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COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL OF MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the association between competitive strategies and organizational survival of manufacturing firms in Rivers State, As well as the moderating effect of technology on the relationship between competitive strategies and organizational survival. The cross-sectional research design was applied in this study. A total of one hundred and eighty-one (181) managers and supervisors from ten (10) manufacturing firms, constituted the sample elements. The simple random sampling technique was used. Primary data was collected for this study and copies of questionnaire was the main instrument for collection of data. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity and the reliability of the instrument was checked using cronbach alpha test. Seven (7) null hypothesis were formulated and tested using partial least square - structural equation modelling (smart pls). The outcome of the analyses revealed a significant positive association between the dimensions of competitive strategies(cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategy) and the measures of organizational survival (innovation and adaptability). Technology was also found to significantly moderate the relationship. The study concluded that adoption of competitive strategies enhances the survival of organizations. The study recommended that Management should apply cost leadership strategies as it provides an opportunity to enhance the firms innovative capability and adaptability to internal and external environmental thereby maximizing its survival.

KEYWORDS

Competitive Strategies, Organizational survival, leadership strategies



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Introduction

Organizations are faced with several challenges and their survival depends on the interactions and competitive advantage on a long run over competitors in the industry and also the adoption of strategies that enable them cope with internal and external environmental factors. (Huber, 2011), such that if organizations must survive, adapting to environmental changes should remain of serious concerns to organizational leaders. Organizational survival is an implicit organizational objective that requires an investment of both physical and human resources (Jones & Barlet, 2008). According to Adewale (2011), the achievement of organizational survival should come before all other objectives because doing so will help the organization achieve its other objectives. Lee (2006) posits that organizational survival in a competitive business environment depends on how organizations innovate, learn to adapt efficiently to its environment and utilize its human and material resources fully. Any organization that does not take organizational survival as the main goal should have a rethink (Gross, 1968). Manufacturing firms continuously grow and competition intensifies. As competition intensifies many firms continue to seek profitable ways in which to differentiate themselves from competitors (Porter, 2008). As a result, businesses need to develop tactics that will provide them a competitive advantage over other market competitors and increase their chances of surviving. The activities that organizations engage in and the decisions made in order to get to a certain point of success and ensure its survival are known as strategies. Strategies are concerned with the goals and objectives of the organization. Onuoha (2009) research carried out revealed that manufacturing sector in Nigeria is faced with diverse challenges such as high production cost, poor infrastructure, finance, competition from imported goods, limited scope of operation. Some of the factors such as poor infrastructure, poor electricity supply has a negative impact on capacity utilization and policy inconsistency, high cost of funds arising from depreciation of naira. Thus, the challenges have necessitated the need for strategies, innovation and adaptability. According to Covin and Slevin, (2010) influences such as intensified competition, economic restructuring, government regulations and technological advances have resulted in increased turbulence in the environment and uncertainty for manufacturing firms. In periods of economic downturn managers, executives often prefer to “do more with less” (Guidry, 2011). Thus, firms hire consultants and often set up department to handle issues that are detrimental to organizational survival (Evans & Berman, 1992).

Due to the intense competition among manufacturing companies, these businesses must implement competitive strategies in order to enhance and gain a competitive advantage, increase profitability and earn returns that are above average, and enable the company to continuously improve its goods and services, make better decisions, and increase its chances of surviving in the market. Manufacturing firms also have to constantly scan the environment to keep aware of environmental changes such as government policies, economic restructuring, technological changes etc as mentioned. Manufacturing firms also have to increase their technological know-how and acquiring of new and advance technologies to maximize its competitive advantage, effectively and efficiently render its services. Therefore this paper seeks to examine the role adapting competitive strategies play in the survival of manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. Examine the relationship between cost leadership strategy and innovation.
- ii. Determine the relationship between cost leadership and adaptability.
- iii. Ascertain the relationship between differentiation strategy and innovation.
- iv. Investigate the relationship between differentiation strategy and adaptability.
- v. Assess the relationship between focus strategy and innovation.

- vi. Determine the relationship between focus strategy and adaptability.

Research Questions

- i. What is the nature of relationship between cost leadership strategy and innovation?
- ii. What is the nature of relationship between cost leadership strategy and adaptability?
- iii. How does differentiation strategy relate with innovation?
- iv. What is the nature of relationship between differentiation strategy and adaptability?
- v. How does focus strategy relate with innovation?
- vi. What is the nature of relationship between focus strategy and adaptability?

Research Hypotheses

In order to achieve the objective of this study, the following hypotheses were formulated to help guide the study:

HO1: There is no significant relationship between cost leadership strategy and innovation.

HO2: There is no significant relationship between cost leadership strategy and adaptability.

HO3: There is no significant relationship between differentiation strategy and innovation.

HO4: There is no significant relationship between differentiation strategy and adaptability.

HO5: There is no significant relationship between focus strategy and innovation.

HO6: There is no significant relationship between focus strategy and adaptability.

Literature Review

Adesina (2017) examined the relationship between competitive strategies and organizational survival of micro-finance banks in Rivers State. Measures of competitive strategies used were market development strategy, differentiation strategy and business positioning strategy whilst dimensions of organizational survival were flexibility and adaptability. Data were collected for the study through questionnaire from a total population size of 155 and sample size of 112 managers determined using judgmental sampling technique. Six (6) research questions and hypotheses were raised. The instrument was validated and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability above 0.70. Also, 112 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the case study while 90 copies of questionnaires were completed and returned; tabulations percentage prior to testing hypothesis with Spearman rank order coefficient of correlation via SPSS IBM 21 version was used. From the findings, the concept of competitive strategies creates positive impact on organizational survival towards performance efficiency. Thus, competitive strategies were found to significantly increase flexibility and adaptability of micro-finance banks. Ibe and Olori (2016) examined the degree of employee work attitude and organizational survival of Fast food firms in Port Harcourt. A sample of 99 managers from 12 fast food firms in Port Harcourt was surveyed using questionnaire. A non-parametric statistical tool- Spearman Rank correlation co-efficient with the aid of SPSS was used to find the correlation between the independent and dependent variable. The findings showed that job involvement and job satisfaction have influence on organizational innovation and adaptability on fast food companies. From the findings, it was concluded that employee work attitude has significant influence on organizational survival.

Promise (2020) investigated the relationship between work environment and organizational survival of bottling companies in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the cross sectional survey of variables. Primary data was generated through self administered questionnaire. The population of the study was 122 employees of 2 selected companies. The sample size of 93 was determined using the Taro Yamane’s formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved buy the use of the Crobach Alpha coefficient with the entire item scoring above 0.70. Data generated were analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The hypotheses were tested using the spearman rank order correlation statistic. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. The study findings revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between work environment and organizational survival of bottling companies in Port Harcourt.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey research design which is a type of quasi- experimental design was adopted for the study. The target population for this study is managers and supervisors of manufacturing firms in Rivers state registered under manufacturing association of Nigeria (MAN). However, the accessible population consist of one hundred and eighty-one (181) managers and supervisors of ten (10) registered manufacturing firms in Port-Harcourt. Primary and secondary data was used for the study, primary data for the study was generated via administration of the questionnaire and interview, while, the secondary data for the study include information from publications such as: periodicals, journals articles, text books and the internet. Competitive strategies is the independent variable and comprises of three dimensions, which are cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy and focus strategy adopted from work of Porter (1980, 1985). The dimensions wasoperationalized using a five (5) point Likert scale of strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Undecided=3, Disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. organizational survival is the dependent variable and was measured by innovation and adaptability adopted from the work of Chuang et al. (2010)&Polyhart et al. (2011). The measures wasoperationalized using a five (5) point Likert scale of strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Undecided=3, Disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. Data collected was analyzed using Spearman’s Rank Order correlation Coefficient.

Results

Data Distribution for Cost leadership strategy

Table 1:Descriptive Statistics

S/NItems	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
1 Our organisation focuses on reducing operating cost.	156	1	5	3.04	.999	High
2 Our organisation focuses on utilisation of resources.	156	1	5	3.12	1.121	High
3 Most of the policies adopted are geared towards minimising cost	156	1	5	3.35	1.021	High

4	Our organisation ensures our products are reasonably priced.	156	1	5	3.37	.867	High
Valid N (listwise)		156					

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation of each item for Cost leadership strategy. The output of the mean values are above the threshold of 3.0 implying that most of the respondents show high levels of agreement to the statement items.

Table 2 Individual Responses to Items on Cost leadership strategy

Our organization focuses on reducing operating cost.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Disagree	56	35.9	35.9	37.8
	Neutral	37	23.7	23.7	61.5
	Agree	51	32.7	32.7	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization focuses on utilization of resources.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	9.6	9.6	9.6
	Disagree	35	22.4	22.4	32.1
	Neutral	31	19.9	19.9	51.9
	Agree	66	42.3	42.3	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Most of the policies adopted are geared towards minimizing cost					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	33	21.2	21.2	25.6

	Neutral	23	14.7	14.7	40.4
	Agree	84	53.8	53.8	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization ensures our products are reasonably priced.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Disagree	22	14.1	14.1	16.0
	Neutral	54	34.6	34.6	50.6
	Agree	68	43.6	43.6	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 presents the outcome of the participants’ collective responses to the individual statement items of Cost leadership strategy.

Table 3 Data Distribution for Differentiation strategy

Descriptive Statistics

S/N/Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
1 In our organisation we offer products that are unique.	156	1	5	3.33	1.137	High
2 Our organisation focuses on quick delivery timeline.	156	1	5	3.01	1.300	High
3 Our organisation focuses on continuous improvement of products and services.	156	1	5	3.35	.962	High
4 Our products are designed to suit customers’ needs.	156	1	5	3.04	1.152	High
Valid N (listwise)	156					

Source: Author’s Field Survey (2022) - SPSS version 25.0 output extracts

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation of each item for Differentiation strategy. The output of the mean values are above the threshold of 3.0 implying that most of the respondents show high levels of agreement to the statement items.

Table 4 Individual Responses to Items on Differentiation strategy

In our organization we offer products that are unique.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	6.4	6.4	6.4
	Disagree	36	23.1	23.1	29.5
	Neutral	20	12.8	12.8	42.3
	Agree	73	46.8	46.8	89.1
	Strongly Agree	17	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization focuses on quick delivery timeline.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	30	19.2	19.2	19.2
	Disagree	23	14.7	14.7	34.0
	Neutral	35	22.4	22.4	56.4
	Agree	51	32.7	32.7	89.1
	Strongly Agree	17	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization focuses on continuous improvement of products and services.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	5.8	5.8	5.8
	Disagree	10	6.4	6.4	12.2
	Neutral	72	46.2	46.2	58.3
	Agree	48	30.8	30.8	89.1

	Strongly Agree	17	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our products are designed to suit customers' needs.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	62	39.7	39.7	44.2
	Neutral	22	14.1	14.1	58.3
	Agree	48	30.8	30.8	89.1
	Strongly Agree	17	10.9	10.9	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows/presents the outcome of the participants' collective responses to the individual statement items of Differentiation strategy.

Table 5 Data Distribution for Focus strategy

Descriptive Statistics

S/N/Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
1 We have expanded the existing product line by introducing additional new products.	156	1	5	3.14	1.012	High
2 Our organization focuses on specific market segment of the industry.	156	1	5	3.08	1.013	High
3 Our products are of high quality.	156	1	5	3.27	.911	High
4 Our organization focuses on specific product segment.	156	1	5	3.28	1.034	High
Valid N (listwise)	156					

Table 5 shows the mean, standard deviation of each item for Cost leadership strategy. The output of the mean values are above the threshold of 3.0 implying that most of the respondents show high levels of agreement to the statement items.

Table 6 Individual Responses to Items on Focus strategy

We have expanded the existing product line by introducing additional new products.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	17	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Disagree	10	6.4	6.4	17.3
	Neutral	72	46.2	46.2	63.5
	Agree	48	30.8	30.8	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization focuses on specific market segment of the industry.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	44	28.2	28.2	32.7
	Neutral	44	28.2	28.2	60.9
	Agree	52	33.3	33.3	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our products are of high quality.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	19	12.2	12.2	16.7
	Neutral	64	41.0	41.0	57.7
	Agree	57	36.5	36.5	94.2

	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization focuses on specific product segment.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	4.5	4.5	4.5
	Disagree	37	23.7	23.7	28.2
	Neutral	26	16.7	16.7	44.9
	Agree	77	49.4	49.4	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 presents the outcome of the participants’ collective responses to the individual statement items of Focus strategy.

The criterion variable: Organizational Survival is operationalize using two measures; Innovation and Adaptability measured on 4-items instruments each.

Table 7 Data Distribution for Innovation

Descriptive Statistics

S/N	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
1	Our organization has processes and system that consider, assess and support new ideas and take actions quickly.	156	1	5	3.10	1.243	High
2	Our organization invests in research and development in order to come up with innovative products.	156	1	5	3.02	1.322	High
3	There is flexibility of our organization structure.	156	1	5	3.11	1.288	High
4	Our organization always seeks to improve attributes of our product and our services.	156	1	5	3.43	1.036	High

Valid N (listwise)	156				
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Table 7 shows the mean, standard deviation of each item for Innovation. The output of the mean values are above the threshold of 3.0 implying that most of the respondents show high levels of agreement to the statement items.

Table 8 Individual Responses to Items on Innovation

Our organization has processes and system that consider, assess and support new ideas and take actions quickly.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	31	19.9	19.9	19.9
	Disagree	11	7.1	7.1	26.9
	Neutral	35	22.4	22.4	49.4
	Agree	70	44.9	44.9	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Our organization invests in research and development in order to come up with innovative products.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	36	23.1	23.1	23.1
	Disagree	17	10.9	10.9	34.0
	Neutral	20	12.8	12.8	46.8
	Agree	74	47.4	47.4	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
There is flexibility of our organization structure.					

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	34	21.8	21.8	21.8
	Disagree	10	6.4	6.4	28.2
	Neutral	26	16.7	16.7	44.9
	Agree	77	49.4	49.4	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Our organization always seeks to improve attributes of our product and our services.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	9.0	9.0	9.0
	Disagree	13	8.3	8.3	17.3
	Neutral	30	19.2	19.2	36.5
	Agree	90	57.7	57.7	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author’s Field Survey (2022) - SPSS version 25.0 output extracts

Table 8 presents the outcome of the participants’ collective responses to the individual statement items of Innovation.

Table 9 Data Distribution for Adaptability

Descriptive Statistics

S/N/Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Agreement
1 Our organization resources are organized to enable members and units react quickly to changing business environment.	156	1	5	3.31	1.123	High
2 Managers at all levels actively and visible support innovation.	156	1	5	3.23	1.264	High

3	Our changes are simple, focused and clearly communicated.	156	1	5	3.02	1.327	High
4	We regularly analyze a wide variety of opportunities for improvement and adapt our business model accordingly.	156	1	5	3.19	.917	High
Valid N (listwise)		156					

Table 9 shows the mean, standard deviation of each item for Adaptability. The output of the mean values are above the threshold of 3.0 implying that most of the respondents show high levels of agreement to the statement items.

Table 10 Individual Responses to Items on Adaptability

Our organization resources are organized to enable members and units react quickly to changing business environment.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	6.4	6.4	6.4
	Disagree	36	23.1	23.1	29.5
	Neutral	20	12.8	12.8	42.3
	Agree	75	48.1	48.1	90.4
	Strongly Agree	15	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	
Managers at all levels actively and visible support innovation.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Disagree	20	12.8	12.8	28.8
	Neutral	20	12.8	12.8	41.7
	Agree	76	48.7	48.7	90.4
	Strongly Agree	15	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Our changes are simple, focused and clearly communicated.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	31	19.9	19.9	19.9
	Disagree	27	17.3	17.3	37.2
	Neutral	21	13.5	13.5	50.6
	Agree	62	39.7	39.7	90.4
	Strongly Agree	15	9.6	9.6	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

We regularly analyze a wide variety of opportunities for improvement and adapt our business model accordingly.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.9	1.9	1.9
	Disagree	35	22.4	22.4	24.4
	Neutral	56	35.9	35.9	60.3
	Agree	53	34.0	34.0	94.2
	Strongly Agree	9	5.8	5.8	100.0
	Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Table 10 presents the outcome of the participants’ collective responses to the individual statement items of Adaptability.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 11: Summary of the Hypothesis testing and Decision Making

	Hypotheses	Path Coefficient (β)	P Values (p)	Predictive Accuracy (R^2)	Decision on Hypothesis
H ₀₁	There is no significant relationship between Cost leadership strategy and Innovation.	0.597	0.000	0.356	Reject Null Hypothesis

H ₀₂	There is no significant relationship between Cost leadership strategy and Adaptability.	0.686	0.000	0.470	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₃	There is no significant relationship between Differentiation strategy and Innovation.	0.727	0.000	0.529	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₄	There is no significant relationship between Differentiation strategy and Adaptability.	0.853	0.000	0.727	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₅	There is no significant relationship between Focus strategy and Innovation.	0.709	0.000	0.503	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₆	There is no significant relationship between Focus strategy and Adaptability.	0.756	0.000	0.571	Reject Null Hypothesis
H ₀₇	Technology does not moderate the relationship between Competitive Strategies and Organizational Survival.	0.593	0.000	0.352	Reject Null Hypothesis

Conclusion

In conclusion, the need for the adoption of competitive strategies have necessitated organization to rigorously adhere to cost leadership strategy, differentiating strategy, and focus strategy, and its oversight through its technology in order to enhance the survival of manufacturing companies. Implementing a cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies within a manufacturing company specifically improves organizational survivability. Since adopting and implementing a competitive strategy would encourage innovation and adaptability within the firm, doing so would be beneficial for the company's long-term existence.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the analysis and findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Management should apply cost leadership strategies as it provides an opportunity to enhance the firms innovative capability and adaptability to internal and external environmental factors for sustainable business results thereby maximizing its survival.
- ii. Management should create policies that would enhance a cost leadership strategy of the firms in line with recent technology, as this would help lower production cost, operations cost and maximize capability via innovation and adaptability.
- iii. Management should employ differentiation strategy through developing strong marketing campaign, producing unique products with special features as this would enhance the value of the brand, increase its awareness and enhance organizational survival.

- iv. Management should adopt differentiation strategy to gain sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors and maximize its adaptability and innovation
- v. Management can easily attract future customers with specificity by applying focus strategy thereby enhancing the innovative and adaptive capability of the firm also with the use of technology in their processes.
- vi. Management should ensure strong actions are taken towards focus strategy, focusing their products and services at a particular segment as this will help maximize adaptability hence survival of the organization.
- vii. Management should ensure innovation is on the high side and adopt the use of advance technology in their production and processes as this will create differentiation for the firm increasing the firms adaptability and maximizing its survival.

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