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Strategic Management Practices and Strategic Plans: An Empirical Analysis of Enterprise Approaches*

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Abstract

As a continuous process, strategic management addresses the entrepreneurial dimension of organizations, organizational renewal and progress, and, in particular, developing and implementing strategies to create competitive advantages. This includes tracking and improving current programs and operations to ensure the strategic plan is on track. The outcomes of the nature and practice of the strategic management process are presented for a sample of 314 enterprises in Kosovo. The findings show that only 10.2% of Kosovan enterprises apply strategic management as a whole process, whereas 31.2% have five-year strategic plans. The results of the research showed that there is a significant relationship between the strategic management process and strategic tools. However, there is no significant relationship between strategic plans and strategic tools. We contribute theoretically by distinguishing written plans from active process engagement and by showing that process engagement, rather than mere plan possession, better predicts tool adoption in a transitional economy. This study thus provides important insights for those policymakers, practitioners, and academics looking to improve strategic management processes in similar environments.

Keywords: *strategic management process, strategic planning, strategic plan, strategic tools, Kosovan enterprises, transitional economy*

JEL classification: *D22, L20, M10, O12*

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1. Introduction

"*Success today and tomorrow requires driving while looking straight out of the front windshield*" (Godfrey et al., 2020, p. 6). While strategic planning can serve as a valuable framework for organizing and presenting a systematic overview of all management initiatives, it should not be misconstrued as guaranteeing the chosen strategy's success. Instead, it provides some certainty to decision-makers without guaranteeing success. Using strategic tools and incorporating different perspectives can help decision-makers increase the sustainable success of their strategies (Kotler et al., 2015). As Berisha Qehaja et al. (2017a) emphasize, research on strategy tools and techniques primarily focuses on their extent of utilization and classification.

While large international companies often determine the strategic path, small and medium-sized enterprises still implement sustainability principles, emphasizing sustainable competitiveness. Organizations should have a long-term strategy with clear goals that promote process improvement, fair behaviour, and active problem-solving by management (Vrabcova et al., 2022). According to Al Ghamdi (2005), many corporate executives recognize the value of strategic planning; however, only a few translate these plans into tangible market results. An enterprise's business strategy is a multifaceted plan to acquire and sustain competitive advantage. This strategic plan must exhibit innovation to adapt to the emerging knowledge from consumers, competitors, and technological shifts (Dyer et al., 2019). Firms must cultivate robust dynamic capabilities to formulate viable strategies for creating and capturing value even in potentially adverse and volatile environments. Additionally, they should shape their business landscape through market and non-market actions (Teece, 2020). According to Ivanova et al. (2019), in current business practices, the core objective of strategic management is to maintain a competitive advantage through technological progress. This requires accelerating the implementation of new technology and aligning with the broader corporate strategy.

Previous empirical studies have primarily concentrated on well-developed or stable economies, neglecting to address strategic management's distinctive challenges in transitional economies like Kosovo. This shows a gap in the literature about the specific dynamics and issues businesses face in transitional settings. According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD, 2021), a transitional economy transforms from a centrally planned economic system to a market-driven economy, typically entailing the liberalization of prices, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the introduction of competitive markets. Kosova can be considered a transition economy, considering its history, reforms in various economic and integrated packages, and accordingly adapted institutions. It aims to shift from a post-conflict region to a country implementing policies oriented towards a market economy.

As a transitional economy, Kosovo has undergone significant reforms and adjustments of its institutions to transform itself from a post-conflict territory to a competitive country. Although these advancements have been made, strategic management practice is comparatively very weak in Kosovo's enterprises. Research has been conducted in the past to assess which tools and techniques are commonly utilized in executive management worldwide. Based on a thorough review of empirical studies published between 1990 and 2015, Berisha Qehaja et al. (2017b, p. 585) determined that: "*the ten most used strategic tools and techniques worldwide resulted as follows: SWOT analysis, benchmarking, PEST analysis, what-if analysis, vision and mission statements, Porter's five forces analysis, business financial analysis, key success factors analysis, cost-benefit analysis and customer satisfaction*".

Building upon prior research (Berisha Qehaja & Kutllovci, 2020a), which revealed low usage of strategy tools among Kosovan enterprises and reliance on fundamental tools such as SWOT analysis, this study investigates the relationship between strategic management processes, formalized strategic plans, and tool adoption to address critical gaps in organizational practices. Prior work has documented which tools managers use and how planning is practiced, yet important theoretical and empirical questions remain about what aspect of strategy practice actually drives tool adoption and strategic capability.

This paper addresses two related gaps. First, much of the literature treats formal plans (the presence of a written strategy) and strategic process engagement (formulation, implementation, and evaluation) as interchangeable indicators of strategic capability. We argue they are conceptually distinct: formalization signals documentation and commitment, whereas process engagement captures active managerial work and decision routines. Second, evidence from transitional economies is scarce. Institutional constraints, resource scarcity, and rapid change in such contexts may alter how plans and processes translate into tool use and strategic action. By studying Kosovan enterprises, we provide context-sensitive evidence that tests whether these two dimensions relate differently to the adoption of strategic tools.

Research problem. For Kosovan enterprises, we examine: a) the extent to which enterprises engage in the strategic management process, b) whether they maintain formalized strategic plans, and c) how these processes and plans relate to the use of strategic tools.

The first dimension of the problem examines how Kosovan enterprises pursue strategic management activities, including vision and mission statements, environmental analysis, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. The second considers whether enterprises formulate and utilize formalized strategic plans to direct activities and decisions, providing insight into their priorities, objectives, and approaches to achieving competitive advantage. The third dimension tests the inter-

relationship between strategic management processes and the application of strategic tools. Finally, the fourth dimension assesses whether formalized strategic plans are associated with more extensive tool use in decision-making.

The primary goal of this study is to present key findings from an empirical investigation into the nature and practice of the strategic management process in enterprises operating within the Republic of Kosova, thereby contributing significantly to our understanding of strategic management practices in transition economies.

The paper is organized as follows: First, a brief introduction is presented, followed by a literature review on strategic planning, strategic management processes, strategic plan development, and the use of tools, along with the study hypotheses. The third section presents research methods, including objectives, data, and methodology. Section four presents and discusses the results of the tested hypotheses. The final section concludes with key findings, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

This section explores the theoretical foundations of strategic planning and strategic management processes, as well as their impact on organizational effectiveness. It provides more insight into the impact of strategic tools in assisting managerial decision-making and for better performance. Through an exploration of the relationships between these constructs, this section establishes a basis for hypotheses development while drawing insights from relevant literature.

2.1. Strategic planning

In scholarly literature, *strategic planning* is often used interchangeably with *strategic management*, but it is crucial to recognize that they are different. Strategic management is concerned with strategy formulation and implementation, evaluation, and control, whereas strategic planning is limited to formulating strategy at all organizational levels. In contemporary contexts, the later stages of the strategic management process have substantial significance. As stated by David (2011), the expression 'strategic planning' is predominantly employed in the business circle, while *strategic management* finds more significant usage in academic discourse. Nevertheless, during literature reviews, it is common to encounter *strategic planning* as a synonym for *strategic management*. Consequently, the strategic management process generates a plan that includes all managerial activities, followed by rigorous implementation, control, and evaluation. In other words, a strategic plan is a blueprint that outlines an organization's goals and priorities for a given period, typically spanning five years. It outlines an organization's vision,

mission, values, goals, and strategies for achieving them. A strategic plan is a roadmap that helps guide organizational decisions and resource allocation to move the organization toward its objectives. Strategic plans aim to provide organizations with a competitive advantage, reinforcing the critical role of strategic management in modern business practices (Dyer et al., 2019).

Scholars have long distinguished between formal, deliberate strategies and informal, emergent ones. Armstrong (1982) found that formal planning, typically associated with multi-year horizons, provides structure and consistency in organizational decision-making. In contrast, Mintzberg (1994) emphasized that informal strategies emerge through adaptation and learning, often reflecting shorter or undefined horizons. The time horizon of strategic plans is therefore critical: organizations with formal strategies tend to adopt long-term perspectives, while those relying on informal approaches operate more reactively. This distinction is directly relevant to our hypotheses, as the presence or absence of a formal strategic plan, and its intended duration, shapes the likelihood of enterprises employing strategic management tools.

This process's composition underwent significant changes before culminating in its current form. Strategic planning originated in the mid-1950s. During this era, strategic planning emerged as an effective means of guiding businesses to pursue their goals. However, a fundamental limitation of this approach is its exclusive focus on the strategy formulation phase, which interprets the strategy itself as the sole outcome of strategic planning. The main drawback of strategic planning is that it does not include any stage other than strategy formulation. Kume (2010) mentioned three significant failures in strategic planning: forecasting, selection, and formalization. Strategic management has emerged as a discipline alongside strategic planning, evolving to encompass two additional essential phases: strategy implementation and evaluation/control.

2.2. Strategic management process

The strategic management process has developed through both classical foundations and contemporary refinements. Early works by Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965), and Learned et al. (1965) established the discipline by linking internal strengths and weaknesses to external opportunities and threats (Rumelt et al., 1994). Porter's *Competitive Strategy* (1980) further advanced the field by introducing the five forces framework, which emphasized industry dynamics and competitive positioning. These contributions marked a shift from deterministic approaches toward contingent perspectives, underscoring the need for organizations to adapt to their external environment.

Building on these foundations, Mintzberg (1990) categorized nine schools of thought: design, planning, positioning, entrepreneurial, cognitive, learning, political, cul-

tural, and environmental. Elfring and Volberda (2011) distinguished between prescriptive schools (design, planning, positioning) and descriptive schools (the remaining six). McKiernan (1997) later synthesized these perspectives into four broader streams: planning and practice, learning, competitive positioning, and the resource-based view. Ansoff (1991) critiqued prescriptive schools, while Mintzberg (1978) and Mintzberg and Waters (1985) emphasized the interplay of deliberate and emergent strategies. Mintzberg et al. (2020, p. 12) observed that "*emergent strategies are not necessarily bad and deliberate strategies good; effective strategists mix these in ways that reflect the conditions at hand, notably the ability to predict as well as the need to react to unexpected events*."

This literature shows that while historical contributions provide theoretical depth, the current emphasis is on formalized activities, vision and mission development, environmental scanning, internal analysis, goal setting, implementation, and evaluation, which make the strategic management process measurable and applicable. This study builds on that perspective by examining how Kosovan enterprises apply these structured elements in practice.

2.3. Strategic management tools and techniques

It is widely accepted that strategic management tools and techniques encompass a variety of resources that aid managers at every stage of strategic management (Afonina & Chalupsky, 2012). Strategic tools represent a diverse set of instruments to assist enterprises in fulfilling the complex demands of dynamic marketplaces while establishing and sustaining competitive advantages (Stenfors et al., 2007). Berisha Qehaja and Kutllovci (2020a) examined the usage of strategy tools in Kosovan enterprises, revealing low adoption rates overall and notable differences across sectors. Building on this, Berisha Qehaja and Kutllovci (2020b) found that competitive advantage partially mediates the relationship between the use of strategic tools and enterprise performance, accounting for 23.21% of the mediation. Stenfors et al. (2007) claimed that a range of tools from different disciplines are available to facilitate strategic-level decision-making. The sheer number of tools suggested by consultants and scholars alike is beyond the reach of detailed enumeration, and it is worth noting that there is no comprehensive consensus about what these tools should be (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Elfring and Volberda (2001, p. 1) state, "*The choice of a definition and the application of specific strategic management techniques is greatly dependent on which paradigmatic schools of thought in strategic management one prefers*".

Understanding strategic tools is important for three key reasons. First, it benefits scholars and practitioners, as it facilitates a transition from a normative and objective perspective towards a more humanistic and practice-oriented approach in comprehending the application of strategic tools (Gunn & Williams, 2007).

Tools and techniques play a crucial role in strategic management. However, it is essential to recognize that strategy tools cannot substitute for overarching enterprise strategies (Porter, 1996). Moreover, it is important to note that strategic tools do not integrally formulate a strategy; the responsibility for crafting strategy rests with managers (Hussey, 1997). While these tools may contribute to specific aspects of the strategic management process, they do not replace managerial expertise and practical applications (Whittington, 1996).

The need for customization in tool usage goes beyond tool features and is influenced by diverse enterprise contexts (Knott, 2006). Berisha Qehaja et al. (2017b) found that managers incorporate strategic tools into daily activities, with usage varying by enterprise size, sector, and economic development level. Porter (1996) cautioned that less visible management tools have almost supplanted traditional strategies.

2.4. Conceptual framework

Defining the strategic management process, strategic plan, and strategic tools

The conceptual framework forms the foundation of a study and guides its analysis (Bell & Waters, 2018). Fisher (2010) highlighted cause-and-effect relationships as common in conceptual frameworks. This study examines links between strategic tools, strategic management processes, and strategic plans.

Numerous studies (Miller & Cardinal, 1994; Peel & Bridge, 1998; Glaister & Falshaw, 1999; Andersen, 2000; Carland & Carland, 2003; Gibson & Casser, 2005; Thornhill & White, 2007; Wang et al., 2007; Šuklev & Debarliev, 2012; Sandada et al., 2014) have consistently indicated that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engaging in strategic planning are prone to experience enhanced outcomes, including increased sales, accelerated return on investment, improved profit margins, and a larger workforce. Bayraktar et al. (2017) find that innovation mediates competitive strategies and firm performance in Turkish manufacturing enterprises. Svatosova (2020) emphasized that identifying variables that impact e-commerce processes is crucial for successful strategic management.

Most studies treat strategic tools as an essential building block of the strategic management process, while some others have focused on their level of usage by organizations. Webster et al. (1989) argue that strategic tools are better for strategic thinking and thus make planning more efficient. Conversely, Dincer et al. (2006) suggest that these tools simplify the planning process and encourage strategic thinking, particularly in its final stages. To promote lasting sustainability and growth, it is crucial for strategic orientation and management, supported by specialized tools, to evolve alongside organizational development (Ward, 1988; Stone, 1999; Ireland, 2000; Wolf, 2000; Analoui & Karami, 2003; *as cited by* Gică, 2011).

Dincer et al. (2006) note that enterprises with emergency strategies but no formal strategic plans tend to avoid traditional strategic planning methods. Vaitkevičius (2007) found that strategic management in Lithuanian companies showed low systematization, emphasizing strategic tools like detailed analyses. Elbanna (2008) observed that businesses may use strategic tools without having structured plans. Šuklev and Debarliev (2012) emphasize that formal planning and strategic tools are distinct yet interconnected elements influencing planning effectiveness, warranting independent investigation. Strategic plans are considered positively associated with using strategic tools. In line with this, our study also examines whether enterprises lacking formal strategic plans nevertheless employ strategic tools, which is addressed within the scope of H_2.

Contemporary strategy-as-practice perspectives stress that strategy is enacted through everyday managerial activities and routines rather than only through formal documents. Research on tools-in-use further shows that the performative mobilization of tools by practitioners shapes strategic outcomes (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). This perspective implies that active engagement with discrete process steps and the routines of strategizing may be stronger drivers of tool adoption and strategic capability than the mere presence of a written plan, which motivates our focus on item-level measures of process engagement and tool use.

The development of our hypotheses rests on the assumption that the strategic management process and strategic tools are interdependent. Each stage of the process requires distinct analytical support: formulation is typically aided by SWOT analysis, vision and mission statements, Porter's five forces, and value chain analysis; implementation benefits from portfolio matrices such as the BCG and GE; while evaluation and control are facilitated by the Balanced Scorecard and "*What if*" analysis. Enterprises that engage more comprehensively with these stages encounter greater complexity and decision-making demands, which naturally increases their reliance on a broader set of tools. Thus, the seriousness with which organizations approach the process logically corresponds to broader tool usage, providing the theoretical foundation for our hypotheses.

Hypotheses. The following hypotheses were formulated based on previous discussions:

- H_1: *The strategic management process will be positively related to using strategic tools.*
- H_2: *The strategic plan will be positively related to using strategic tools.*

These hypotheses are correlational, as they indicate the co-occurrence of variables in a specific manner without implying causation between them.

3. Methodology

The main research objective is to present the key findings of this empirical study on the nature and practice of the strategic management process in enterprises operating in the Republic of Kosova, thereby significantly contributing to our understanding of strategic management practices in transition economies.

3.1. Empirical data and analysis

The sampling method used in this study was random and drawn from the Kosova Tax Administration's final database. The study encompassed 1,685 registered businesses. Based on statistical parameters of a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error, the required representative sample size was calculated to be 314 firms, and this threshold was met as 314 firms participated in the survey. The overall participation rate was 18.63% of the population (314/1,685), which is consistent with accepted standards in organizational and strategic management research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008; Holtom et al., 2022). Respondents were owners or managers of the firms. Data were analysed using SPSS.

According to ethical guidelines, all participants in this study gave their informed consent before participation. Given the nature of the study and the circumstances under which it was undertaken, this consent was obtained verbally. All participants were provided with the purpose of the study, the tasks required, and their rights as participants (including the right to withdraw from the study at any time).

3.2. Methods

Construct measures are essential to research methodology, particularly in the social sciences, as they help operationalize abstract concepts into measurable variables. The following are some construct measures related to the research questions we provided regarding strategic management practices in Kosovan enterprises.

Numerous authors have developed measurement scales to evaluate managers' perspectives on strategic management (e.g., Glaister & Falshaw, 1999; Dincer et al., 2006; Kalkan & Bozkurt, 2013). Glaister et al. (2008) highlighted that early research on strategic planning systems often faced criticism for using overly simplistic processes or formalization measures. Inspired by the works of Gluck et al. (1982) and Marx (1991), the latter researcher developed a multifaceted measurement scale for planning processes, encompassing a formal flexible dimension. Similarly, Miller (1987) introduced a scale for enterprise planning with eleven strategy-related statements, evaluated on a Likert scale from 0 (*not at all accurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). Boyd and Elliott (1998) further contributed by proposing metrics to assess strategic management through seven sub-phases

rated on a five-point Likert scale. While Glaister et al.'s (2008) scale emphasizes formalization, it does not comprehensively evaluate all aspects of strategic management. Likewise, Miller's (1987) scale, though valuable, focuses solely on the strategic planning step, excluding critical stages like implementation and control.

After analysing various scales developed by different authors, this study adopted Boyd and Reuning-Elliott's (1998) measurement scale to assess the strategic management variable. Boyd and Reuning-Elliott's scale was chosen for its inclusion of questions covering all stages of the strategic management process. To ensure completeness, the scale was further refined using David's (2011) strategic management model, which defines the process as a cycle of formulation, implementation, and evaluation/control. For instance, the original question addressing only the mission statement was expanded to include the vision statement. Additionally, the general question on trend analysis was divided into separate questions for internal and external analyses (see Table 1). In this way, the measurement instrument reflects not only the planning elements but also the broader stages of the strategic management cycle. The resulting ordinal data rank responses meaningfully according to assessed criteria.

Table 1: Measurement of the strategic management process

Variable	Description	Question	Item-scale
Strategic management process	Measurement of strategic management process	1. *Vision and mission statement* 2. *External environment analysis (political, economic, social, technological, ecological, and legal factors)* 3. *Internal environment analysis (management, marketing, finance, accounting, manufacturing, research/development, information systems)* 4. *Competitor analysis* 5. *Long-term goals (5 years or more)* 6. *Annual goals* 7. *Short-term action plans* 8. *Ongoing evaluation*	(1) no emphasis (2) (3) moderate emphasis (4) (5) very strong emphasis

Source: Adapted from Boyd and Reuning-Elliott (1998)

For hypothesis testing, the ordinal scores of the *strategic management process* scale were grouped into two categories ("*emphasis*" scores 3-5, and "no/low emphasis" scores 1-2). Strategic tool usage was recoded into a binary variable (use vs. non-use). This categorization allowed the application of chi-square association measures (Phi and Contingency Coefficient), which are appropriate for categorical and ordinal data.

Strategic plan. Initially, the respondents were questioned about the presence of both formal and informal strategies. Subsequently, only respondents who confirmed the existence of written strategies were asked about the duration for which they maintained these strategies. It is inferred that enterprises possessing a written strategy for five or more years can be deemed to have strategic plans in place. Consequently, a new variable was constructed that exclusively incorporated responses from respondents with written plans spanning five years or longer (see Table 2). This measurement scale produces nominal data.

Table 2: Type of strategy and written strategic plans

Variable	Description	Question	Item-scale
Strategic plan	Strategic plan	1. *Is your strategy formal (written) or just in the form of unwritten ideas, or concepts? a) formal, b) informal.* If formal, go to question 2. 2. *For how many years you have written a strategy?*	(1) 1 year (2) 2 years (3) 3 years (4) 4 years (5) 5 years, and (6) over 5 years

Source: Author's calculations

Strategic tools. To assess respondents' understanding of strategic tools, the measurement criterion was adapted by Jarzabkowski et al. (2012). Thus, for each tool listed, respondents were given the choice of 1 = We are unaware of it, 2 = We are aware but have never used it, 3 = We have used it but no longer use it, or 4 = We use it. The measurement scale produced nominal data. SWOT analysis, *What if* analysis, vision and mission statements, Porter's five forces analysis, value chain analysis, BCG matrix, GE matrix, and balanced scorecard were some of the strategic tools used in this study. According to several empirical studies, these tools have proven to be the most widely used.

Psychometric evidence. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency: the eight-item *strategic management process* scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (α=0.79, n=314), and the *strategic tools* items (*recoded for current use*) showed acceptable reliability (KR-20/α=0.73, n=314). Factorability was checked using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure and Bartlett's test (SMP: KMO = 0.809;

Bartlett's $\chi^2(28) = 611.66$, $p < 0.001$; Tools: KMO = 0.765; Bartlett's $\chi^2(28) = 510.48$, $p < 0.001$), and exploratory factor analysis (principal-axis factoring, Direct Oblimin) indicated a unidimensional solution for the *strategic management process* and a two-factor solution for the *strategic tools* (analytical/implementation vs. awareness/statement; inter-factor r=0.477). The strategic-plan measure is a single-item indicator and is reported at the item level; its validity is supported via expected associations with the multi-item scales.

In testing H_1 and H_2, a nonparametric test for association was employed; specifically, the *Chi-square-based measures* known as *Phi* (ϕ). The values of this test range from 0 to 1 and aim to adjust the chi-square (χ) statistic in proportion to sample size (N). This test frequently analyzes 2 × 2 contingency tables with nominal data. As Hair et al. (2003) indicated, the chi-square test can also be extended for application with ordinal data. The formula for calculating the Phi (ϕ) test is as follows:

$$\phi = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{N}} \tag{1}$$

where, χ^2 = Chi-square and N = number of cases

Contingency Coefficient C is typically employed when dealing with contingency tables larger than 2 × 2. This coefficient is derived from the chi-square distribution (χ^2) and varies between zero and one. A higher contingency coefficient (C) value indicated a stronger association. This coefficient is computed using the following formula:

$$C = \sqrt{\frac{\chi^2}{\chi^2 + N}} \tag{2}$$

The primary benefit of C is its capacity to handle data in almost any form: skewed or normal, discrete or continuous, or nominal or ordinal (Cooper and Schlinder, 2014).

4. Results and discussion

After outlining our research approach, we provide the findings of our study, which shed light on Kosova's strategic management landscape.

4.1. Results

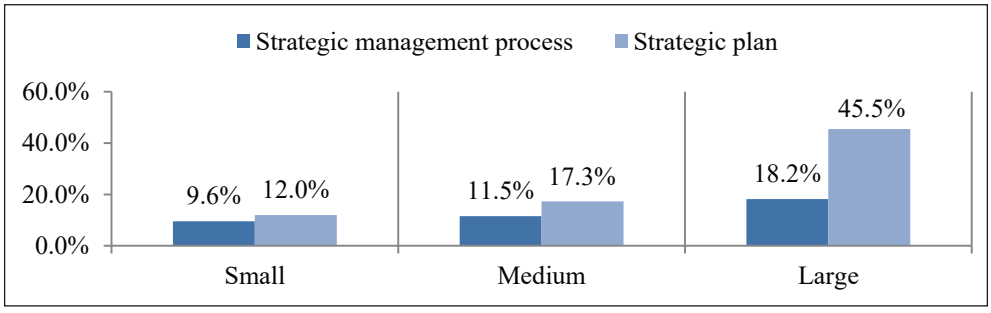
Sample characteristics. The analytic sample comprised N=314 enterprises (small=251; medium=52; large=11). Percentages reported below use these subgroup Ns unless otherwise stated.

Strategic management process. According to the adopted measurement scale, the strategic management process is considered complete only when all stages defined in the instrument are addressed. Overall, 10.2% (*n*=32) of enterprises regarded the strategic management process as important, while 89.8% (*n*=282) regarded it as partially or entirely insignificant. Among small enterprises (*n*=251), 9.6% (*n*=24) regarded the strategic management process as significant; among medium enterprises (*n*=52), 23.1% (*n*=12) did so; and among large enterprises (*n*=11), 18.2% (*n*=2) did so (See Figure 1.)

Possession of a written strategic plan. Overall, 44.90% (*n*=141) of the full sample reported having written plans, 42.68% (*n*=134) reported not having written plans, and 12.42% (*n*=39) declined to respond. By size, possession of a written plan was: small = 11.95% (*n*=30/251), medium = 17.3% (*n*=9/52), and large = 45.5% (*n*=5/11). Among those with written plans (*n*=141), 31.21% (*n*=44) reported five-year plans and 68.79% (*n*=97) reported plans of one to four years; across the full sample 14.0% (*n*=44/314) reported plans longer than five years.

Figure 1 displays the assessment of the strategic management process across firm sizes and illustrates the proportion of enterprises reporting strategic plans of five years or longer.

Figure 1: Strategic management and strategic plan according to enterprise size.



Source: Author's calculations

A chi-square test comparing small versus non-small (medium + large) firms indicated an association between firm size and presence of a written strategic plan, $\chi^2(1, N=314) = 4.41$, $p=0.036$; Cramer's V = 0.12 (*small effect*). When examined by category, medium firms did not differ significantly from small firms, $\chi^2(1, N=314) = 0.56$, $p=0.454$ (Cramer's V = 0.04), whereas large firms were more likely than non-large firms to report a written plan, $\chi^2(1, N=314) = 9.35$, $p=0.002$; Fisher's exact test (two-sided), $p=0.010$; Cramer's V = 0.17. One expected cell in the large-firm comparison was < 5 (minimum expected = 1.54); Fisher's exact test was therefore used to confirm the result.

Strategic tools. Overall, 35.67% (*n*=114) of the full sample (*N*=314) reported employing at least one of the eight strategic management tools assessed, while 64.33% (*n*=202) reported using none (see Table 3).

Table 3: The usage of strategic tools

The usage of strategic tools	Percentage (%)	Number of enterprises
At least one tool	35.67	114
None of the tools	64.33	202
Total	100.00	314

Source: Author's calculations

First hypothesis testing: H_1: The strategic management process is positively related to using strategic tools. A nonparametric correlation test was employed to assess H_1, utilizing Phi (ϕ) – *Chi-square- based measures*. In addition, we examined the contingency coefficient C. The significance threshold was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Based on the findings in Table 4a, we can assert a statistically significant association between the strategic management process and the utilization of strategic tools (Pearson's chi-square $\chi^2(1, N = 314) = 8.727$, $p = 0.003$), consistent with our hypothesis.

Table 4a: Chi-Square Tests: Using strategic tools, and the strategic management process

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.727a	1	0.003*		
Continuity Correction[b]	7.614	1	0.006		
Likelihood Ratio	8.313	1	0.004		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.006	0.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.699	1	0.003		
N of Valid Cases	314				

Note: a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.69. b. Computed only for a 2x2 table. *$p < 0.01$

Source: Author's calculations

It is important to emphasize that the chi-square (χ^2) test criterion was not violated; fewer than 20.0% of the cells should exhibit an expected value of less than 5. In the present scenario, none of the cells had an expected value below five, resulting in a 0.0% occurrence within the permissible 20.0% limit.

Table 4b: Symmetric Measurements: Using strategic tools and strategic management processes

Symmetric Measurements			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.167	0.003*
	Cramer's V	0.167	0.003
	Contingency Coefficient	0.164	0.003*
N of Valid Cases		314	314

Note: *$p < 0.01$

Source: Author's calculations

The Phi test (ϕ) yielded a coefficient of 0.167 with a *p*-value of 0.003, indicating the strength of the correlation effect. Similarly, the contingency coefficient C resulted in a value of 0.164 with a *p*-value of 0.003, providing further insights into the magnitude of the correlation effect. In all tests, the *p*-value was found to be less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a statistically significant relationship between the use of strategic tools and the strategic management process (see Table 4b). However, the effect size is small. Consequently, we can confidently reject the null hypothesis (H_0) in favor of the supporting hypothesis (H_1).

Second hypothesis testing: H_2: The strategic plan is positively related to using strategic tools.

We conducted a nonparametric test for correlation to examine H_2 utilizing Phi (ϕ) – *Chi-square based measures*. In addition, we assessed the contingency coefficient (C). The significance criterion was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The results in Table 5a indicate no statistically significant relationship between the variables under investigation (Pearson Chi-Square 2(1df, $N = 314$) = 2.135, $p = 0.144$).

Table 5a: Chi-Square Tests: Using strategic tools and strategic plan

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.135[a]	1	0.144		
Continuity Correction[b]	1.668	1	0.196		
Likelihood Ratio	2.078	1	0.149		
Fisher's Exact Test				0.174	0.099
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.129	1	0.145		
N of Valid Cases	314				

Note: a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.69.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Author's calculations

In this instance, the chi-square (χ^2) test criterion was not violated, as it mandates that fewer than 20.0% of the cells should possess an expected value of less than 5. Consequently, 0.0% of the cells fell within the permissible 20.0% threshold in this scenario.

Table 5b: Symmetric measurements: Strategic tools and strategic plans

Symmetric Measurements			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	0.082	0.144
	Cramer's V	0.082	0.144
	Contingency Coefficient	0.082	0.144
N of Valid Cases		314	

Note: *$p > 0.05$

Source: Author's calculations

The Phi coefficient (ϕ) was employed as a measure of association, yielding a value of $\phi = 0.082$, with a corresponding *p*-value of 0.144. Similarly, the contingency coefficient C was computed and found to be $C = 0.082$, with an associated *p*-value of $p = 0.144$. These statistical metrics were used to assess the strength of the correlation effect. In all the tests, the obtained *p*-values exceeded the conventional significance threshold of 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) (see Table 5b). Therefore, we do not reject the null hypothesis (H_0) for H_2. No statistically significant evidence in this sample suggests that having a written strategic plan is associated with the use of strategic tools.

Summary of results:

Hypothesis H_1. A significant correlation was identified between the strategic management process and the utilization of strategic tools, as evidenced by the statistical analysis (Pearson's chi-square $\chi^2(1, N = 314) = 8.727$, $p = 0.003$). The magnitude of this association is small, as indicated by the Phi coefficient ($\phi = 0.167$, $p = 0.003$) and contingency coefficient *C* ($C = 0.164$, $p = 0.003$).

Hypothesis H_2. No statistically significant correlation emerged between the strategic plan and utilization of strategic tools (Pearson Chi-Square, χ^2 (1df, $N = 314$) = 2.135, $p = 0.144$). Consequently, no effect size was available for interpretation ($\phi = 0.082$, $p = 0.144$; $C = 0.082$, $p = 0.144$). Because the association is non-significant and the effect sizes are very small, we do not reject the null hypothesis (H_0) for H_2; there is insufficient evidence in this sample to conclude a meaningful relationship.

4.2. Discussion

This subsection compares our empirical findings with prior global research and highlights a gap in transitional-economy studies: empirical evidence on strategic-tool use is scarce, so our analysis provides novel, context-specific evidence from Kosovan firms and is among the few studies to examine the strategic management process in such settings.

The empirical findings of this study indicate that only 10.20% (*n*=32) of the surveyed enterprises perceive the strategic management process as crucial for their organizations, while 89.80% (*n*=282) consider it to be of partial or negligible importance. Furthermore, our research highlights that larger enterprises tend to place a greater emphasis on strategic management processes. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Matthews and Scott (1995), Frost (2003), and Kraus (2007). Our inferential tests confirm an association between firm size and presence of written plans, although effect sizes are small and the large-firm subgroup is limited, so these size-specific findings should be interpreted with caution. The absence of strategic management processes in enterprises within Kosova is a matter of considerable concern. Numerous empirical studies have underscored that the constrained achievements of these enterprises, as well as business failures, can be attributed to deficiencies in adopting strategic management practices. Empirical findings within the context of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), as well as large corporations implementing the strategic management process, consistently demonstrate a significant positive association between this process and enterprise performance. Empirical studies consistently show that enterprises adopting strategic management practices achieve measurable performance benefits. For instance, Lyles et al. (1993) and Schwenk and Shrader (1993) found that SMEs with formalized strategic processes reported higher growth and survival rates. Miller and Cardinal (1994) demonstrated a positive link between strategic planning and profitability, while Glaister and Falshaw (1999) observed that UK firms with long-term plans achieved stronger financial outcomes and organizational stability. More evidence from Šuklev and Debarliev (2012) and Sandada et al. (2014) highlights that in transitional economies, the intensity of strategic planning is significantly associated with enhanced competitiveness, employee expansion, and improved decision-making. These findings reinforce the importance of structured strategic management for enterprise performance.

Among the surveyed enterprises, 141 reported on written plans. Notably, only 31.21% (*n*=44) of them possessed strategic written plans with a five-year horizon, whereas 68.79% (*n*=97) had plans spanning one to four years. This pattern suggests that planning in Kosova is often short-term or semi-formal rather than embedded in a continuous, long-horizon strategic cycle. Furthermore, this study's findings indicate an association between enterprise size and the presence of a written strategic plan. Nevertheless, it should be noted that merely 14% (*n*=44) of the

sample of enterprises (*n*=314) maintained strategic plans for more than five years. Compared to the region, the presence of strategic plans among large Turkish companies was 42% (Dincer et al., 2006). Conversely, research conducted by Gică and Balint (2012) revealed that 55.5% of Romanian SMEs have strategic plans, indicating a higher proportion than Turkish companies. Furthermore, Elbanna's (2007) study in Egypt reported an even more favorable situation, with 64.2% of SMEs having written strategic plans. Remarkably, Glaister and Falshaw (1999) reported that the majority of British enterprises maintained strategic plans for more than five years, with an impressive rate of 97.3%.

Numerous empirical studies conducted on a global scale have consistently revealed a positive correlation between the implementation of strategic plans and enhanced enterprise performance (Lyles et al., 1993; Schwenk & Shrader, 1993; Miller & Cardinal, 1994; Jennings & Beaver, 1997; Glaister & Falshaw, 1999; Andersen, 2000; Thornhill & White, 2007; Wang et al., 2007; Sandada et al., 2014). Consequently, Kosovan enterprises must pay special attention to the adoption and execution of their strategic plans. However, because our data are cross-sectional, we cannot infer causality; longitudinal research is needed to test whether formalization and tool adoption drive performance improvements. In conclusion, when compared to previous research findings, it becomes evident that enterprises in Kosova exhibit a notably low level of utilization of strategic tools. For instance, as reported by Rigby and Bilodeau in 2015, large firms averaged the use of 8.1 tools in 2014, mid-sized firms increased their usage from 6.8 tools in 2012 to 7.6 tools, and smaller firms utilized 5.3 tools. Berisha Qehaja and Kutllovci (2020a) confirmed similarly low adoption rates of strategic tools among Kosovan enterprises, with reliance on basic tools such as SWOT analysis and notable differences across sectors. On a different note, Afonina's (2015) research found that Czech enterprises employed an average of 14 strategic tools. When considering all the surveyed enterprises in Kosova, the average utilization of strategic tools was only 0.68 tools per enterprise. However, if we narrow our focus to enterprises that confirm their use of strategic tools, the average increases to two strategic tools (1.91). The predominance of simple, low-cost tools (e.g., SWOT, basic financial ratios) likely reflects limited managerial capacity, resource constraints, and a focus on short-term operational issues rather than long-term strategic analysis. These findings are similar to those observed in Romanian firms, where an average of one to two strategic tools was employed, as reported by Gică and Balint in 2012. Additionally, according to Kume and Leskaj (2010), Albanian enterprises predominantly employ four strategic tools.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight several key insights regarding strategic management processes and practices within Kosovan enterprises. The analysis

reveals a significant gap between the perceived importance of strategic management and its actual adoption, with only a minority of surveyed enterprises considering it a crucial element in their organizational strategy. Furthermore, the presence of formalized strategic plans, particularly those spanning a five-year horizon, is limited among the surveyed enterprises. The utilization of strategic tools remains suboptimal, reflecting a crucial area for improvement in enhancing strategic decision-making processes within Kosovan enterprises. The results also support the hypothesis that there is a statistically significant correlation between the strategic management process and the utilization of strategic tools. However, no significant correlation was found between the presence of a strategic plan and the utilization of strategic tools, suggesting that simply having a plan in place may not necessarily translate into the effective utilization of strategic tools. In light of these findings, there is a clear need for a greater emphasis on strategic management practices, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises in Kosova. Policymakers, business leaders, and researchers can use these insights to develop strategies to improve strategic management practices and foster sustainable growth and competitiveness within Kosovan enterprises. However, it is important to acknowledge this study's limitations, including its cross-sectional research design and reliance on standardized questionnaires for data collection. Future research should consider adopting a longitudinal approach to capture changes over time in strategic management practices and explore alternative perspectives such as the emergent strategy approach. Additionally, employing a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the strategic management phenomena. By addressing these limitations and building upon this study's findings, researchers and practitioners can contribute to advancing our understanding of strategic management processes and practices, ultimately enhancing organizational competitiveness and sustainability within Kosovan enterprises.

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Prakse strateškog upravljanja i strateški planovi: Empirijska analiza pristupa poduzeću

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Sažetak

Strateški se menadžment kontinuirano bavi poduzetničkom dimenzijom organizacija, organizacijskom obnovom i napretkom, a posebno razvojem i provedbom strategija za stvaranje konkurentskih prednosti. To uključuje praćenje i poboljšanje trenutnih programa i operacija kako bi se osigurao ispravan put strateškog plana. Rezultati o prirodi i praksi procesa strateškog upravljanja prikazani su na uzorku od 314 poduzeća na Kosovu. Nalazi ukazuju na činjenicu da samo 10,2% kosovskih poduzeća primjenjuje strateško upravljanje kao cjeloviti proces, dok 31,2% ima petogodišnje strateške planove. Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su da postoji značajna veza između procesa strateškog upravljanja i strateških alata. Međutim, ne postoji značajna veza između strateških planova i strateških alata. Naš teoretski doprinos je u razlikovanju pisanih planova od aktivnog sudjelovanja u procesima, dokazujući da aktivno sudjelovanje u procesima, a ne samo posjedovanje plana, bolje predviđa prihvaćanje alata u tranzicijskom gospodarstvu. Stoga,ova studija pruža važne uvide kreatorima politika, praktičarima i akademicima koji su usmjereni na poboljšanje procesa strateškog upravljanja u sličnim okruženjima.

Ključne riječi: *proces strateškog upravljanja, strateško planiranje, strateški plan, strateški alati, kosovska poduzeća, tranzicijsko gospodarstvo*

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