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# Effects of County Government Transparency Branding Strategy on Small and Medium Enterprises Satisfaction in Bungoma County, Kenya

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## Abstract

Government transparency branding strategies are increasingly recognized as critical tools for enhancing stakeholder satisfaction, particularly within decentralized governance systems where counties play a central role in service delivery. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as key drivers of local economic development, are highly dependent on efficient, accountable, and transparent government systems to access services, infrastructure, and markets. Yet, in many devolved units in Kenya, inconsistencies in transparency and accountability continue to undermine SMEs' confidence and satisfaction with county-level service delivery. This study examined the impact of government transparency branding strategies on service delivery satisfaction among SMEs in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study targeted 1000 SMEs in Bungoma County, with a sample size of 287 respondents. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to SME owners and interviews with key government officials, including the Ministers for Finance, Trade & Industry, Youth Affairs, five Members of the County Assembly serving on the Finance and Business Committee, and Members of Parliament from the county's nine constituencies. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 24, applying descriptive and correlation analyses, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings revealed that transparency in financial records and decision-making significantly enhances SME trust and satisfaction by improving service delivery efficiency. Government accountability mechanisms were also positively associated with SME confidence, though doubts persisted regarding their effectiveness. Furthermore, clear, timely, and accessible communication was shown to be critical in enabling SMEs to engage with county policies and ser-

vices. The adoption of digital platforms further improved service delivery by streamlining processes, although gaps remained in tailoring technology to SME needs. Political influence emerged as a significant moderator, at times undermining the benefits of transparency branding due to shifting political priorities and patronage. The study recommended that Bungoma County should strengthen transparency initiatives by ensuring timely disclosure of financial records, institutionalizing robust accountability frameworks, and improving communication strategies. Greater investment in SME-focused digital platforms is also necessary. Importantly, political dynamics must be carefully managed to safeguard the gains of transparency branding. By adopting these measures, county governments can create a more transparent, accountable, and SME-friendly environment, thereby enhancing service delivery satisfaction and promoting business growth in devolved contexts.

## Keywords

Government Transparency, Branding Strategy, SME, Service Delivery Satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

Governments worldwide are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in driving economic development, innovation, and job creation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2022; UN Trade and Development, UNCTAD, 2021). As globalization and digitalization intensify competition, countries must adopt strategic measures to attract and retain businesses, making government branding an essential component of economic development strategies. Successful examples include Singapore, Canada, and Australia, where government transparency and branding strategies have been integrated to enhance global competitiveness, foster innovation, and promote investor confidence (Ang, 2021; Dinnie, 2020). Such branding strategies convey economic stability, regulatory transparency, and a commitment to supporting SMEs, thus creating a conducive business environment (OECD, 2022; World Bank, 2020). Despite growing research on government branding and open governance, limited literature specifically addresses how these strategies influence SME satisfaction with public service delivery, particularly in emerging economies.

The adoption of digital technologies has accelerated government transformation globally. Many countries have advanced from basic information provision to transactional and participatory e-government platforms, enabling cross-government data integration and seamless citizen engagement (United Nations, 2022). E-government has become a central tool for enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in service delivery while supporting sustainable development (World Bank, 2021). In Sub-Saharan Africa, governments are increasingly investing in digital public services to strengthen citizen trust, reduce corruption, and improve

responsiveness to business needs (Hassan et al., 2024).

Open government initiatives have also gained prominence in advancing transparency and citizen engagement. By promoting Open Government Data (OGD), governments provide unrestricted, non-confidential data generated through public funds to foster accountability and inclusivity (De Souza, d'Angelo, & Lima Filho, 2022; Ruijer et al., 2020). Such initiatives enhance interaction between government and citizens, enabling participatory governance and creating new opportunities for SMEs through data-driven innovation (Porumbescu, 2020).

In Kenya, the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution ushered in a devolved governance framework, transferring significant responsibilities to the 47 county governments. These functions include agriculture, health, trade, local transport, cooperatives, and planning, among others (Republic of Kenya, 2010). County governments, therefore, play a pivotal role in service delivery to SMEs, making transparency branding strategies essential for building trust, ensuring accountability, and improving business satisfaction with county-level governance. Understanding how these strategies influence SME service delivery satisfaction in counties such as Bungoma is critical for strengthening local economic growth, advancing devolution, and achieving Kenya's broader development agenda (World Bank, 2021; OECD, 2022).

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

From year to year, public sector service delivery has been described as lethargic with many challenges, unlike in the past, the public sector today is under strong pressure to improve their service delivery (Kauma, Irerib, & Olweny, 2022), given the growing public interest and scrutiny. With the onset of devolution, the scrutiny on public service delivery is largely shifting to county governments which have been tasked with decentralizing most public sector functions. However, a decade after devolution started, a joint World Bank and Government of Kenya survey dubbed Making Devolution Work for Service Delivery (MDWSD) conducted in the year 2020, still faults county governments for poor service delivery in various sectors.

Public branding initiatives—including strategies such as transparency, accountability, communication, and e-government systems—have been empirically linked to enhanced perceptions of government effectiveness, trust, and citizen engagement by serving as a signaling mechanism that shapes expectations of service quality and organizational credibility (Lamsal & Gupta, 2022). Evidence suggests that when public institutions implement consistent branding strategies, including clear communication channels, performance visibility, and interactive digital platforms, citizens and SMEs perceive services as more reliable, timely, and responsive, resulting in higher satisfaction levels (Nguyen et al., 2021; Manaf et al., 2023).

In Kenya, specific policy frameworks and institutional reforms such as legislative instruments, including the Micro and Small Enterprises Act 2012 and devolved governance mechanisms (Ong'olo & Odhiambo, 2013) as well as adopted

technology-driven branding strategies—social media, online platforms, and mobile applications—to enhance visibility, communication, and digital governance frameworks (Chege, Wang, & Suntu, 2020; Kogo, 2025). Despite these efforts, empirical gaps remain, particularly regarding the relationship between public sector branding strategies and SME perceptions of service delivery satisfaction. SMEs continue to report challenges in transparency, accountability, and access to information at the county level, while some interventions are perceived as counterproductive, fueling distrust (Ong'olo & Odhiambo, 2013). These gaps highlight the need for empirical investigation to generate evidence that can guide policy, improve branding strategies, and ultimately enhance service delivery satisfaction for SMEs in the Kenyan context, hence a need for this study focusing on Bungoma County.

### 1.2. Specific Objectives

To assess how government transparency branding strategy affects Small and Medium Enterprises service delivery satisfaction in Bungoma County.

### 1.3. Research Hypotheses

**$H_{01a}$:** There is no statistically significant effect of government transparency branding strategy on Small and Medium Enterprises satisfaction in the County government of Bungoma.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Branding Theory, originally advanced by Aaker, has evolved significantly over the years to address not only private-sector competitiveness but also public-sector governance and service delivery. A brand, in this context, goes beyond visual identity to represent a promise of values, expectations, and trust between an organization and its stakeholders. In government settings, branding strategies are increasingly being deployed to project transparency, efficiency, and accountability, thereby shaping citizens' and businesses' perceptions of governance (Torres, Pina, & Royo, 2021).

Key components of branding theory include brand identity (what the government represents), brand image (how it is perceived), brand equity (its accrued trust and reputation), and brand positioning (how it differentiates itself in a competitive or governance space). In the public sector, effective branding is demonstrated through transparency and consistent communication of values that foster legitimacy and trust (Wang & Zhang, 2022).

For SMEs, government transparency branding strategies can enhance perceptions of reliability, reduce bureaucratic burdens, and strengthen loyalty to county services. This is crucial in contexts such as Bungoma County, where SMEs often face regulatory and infrastructural challenges. Research indicates that when governments create clear and emotionally resonant brands—built on honesty, inclu-

siveness, and innovation—they foster stronger engagement and higher satisfaction among stakeholders (Osborne et al., 2020).

However, the theory also highlights limitations. Building and maintaining a credible government brand requires significant investments in communication, consistency, and political goodwill. Additionally, external shocks such as corruption scandals or political instability can quickly erode trust, diluting the effectiveness of branding strategies (Torres et al., 2021). These weaknesses underline the importance of context-specific applications of branding theory, especially in devolved governance systems where local governments, like Bungoma County, bear primary responsibility for service delivery to SMEs.

### 2.2. Empirical Literature Review

Recent empirical studies demonstrate that government transparency directly influences service delivery and public satisfaction. Hassan et al. (2024) emphasize that transparency fosters accountability, improves citizen participation, and enhances service quality by making government actions more visible and measurable. Similarly, Yang and Battocchio (2021) highlight that branding strategies centered on openness—such as clear communication of policies and service standards—enhance government credibility and trust, positively shaping public perceptions of service delivery.

Empirical evidence also suggests that transparent branding reinforces institutional legitimacy. Timofeyev et al. (2023) found that when service processes are transparent, including information on requirements and feedback channels, citizens report higher satisfaction and are more willing to engage in participatory governance. Ruijer et al. (2020) add that open government data initiatives contribute to innovation, efficiency, and collaboration with businesses, enabling SMEs to leverage government information for operational decision-making.

Despite these advances, challenges remain in African contexts. Hassan et al. (2024) found that digital governance initiatives are often hindered by limited infrastructure, corruption, and weak accountability systems, constraining the effectiveness of transparency branding efforts. In Kenya, studies show that while devolution has increased local access to services, SMEs still face inefficiencies and gaps in accountability at the county level (Ngugi & Were, 2021). Corruption, political patronage, and limited institutional capacity undermine the intended benefits of government branding and transparency initiatives (World Bank, 2021).

While global and regional studies affirm that transparency and branding strategies strengthen service delivery and trust, there is limited empirical evidence on how these strategies specifically impact SMEs in devolved governance settings such as Bungoma County. Existing studies primarily focus on citizen trust, e-government, or general public administration but rarely examine SMEs' satisfaction as distinct stakeholders in local governance. This gap necessitates focused research to understand how government transparency branding strategies influence SME

service delivery satisfaction at the county level. Filling this gap will generate evidence-based insights for strengthening county governance, fostering SME growth, and advancing Kenya's economic transformation agenda.

## 3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how government transparency branding strategies influence SME service delivery satisfaction in Bungoma County. Mixed-methods designs are particularly suitable for governance and public administration studies because they allow for triangulation of data, thereby enhancing validity, reliability, and depth of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023).

The target population comprised 1,000 SMEs across the nine constituencies of Bungoma County. Using Yamane's formula, a representative sample of 287 SMEs was selected through stratified random sampling to capture diverse perspectives from different business sectors. The sample was selected through stratified proportionate sampling approach. Specifically, the SMEs were distributed through stratified proportionate random sampling procedures across the nine Sub-Counties then randomly selected in each sub county.

For the quantitative strand, data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire design drew from validated governance and service delivery satisfaction scales, and was divided into sections measuring perceptions of government transparency and branding strategies; and levels of service delivery satisfaction. Likert-scale questions (ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") were employed to capture attitudes and perceptions, while a few open-ended items allowed respondents to elaborate on their experiences. A pre-test involving 20 SMEs outside the sample frame was conducted to refine clarity, reliability, and sequencing of the questions.

For the qualitative data, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with county leaders, including the County Ministers for Finance, Trade & Industry, and Youth Affairs. An interview protocol was developed, consisting of guiding questions organized around themes such as perceptions of government branding, mechanisms for transparency, policy implementation challenges, and impacts on SME service delivery. The protocol allowed flexibility to probe deeper into emergent issues while ensuring comparability across interviews. All interviews were recorded (with consent) and supplemented by detailed field notes.

Data analysis followed a dual approach. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS Version 24, applying descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) to summarize SME responses, and inferential analysis—particularly correlation and regression—to examine relationships between study variables. For the qualitative data, transcripts were analysed through thematic analysis. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings ensured convergence and minimized bias.

## 4. Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis included description of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation and the findings were presented in Table 1. The statements were anchored on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Undecided, 2 = Disagree (D), 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). and respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed to the questionnaire statements during data collection. Descriptive statistics included percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of government transparency branding strategy.

| Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **The Government supports for transparent public procurement of high-quality local products** | 5% | 10% | 43% | 27% | 15% | 2.88 | 1.11 |
| **There are clear Procedures for prequalification into AGPO; time taken, and official costs involved** | 3% | 17% | 26% | 45% | 19% | 2.36 | 1.12 |
| **T3: There are clear procedures for Payments, time and total tax rate for a firm to comply with all tax regulations** | 2% | 5% | 16% | 53% | 24% | 2.13 | 1.09 |
| **There are clear Procedures on time and cost to get connected to the electrical grid, the reliability of the electricity supply, and the cost of electricity consumption** | 6% | 8% | 25% | 35% | 26% | 2.56 | 1.14 |
| **There are clear Procedures followed to register into an association; average time taken; and costs involved** | 6% | 9% | 33% | 32% | 20% | 2.64 | 1.13 |
| **There are clear Procedures on Time and cost to resolve a commercial dispute and the quality of the judicial processes** | 3% | 6% | 23% | 47% | 21% | 2.39 | 1.15 |
| **The government plan and program are implemented transparently.** | 7% | 13% | 36% | 27% | 17% | 2.80 | 1.12 |
| **The entire process of the County government is transparently disclosed.** | 5% | 8% | 39% | 35% | 13% | 2.71 | 1.10 |
| **T9: As SMEs we can clearly see the progress and situations of the government administration.** | 4% | 7% | 32% | 48% | 8% | 2.41 | 1.07 |
| **T0: The County government discloses sufficient information to the SMEs about its performance.** | 5% | 10% | 34% | 41% | 11% | 2.56 | 1.09 |

In this study, government transparency branding strategy is operationally defined as the deliberate use of transparent governance practices—including clarity of procedures, disclosure of information, and openness in decision-making—as a strategic tool by the county government to project credibility, build trust, and enhance its brand image among SMEs. The findings on the extent to which these practices have been adopted reflect gaps in how effectively this strategy is perceived. For example, on the government's support for transparent public procurement, 43% of respondents were neutral and 27% disagreed. While procurement rules may exist, the absence of strong agreement suggests they are not being leveraged as branding tools to signal fairness and openness. Yang and Battocchio (2021) argued that a transparency branding strategy would require not only implementing fair procurement but also deliberately communicating it as a feature of the county's brand. The current neutral stance therefore reflects weak branding impact.

On AGPO prequalification procedures, 45% of respondents disagreed that the process is clear. From a branding perspective, this erodes the county's ability to position AGPO as a flagship initiative showcasing inclusivity and empowerment of SMEs. Instead of branding itself as SME-friendly, the county risks projecting an image of bureaucratic opacity. Similarly, tax compliance procedures were found unclear by 53% of respondents. Branding-wise, this undermines the government's potential to signal efficiency and predictability—attributes that could reassure SMEs and reinforce its reputation as a supportive partner as similarly indicated by Maagi and Mwakalobo (2023).

The findings on electricity connection (35% disagreed, 26% strongly disagreed) and dispute resolution (47% disagreed) further illustrate missed branding opportunities. In these cases, SMEs perceive difficulty and unreliability, which dilutes the brand effect of transparency. Frimpong et al. (2023) argued that clear, accessible, and timely communication in these processes could strengthen the government's brand as a reliable service facilitator, but the prevailing perceptions instead weaken this strategic positioning.

Finally, perceptions about the disclosure of government plans, programs, and performance show high neutrality (36%) and disagreement (41%). This suggests that even when initiatives are implemented, they are not effectively branded through transparent communication. SMEs are left uncertain or dissatisfied, undermining the county's ability to brand itself as accountable and responsive. The fact that 48% of SMEs disagreed that they can clearly see government progress is particularly damaging to branding, since visibility of results is central to shaping a positive government image.

In sum, the study demonstrates that while transparency practices exist, they are inconsistently perceived and not clearly communicated as deliberate elements of a branding strategy. This weakens the county government's ability to leverage transparency to build trust and satisfaction among SMEs. As the literature emphasizes (Tahir, Adnan, & Saeed, 2024), transparency only strengthens govern-

ment branding when it is intentionally framed and communicated as part of the government's identity, rather than left as an administrative byproduct. Bungoma County's current gaps in clarity, disclosure, and procedural efficiency therefore represent both governance weaknesses and branding failures, which limit its ability to enhance SME satisfaction with service delivery.

These findings are supported by qualitative evidence which indicated that that while some government initiatives—particularly capacity-building in digital finance, were positively received, significant challenges remain in infrastructure provision, procurement transparency, policy implementation, and communication responsiveness. These weaknesses hinder SMEs' ability to operate efficiently and erode confidence in government branding efforts. Key themes from the qualitative findings are presented and discussed;

**Access to Infrastructure (Electricity, Water, Waste Management)**

Access to basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, and waste management emerged as a major concern for SMEs. Respondents noted frequent power outages, unreliable water supply, and inconsistent service delivery, with rural SMEs more adversely affected than their urban counterparts. These challenges undermine productivity and reduce satisfaction with government service delivery.

"*We often experience power outages that interrupt our operations. We need a more reliable supply of electricity, especially for those of us running businesses in rural areas.*" (*SME owner*)

"*Water supply is inconsistent. Some days we have no water, which makes it hard to run certain services efficiently.*" (*SME Manager*)

**Government Procurement Processes**

While some SMEs benefited from procurement opportunities, many perceived the process as bureaucratic, unclear, and biased toward larger businesses. The lack of transparency and procedural clarity limited SME participation, reinforcing perceptions that procurement systems were not SME-friendly.

"*The procurement process seems to favor larger businesses. It's hard for a small company like mine to even get a look in.*" (*SME owner*)

"*There's a lot of paperwork, and the rules aren't always clear. It feels like the system isn't built for small businesses to thrive.*" (*County Official*)

**Training and Capacity Building**

Government-led training and capacity-building initiatives, particularly in digital finance, were appreciated by SMEs. However, participants stressed that many programs were generic and not tailored to specific industry needs, limiting their practical value. SMEs requested more advanced and sector-focused training.

"*The digital finance training was helpful, but I wish they offered more advanced courses tailored to my industry.*" (*SME Owner*)

"*I've attended a few government-organized training sessions, but they were too generic and didn't address the specific challenges my business faces.*" (*County Official*)

**Policy Implementation**

Respondents expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of SME-related policies, noting a gap between policy announcements and actual implementation. Many SMEs felt that while the government introduced promising initiatives, these rarely translated into tangible benefits on the ground.

"*The government keeps announcing great policies for SMEs, but we rarely see the impact on the ground. There's a gap between what's promised and what's delivered.*" (*SME Owner*)

"*They need to do more than just pass laws. We need to see actual changes that help us grow our businesses.*" (*SME Owner*)

**Feedback and Communication Mechanisms**

SMEs reported dissatisfaction with government feedback mechanisms, describing them as ineffective and non-responsive. Respondents highlighted the lack of clarity, timeliness, and follow-up in government communications, which weakened trust and limited the impact of their contributions.

"*It's frustrating. We provide feedback, but we never know if anything changes because of it.*" (*SME Owner*)

## 4.2. Regression Results

A regression analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the study variables. The various items and constructs measuring the study variables were consolidated into a single variable through a composite mean then used to regress. Regression Model summary is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Model summary.

| R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0.669[a] | 0.448 | 0.446 | 0.27714 |
| **Predictors: (Constant), Government Transparency Branding Strategy** | | | |

The model summary indicated that government transparency branding strategy explained 44.8% of the variance in SME's service delivery satisfaction in Bungoma County ($R^2$ = 0.448). When the model is adjusted for the number of predictors in the model, the adjusted $R^2$ remained at .446 indicating that the observed model can be inferred to the population. The regression model significance was established and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. ANOVA.

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 14.955 | 1 | 14.955 | 194.716 | 0.000[b] |
| Residual | 18.433 | 240 | 0.077 | | |
| Total | 33.388 | 241 | | | |
| **Dependent Variable: SME's Service delivery satisfaction** | | | | | |
| **Predictors: (Constant), Government Transparency Branding Strategy** | | | | | |

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the model was statistically significant. The results indicated that the model was statistically significant ($F(1, 240) = 194.72$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that government transparency branding strategy is a strong predictor of SME's service delivery satisfaction. Table 4 presents the model coefficients.

Table 4. Model coefficients.

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 0.609 | 0.255 | | 2.385 | 0.018 |
| Government Transparency Branding Strategy | 0.804 | 0.058 | 0.669 | 13.954 | 0.000 |

The corresponding regression equation for the model is as follows:

$$\hat{Y} = 0.609 + 0.804\text{Government Transparency}$$

where: $\hat{Y}$ = SME's Service Delivery Satisfaction.

**0.609 =** is the intercept representing the predicted value of SME's Service Delivery Satisfaction when Government Transparency is Zero (0). The constant coefficient of 0.609 in the model suggests that even in situations where government transparency is completely absent, SMEs still record some level of satisfaction with service delivery. This means that satisfaction is not solely dependent on transparency; other factors, such as access to infrastructure, private sector support, may help sustain a minimum level of positive experience. In practical terms, this baseline satisfaction highlights that while government transparency is a powerful driver of improvement, policymakers should also recognize and strengthen the underlying conditions that keep SMEs moderately satisfied. Therefore, reforms that improve transparency should go hand in hand with other service delivery improvements to maximize SME satisfaction.

The model coefficients results indicated that government transparency branding positively and significantly affect SME's satisfaction with service delivery ($\beta = 0.804$; *P*-value < 0.05). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in transparency branding (e.g., clearer procedures, open access to procurement, transparent reporting), SME satisfaction with service delivery increases by approximately 0.804 units. The findings imply that enhancing transparency in county governance—through publishing timely financial reports, simplifying licensing procedures, clarifying tax obligations, and openly communicating procurement processes—can greatly improve SMEs' satisfaction with service delivery. This is consistent with the findings of a study by Yang and Battocchio (2021) on the roles of perception, transparency, trust and perceived social equity in enhancing citizen satisfaction in the public sector which established that transparency in the public sector enhances citizen satisfaction.

**Hypothesis Testing**

$H_{01}$: There is no statistically significant effect of government transparency branding strategy on Small and Medium Enterprises satisfaction in the County government of Bungoma.

From the model coefficients findings, given that *P*-value ($P < 0.001$) is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis $H_{01}$ is rejected. Therefore, the study logically comes into the conclusion that Government transparency strategy significantly contributes to the prediction of SME's service delivery satisfaction.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1. Conclusion

The study concludes that government access to public financial records and decision-making transparency branding strategies have a notable positive impact on SME satisfaction. Respondents generally view access to public financial records and decision-making transparency as a crucial factor that enhances their trust in government and satisfaction with service delivery. However, the mixed views on access to public financial records and decision-making transparency suggest that while improvements have been made, there is still room for more consistent and clear clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of government communications of government actions and decisions to further boost SME satisfaction.

### 5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) Enhance Access to public financial records and decision-making transparency Initiatives: The County Government of Bungoma should develop and implement robust access to public financial records and decision-making transparency initiatives, such as clear and regular clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of government communications of policies and decisions, to improve SME satisfaction. By ensuring that information is accessible and easily understandable, the government can build trust and credibility with SMEs.

2) Strengthen Accountability mechanisms for public officials Mechanisms: To address concerns about accountability mechanisms for public officials, the County Government should establish clear accountability mechanisms for public official's frameworks and processes for addressing SME grievances. Regular audits and transparent reporting on government actions related to SMEs will help reinforce accountability mechanisms for public officials and build confidence among business owners.

3) Improve Clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of government communications Channels: The government should enhance its clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of government communications strategies by employing diverse channels and ensuring timely and accurate information dissemination. Creating feedback mechanisms to understand SME concerns and improve clarity, timeliness, and accessibility of government communications effectiveness will help address issues

and improve satisfaction.

4) Invest in Technology and Training: The County Government should prioritize investments in technology that facilitates efficient service delivery to SMEs and provide training for SME owners to effectively use these technologies. This approach will help modernize operations and improve overall satisfaction with government services.

5) Navigate Political Dynamics Carefully: The County Government should carefully navigate the political landscape by aligning branding strategies with political realities and maintaining positive relationships with political stakeholders. This will help mitigate the impact of branding strategies and political influence on SME satisfaction and ensure more effective service delivery.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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