

The Impact of Strategic Management Practices on the Performance of SMEs in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: *Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are one of the pillars of the global economic growth, job generation, and innovations. In Saudi Arabia, and specifically in the Western part, there are SMEs that are being planned as a strategic force behind Vision 2030, but they are still exposed to the issues of competitiveness, resource limits, and sustainability. This paper includes a narrative literature review that critically analyses the association between Strategic Management Practices (SMPs), such as environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation, and SME performance. The review incorporates theoretical approaches of the Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT), and Contingency Theory in addition to the contributions of change management and organizational culture as mediating and enabling conditions of strategy implementation. The evidence related to the whole world and the experience in the developing economies and the research related to the Gulf context are synthesized to reveal patterns, contradictions and limitations of the available literature.*

Results indicate that the strategic management practices of formulation, implementation and evaluation/control positively affect the performance of SMEs, increasing the level of growth, profitability, innovation, customer satisfaction and business continuity. The review also demonstrates that organizational culture and change management are conclusive moderators of implementation success: participative, learning oriented culture and structured change practices (visible sponsorship, two-way communication, capability building) enhances but rigid culture and ad hoc change flatten it-effects that are particularly noticeable within Western Saudi SMEs with scarce resources and uncertain markets.

Results indicate that although SMPs are always effective in improving firm performances, majority of SMEs, especially in developing environments, face challenges in informal practices, lack of resources and resisting change. Moreover, non-financial performance measures like customer satisfaction, innovation, business continuity among others have become more important where all other traditional financial measures are also considered.

The study encapsulates 15 practical recommendations to improve the strategic management of the SMEs based on reviewed literature and Western Saudi setting. These recommendations are consistent and context-based roadmap to increase the maturity of SMEs, improve strategic agility and innovation, and sustainable performance among SMEs in Makkah, Jeddah, and Medina, as per Vision 2030.

KEY WORD: *Strategic Management Practices (SMPs); Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); Organizational Performance; Saudi Arabia; Western Region; Resource-Based View (RBV); Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT).*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are universally known as crucial to economic growth, innovation, and job creation. (Costa Melo et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2014; Kaur & Sharma, 2014). Their contribution to sustainable growth has been witnessed in both developed and developing countries, where they act as a source of entrepreneurship, productivity, and diversification of industries (Pushpakumari and Wijewickrama, 2008; Keskin and Senturk, 2010). SMEs are also important in poverty reduction and enhancement of the general quality of life in developing countries (Arjang et al., 2024).

In Saudi Arabia, 99 percent of the total number of businesses in the private sector are SMEs and more than 65 percent of the workforce (Monsha'at, 2022). They play a key role in the Kingdom Vision 2030 that seeks to raise their contribution to GDP to 35% and ultimately to international standards of around 46%

(Alharbi, 2021). As part of this national vision, SME activity has been centered in the Western Region, which includes key cities such as Makkah, Jeddah, and Medina (Hamed and Qushair, 2023).

To achieve this growth, the Saudi government has introduced various measures to increase the competitiveness of SMEs and minimize entry barriers to the market such as through fee waivers, loans, and preferential procurement (Monsha'at, 2022). These initiatives indicate a larger aspiration to transform an oil-based economy into a market-based economy by empowering the private sector and making strategic investments in human capital (Alotaibi and Campbell, 2022).

However, in spite of this, SMEs still experience structural and operational challenges. They lack access to finance, ineffective strategic capabilities, and ineffective responsiveness to dynamic market conditions (Batwa and Alamoudi, 2019; Alenzy, 2018). Most SMEs do not have formal strategic management processes that restrain their capability to be proactive in response to competition, innovation needs and changes in the regulation. It has been found that despite the recognition of the significance of strategic tools, the actual application of these tools, including SWOT analysis or HR planning, is scarce among SMEs (Alotaibi, 2016).

Strategic management practices (SMPs) such as strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation are critical in aligning internal resources and external opportunities. They assist SMEs in improving their decision making, risk management, and long-term performance (Fuentes et al., 2020; George Bert et al., 2019).

Two gaps in the literature can be identified: the first gap is the absence of empirical studies examining the effects of strategic management practices (SMPs) on the performance of SMEs in the Saudi context, specifically in the western region, and the second gap is the insufficient examination of internal facilitators of strategic implementation success, namely, organizational culture and change management, although the evidence suggests that the effectiveness of implementation depends on culture-adaptable and people-focused change processes (Kotter, 2010; Vlasenko and Kozak, 2023).

This research fills these gaps by reviewing the available literature on strategic management practices and their contribution to the performance of SMEs, with special reference being made to the Western Region of Saudi Arabia. It also explores the role of internal processes like change management and organizational culture in determining the success of strategy implementation - providing insights that are both theoretically-based and practically applied to Vision 2030 objectives.

1.2 Research Problem

The Saudi Arabian private sector is largely based on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which constitute 99 percent of the total number of businesses and provide employment to more than 65 percent of the population (Monsha'at, 2022). Even though SMEs remain central to the economy and the government aims to increase their contribution to the GDP to 35 percent with Vision 2030, their access to finance is still limited, strategic planning remains inadequate, and many are still not adaptable to market changes (Batwa and Alamoudi, 2019; Alenzy, 2018). One of the main problems is the inadequate use of structured strategic management practices (SMPs) such as formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Researches indicate that a significant number of SMEs in the western area have unproper strategic processes and are prone to being interrupted and facing competition (Alzahrani et al., 2023). In spite of creating strategies, poor implementation is still a key obstacle even during its implementation, as research has shown that as many as 90 percent of companies have not achieved their strategic objectives because their implementation was poor (Baroto et al., 2014).

Recent literature highlights the actual value and importance of organizational culture and change management as key facilitators of effective strategy execution (Kotter, 2010; Vlasenko and Kozak, 2023). Nevertheless, these aspects are not always taken into consideration in the context of SMEs, especially in Saudi Arabia, where empirical studies on its impact are quite limited. Thus, the research fulfills a research gap by identifying the effects of the strategic management practices on the SME performance in the western part of Saudi Arabia, along with the moderating effect of organizational culture and change management on the success of strategy implementation.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main aim of this research is to analyze how strategic management practices, i.e. strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation will influence the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the western part of Saudi Arabia. The research also seeks to find out how strategy implementation success mediates this relationship, and organizational culture and change management moderates the connection between strategy implementation and its success.

II. Research Methodology

The methodological approach followed in this study is the narrative literature review aimed at investigating the association between strategic management practices and the performance of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the western part of Saudi Arabia. Narrative review method is suitable to demonstrate the complexity and multidimensionality of the strategic management in SMEs through a synthesis of existing literature that is comprehensive, flexible, and contextually rich. In comparison to systematic reviews, which have a stronger emphasis on the strict protocol and quantitative synthesis, narrative reviews also allow the researcher to critically interpret and integrate the findings of a wide array of sources. The method is especially effective in dealing with the intricate social, managerial, and organizational phenomena - interaction among strategy, performance, organizational culture and change management.

The literature that has been reviewed covers academic journal articles, institutional reports, and geographical studies, which were published within the period of 2010 and 2024. The sources were chosen in accordance with the key variables of the study which included strategic management practices (strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation), SME performance, and moderating effects of change management as well as organizational culture. Applicable publications were found with the use of academic databases like Scopus, Web of science, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. Search strategy involved using key words related to searching like: strategic management practices, SMEs performance, strategy implementation, change management, and organizational culture, Saudi Arabia, and Vision 2030.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Understanding SMEs and Their Role in Saudi Arabia

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are widely recognized as engines of employment, innovation, and inclusive growth across economies (Kaur & Sharma, 2014; Hasan et al., 2014; Kandasamy et al., 2019; Pinudom & Johnson, 2020). The importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as drivers of economic growth and social development is well recognized throughout the world due to their ability to create jobs, enhance innovativeness and promote diversification. (Alabsy, 2021). SMEs have a very specific niche in the national economy of Saudi Arabia, representing the vast majority of business foundations and a backbone of the transformation agenda of the Kingdom Vision 2030 (Alabsy, N. M. A. 2021). They are not limited to the economic metrics but they improve social stability, entrepreneurial activity, and sustainable development. The western part, Makkah, Jeddah and Medina are some of focus areas of SMEs because of its religious, cultural and economic value, where a significant proportion of Kingdom enterprises are located and where the western region is leading in sectors like tourism, retailing, and hospitality. Under Vision 2030, the state has prioritized SME development—via finance, capacity-building, and regulatory reforms—to lift the sector's GDP share toward 35% and beyond (Alharbi, 2021; Monsha'at, 2022; Alotaibi & Campbell, 2022). Post-COVID evidence also underscores both the sector's resilience and the need for sustained policy and managerial support (Nurunnabi, 2020; Alharbi, 2022; Alfaqiri et al., 2024). Against this backdrop of rapid change and rising competition, strategic management practices—spanning environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation—are increasingly viewed as critical levers for SME performance in the Saudi context (George et al., 2019; Omsa, 2017; Alotaibi, 2016; Alzahrani et al., 2023).

Definitions and Classification of SMEs

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are well established as is an important segment of the contemporary economies, but the definition of SME has been differently established in different countries and institutions based on the economic structures, policies, and development priorities (Alabsy, N. M. A. 2021). SMEs are generally categorized on the basis of the number of employees, annual turnover or asset size across the globe (Abosedo et al., 2016; Imramziyeva et al., 2024). An example is the World Bank, which classifies SMEs as micro enterprises (less than 50 employees), small enterprises (50 to 200 employees), and medium enterprises (50 or more employees) (Keskin et al., 2010). Equally, the European Commission (2003) identifies SMEs as companies having less than 250 workers a criterion that is commonly utilized in the European Union (Maldeniya et al., 2021). In spite of these differences, the general idea is that SMEs are businesses, which are not larger in scale compared to large corporations, but they still have serious economic and social impacts (Karadag, 2015). The empirical data in developed and developing countries indicates that SMEs contribute to most of the new jobs, rural development, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Kandasamy et al., 2019; Pinudom and Johnson, 2020).

In Saudi Arabia, the classification of SMEs has been clearly articulated by Monsha'at (2022), which defines them into three categories:

- Very small enterprises: 1–5 employees with annual revenues of 0–3 million SAR (representing 85% of SMEs). (Al-Tit et al., 2019).
- Small enterprises: 6–49 employees with annual revenues of 3–40 million SAR (14% of SMEs).

- Medium enterprises: 50–249 employees with annual revenues of 40–200 million SAR (1% of SMEs).

Importance of SMEs in the Saudi Economy

SMEs contribute significantly to the socio-economic growth of nations all around the world by creating job opportunities, boosting the GDP, increasing the exports and inclusive innovation (Wijethunga and Pushpakumari, 2014; Kandasamy et al., 2019). These statistics highlight their necessity in the maintenance of economic growth and social development. (Al-Tit et al., 2019). SMEs strategic importance has received an additional highlight in the vision 2030 where it is planned to increase its GDP contribution of the current 21% to 35 in line with the global standards which has been pegged at about 46 in the leading economies (Alharbi, 2021). Government-wide initiatives have helped to achieve this ambition, including financial support programs, tax exemptions, simplified regulatory procedures, and special treatment in the public procurement (Albatul, 2024; Monsha'at, 2022).

The western part of Saudi Arabia, which includes Makkah, Jeddah and Medina, can be used to demonstrate the significance of the SME sector at the regional level. Having the highest percentage of SMEs in Makkah (more than 19) and almost half of the preceding figures in Medina, the region is not just the centre of religious tourism, but also business in the areas of hospitality, food and beverage, and retail (Hamed and Qushair, 2023). There are also strategic mega-projects like the Rua Al Madinah and the Central Project in Jeddah that increase the demand of the SMEs by enhancing infrastructure, innovation and services thus directly connecting the SME development to national diversification as part of Vision 2030.

Therefore, SMEs are not just the economic units in Saudi Arabia, but a strategic means of diversification, creation of employment, and sustainable development in the long term.

Key Challenges Facing SMEs in the Western Region

Although SMEs are recognized to be very important, they continue to struggle with a number of challenges that impede their growth towards attaining sustainable growth and making full contributions to the economy in the western part of Saudi Arabia (Gamage et al., 2020). The most significant obstacle is the lack of access to the financial sources as less than 2% of the overall bank lending in Saudi Arabia is directed to SMEs in contrast to 14% in non-GCC nations (Alenzy, 2018). This financial disparity constrains the investment potential of the SMEs in growth, innovation and development of human capital.

The second issue that is urgent is the ineffective strategy planning processes (Gamage et al., 2020). Researches has indicated that a large number of SMEs in Saudi Arabia use deliberate strategies instead of emergent strategies, which restrict their strategic flexibility and adaptability to a dynamic market (Alenzy, 2018). In the absence of solid strategic planning and planning instruments, including SWOT analysis, or HR planning, the firms will be less equipped to predict the changes and avoid risks or invest in innovation (Alotaibi, 2016). The studies also suggest that SMEs that are more adaptable in terms of strategic flexibility can adjust to changes in the environment more and achieve better results, yet, there is a lack of knowledge and resources to create a more adaptive approach in many of them in the western region (Alzahrani et al., 2023).

Moreover, regulatory barriers and technological changes are also major challenges. The complexity of bureaucracies and a slow pace of digital adoption make SMEs less competitive in a more globalized market (Batwa and Alamoudi, 2019). Moreover, such structural difficulties are aggravated by cultural and managerial limitations including inadequate managerial skills, organizational culture, and innovation resistance (Alessa and Alajmi, 2017).

However, it has provided strategic management practices to help curb these challenges. Integrating financial planning, risk management, and innovation into their strategies will help SMEs to become more resilient and competitive and align with government activities such as Vision 2030 (Alotaibi, 2016; Alzahrani, 2019). The potential success of SMEs in the western region to surmount these obstacles will be central in achieving their potentials as the drivers of sustainable development in Saudi Arabia.

3.2 Strategic Management Practices (SMPs)

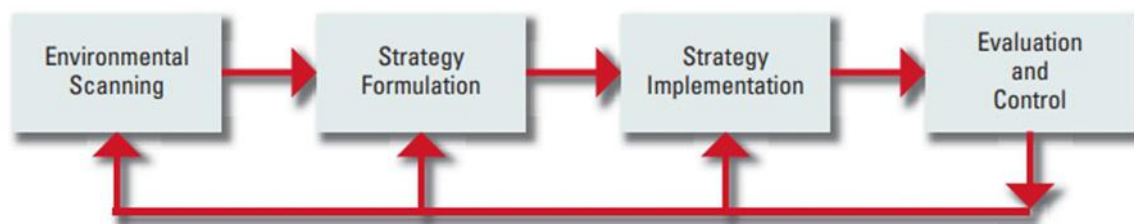
Strategy has taken a new shape not only in its military origins but has become a key construct in business and management (David et al., 2011). Scholars like Drucker, Chandler and Ansoff in the mid-20th century pioneered what would come to be known as strategic management, with its focus on long-term direction, structural alignment, and competitive positioning (Routroy and Kumar, 2017). Regardless of these developments, scholars continue to speculate over a single meaning of strategy, as Mintzberg (1987) points out, because the term has been used with different implicit meanings in different contexts. In reality, strategy within the private sector is considered as means to beat the competition and within the public sector as a way of enhancing efficiency and service delivery (Boyne & Walker, 2011).

The shift of strategic management is not based on the strict planning model but rather on the more dynamic strategies that incorporate the strength of environmental scanning, flexibility, and steady assessment (Snow & Hambrick, 2020; Aspen, 2022). This is one of the indications of an increased understanding that companies need to match internal competencies to external opportunities to retain performance. Although there are differences in definitions, the history of the discipline highlights a common emphasis of the connection between long-term planning and organizational flexibility, which is crucial to SMEs that have to operate in unpredictable settings, as is the case in Saudi Arabia.

Core Strategic Management Practices

Key strategic management practices are a cycle (Höglund et al., 2021). The environmental scanning establishes external opportunities and threats (e.g., industry forces, technological and regulatory changes) and internal strengths and weaknesses with the help of such tools as PESTEL and SWOT. These insights are converted into vision, mission, long-term objectives, and consistent corporate, business, and functional strategies through strategy formulation. Implementation of the strategy is followed by aligning structure, processes, resources, culture and incentives to the strategy that is chosen to be implemented in a given situation using programs, budgets and change management.

Lastly, strategy analysis and control monitor key performance indicators, compare the results to those of the target, and initiate corrective organization learning to maintain the strategy responsive in dynamic settings. It has been found that decision-making style and quality have a significant impact on the effectiveness of every step and overall performance, which supports the necessity of evidence-based reviews and feedback loops (David et al., 2011; Sinnaiah, Adam, and Mahadi, 2023; Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, and Bamford, 2018; Hill, Schilling, and Jones, 2020; Rothaermel, 2021).



Source: (Alnoukari, M.2021)

Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning is the pillar of strategic management because it allows companies to effectively track the internal strengths and external forces, which determine competitiveness (David et al., 2011). The traditional SWOT and PESTEL tools offer systematic methods of determining opportunities and threats, but their practical importance is concerned with how they convert insights into strategic decisions (Hunger and Wheelen, Otieno, 2018).

The recent researches emphasize the fact that scanning needs to be based not only on macro-level trends in the industry but should also incorporate the perceptions of the employees, customer feedback, and technological advances (Guinot et al., 2021). Environmental scanning is non-formal and reactive in most cases to SMEs, particularly those operating in highly dynamic markets such as Saudi Arabia because of resource constraints, which compromises its effectiveness (Kabeyi, 2019). It is here that a severe gap is noticed: although the literature talks of well-organized analytical instruments, it has been revealed through empirical research that most of the SMEs depend on intuition instead of systematic procedures, which generates a disconnect between theory and practice.

Strategy Formulation

Strategy formulation entails setting organizational vision, evaluating organizational capabilities and weaknesses, and making the right strategic choices. (Alnoukari, M.2021). This stage has structured models including the matrix with Ansoff, the growth-share model developed by BCG, and the SWOT analysis (Otieno, 2018). Formulation is all about matching the opportunities and threats and resources of an organization to create sustainable competitive advantage (Hunger and Wheelen, 2006).

Critics have however contended that formal models tend to simplify complex realities. Empirical studies demonstrate that SMEs and especially those that are smaller, hardly comply with strict planning models but rather are flexible and adaptable (Neamat, 2022; Wanyama & Aila, 2022). The participation of employees has also become a decisive element, and research has proved that participatory formulation improves the results of commitment and performances. However, one of the most common pitfalls is the absence of connection

between the formulation and implementation, most strategies do not succeed due to their lack of operations in the form of implementation initiatives (Baroto et al., 2014).

Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation converts the plans formulated to actionable steps by using resources, leadership, and alignment of the organization. It also entails reorganizing the processes, establishing the controls, and encouraging the culture that promotes change (Sushil, 2018; Rao, 2015). The implementation process is usually termed as the hardest part since it involves the process of balancing strategic intent and operational reality (Parnell, 2010).

Empirically, it has been identified that most organizations fail at this level, as as many as 70-90% of strategies fail to produce anticipated results given poor implementation (Baroto et al., 2014). The major obstacles are absence of leadership-level commitment, cultural resistance, and resource misfit to strategic goals (Cândido and Santos, 2019). In the case of SMEs, the resources constraint and reliance on owner-managers increase the difficulty of implementation and make success highly dependent upon leadership capacity and employee engagement (Tawse & Tabesh, 2021). Recent literature highlights the fact that the implementation of strategy is not just an operational process but a socio-cultural one, which needs to be based on trust, participation, and adaptive leadership to achieve sustainable outcomes (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2015).

Strategy Evaluation and Control

Strategy assessment and control focus on how the organizational action is consistent with strategic objectives by tracking performance, comparing real performance to planned performance, and taking corrective action (David, 2011; Wheelen and Hunger, 2012). The stage offers valuable feedback, and this allows firms to respond to changing environments and narrow down on their strategies.

Evidence-driven studies demonstrate that companies that have well-developed evaluation systems are more adaptable and have higher performance in the long term, especially in turbulent markets (Moloi and Marwala, 2021). Within the context of SMEs, however, a much more informal and underused evaluation practice is identified because of the scarcity of resources, a lack of skills, and reactive decision-making (Alotaibi, 2016). This undermines their skill to identify the deviations at an early stage and address them effectively. Critics believe that most companies pay a lot of attention to formulation and little to evaluation, which results in strategies that do not adapt to changes in the environment (Gibbet and Lovemore, 2017).

In recent research, effective evaluation is not merely technical monitoring, but it needs to incorporate leadership, employee involvement, and organizational learning to bridge the gap between planning, implementation, and performance (Ali and Qun, 2019). Therefore, in the case of SMEs especially, it is important that they develop well-structured yet adaptable evaluation systems that will keep them competitive and strategies are turned into quantifiable results.

3.3 Linking Strategic Management Practices to SMEs' Performance

Global Empirical Evidence

Empirical researches have consistently demonstrated the positive nature of the relationship between strategic management practices (SMPs) and SME performance, in different contexts. For instance, Otieno, Namusonge, and Mugambi, 2018 found that environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation all contributed to the financial performance of SMEs in the service sector of Kenya. Similar evidence from Sandada (2015) indicated that mission and vision clarity, environmental scanning, and employee participation were key strategic dimensions with positive association with SME performance, though the study revealed slight variations on the basis of demographic characteristics of owners and managers.

Research from other contexts, including Nigeria and South-East Asia, also reinforces these findings. Auka and Langat (2016) reported that strategic planning had a significant effect on the effectiveness of medium-sized enterprises, while Nnamani, Ejim and Ozobu (2015) stressed the importance of effective design and implementation of strategy that increased the effectiveness of organizations in Nigerian manufacturing firms (despite challenges from systemic resistance to change). Likewise, Silpah, Paul, and James (2018) have demonstrated a strong linear relationship between strategy formulation and firm's performance among NSE listed firms, thus, there is value in structured strategic planning in driving competitiveness.

Collectively, global evidence shows that SMPs - when appropriately designed and implemented - enhance SME performance in areas such as profitability, market share, innovation and sustainability (Omsa, Ridwan & Jayadi, 2017; Njeru, 2015). However, critics of the strategic planning theory note that while many SMEs know the importance of strategic planning, they do not fully utilize the formal tools like SWOT or balanced scorecards, which causes a disconnect between the design of the strategy and the actual results of performance goals (Kabeyi, 2019). This suggests that the global discourse is not so much about the presence of strategies but about the quality and consistency of their execution

Insights from Emerging Economies

Evidence of new economies provides a more multifaceted picture of the Performance relationship. Unlike in developed environments, SMEs in these environments are run on a basis of financing gaps, weaker institutional support and unstable market conditions. As an illustration, employee involvement in strategic management was associated with enhanced performance in the Lagos State, but the resource limitations and non-formal planning practices reduced the overall impact of SMPs (Abodunde, 2020). Similarly, the effect of strategy implementation among Nigerian SMEs was extremely dependent on the external circumstances, and regulatory and macroeconomic turbulence played a significant role in dampening the results (Lawal and Bello, 2022).

According to study conducted by Onyekwelu (2020) showed that the four stages of SMPs played an essential role in the performance of manufacturing organizations in South-East Nigeria, though feedback loop and bottom-up participation were very important in sustainability. Similarly, when evaluating Dubai public organizations, Al-Dhaafri and al-Osani (2020) found out that the relationship between planning and organizational excellence was mediated by strategy implementation success as quality of implementation frequently dictates the presence of a measurable output due to strategies. Combined, experience of emerging economies demonstrates that whereas the role of SMPs is becoming increasingly accepted as the performance drivers, the effectiveness of their work is highly dependent on the contextual factors, including the institutional maturity, resource availability, and cultural preparedness to change. Critics point out that the number of SMEs has a tendency to implement so-called deliberate strategies that are not flexible enough (Alenzy, 2018), and they are thus ill-equipped to respond to external shocks. This highlights the need to instill flexibility and innovation into SMPs in strained resource environments, and therefore be much more resilient to unpredictability and market shocks.

Focus on the Saudi and Gulf Context

Within the Saudi and broader Gulf environment, SMPs are becoming extremely important facilitators of SME performance and economic diversification, as part of national transformation programs initiatives like Saudi Arabia Vision 2030. Empirical data indicates that, although SMEs contribute almost 20% of Saudi GDP, they continue to perform worse than international standards, in part because of the lack of strategic planning, financial access and innovation potential (Monsha'at, 2020; Bhanot et al., 2021). Surveys including Alotaibi (2016, 2021) have shown that Saudi SMEs do not use strategic instruments like SWOT analysis, human resource planning, and tend to use fewer formal methods, which do not provide the needed flexibility to react to market changes. On the same note, Alenzy (2018) presents the idea that most SMEs use strict, premeditated approaches, which do not respond to the dynamics of environmental conditions, undermining competitiveness in an economy that relies on oil.

According to recent studies, SME resilience can be enhanced through strategies to entrench strategic flexibility, innovation and culture of learning. Alzahrani et al. (2023) find that SMEs that are more strategic in flexibility perform better than the others in volatile markets, and it is in line with the necessity of strategic flexibility in the Kingdom during the shift towards diversification. Additionally, Nurunnabi (2020) discovered that the government stimulus during the COVID-19 situation was utilized by SMEs in such cities as Jeddah and Makkah, but not all SMEs had the internal capabilities to manage their performance independently of the external influence. This implies that there is still a continuing disparity between the policy-based interventions and SME-level strategic maturity.

Certainly, despite having an extensive financial and organizational guidance and support from Gulf governments, researches show that the internal organizational factors, such as managerial skills, strategic management, and organizational culture, will play an essential role in performance outcomes (Al-Otaibi, 2021). Thus, the issue is not only how to supply resources, but also the ability to design a strategic solution inside SMEs that would help them to convert the aims of the Vision 2030 into efficient and long-term operations. This presents the necessity to conduct future research to investigate how contextual elements e.g., organizational culture and change management impact the effectiveness of SME management programs in Saudi and Gulf SMEs.

3.4 Theoretical Frameworks Underpinning SMPs and Performance Resource-Based View (RBV)

Resource-Based View (RBV) places the firms in a position of heterogeneous resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable that also can produce sustained competitive advantage in all aspects and ensure high level of sustainability (Miller, 2019; Mailani et al., 2024). In the context of the SME, the strategic planning and effective utilization of scarce resources such as human resources, capacity of innovation and intellectual resources may offer access to high-level performance despite structural conditions

(Molete et al., 2025). RBV thus emphasizes the importance of internal strengths in the development of the strategic management practices (Phina, 2020).

However, Researchers observe that resource operationalization and classification is not clearly operationalized which may led to ineffective application to SMEs (Komakech et al., 2025). Some claim that RBV is theoretically inflexible, as it does not reflect the dynamic conditions in the industry and the short-lived competitive advantage of dynamic markets (Monson, 2024; Fernandes et al., 2023). Furthermore, an exclusive emphasis on internal resources does not pay enough attention to the importance of strategic culture, entrepreneurial orientation, and the ability to innovate, which are becoming highly important in SME competitiveness (Alshahrani et al., 2024).

RBV is a valuable approach in the Saudi and Gulf context to understand how SMEs use the limited resources to align within the diversification objectives of the Vision 2030. However, its inertial character implies that RBV cannot be fully relevant in the process of explaining the survival of SMEs in environments that are rapidly changing and resource-constrained. This serves as a reminder that RBV should be supplemented with other complementary approaches to give a more holistic explanation of SME performance, whereby some of these include dynamic capabilities and contingency theories.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT)

Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT) came up to fill the shortcomings of RBV in the context of explaining how firms maintain performance in the turbulent environment. According to Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), dynamic capabilities refer to the capability of a firm to detect opportunities and threats, capture them, and reorganize resources to get continually adjusted. These capabilities are of significant importance to SMEs since they enable businesses to be agile, innovative, proactive in their response to the dynamics of the market and operate with limited resources (Sun et al., 2024; Zhang and Bang, 2023).

In recent researches, it is established that the SMEs that are more dynamic have better innovation results, higher adaptability, and long-term competitiveness (Mwangi et al., 2022; Liboni et al., 2022). Indeed, as an example, the combination of dynamic sensing with strategic flexibility can help firms to identify weak signals of change and subsequently align strategies to it, which is a concern when operating in volatile markets such as the transitioning economy of Saudi Arabia. What is more, the studies also highlight that dynamic capabilities can be considered a complement to RBV, as they convert the fixed resources into dynamic capabilities that help to maintain the competitive advantage (Sun et al., 2024).

However, DCT is not without major criticism. Conceptual vagueness, empirical measurement difficulties, and poor operationalization allow the concept to be limited in terms of its predictive power, which the scholars lay emphasis on (Gonzalez-Samaniego et al., 2023; Schilke and Helfat, 2025). Others comment that its repetitiveness of arguments and ambiguous constructions makes it difficult to generalize and instigate a systematic application in different SME situations (Bruyaka et al., 2024).

DC is a useful resource to SMEs in the Gulf region where companies have to go through fast-paced technological changes and policy changes that are driven by policy reforms. However, its abstract character highlights the necessity of the complementary frameworks that would connect the dynamic reconfiguration with the practical tools of the strategic management.

Strategic Fit and Contingency Theory

The Strategic Fit and Contingency Theory highlights that it is impossible to have a single best way of managing organizations but the extent to which strategic practices are effective is based on the alignment of such practices which is a fit between internal factors (e.g., resources, structure and culture) and external factors (e.g., environment, industry and market conditions). Performance is enhanced where there is alignment between the strategy, organizational design as well as environmental requirements. This practice acknowledges that companies, more so SMEs need to be dynamic in their strategies to be able to compete in turbulent environments.

When applied to SMEs, contingency views are also very applicable: (Safari & Saleh, 2020). Smaller business entities have more constrained resources, more environmental uncertainty, and performance depends on the fit between the strategic management practices of those firms (e.g., planning formality, control systems, scanning intensity) and situation-related variables (turbulence, information intensity, firm size, etc.) (Nguyen et al., 2023; Sari, 2024; Becheikh and Bouaddi, 2024). Empirical studies have also clearly demonstrated that planning should enhance the innovation and outcomes in SMEs (Alzahrani et al., 2023; Alamsjah, 2021). When applied contingency views in the Saudi and Gulf region, contingency theory emphasizes the role of matching strategic management (formulation, implementation and evaluation) with the transformation agenda of the Vision 2030, regulatory changes, and the cultural context. In this case, the SMEs in the west have been forced to adjust to tourism dynamics, seasonal demand based on religious activities, and the government efforts to favor entrepreneurship. This underlines that the effective performance results are not only contingent on strategic

resources (RBV) and the adaptability (DCT), but also on how well the SMEs fit their strategies with the contextual realities.

Relevance to SME Context

RBV, Dynamic Capabilities Theory and Contingency Theory are especially applicable in SMEs in Saudi Arabia particularly those in the western region under the Vision 2030 transformation agenda. The shortage of resources, the constrained managerial capacity, and the increased susceptibility to external shocks are common to the SMEs (McAdam et al., 2019). RBV offers a prism through which one can see how these companies can use the distinct internal resources of the company, including entrepreneurial capabilities, social relations, and proximity to the local market to achieve a competitive advantage. This is further made in DCT by explaining how SMEs can dynamically re-configure scarce resources in response to rapidly evolving environments, e.g., in response to regulatory changes, technological shocks, or tourism demand. In the meantime, Contingency Theory emphasizes the importance of considering strategic management practices in consistency with the situation on the ground, such as industry, cultural and governmental policies.

Combined, these frameworks indicate that the Saudi SMEs cannot afford to survive only on its resources. Instead, their success is determined by their development of adaptive capabilities and their suitability of strategies internal strengths and the external environment. This integrated theoretical approach can be utilized greatly in the case of SMEs in the western region, where companies need to overcome specific issues, including seasonality in religious tourism, rigid competition, and financial limitations, and, also, take advantage of government support initiatives and Vision 2030 opportunities. (Al-Tayyar et al., 2021).

3.5 The Role of Change Management in Strategic Implementation

Definition and Importance

Change management has developed as a task-focused and narrow concept to become a strategic organizational process, which addresses both the technical and people elements of change. Although previous literature differentiated planned and unplanned change, at both the micro and macro levels (Kang, 2015), the distinction is less apparent in modern complex settings. Recent definitions emphasize change management as a process that involves a transformation in an organization structure in order to change it to the intended future state, improve performance and competitive edge (Goceva and Bojkov, 2021).

Researchers note that, it is really essential to align strategy and employee engagement, organizational culture and leadership support in proper manner (Almuqwish and Rosli, 2024). The visible outcomes and food consequences of clear & effective change management include enhanced flexibility, employee trust, productivity, and sustainable development (Bulling, 2018). Change management is strategically valuable in SMEs particularly because resources are usually scarce, and therefore, in order to prepare resilience against sustainability in changing environments.

Models and Theoretical Background

Various models give a theoretical basis on how change can be understood and implemented. The concept of the force-field theory developed by Lewin views change as a balance between driving and restraining forces arguing that the responsibility of a change agent is to minimize resistance and maximize enablers (Lunenburg, 2010). The ADKAR model (Prosci, 2002) is concerned with the creation of awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement, which provides a step-wise plan to help people make transitions.

Outside these, the 8-Step Model by Kotter has earned its niche in providing a practical roadmap of change implementation with its creation of urgency, alignment of leadership, involvement of stakeholders and the institutionalization of the change as a culture. The necessity to empower employees through the use of communication, training, and mentoring, and to reduce resistance is also emphasized by scholars (Errida and Lotfi, 2021). Collectively, these models imply that successful change needs structural as well as cultural adaptations, involvement of employees, and a feedback process.

Empirical Evidence on SMEs

It has been established through empirical studies that SMEs encounter special challenges in change management when compared to larger organizations. They usually lack the financial capacity, informal nature, and reactive approaches to organize the change programs in a systematized form (Popa et al., 2019; Setyawati et al., 2023). Research proves that SMEs are inclined to choose short-term, ad hoc policies instead of long-term strategic planning and this undercuts sustainability (Fitzgerald et al., 2021). Nevertheless, in the case where SMEs incorporate change management with favorable organizational culture, that is, effective communication, alignment of the leadership, and involvement of the employees, it becomes easier to make them adaptable and enhance their performance (Kuczman et al., 2024; Suri and Aslami, 2023).

Change management is now becoming critical to SMEs in dynamic markets like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf to keep up with the reforms of Vision 2030, digital transformation and competitive forces. It has been indicated that the SMEs that have incorporated change management practices into their strategies have a better resilience, innovation and continuity, which supports its significance as a performance driver and survival mechanism.

Although change management is a concept that has been extensively researched, it is a multifaceted and dynamic concept that incorporates both technical change and human-oriented change. In the case of SMEs, it is of great importance due to their limited resources and their vulnerability to changing environments. The literature has pointed out three key dimensions, the definition and strategic significance, theoretical model informing its application, and empirical evidence on SMEs. The table below provides a summary of these dimensions and their important lessons to SMEs.

Section	Key Insights	Critical Lessons for SMEs
Definition & Importance	Evolved from micro/macro task-level focus (Kang, 2015) to a strategic organizational process integrating technical and human aspects (Goceva & Bojkov, 2021). Enhances performance, adaptability, and competitiveness (Almuqwishli & Rosli, 2024; Bulling, 2018).	SMEs benefit by using change management to overcome resource limitations , build resilience, and sustain long-term growth in volatile environments.
Models & Theoretical Background	Lewin's Force-Field Theory : balance driving vs. restraining forces (Lunenburg, 2010). ADKAR Model : awareness → desire → knowledge → ability → reinforcement (Prosci, 2002). Kotter's 8-Step Model : urgency, leadership alignment, culture integration (Kotter, 1996). Training and mentoring critical (Errida & Lotfi, 2021).	Models emphasize that success in SMEs requires employee participation, cultural alignment, and continuous feedback , not only structural adjustments.
Empirical Evidence on SMEs	SMEs face constraints: limited resources, informal structures, reactive strategies (Popa et al., 2019; Setyawati et al., 2023). Success linked to leadership support, communication, and culture (Kuczman et al., 2024; Suri & Aslami, 2023). Alignment with Vision 2030 and digital transformation essential in KSA.	Embedding change management leads to higher resilience, innovation, continuity, and competitiveness , turning SMEs' limitations into opportunities for agility.

Table one: SMEs Key Insights

3.6 The Role of Organizational Culture in Strategy Execution Definitions and Dimensions

Organizational culture has taken the center stage of management research (Assoratgoon & Kantabutra, 2023). Researchers have observed that there were over 160 definitions of the word culture indicating its complexity and multi-dimensionality (Shaiq et al., 2011). The traditional viewpoints, including Hofstede (1984), refer to culture as common cognitive programming that governs the manner in which people think and behave as part of a group, whereas Miron et al. (2004) emphasize the term as informal values, beliefs, and norms held by an organization. More modern submissions are based on the idea that culture is a dynamic and shifting system of meaning that helps organizations adjust to both internal and external problems (Nugent and Flynn, 2020; Patterson et al., 2004).

The dimensions of organizational culture are more than just researched, and the Competing Values Framework (CVF) proposed by Cameron and Quinn (2006) has singled out four major types of organizational culture:

- * Clan Culture - it is focused on teamwork, loyalty, and human resources (Sriya & Bhusal, 2024; Yusuf and Saragih, 2020).
- * Adhocracy Culture - this type is characterized by innovation, flexibility, and risk-taking, and it is mostly applicable in dynamic industries (Santoso et al., 2024; Scaliza et al., 2021).
- * Hierarchy Culture - putting emphasis on structure, control, and efficiency, which stability is usually interconnected with the stability of operations (Yu and Wu, 2009; Sanner and Bunderson, 2018).
- * Market Culture - outward focused, competition-oriented, performance-based goal attainment (Aranki et al., 2019; Samsie et al., 2021).

Such cultural aspects have a considerable impact on the development, communication, and implementation of strategies in organizations and determine the behavior of employees as well as the results of organizations. (Assoratgoon & Kantabutra, 2023).

Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical basis of organizational culture has its roots in the contributions of the classical scholars. Schein used culture to refer to a pattern of common basic assumptions acquired together by a group to address the external adaptation and internal integration and transferred to the new member as the proper way to think and behave. Hofstede (1984) highlighted individualism and collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance as key dimensions of culture that determine the behaviors of managers and the practices of an organization. Along these lines, models such as the Cameron and Quinn CVF (2006) have offered useful means of grouping the types of culture and their influence on performance.

These theories imply that culture is an enabler and a hindrance in terms of strategy implementation. A supportive culture helps to ensure coordination between strategic objectives and employee actions whereas a misaligned culture introduces resistance and sabotage implementation (Talaja et al., 2023).

Empirical Studies Linking Culture and Strategy

The results of the organizational culture on the implementation of the strategies have always been established through the use of empirical research (Kaul, A. 2019). Strategic implementation can be improved by positive cultures of collaboration, trust, and innovation to deploy changes by making them less resistant to change, as well as increasing employee commitment (Talaja et al., 2023). As an example, the clan culture and adhocracy culture have been associated with greater employee satisfaction, innovation, and flexibility, which are essential to the SMEs functioning in the turbulent environment (Santti et al., 2017; Santoso et al., 2024). On the other hand, strict hierarchical cultures can be agile inhibitory, but in highly regulatory industries, can contribute to consistency (Sanner and Bunderson, 2018).

Culture is a fundamental factor in the Saudi and Gulf environment when it comes to aligning organizations towards the Vision 2030 goals, where adaptability, innovation, and employee involvement are the key elements in competitiveness of SMEs. Recent research points out that companies that have a high market and adhocracy orientation can more easily convert a strategy into a practical result, especially in the sectors with a swift change (Kuczman et al., 2024; Suri and Aslami, 2023).

The comparative perspective on types of organizational cultures can assist in understanding how each of the dimensions may promote or remove the implementation of a strategy. Whereas the culture of clan and adhocracy can stimulate collaboration and innovation to facilitate flexible strategic objectives, hierarchy and market cultures can prioritize control and competitiveness which can stabilize as well as limit flexibility.

IV. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

4.1 Emerging Patterns and Trends

The literature reviewed always states that strategic management practices (SMPs) including environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation have a positive impact on the firm performance in global contexts. According to recent research, there has been an increasing focus on SMEs as tools of economic diversification, especially in emerging economies such as Saudi Arabia through the Vision 2030. One of the trends is the consistent combination of change management and organizational culture as an intermediary that enhances the relationship between strategy and performance. Moreover, digitalization and innovation have become more and more regarded as necessary facilitators of strategic implementation.

4.2 Inconsistencies and Contradictions

Although it is widely agreed that SMPs are valuable, there are inconsistencies over the importance of individual practices. Other studies focus on the importance of formulation as the most important contributor to performance, whereas others believe that implementation and evaluation should not be ignored but are much more important in turbulent markets. Likewise, although some studies suggest that SMPs are associated with better financial and non-financial performances, others claim that it has a mixed or non-significant impact in resource-constrained SMEs. There are also contradicting cultural dimensions: in one case, clan cultures provide commitment of employees; in another case, market-oriented cultures provide short-term benefits at long-term sustainability costs

4.3 Methodological Limitations

A significant number of the studies reviewed have methodological weaknesses. First, many of them are based on cross-sectional survey data which restricts causal inference and does not reflect the dynamic nature of strategy. Second, there is a significant volume of literature in the world that works with big companies, which diminishes the generality of the results in SMEs. In Saudi Arabia the studies are usually based on small non-random samples or case studies and this restricts the generalizability. In addition, the measurement issues, including the definition of performance (financial and non-financial) used differently, pose difficulties in the comparison of outcomes in different contexts.

4.4 Theoretical and Practical Gaps

In theory, literature has extensively utilized RBV and dynamic capabilities theory, however, research has not combined them with contingency views on explaining environmental volatility in Saudi Arabia. Few studies have also been conducted on how change management and organizational culture relate with SMPs to influence the result in SMEs. In practice, Saudi studies support government programs under the vision of 2030, but there is little empirical evidence of how SMEs in the Western region (Makkah, Jeddah, Medina) are

adapting strategically. This presents a research vacuum in which the effects of SMPs on performance are not only tested but the moderating effects of culture and change management within the locally specific socio-economic and religious-tourism-driven setting are also investigated.

4.5 Variables Needing Further Exploration

The relationship between SMPs and firm performance has been largely studied in the literature, but there has been little attention to the mediating and moderating variables that can either eliminate or indirectly reinforce this relationship. As an illustration, though change management and organizational culture have been found to contribute to performance, few studies have tested their effects empirically in SMEs in emerging economies. In addition, in many cases, the performance is evaluated in terms of financial metrics that ignore non-monetary performance like customer satisfaction, innovation ability, and business continuity which are becoming crucial in dynamic environments.

4.6 Industry and Regional Gaps

Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia vision 2030 focuses on the development of SMEs, the literature regarding SMEs in Western parts (Makkah, Jeddah, Medina) is limited. Most of the research focused on Riyadh or country level data has created regional gap in terms of SMEs working in hubs influenced by religious tourism, cultural industries and service sectors. Such SMEs are subject to special challenges like seasonality of demand, large dependence on expatriates, and regulatory pressures. There has been little empirical research on the ways in which SMPs can be modified to these context-specific issues.

4.7 Conceptual and Empirical Recommendations

In principle, future studies need to incorporate RBV, Dynamic Capabilities, and Contingency Theory in the context of contextual influences including organizational culture and change management, and thus provide a more comprehensive picture of strategy implementation within SMEs. Longitudinal studies are required in an empirical manner to capture the dynamic nature of the SME strategies under reforms of Vision 2030. Researchers must also extend performance measures and incorporate multi-dimensional measures of performance that both meet economic and social goals. Lastly, comparative research between the Western region SMEs and other Saudi regions- or other Gulf countries- may be informative on the regional differences and the best practice in strategic management.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

This review has discussed the importance of Strategic Management Practices (SMPs) in determining the performance of SMEs, especially in Western region of Saudi Arabia. Combining theoretical views, such as the Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, and Contingency Theory, the study identifies ways in which SMEs may attain sustainable competitiveness through an effective scanning, strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

The study results indicate that strategic management practices, such as formulation, implementation, and evaluation/control, have a direct, positive effect on SME performance, which leads to increased growth, profitability, innovation, customer satisfaction, and business continuity. It is also observed in the review that the organization culture and change management are determining moderators of the success of implementation: the participative and learning cultures, as well as the structured change processes (visible sponsorship, two-way communication, capability building) strengthen the implementation and the rigid cultures and change as ad hoc change blunt the implementation, a phenomenon that seems to be particularly acute in the context of Western Saudi SMEs where resources are limited and the market changes rapidly.

Another key point of the review is on the significance of change management and organizational culture as facilitating factors that determine the success of strategic initiatives. Empirical studies on global and emerging economies indicate the usefulness of developed SMPs in improving the performance of firms, but research gaps on the mechanisms of these practices in resource-limited contexts, like SMEs in the service-oriented Western region of Saudi Arabia, exist.

The review found a series of emerging trends (including the increased significance of non-financial performance indicators), inconsistencies (the imbalance between the emphasis on formulation and execution), and gaps in methods (a strong dependence on cross-sectional designs). These lessons suggest the necessity of more context-oriented, longitudinal and multi-dimensional studies.

Finally, this review adds value by placing SMPs in the context of the distinct Vision 2030 transformation environment, where strategies should be adapted to the dynamics of the region of Makkah, Jeddah, and Medina. By filling these gaps, the academic discourse will be enhanced as well as offer practical

recommendations to policy makers, consultants and leaders of SMEs struggling to ensure greater organizational resilience and performance across time.

5.2 Recommendation

The researcher summarized 15 practical recommendations to SMEs in the Western Region of Saudi Arabia based on a systematic literature review and the empirical studies that are pertinent to this research. Together, they will ensure better quality of execution, performance, resilience, and competitiveness, as per vision 2030.

1. Making the strategic management cycle institutional: An annual process of environmental scanning, strategy formulation and implementation evaluation must be formalized, quarterly review checkpoints and ownership of processes should be assigned to SMEs.
2. Intensify environmental scanning functions: Companies ought to have a systematic market check, which monitors regulatory changes, patterns, competition behavior, customer trends and technological changes.
3. Prioritize and focus strategic decisions: To prevent the wasting of resources through a lack of focus, the enterprises should focus strategic priorities on a short list of 3-5 goals (aligned with Vision 2030) and test them with resource-fit analyses (e.g., VRIN, SWOT/TOWS).
4. Embrace light execution governance: Roles (e.g., RACI), milestones, budgets and interdependencies should be defined and initiatives associated with OKRs or a Balanced Scorecard so that incentives can be aligned and coordination failures are minimized.
5. Improve evaluation and control systems: Organizations are encouraged to implement combined performance boards, which integrate financial and non-financial indicators (e.g., customer satisfaction, rate of innovation, time-to-market, etc.) and need variance reports, which must be supplemented by corrective steps that are time-bound.
6. Formulate dynamic capabilities: The routines SMEs need to institutionalize to enhance adaptability to environmental turbulence by detecting opportunities, exploiting them through rapid experimentation and rearranging resources.
7. Make change management formal: An explicit change model (e.g., Kotter or ADKAR) in terms of executive sponsorship, stakeholder mapping, communication planning, specific training, and resistance-management guidelines must be used to support strategy execution.
8. Concur organizational culture/execution: Leaders must develop a culture of performance-and-learning (e.g., integrating elements of clan and adhocracy), with a clear communication, psychological safety and awareness of quick wins to keep the momentum.
9. Empower the strategy middle: Capability building in translation of strategies, decision making based on data, coaching should be offered to middle managers; cross-functional communities of practice should be created to coordinate the implementation.
10. Become pragmatically digital: Companies must implement cost-efficient cloud applications (e.g., accounting, CRM, e-commerce, lightweight ERP) having simple data management and cybersecurity hygiene to enhance execution discipline and measurement.
11. Broaden access to finance: SMEs ought to use Monshaat and Kafalah schemes, supply-chain financing, and vendor-relationships, and enhance the concept of bankability by maintaining clean financial statements, cash-flow-projections, and internal credit policies.
12. Connect human resources with strategy: Strategic priorities should be directly linked to workforce planning, role clarity, and upskilling in project management and data analytics to achieve Saudization/localization goals without compromising capability.
13. Take advantage of local concentration in Western KSA: Firms are expected to be a part of Jeddah-Makkah-Medina clusters (tourism, hospitality, logistics), involve themselves in buyer-supplier development programs and partner with universities and incubators to reach knowledge and markets.
14. Make risk management and business continuity institutional: To maintain a proper resilient execution, enterprises should adopt BCM frameworks to ensure high performance
15. Enhance the policy and research base: Develop an SMP Adoption Scorecard to measure the extent to which SMEs use scanning, formulation, implementation and evaluation; establish quantifiable goals to get a greater portion of credit on to SMEs in the Western Region; release de-identified government data (e.g., licensing, procurement, Kafalah guarantees) to researchers; and finance studies that track the same SMEs over time. Apply these findings to make changes to SME programs each year and make evidence-based decisions.

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