

Research article

AN INSIGHT INTO STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES OF HANDICRAFT EXPORT ORGANISATIONS IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Too often, promising strategic plans never come to fruition. This applies to both large and small organisations in all industries. Based on documentation methods, this paper has classified strategic management theories into analysis and implementation.

This research aimed at highlighting implementation practices among handicraft export organisations in Ghana to complement academic work in strategic management, hitherto, have been limited to strategic analysis and with concentration on large organisations.

A qualitative mode of enquiry, using structured questionnaire and interview with key stakeholders in handicraft export business was used. In all, 46 handicraft export managers were interviewed. Multi method sampling technique was used to select these handicraft export organisations whose managers served as the respondents.

The study analysed the key environmental factors on strategic management implementation into challenging and enablers. The study found that economic and international factors were very important to strategic management implementation and also posed severe challenges to handicraft export organisations in their implementation practices. Though technological and monitoring and evaluation were very important to strategic management implementation, they were not critical environmental factors as rated by handicraft export organisations. Interestingly, almost all the internal factors were very important to strategic management implementation the study did not considered them as challenge to Handicraft Export Organisation. Lastly, political and socio-culture factors were challenging to handicraft export organisations but they were presented as not too important to strategic management implementation.

Therefore, it is important to consider economic and international factors in strategic management implementation especially for organisations that are into export activities. **Copyright © IJABM, all rights reserved.**

Keywords: strategic management, implementation, practice, survival-based, knowledge-based

INTRODUCTION

In business world today, ‘strategy’ has been the most overused and misused term. Everybody seems to have a ‘strategy’ for everything. By attaching the term ‘strategy’ to an activity, it somehow becomes more important, but in reality very little may actually be done. Whiles strategic analysis and implementation may appear to be simple; achievement involves many complex interdependent or even conflicting tasks. Different management theories have successfully explained good part of what constitute strategy analysis on one hand, and on another how such strategies can be implemented.

Too often, promising strategic plans never come to fruition. A common cause of such failures includes a breakdown in implementation – the internal processes and events needed to bring the strategy to life. It is however noted that, formulating a consistent strategy is a difficult task for many management teams, making the strategy work, thus implementing it throughout the organisation and over time, is even more difficult.

Two dimensions determine the success of any strategy: the strategy that has been formulated and the organisation’s ability to implement it. According to Bonoma (1984), Berry and Parasuraman (1991), and Piercy (1997) the appropriateness of any strategy is determined by the effectiveness of its implementation. The four general position options established by Bonoma’s matrix are shown below:

		Formulation	
		Appropriate	Inappropriate
Implementation	Good	SUCCESS	CHANCE
	Bad	PROBLEM	FAILURE

Figure 1: Strategy Formulation and Implementation

Source: Adapted from Bonoma, 1984

When organisation has appropriate strategy formulation with good implementation, success is the outcome. This is the ideal position for organisations as it presents little or no problem. As regards Chance, the strategy formulation is inappropriate, perhaps it lacks detailed analysis or not building on existing strength. However, it may be saved by good implementation. This good implementation may be achieved by adopting and adapting from a weak opening basis and, with luck, do what is required. Nevertheless, this position is always associated with high degree of risk. The Problem position indicates that, the organisation is doing the right things badly. The strength of strategic formulation is dissipated by poor implementation. Often the true value of the strategy is not fully recognized and it is dismissed as being inappropriate. With Failure position, there is no win situation. Failure at all levels indicates danger of struggling on with implementation and simply ‘throwing good money after bad strategy’. Organisations should learn from situations of strategy formulation and implementation.

However, effective strategy implementation depends on;

- (i) The organisation’s understanding on fundamental principles of implementation. This requires that strategy implementation should deal with both human aspect of business and more objective processes to management. McKinsey’s ‘Seven-S’ model provides a useful summation of these ideas. The figure below illustrates the fundamental principles of implementation;

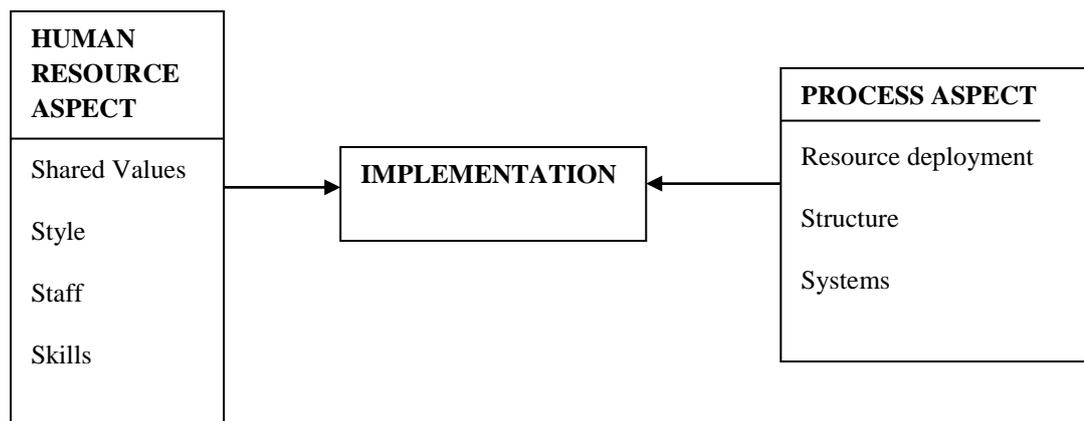


Figure 2: The McKinsey’s Seven-S

Source: Adapted from Drummond and Ensor. (2004)

- (ii) Assessing the implementation of each strategy. This is about how easily the strategy fit into current activities. Not too surprisingly, the easier the fit the less likely implementation problems are to occur. The concern here is largely about the level of change associated with the implementation. The greater the change, the greater the management challenge and the greater the perceived benefit of the change needs to be. Hence, there is a need to consider the potential pay-off and the amount of change required to achieve. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between change and importance;

		Level of Change in Current Operations	
		High	Low
Importance of Change	High	Overhaul	Synergy
	Low	Overkill	Limited Impact

Figure 3: Strategic Fit

Source: Adapted from Drummond et al. (2004)

With regard to Overhaul, strategic implementation requires high degree of change in current operations and organisation must expect increasing levels of resistance and risk as the strategy has limited fit with current activities. There must be a compelling strategic reasons and significant support for this strategy implementation to become successful. Such implementation takes place during organisational restructuring, downsizing, mergers or overhauling business culture. Under Synergy, the combined effect of high importance and relatively limited change offers a potential ‘easy ride’. Problems should be limited and risk of failure is reduced. This means that organisations need to be sure it has the required synergy before embarking on this route. The Overkill presents high risk and limited impact of importance. Care is needed in order not to alienate staff and disrupt activities. Limited Impact strategic implementation occurs where low levels of change affect relative unimportant areas of activities. Often a series of such activities can yield incremental change. This could represent a stage-by-stage approach to change, where relatively minor changes are introduced over a period of time. This option of incremental activity can be used where resources are limited or a phased consolidated approach is deemed more appropriate.

Despite the importance of both analysis and implementation to strategic development, a number of studies conducted to understand what contributes to the success of organisation’s strategy have been focused on strategic analysis. Many of the strategic analysis have adopted the resource-based view (RBV) of the organisation as the theoretical basis of their studies and argue that the competitive advantage of organisations is sourced primarily in the organisation’s ability to access and acquire rare and inimitable resources that create better value for customers. These resources are considered as indicators of organisation’s performance levels in the market (Lynch, 2003; Mintzberg, 1987; 1990; 1994; Peteraf, 1993; Stacey, 1993; Porter, M. E. 1980; 1985)

While resource-base view has been instrumental in explaining the performance differences among organisations, arguments have been advanced that the mere possession of resources is insufficient to generate superior performance. For instance, Barney and Arikan (2006) have stated that, the assumption that appropriate strategic action will automatically follow from the recognition of valuable resources within the organisation is an intellectually naïve one. The two authors argued that, while organisation’s resources have a more or less direct impact on the strategic courses and action an organisation may pursue implementation of such strategies to realize value creation potential remains an under-researched topic. On a more important note, how resources can be applied through strategic decisions to create superior value and competitive advantage for organisations remain an unclear study area. The current literatures mostly shed light on how the capabilities of organisations enable them to formulate appropriate strategic choices that match their resources with opportunities in their external environment. However, mechanisms that ensure successful implementation of the chosen strategies are not discussed. While there is assumption that organisations should establish appropriate structures to match their

strategies, research has shown that there is a lot of incongruence between strategy and structure (Duysters and Hagedoorn, 1995; 1996).

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used questionnaire on 46 (Zikmund W.G. 2002; Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A., 2009) managers of Handicraft Export Organisations in Ghana who have been consistently exporting at least in the last five years within the handicraft product line as allowed by the American Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). In addition, two (2) officials of trade institutions were interviewed on the subject of strategic management implementation of the Handicraft Export Organisations. Multi method sampling technique was used to select those Handicraft Export Organisations in the following handicraft areas; Kente (traditional textiles), statuettes (wood), brass ware, ceramics, jewelry, basket wares and other assorted handicraft products. Quota sampling technique (appendix 1) was used because the different strata put together reflect the total face of the handicraft sector. In each of the participating organisation groupings, simple random sampling method was used to select the participating organisations for the study (Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill 2009; and William G. Zikmund 2002). The study also used secondary data by considering relevant academic peer reviewed journals.

DISCUSSIONS ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PRACTICES

(i) Implementation Factors

Analysis of respondents' data revealed three key factors that Handicraft Export Organisations consider during implementation of their strategies. These are the planed strategy, general economic environment, and competitors' action. The analysis of the ecological environment is emerging as major markets of handicraft are demanding answers to the general ethical issues facing handicraft sector. On the other hand, communication of strategic implementation issues and analysis of political and socio-cultural factors have been indicated as factors not considered adequately in Handicraft Export Organisations strategic implementation process. It is also clear from the data that, Handicraft Export Organisations seldom make changes during strategic implementation process. Appendix 2 shows statistical information on the rating of the factors that affect strategic management implementation.

(ii) Implementation Factors which are Challenge

The following criteria were used to classify implementation factors as severe, average and low challenging factors:

- (i) If the combined percentage of very challenging and challenging exceed 60% it is classified as severe factor.
- (ii) If the combined percentage of very challenging and challenging is between 50% and 60% it is classified as average factor.
- (iii) If the combined percentage of very challenging and challenging is below 50% it is classified as low factor.

Given the information as presented by the respondents, four factors namely economic, political, socio-culture and international factors were rated as severe factors that affect strategic management implementation. On the

rating of the economic factor, 65.2% of the respondents rated the factor as very challenging while 34.8% representing the rest of the respondents indicated the factor as challenging. As regards international environment, though 10.9% of the respondents were of the view that the factor was not a challenge it is still important to note that 58.7% and 28.3% agreed that the factor is very challenging and challenging respectively. In analyzing the political environment as a factor, 52.2% of the respondents rated it as very challenging while 21.7% and 13% indicated it as challenging and averagely challenging respectively. This means that all the respondents in rating political factor totally agreed that it is a key challenge in the strategic management implementation. This is very true as international treaties, national priorities, foreign policies of other countries and local partisan decisions have direct consequences on businesses. On Socio-cultural environment, 17.4% and 58.7% of the respondents rated the factor as very challenging and challenging respectively. This classified severe factor can be attributed largely to the changing taste and lifestyle of handicraft consumers from just symbolic artifact to more functional-based product.

Two other factors were noted to have average challenge on strategic management implementation; they were technological and monitoring and evaluation factors. Though the world is ruled by technology, handicraft production does not depend very much on technology. However, the promotional aspect of the marketing function has experienced considerable technological influence. From appendix 3, it was clear that respondents were divided on rating technological factor as challenging. This could be that their technological literacy levels and the expected benefits from the technological world were mixed feeling. Buyers now use technology relatively more to access suppliers and product information compared to some time past. As a result, respondents who were not used to technology in doing business considered the factor as a challenge. Monitoring and evaluation was also presented as averagely challenging factor by the respondents. Just above 50% of the respondents considered the factor as challenging, perhaps due to inadequate management capacity to control financial issues. To a larger extent, respondents have adequate product knowledge to control raw material quality and production resources. What appears to be the difficulty is financial management of their businesses.

Other factors such as Planning, organizational structure, interdepartmental relationship and communication were also considered as low challenge factor to strategic management implementation. Out of these low challenge factors, organisational structure ranked the highest. Further discussions on organisational structure indicated that, the organisations have inadequate functional structure at best and at worse none. The Heads of the organisations appear to do all business activities and allow other staff to attend to instructed duties. It has been rated that communication is not a key factor; this appears to be so with few staff close to the Head. The study can also commend on general planning activities of respondents but in most cases not written on records for effective communication. Within organisations there were no clear departments, these organisations depend on others for services including secretarial services, warehousing, sale outlets and promotion. Indeed, the relationship has functioned well and it is not surprising that the responses rated it as not challenging. Appendix 3 provides the statistical information on respondents' rating of implementation factors as challenge to strategic management.

The figure 1 below have grouped the challenging factors into severe, average and low and has shown how the factors affect strategic management implementation.

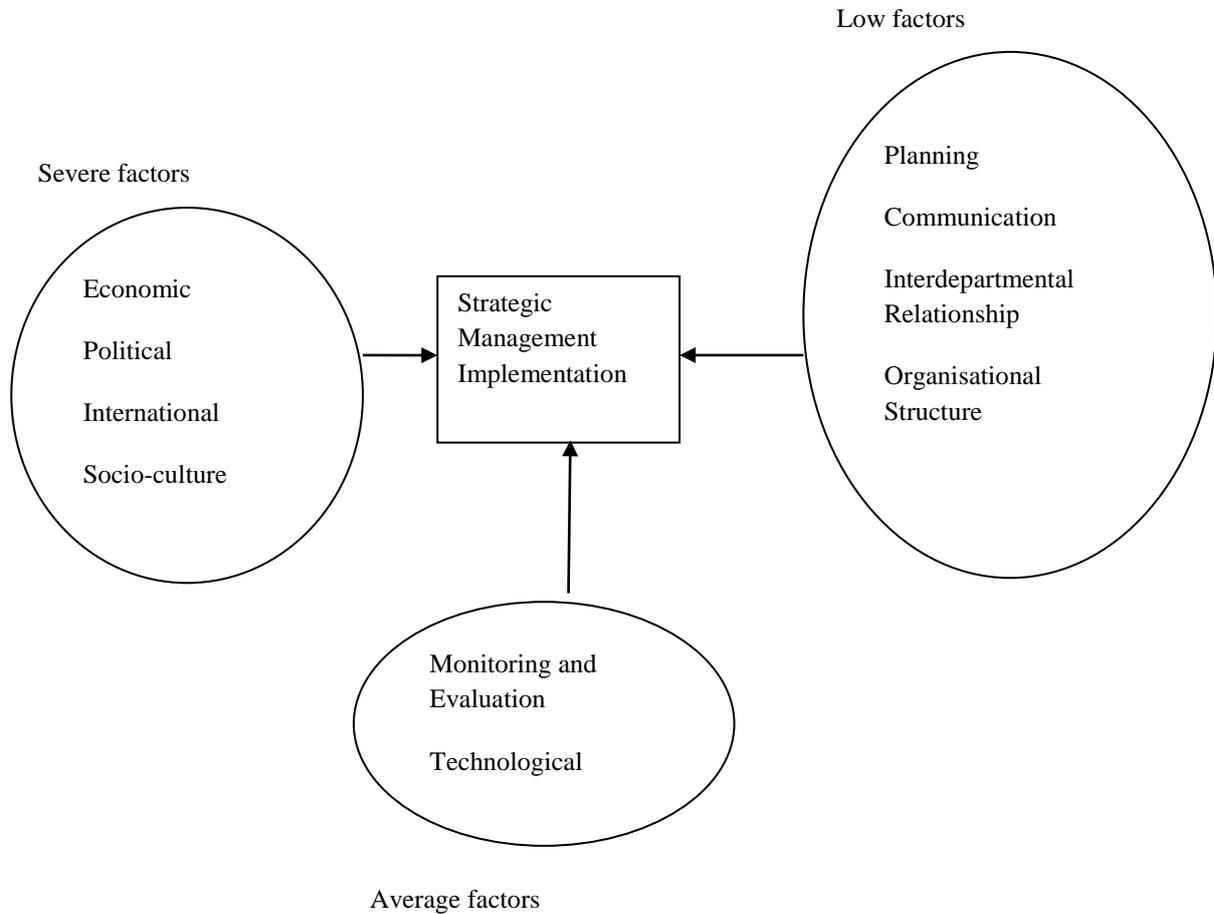


Figure 1: Implementation Factors as Challenging On Strategic Management.

Source: Banahene, S. (2014)

(iii) Implementation Factors as Enabler to Strategic Implementation

The analysis was based on the percentage of the responses. The choice of very, average and low enabler factors was based on the following:

- (i) If the combined percentages of very good and good exceed 60% it is classified as very enabling factor.
- (ii) If the combined percentage of very good and good is between 50% and 60% it is classified as average enabling factor.
- (iii) If the combined percentage of very good and good is below 50% it is classified as low enabling factor.

As indicated by the respondents in appendix 4, planning, economic, communication, international, technology, organisational structure, interdepartmental relationships and monitoring and evaluation were considered as very enabler factors to strategic management implementation. Political and Socio-culture were also identified as low enabler factors. None of the factors were indicated as average enabler factor to strategic management

implementation. The results further indicated that planning is very important factor in strategic management implementation. Appendix 4 provides statistical information on the respondents' rating of implementation factors as enabler to strategic management implementation.

From the information in appendix 4, the implementation factors can be grouped into very and low enablers. The figure 1 shows that eight (8) implementation factors were considered as very enabler and two (2) other factors as low enablers.

Very Enabler

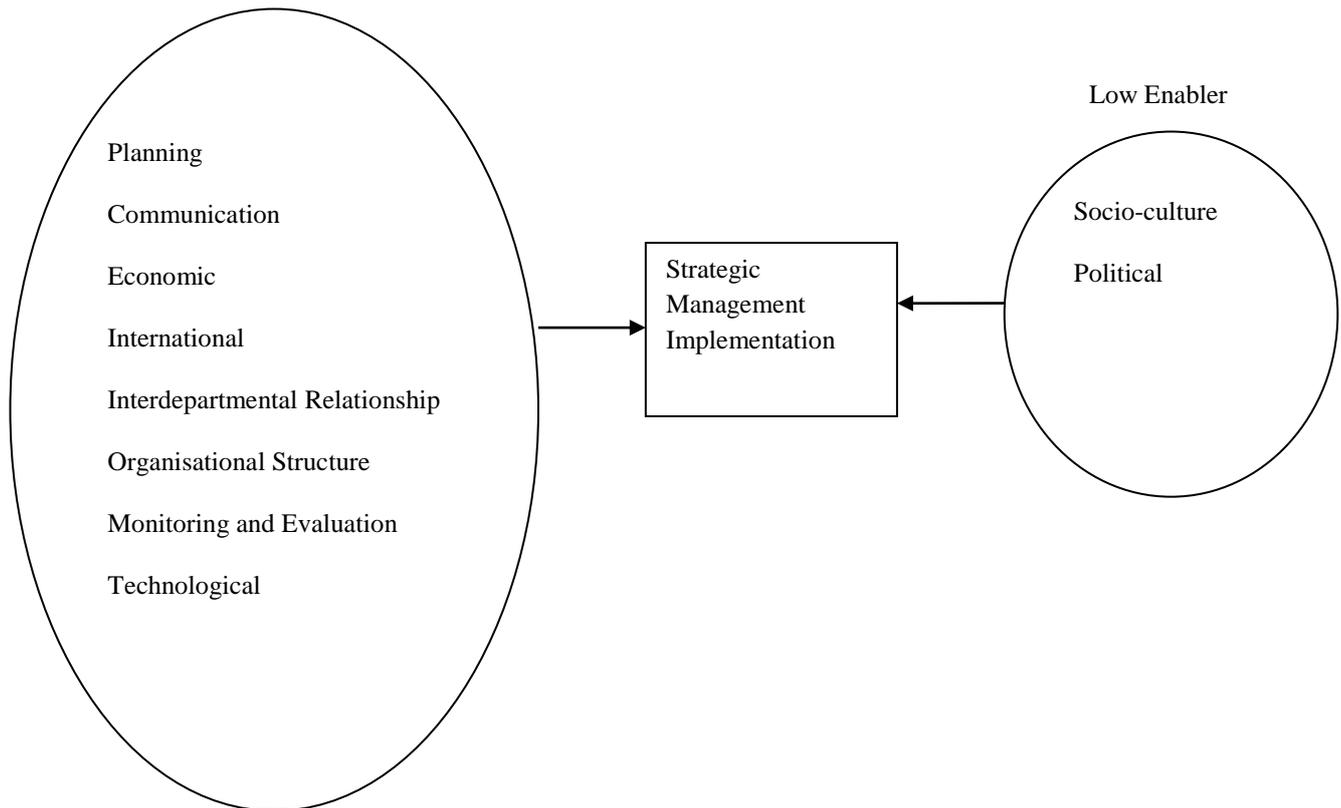


Figure 1: Classification of Implementation Factors as Enabler to Strategic Management Implementation

Source: Banahene, S. (2014)

(iv) Important Implementation Factors

Handicraft Export Organisations analyze business factors that are important to them. On the analysis of implementation factors that are important to strategic management implementation, about 84.8% of the respondents analyze handicraft competitors. About 69.9% and 50% also analyze the economic and ecological environment of the handicraft business. Again about 37% analyze political and socio-cultural environment. There are indications that macro factors are not adequately analysed by the respondents. About 34.8% of the respondents monitor and evaluate strategic management implementations and 13% communicate strategic management implementation related issues with key staff of their business.

The analysis of environmental factors indicate that economic, international and technological are enabler to strategic management implementation but also pose challenge to Handicraft Export Organisations during strategic implementation. Other environmental factors that moderately enable strategic management implementation are political and socio-culture. There are internal factors which also enable strategic management implementation and fortunately all of them were within the control of respondents. These internal factors were planning, communication, interdepartmental relationship, organisational structure and monitoring and evaluation. Appendix 5 gives the statistical information on the important factors as indicated by respondents.

(v) Conclusions on Interview with Two Trade Institutions

From the interview with the officials from two (2) key stakeholders of handicraft namely Ghana Export Promotion Authority and Aids To Artisans Ghana, there were a lot in common. There is more to believe that, handicraft export organisations have challenges in implementing their strategies. In their view, the key environmental factor to Handicraft Export Organisation's strategic management implementation is international issues. Because handicraft export organisation's customers are in the export market and whatever affects the export market have serious consequences on their strategic management practices. The Ghana factor is equally important in the strategic management implementation. Ghana's image offers intrinsic value to handicrafts that are originated from the country.

(vi) Findings on Environmental Factors on Strategic Management Implementation of Handicraft Export Organisations

The study analysed the key environmental factors on strategic management implementation into challenging and enablers. The challenging environmental factors are those factors that pose difficulties to strategic management implementation and they were grouped as either severe, average or low challenging. The enabler environmental factors were those that promote strategic management implementation to succeed and were also grouped as very or low enablers.

The study found out that economic, political, socio-culture and international factors posed severe challenges to strategic management implementations. The low challenging factors to strategic management implementation were planning, communication, interdepartmental relationship, and organisational structure. The technological and monitoring and evaluation factors were indicated by the respondents as averagely challenging.

On the analysis of the factors that enable strategic management implementation, planning, communication, economic, international, interdepartmental relationship, organisational structure, technology and monitoring and evaluation were identified as very enabler factors to strategic management implementation. The low enabler factors were socio-culture and political.

From this data, the environmental factors can be grouped into the following segments:

- (i) Environmental factors that were very important and pose severe challenge to strategic management implementation.

- (ii) Environmental factors that were very important but pose low challenge to strategic management implementation.
- (iii) Environmental factors that were very important but pose average challenge to strategic management implementation.
- (iv) Environmental factors that were low in importance but pose severe challenge to strategic management implementation.

The table 1 below has presented the environmental factors into how important they are to strategic management implementation.

Table1: Classification of Environmental Factors Rate on Strategic Management Implementation

		Environmental factors Rate		
		Severe	Average	Low
Strategic Management Implementation	Very Important	Economic International	Monitoring and Evaluation Technological	Planning Communication Interdepartmental relationship Organisational structure
	Low Important	Political Socio-culture		

Source: Banahene, S. (20014)

From table 1, economic and international factors were very important to strategic management implementation and also posed severe challenges to handicraft export organisations in their implementation practices. Though technological and monitoring and evaluation were very important to strategic management implementation, they were not critical environmental factors as rated by handicraft export organisations. Perhaps, the small nature of the organisations makes it easier to monitor and evaluate strategic management implementation issues. On technology, handicraft business requires less of technology in terms of production but considerably needed it in the promotion of handicraft. As most orders are routine and customer relationships are strong, the use of technology is within control. Interestingly, almost all the internal factors were very important to strategic management implementation but the study did not considered them as challenge to handicraft export organisation. Lastly, political and socio-culture factors are challenging to handicraft export organisations but they were presented as not too important to strategic management implementation.

CONCLUSION

The research therefore concludes that, Handicraft Export Organisations should consider economic and international factors in their strategic management implementations. In addition, Handicraft Export Organisations should strengthen their capacities in monitoring and evaluation, planning, communication, interdepartmental relationships, and their internal structure to ensure successful implementations of their strategy.

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APPENDIX 1

Group of the Handicraft Organisations and their Total Number of Different Handicraft Products Exported.

Serial Number	Number of Export Organisation(s)	Total Number of Different Handicraft Product(s) Exported
1	1	6
2	3	4
3	2	3
4	5	2
5	114	1
TOTAL	125	16*

Source: Banahene, S. (2013)

*Note: the actual number of handicraft products that these organisations export is 6.

CALCULATION OF SAMPLING SIZE

The researcher adopted Cochran's formula to determine the sample size:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \\
 &= \frac{125}{1 + 125 (0.1)^2} \\
 &= \frac{125}{1 + 125 (0.01)} \\
 &= \frac{125}{2.25} \\
 &= \underline{\underline{55.6}}
 \end{aligned}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population of the study

e = margin of error.

Therefore, the sample size for this study was 56 organisations.

APPLICATION OF THE 80%

$$\begin{aligned}
 na &= n \times 80\% \\
 &= 56 \times 0.8
 \end{aligned}$$

$$= 44.8$$

Where:

na = number of respondents the researcher should contact

n = sample size

re = estimated response rate.

Though the sample size was 56, the researcher can use not less than 45 responses from the organisations to make the scientific conclusions.

Appendix 2: Rating of Implementation Factors

Rating Implementation Factors	Very Often	Sometimes	Not Too Often	Not At All
Plan business actions before implementations	91.3%	6.5%	2.2%	0.0
Planning and implementation run concurrently	6.5%	84.4%	8.7%	0.0
Analysis of political environment	37.0%	28.3%	32.6%	2.2%
Analysis of economic environment	69.9%	23.9%	4.3%	0.0
Analysis of social-cultural environment	37.0%	45.7%	19.6%	0.0
Analysis of ecological environment	50.0%	30.4%	17.4%	2.2%
Analysis of competitors' actions	84.8%	13.0%	2.2%	0.0
Communication of corporate strategy to key staff	13.0%	13.0%	52.2%	21.7%
Vary organization's action as the environment changes	21.7%	52.2%	23.95	2.2%
Monitor and evaluate strategic decisions during implementation	34.8%	60.9%	4.3%	0.0

Source: Banahene, S. (2014)

Appendix 3: Respondents' Rating of Implementation Factors as Challenge

Rating Factors	Very Challenging	Challenging	Averagely Challenging	Not Challenging
Planning	0.0	28.3%	47.8%	23.9%
Communication	6.5%	23.9%	50.0%	19.6%
Economic environment	65.2%	34.8%	0.0%	0.0
Political environment	52.2%	21.7%	13.0%	0.0
Socio-cultural environment	17.4%	58.7%	10.9%	13.0%
Technological environment	17.4%	32.6%	19.6%	30.4%
International environment	58.7%	28.3%	2.2%	10.9%
Interdepartmental relationships	4.3%	4.3%	56.5%	34.8
Organizational structure	2.2%	32.6%	65.2%	0.0%

Monitoring and evaluation	4.3%	50.0%	30.4%	15.2%
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Source: Banahene, S. (2014)

Appendix 4: Respondents' Rating of Implementation Factors as Enabler

Rating Factors	Very Good	Good	Average	Weak
Planning	80.4%	19.6%	0.0	0.0
Communication	50.0%	26.1%	17.4%	2.2%
Economic environment	65.2%	23.9%	4.3%	6.5%
Political environment	10.9%	23.9%	52.2%	10.9%
Socio-cultural environment	8.75%	6.5%	56.5%	26.1%
Technological environment	21.7%	67.4%	4.3%	6.5%
International environment	82.6%	4.3%	6.5%	6.5%
Interdepartmental relationships	50.0%	26.1%	15.2%	8.7%
Organizational structure	21.7%	65.2%	8.7%	4.3%
Monitoring and evaluation	15.2%	84.85	0.0	0.0

Source: Banahene, S. (2014)

Appendix 5: Rating of Implementation Factors

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Analysis of social-cultural environment	37.0%	45.7%	19.6%	0.0
Analysis of ecological environment	50.0%	30.4%	17.4%	2.2%
Analysis of competitors' actions	84.8%	13.0%	2.2%	0.0
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Monitor and evaluate strategic decisions during implementation	34.8%	60.9%	4.3%	0.0

Source: Banahene, S. (2014)