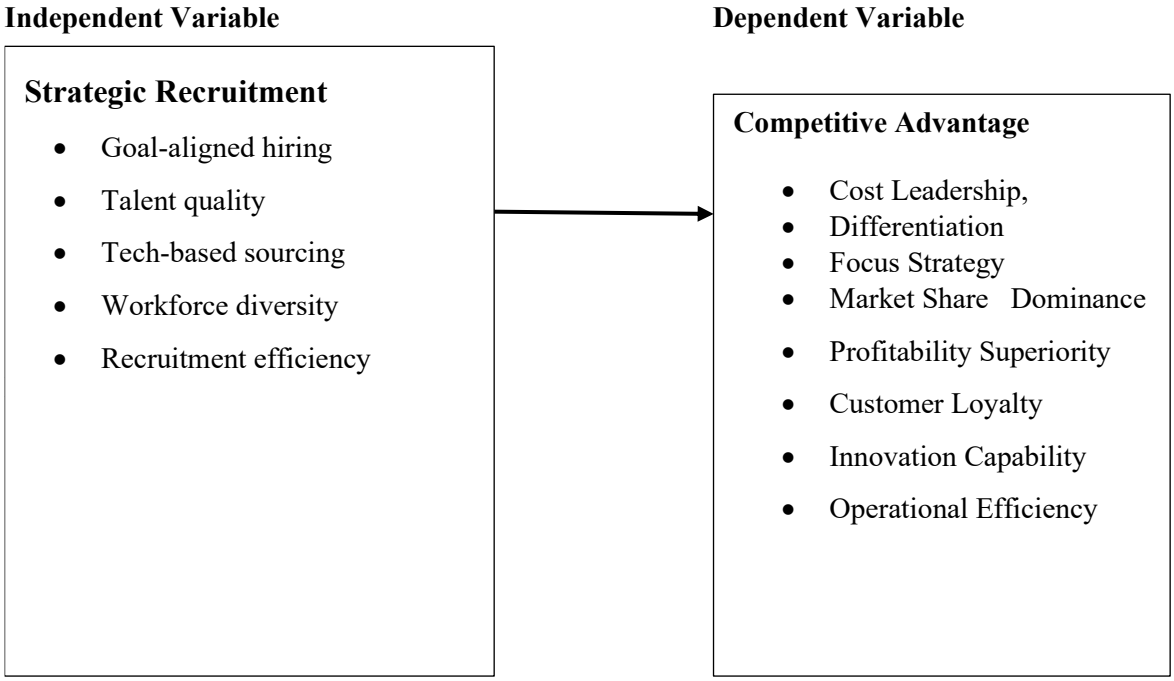

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and explanatory research design within a cross-sectional case study approach, focusing on Safaricom PLC, Kenya. The descriptive design facilitated the systematic assessment of strategic recruitment practices, while the explanatory design enabled examination of the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage. The cross-sectional approach enabled data collection from selected employees at a single point in time, while the case study approach provided an in-depth organisational context for investigating the study variables. A quantitative approach was employed to facilitate statistical analysis and objective assessment of the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage (Hammad et al., 2022; Kiragu & Marwa, 2022; Jarrar, 2022; Mishra et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2023).

Target Population

The target population comprised all 6,462 employees of Safaricom PLC as of March 2025 (Safaricom, 2026). Employees were drawn from key functional departments, including Human Resource Management, Strategy and Corporate Planning, Marketing and Product Development, Finance and Operations, Network and Technology, and Customer Experience and Service Management. These employees were considered appropriate respondents because their strategic and operational roles provide relevant knowledge and experience regarding recruitment practices and organizational competitiveness (Egessa, 2026; Abdulkareem & Adekunle, 2025; Shrestha & Prajapati, 2024).

Sampling Design

The study used stratified random sampling to ensure the major functional departments were proportionately represented in the sample. Employees were first classified into departmental groups, after which participants were randomly selected from each group. The method supported representative sampling, reduced the likelihood of selection bias and enhanced the dependability of the findings (Mishra et al., 2022; Hammad et al., 2022). Yamane's (1967) formula guided the determination of the sample size, while the participation of managerial and operational employees facilitated the collection of diverse views regarding strategic recruitment and competitive advantage. This approach provided an appropriate basis for generating reliable empirical evidence on the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC.

Safaricom's total population is 6,462 employees, n

n = sample size

N = population size (6,462)

e = margin of error (typically 5% or 0.05)

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{6462}{1+6462(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{6462}{17.155}$$

$$n \approx 377$$

This means that, to achieve a 5 per cent margin of error, the researcher needed to survey 377 employees, proportionally selected from all departments using stratified random sampling. This is in tandem with Yamane (1967) as well as Egessa (2026).

Sampling Frame

The target population comprised all 6,462 employees of Safaricom PLC registered in the organisation's human resource database as of 31 March 2025, including 2,500 employees based at the headquarters (Safaricom PLC, 2025). The sampling frame covered key functional departments, namely Human Resource Management, Strategy and Corporate Planning, Marketing and Product Development, Finance and Operations, Network and Technology, and Customer Experience and Service Management. Stratified sampling ensured proportional departmental representation, followed by simple random sampling within each stratum. This approach enhanced sample representativeness and reliability by capturing diverse employee perspectives relevant to strategic recruitment and competitive advantage (Egessa, 2026; Abdulkareem & Adekunle, 2025; Shrestha & Prajapati, 2024; Mishra et al., 2022).

Table 1: Sampling Frame and Sample Size Distribution of Safaricom PLC Employees

Department/Stratum	Target Population (N)	Percentage Proportion (%)	Sample Size Calculation $\frac{N}{6462} * 377$	Proposed Sample Size
Human Resource Management	420	6.5%	24.5	25
Strategy and Corporate Planning	315	4.9%	18.4	18
Marketing and Product Development	1,626	25.2%	94.9	95
Finance and Operations	980	15.2%	57.2	57
Network and Technology	1,120	17.3%	65.3	65
Customer Experience and Service Management	2,001	31.0%	116.7	117
Total	**6,462**	**100%**		**377**

Source: Researcher (2026)

Hence the sample size was 377 based on proposed stratified random sampling.

Data Collection

The study gathered primary data by administering structured questionnaires to selected employees of Safaricom PLC. The questionnaire focused exclusively on strategic recruitment and competitive advantage and was adapted from instruments used in related studies (Kiragu & Marwa, 2022; Jarrar, 2022; Hammad et al., 2022; Mishra et al., 2022). The structured format ensured standardised responses and facilitated objective quantitative analysis. The study adopted an explanatory, cross-sectional case study design to examine the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC (Hammad et al., 2022; Pratama et al., 2023).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection commenced after obtaining authorisation from Safaricom PLC management and a research permit from NACOSTI. Before the main data collection, the

questionnaire was piloted with individuals whose characteristics resembled those of the study population to evaluate the instrument's clarity, relevance and reliability (Egessa, 2026; Abdulkareem & Adekunle, 2025; Shrestha & Prajapati, 2024). The final questionnaires were administered to selected respondents using appropriate physical and electronic channels, with procedures designed to minimise response bias and enhance data quality

Data Analysis and Presentation

Collected data were coded, edited, verified and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarised the study variables, while Pearson correlation and regression analysis established the direction, strength and statistical significance of the relationship between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage. Statistical inference was conducted at the 5 per cent significance level to determine whether strategic recruitment significantly predicted competitive advantage.

The study's analytical model was as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y=B_0+B_1SR+\varepsilon}$$

Where:

Y stands for Competitive Advantage (CA)

β_0 = Constant term

SR = Strategic Recruitment (SR)

Ethical Consideration

The study observed ethical principles throughout the research process. The study secured informed consent from all participants after explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and intended data use. Respondents participated voluntarily and were advised that they could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any stage without facing penalties. Confidentiality and anonymity were safeguarded by omitting personal identifiers from the dataset and presenting the results in aggregate form. All collected data were securely stored, accessed only by authorised persons and used exclusively for the stated research purposes, in accordance with applicable data protection requirements. The research complied with the applicable ethical and institutional requirements through approval by the relevant ethics review committee, authorisation by NACOSTI, and permission granted by Safaricom PLC management before data collection began.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The size of the sample for the investigation was 377 respondents. Therefore, a total of 377 questionnaires were administered, but 257 questionnaires were duly filled and returned, representing a response rate of 68.2 per cent, which is sufficient for a research study. Table 4 presents the response rate. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) postulate that a response rate of 50 per cent is considered adequate for analysis and reporting.

Table 2: Response Rate

Category	Frequency	Percent
Response	257	68.2
Non-Response	120	31.8
Total	377	100

Descriptive Results

The study summarised descriptive statistics using percentages, mean scores and standard deviations. Primary information was gathered through structured questionnaires and processed with SPSS version 29. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 representing strong disagreement and 5 representing strong agreement.

Descriptive Results for Strategic Recruitment

The descriptive outcomes for strategic recruitment are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Descriptive Results for Strategic Recruitment

	SD	D	N	A	SA		
	%	%	%	%	%	M	S Dev
Our recruitment processes ensure goal-aligned hiring that supports organizational objectives.	5.4 %	5.4 %	13.6 %	38.5 %	37.0 %	3.96	1.10
Talent quality is a key criterion in all hiring decisions.	3.5 %	6.2 %	12.5 %	45.1 %	32.7 %	3.97	1.01
Technology-driven sourcing methods are effectively used to attract qualified candidates.	6.6 %	3.9 %	14.8 %	40.1 %	34.6 %	3.92	1.12
Workforce diversity is actively promoted and considered during recruitment.	5.8 %	4.3 %	17.9 %	36.2 %	35.8 %	3.92	1.11
Candidates are assessed for cultural fit to enhance organizational cohesion.	4.7 %	5.1 %	16.0 %	40.1 %	34.2 %	3.94	1.06
Our recruitment processes are efficient and timely in filling positions.	5.8 %	3.9 %	14.4 %	44.4 %	31.5 %	3.92	1.07

The statement, 'Our recruitment processes ensure goal-aligned hiring that supports organizational objectives' attracted responses as follows; 37 per cent of the participants were in tandem, 38.5 per cent were in concurrence while 13.6 per cent were neutral with an average of 3.96 and an SD of 1.10. 32.7 per cent of the respondents were strongly in concurrence that they enhance employee competencies through targeted skill-building initiatives; 45.1 per cent were in tandem, while 12.5 per cent were neutral, with an average and respective SD of 3.97 and 1.01. Furthermore, 34.6 per cent of the responses were strongly in tandem that they regularly evaluate training effectiveness to ensure optimal learning outcomes; 40.1 per cent were in concurrence, while 14.8 per cent were neutral, with an average of 3.92 and an SD of 1.12.

Regarding the statement, 'Workforce diversity is actively promoted and considered during recruitment' 35.8 per cent were strongly in concurrence, 36.2 per cent were in tandem while 17.9 per cent were neutral with an average of 3.92 and an SD of 1.11. In addition, 34.2 per cent were strongly in tandem that candidates are assessed for cultural fit to enhance organisational cohesion, 40.1 per cent were in tandem while 16 per cent were neutral with an average of 3.94 and an SD of 1.06. Finally, concerning the statement, 'Our recruitment processes are efficient and timely in filling positions', 31.5 per cent of the participants were in strong concurrence, 44.4 per cent were in concurrence, while 14.4 per cent were neutral, with an average and respective SD of 3.92 and 1.07. The descriptive statistics for strategic recruitment were crucial to determining the degree to which Safaricom was matching the staffing requirements with its strategic goals, such as forecasting staffing requirements and addressing skills gaps. This aligns with the findings of Egessa (2026), Alzeiby et al. (2025) and Bangbon et al. (2023), who showed the significance of workforce planning in building organisational capability and performance. Recent evidence from Kenya also indicates that strategic HR planning is linked to sustainable competitive advantage via skills gap identification, skills forecasting and skills development.

Diagnostic Results

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test established that competitive advantage ($D = 0.088$, $p = 0.111$) and strategic recruitment ($D = 0.091$, $p = 0.067$) were normally distributed, as their significance values exceeded 0.05, confirming suitability for further analysis and supporting Song et al. (2024). Multicollinearity assessment using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) indicated that strategic recruitment recorded a VIF of 2.675, which was below the threshold of 5, confirming the absence of problematic multicollinearity. The Breusch–Pagan test yielded a significance value of 0.1173, exceeding 0.05 and consequently indicating homoscedasticity, thereby confirming that the data were appropriate for subsequent regression analysis and statistical inference (Kiragu & Marwa, 2022).

Correlation Results

The analysis was used to explore the direction and strength of association between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya. This study helps establish whether strategic recruitment and competitive advantage are significantly associated.

Table 4: Correlation Results

		Competitive Advantage	Strategic Recruitments
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	1	.558**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	257	257
Strategic Recruitments	Pearson Correlation	.558**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	257	257

From the outcomes, the association between strategic recruitment and competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya was positive (0.558) and statistically significant (0.000<0.05).

Inferential Results

The analysis purposed to assess the linear association between the variables under investigation using multiple regression analyses. The dependent variable was Safaricom Limited's competitive advantage, while the independent variable was strategic recruitment.

Strategic Recruitment and Competitive Advantage

The analysis purposed to assess the linear association between strategic recruitment and the competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.558a	0.311	0.308	0.67809

As per the SPSS output, R = 0.558showing there is a strong positive association between the predictors and competitive advantage. The estimated model indicates that strategic recruitment explains 31.1 per cent of the variation in competitive advantage at Safaricom PLC, Kenya. This is supported by the estimated R-squared value of 0.311. Therefore, strategic recruitment is significant in explaining competitive advantage.

Table 6: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52.915	1	52.915	115.079	.000b
	Residual	117.252	255	0.46		
	Total	170.167	256			

The outcomes further postulate that the model estimated is significant. The ANOVA outcomes indicate that the estimated regression model was statistically significant, $F(1,255) = 115.079$, $p < 0.001$. Because the calculated F-value (115.079) exceeded the critical F-value at the 5 per cent significance level, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant association between the independent variable and competitive advantage.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.415	0.155		15.559	0.000
Strategic Recruitments	0.443	0.041	0.558	10.727	0.000

The study's analytical model was as follows:

$\mathbf{Y=B_0+B_1SR + \varepsilon}$

Where:

Y = Competitive Advantage

β_0 = Constant term

β_1 is the regression coefficient

SR = Strategic Recruitment

ε is the error term

Thus,

$\mathbf{Y=2.415+0.443SR}$

Strategic recruitment received a positive (0.443) and statistically significant (0.000<0.05) coefficient. Therefore, increasing strategic recruitment by one unit yields 0.443 units significant improvement in the competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya. Therefore, strategic recruitment is a significant determinant of competitive advantage. The outcomes of Egessa (2026) indicated that the practices of SHRM had significant effects on performance success, with recruitment as the main success predictor. Shrestha & Prajapati (2024) revealed that compensation, recruitment and career management were significant positive predictors of employees' stay, whereas training and performance appraisal were negative predictors. Schulze and Dada (2025) revealed that strategic entrepreneurship had a positive influence on both retention and recruitment and that corporate reputation and market competition increased the positive effect on recruitment and retention.

Appoh et al. (2024) showed that policies on leadership commitment, inclusive recruitment, training,g and performance management have a significant positive influence on organisational performance and innovation. Alzeiby et al. (2025) indicated that strategic intent and SHRMPs play a significant mediating role in the link between AI adoption and employee outcomes, which enhance staff experience and engagement. Verma et al. (2022) showed that planning and staffing, calculated, partnership, and leadership development were most important practices and in contrast, performance valuation and evaluation, work design and scrutiny and promotion were the least important.

Kiragu and Marwa (2022) unveiled a significant positive link between recruitment and retention, career management and retention, and training and retention. Aliyev (2024) revealed that strategic alignment and good human capital management give rise to unique and complex capabilities that enhance organisational performance and competition. Bangbon et al. (2023) postulated that HRP has the greatest positive impact on organisational performance, followed by staff retention, selection and recruitment, compensation and benefits, as well as development and learning. However, the assessment highlights the need for HR policies to be strategically designed to deliver the best outcomes for the institution. The results of Herlina et al. (2022) were consistently found to show that the SHRM practices positively influence employees' commitment and that committed employees positively influence organisational performance.

Summary of Findings

The association between strategic recruitment and the competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya was positive (0.558) and statistically significant (0.000 < 0.05). Strategic recruitment recorded a positive (0.443) and statistically significant (0.000<0.05) coefficient. Therefore, increasing strategic recruitment by one unit results in a 0.442-unit significant improvement in the competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya. Therefore, strategic recruitment is a significant determinant of competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: Strategic recruitment has a positive and statistically significant association with the competitive advantage of Safaricom Limited, Kenya. Strategic recruitment plays a crucial role in sustaining and creating competitive advantage by enabling entities to attract and select talented individuals whose skills, knowledge and values align with organisational goals. Effective recruitment ensures that the right people occupy the right positions, enhancing employee performance, innovation, productivity and retention. Organisations that use well-planned recruitment strategies can respond more efficiently to dynamic market demands and build a capable workforce that competitors may find difficult to replicate. Therefore, strategic recruitment should be considered a key organisational investment for achieving long-term growth, performance and sustainable competitive advantage.

Recommendations: The study recommends that Safaricom PLC strengthen strategic recruitment by aligning employee attraction and selection practices with organisational objectives and the competencies required to sustain competitive advantage. The organisation should systematically identify its current and anticipated human resource requirements and ensure that recruitment decisions prioritise candidates whose knowledge, skills, abilities and professional experience correspond with its

strategic and operational priorities. Recruitment criteria should be clearly defined and consistently applied to enhance the suitability of selected candidates for specific organisational roles. Furthermore, recruitment practices should be periodically reviewed to establish whether they effectively acquire the human capital required to support organisational efficiency, innovation and service differentiation within Kenya's competitive telecommunications industry.

Safaricom PLC should also institutionalise the evaluation of strategic recruitment outcomes to determine the extent to which recruitment practices contribute to competitive advantage. This could involve monitoring the alignment between recruited employees' competencies and job requirements, assessing the suitability of selected candidates and evaluating recruitment outcomes against organisational priorities. Recruitment decisions should be informed by evidence on workforce requirements and the capabilities needed to respond to technological developments, changing customer expectations and competitive pressures. Therefore, by continuously evaluating and refining its recruitment practices, Safaricom PLC may strengthen the strategic alignment of acquired human capital, improve its capacity to respond to market changes and reinforce its competitive positioning. These recommendations emphasise the strategic importance of recruitment while remaining focused on its potential contribution to competitive advantage rather than assuming effects on unmeasured outcomes such as employee retention or turnover.

Future studies should examine strategic recruitment and competitive advantage across multiple organisations and industries to enhance the generalizability of findings. Comparative studies could investigate whether the influence of strategic recruitment varies across sectors, organisational sizes and ownership structures. Longitudinal research is also recommended to establish how recruitment practices influence competitive advantage over time. Further studies could incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables, such as employee engagement, organizational agility, employer branding and technological capability. Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches could additionally provide deeper insights into how strategic recruitment practices generate sustainable competitive advantage.

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