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BUSINESS NETWORK CAPACITIES OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was purposed on examining the control of business network capacity on company sustenance using some food and beverage firms in Lagos, Nigeria. This study applied an experimental survey design and purposive sampling technique to arrive at 657 middle and top level management staff of six food and beverage firms particularly the manufacturing ones. Statistically, AMOS Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) version 22.0 and SPSS version 21 were employed to examine the research model. The result from the Structural Equation Modelling showed that Product innovation was explained in a variance of 70.5% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 47.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Strategic flexibility was explained in a variance of 75.1% of Competitive advantage, and a critical ratio of 66.7% and ($p < 0.001$). Decision making was explained in a variance of 64.4% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 35.7% and ($p < 0.001$). Competitive intensity was explained in a variance of 90.8% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 53.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Technology turbulence was explained in a variance of 85.9% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 59.4% and ($p < 0.001$). From the correlation analysis, Product innovation has very high correlation with Sales growth at 84.0%. Strategic flexibility has very high correlation with Competitive advantage at 86.6%. Decision making has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 80.3%. Competitive intensity has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 95.3%. For the control of business network capacity, product innovation, strategic flexibility, decision making, competitive intensity and technological turbulence were essential to control the sales growth , competitive advantage, and enterprise survival of food and beverage enterprises in Lagos, Nigeria.

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1. Introduction

Many years back, business enterprises have been witnessing unparalleled and exceptional degree of transformation, conversion, intense and forceful competition, and tumultuous environment globally. These transformations emanates as a result of market fragmentation, changing technology, active management, the convergence of different business enterprises, supplier attitudes, changing customer demands, changing customer expectations, reduced lifecycle of product, etc. which have direct and indirect implication on business sustenance. According to Ahmad, Othman and Lazim (2014), business enterprises are encountering significant challenges because of the active attributes of business enterprise itself, the market, and environmental circumstances.

The concept of enterprise capacity was initially designed by Teece and Pisano (1994); and later improved by Teece et al. (1997), who emphasized that a enterprise's competitive advantage in a active environment rests on the enterprises' stock of organizational capacities which makes it possible to deliver a constant stream of innovative products and services to customers (Hou, 2008). Enterprise capacities can, therefore, be defined as the routines in an enterprise that facilitate and guide the development of the company's organizational capacities by changing its resource underlying base (Adeniran et al., 2024a; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). Both organizational and active capacities can be called organizational routines, but with different outcomes. Organizational capacities enable services and goods production, whereas active capacities enable development and renewal of organizational capacities.

The question of how enterprises compete in the prevailing volatile and uncertain business environment has been established within the strategy literature for a long time. The field of strategic management is concerned with revealing the causes of sustainable competitive advantage leading to sustenance differences among enterprises (Osisioma et al., 2016).

Globally, it is evident that enterprises are operating in increasingly turbulent and unsettled business environment. During the 1970s, '80s and '90s, enterprises' resources were seen as being homogenous by industrial organization scholars, that is, evenly distributed among enterprises, and which aids companies to achieve competitive advantage by picking an attractive industry and creating a competitive position in the industry (Acikdilli et al., 2013). The strategic management field began during the 1990s to shift attention towards enterprises' stock of resources and capacities as the place to look for the principal source of sustenance variances among enterprises (Adeniran et al., 2024e; Hoskisson, et al., 1999).

Food and beverage enterprises are not exempted from the sweeping transformation as they have experienced increasing levels of competition during the last one decade, which create significant issues to maintaining economic balance. There

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seems to be more challenge posed which seems to be higher than enterprise survival. This challenge is experienced with the tendency at which enterprises thrive during the situation of increased competition.

For long, networking in enterprises has been associated with resource sharing among partners, market access and the adoption of new technologies that enterprises could not be able to access in isolation. This implies that networking is dependent on many indicators such as trust among networking partners for the purpose of sharing strategic resources. These wiles may also indicate that the benefits embedded in networking are inclined on capacities of enterprises to develop significant relationship between networking partners.

The entrepreneurial business network is a multifaceted network of business enterprises that collaborates to achieve the objectives of enterprise objectives (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Ozcan and Eisenhardt, 2009). The objectives are typically operational and strategic, and business networks agree and embrace it based on their position in the competitive market (Ford, Gadde, Håkansson, Lundgren, Snehota, Turnbull and Wilson, 2014). There are two main actives of enterprise networks; they are enterprise associations and enterprise aggregations. The actives enhances enterprise networks to maintain a more robust, innovative and competitive nature (Chung, Yang and Huang, 2015). An entrepreneurial network is the socioeconomic activity of business and the platform on which the executives of enterprises meet with each other to converse about existing and obtainable opportunities in enterprise networks. The enterprise networks provides platform for establishing relationships, identifying opportunities of business, and sharing information between potential partners (Adeniran, Jadah, and Mohammed, 2020; Guercini and Ranfagni, 2016).

According to Soda, Usai and Zaheer (2004), the enterprise network is a business of social networking, which enhances business tycoons (entrepreneurs and managers) to connect, relate and communicate with other business tycoons for the purpose of forming mutual relationships that is beneficial businesses, and expanding business interests. An enterprise network is a dimension of leveraging business network, personal networks and relationship for the purpose of facilitating regular supply of new opportunities for enterprises Hedvall, Jagstedt and Dubois (2019). Nowadays, the leading enterprises are having competitive advantages over other enterprises through networked models and tapping information from external sources for the purpose of enhancing and increasing business growth (Dangelico and Pontrandolfo, 2015).

According to Raza, Minai and Hashim (2017), the sustainable sustenance of different network of enterprises does not rely only on the end result of a particular factor; but it is embedded on the permutation of its active capacities and available resources. Also, Minai, Ibrahim and Law (2012) stated that enterprise networks are an intangible resource that increases the efficiency of small enterprises. Many scholars are of the view that enterprise networks are beneficial to the entrepreneurs and enterprises might receive impending benefits from networking, particularly the exchange of relationships (Xu, Guo, Zhang and Dang, 2018). However, it is

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pertinent to note that enterprise networks are active and not static. Law (2012) reveals that the power of enterprise network is a determinant factor for the success and survival of enterprises.

As a consequence to encounter a fiercer business competition, it is crucial for enterprise to manage their networks for the purpose of achieving growth and profitability (Huang, Lai and Lo, 2012). Typically, enterprises encountered several challenges and competitive business environment to maintain and sustain enterprise growth by utilizing the networks (Gunawan, Jacob and Duysters, 2016). Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997) noted that the active capacities of enterprises are the higher order capabilities that could reconfigure, integrate and coordinate the specific resources to encounter the complex, challenging and competitive enterprise. Thus, active capacities perform key role when combating the changing actives of competitive environment, which influences enterprises (Barreto, 2009).

Earlier studies such as van Duren et al. (2003) noted that specific managerial factors were pointed by managers to influence enterprise profitability. Schumacher and Boland (2005); Pendell and Boland (2005) showed that enterprise resources are dominant in explaining enterprise sustenance. Despite the helpfulness of these studies, they do not render the challenge impotent. Van Duren et al. adopted a case study procedure by conducting interview on five enterprises. Small numbers of observations were revealed to limit the potency of the study when making generalizations to the food industry.

The study conducted by Boland employed regression analysis to identify the return of investment on assets. Nonetheless, the sets of data were limited to secondary data without any primary data. Also, the study identified specific resources employed by the enterprises to realize better sustenance. Despite the fact that the similar studies being carried out were able to observe the pertinence of factors driving the efficiency of enterprise, further analysis should be carried out to shed more light in the study. Further understanding can be exposed regarding the creation of competitive advantage, product innovation, and the sustenance of food enterprises and beverage enterprises in a highly competitive market. Furthermore, there are no earlier studies that have employed structural equation model in the Nigerian food and beverage industry. Also, few studies have been able to achieve direct relationship between variables quantitatively, and be able to achieve the test of hypothesis.

Many studies have been carried out and have analyzed the antecedent variables that affect the nexus between product innovation and enterprise survival. Among are the studies of Vermeulen, De Jong, and O'shaughnessy (2005); Chang, Hughes, and Hotho (2011); Alegre and Chiva (2013); Adeniran et al. (2024c), Adeniran et al. (2024d), but there are some gaps to be filled because of country specific studies which open a prospect to observe the different variables that have suspect of influencing this nexus. To embark on this, this study determines whether competitive intensity and competitive advantage has influence on product innovation, which will result to improving enterprise survival.

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Also, previous studies were limited to the attainment of business networks, network density and network resources, and the existing body of academic and scientific literature may not have delved into the examination of the relationship between enterprise networks and business sustenance with the mediating role of active capacities. The aim of this study is to address the control of business network capacity on the sustenance of food and beverage enterprises in Nigeria. It is believed that this approach is capable of giving s plausible result.

Table 1. Translation of conceptual framework

S/No.	Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
1	Product innovation	Enterprise survival
	Product innovation	Enterprise efficiency
	Product innovation	Competitive advantage
	Product innovation	Sales growth
2	Strategic flexibility	Enterprise survival
	Strategic flexibility	Enterprise efficiency
	Strategic flexibility	Competitive advantage
	Strategic flexibility	Sales growth
3	Decision making	Enterprise survival
	Decision making	Enterprise efficiency
	Decision making	Competitive advantage
	Decision making	Sales growth
4	Technological capacity	Enterprise survival
	Technological capacity	Enterprise efficiency
	Technological capacity	Competitive advantage
	Technological capacity	Sales growth
S/No.	**Mediating variables**	**Dependent variables**
1	Competitive intensity	Enterprise survival
	Competitive intensity	Enterprise efficiency
	Competitive intensity	Competitive advantage
	Competitive intensity	Sales growth
2	Technology turbulence	Enterprise survival
	Technology turbulence	Enterprise efficiency
	Technology turbulence	Competitive advantage
	Technology turbulence	Sales growth

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2. Methods

This research was achieved with Structural Equation Modelling and Correlation Analysis to validate the specified model. In the year 2014, the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) (CBN, 2003) listed fourteen companies which comprises of multinational and indigenous companies. The population adopted in this study will comprise the categories of staff in the top and middle management cadre of the six (6) selected quoted food and beverages companies located in Lagos State. Six quoted food and beverages companies will be purposively selected for the study as they are noted to be major players and stakeholders in the Food and Beverages industry in Nigeria. This is also evidenced in the study of Akpan and Ikon (2016), and it justification was identified in the studies of Adeniran and Tayo-Ladega, O. (2024); Adeniran *et al*. (2024b), Adeniran (2018). It was revealed from previous studies that the other eight companies were difficult to educing information from them.

According to Zikmund (2003), the various error allowances will be determined and the suitable one will be chosen based on the discretion of the researcher. The chosen error allowance of 0.04 will be employed to establish the sample size as shown in the equation below:

The formulae for achieving sample size $n = \frac{Z^2}{4E^2}$; where;

n = Sample size;

Z = Z score for the confidence interval (2.05);

E = Error allowance (0.04)

When inserted into the formula, Sample Size will be 656.6406, and approximately 657. It is therefore necessary that the questionnaire will be targeted at 657 respondents which are middle and top managers in the six food and beverage manufacturing enterprises. AMOS Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) version 22.0 and SPSS version 21 were employed to achieve the research model.

3. Result and Discussions

The structural model was examined through SEM technique with the effects of 4 Observed Variables (OV) on 4 Latent Variables (LV), and 2 Mediating Variables (MV) on 4 Latent Variables (LV). From Table 2, OVs are Product innovation, Strategic flexibility, Decision making, and Technological capacity, LVs are Enterprise survival, Enterprise efficiency, Competitive advantage, and Sales growth.

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Mediating variables are Competitive intensity and Technology turbulence. From the Structural Equation Modelling, the significant variables between OV and LV are Product innovation and Sales growth with R2 value of 0.705 which implies that Product innovation was explained in a variance of 70.5% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 47.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Also, the significant variables between OV and LV are Strategic flexibility and Competitive advantage with R2 value of 0.751 which implies that Strategic flexibility was explained in a variance of 75.1% of Competitive advantage, and a critical ratio of 66.7% and ($p < 0.001$).

Furthermore, the significant variables between OV and LV are Decision making and Enterprise survival with R2 value of 0.644 which implies that Decision making was explained in a variance of 64.4% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 35.7% and ($p < 0.001$). Regarding the significant variables between MV and LV are Competitive intensity and Enterprise survival with R2 value of 0.908 which implies that Competitive intensity was explained in a variance of 90.8% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 53.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Finally on this, the significant variables between MV and LV are Technology turbulence and Enterprise survival with R2 value of 0.859 which implies that Technology turbulence was explained in a variance of 85.9% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 59.4% and ($p < 0.001$).

Table 2. Structural Equation Model and Results of Hypotheses

S/No.	Observed Variables	Latent Variables	R^2	CR	Sig	F. Test	Results
	Product innovation	Enterprise survival	0.000	1.22	0.712	0.136	NA
1	Product innovation	Enterprise efficiency	0.000	1.43	0.669	0.182	NA
	Product innovation	Competitive advantage	0.000	1.36	0.960	0.003	NA
	Product innovation	Sales growth	**0.705**	**47.6**	**0.000**	**1282.232**	**R**
	Strategic flexibility	Enterprise survival	0.001	1.27	0.456	0.556	NA
2	Strategic flexibility	Enterprise efficiency	0.033	1.28	0.000	18.371	R
	Strategic flexibility	Competitive advantage	**0.751**	**66.7**	**0.000**	**1616.495**	**R**
	Strategic flexibility	Sales growth	0.000	1.83	0.846	0.038	NA
	Decision making	Enterprise survival	**0.644**	**35.7**	**0.000**	**972.116**	**R**
3	Decision making	Enterprise efficiency	0.034	1.83	0.000	18.656	R
	Decision making	Competitive advantage	0.001	1.27	0.527	0.400	NA
	Decision making	Sales growth	0.003	1.51	0.239	1.389	NA
	Technological capacity	Enterprise survival	0.005	1.71	0.098	2.743	NA
4	Technological capacity	Enterprise efficiency	0.083	1.28	0.000	48.540	R
	Technological capacity	Competitive advantage	0.010	1.45	0.018	5.663	R

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	Technological capacity	Sales growth	0.002	1.44	0.309	1.039	NA
S/No.	**Mediating Variables**	**Latent Variables**					
	Competitive intensity	Enterprise survival	**0.908**	**53.6**	**0.000**	**5308.045**	**R**
1	Competitive intensity	Enterprise efficiency	0.040	1.53	0.000	22.198	R
	Competitive intensity	Competitive advantage	0.000	1.16	0.975	0.001	NA
	Competitive intensity	Sales growth	0.003	1.65	0.191	1.718	NA
	Technology turbulence	Enterprise survival	**0.859**	**59.4**	**0.000**	**3268.451**	**R**
2	Technology turbulence	Enterprise efficiency	0.027	1.73	0.000	14.796	R
	Technology turbulence	Competitive advantage	0.000	2.94	0.665	0.187	NA
	Technology turbulence	Sales growth	0.105	1.37	0.014	6.041	R

NB: p-value < 0.05, R^2: Square root of correlation coefficients of the intercepts, C.R: Critical Ratio, Sig: Significance, NR: Null hypothesis Not Rejected, R: Null hypothesis Rejected.

From Table 3, regarding the cause and effect relationship, the Product innovation has very high correlation with Sales growth at 84.0%. This implies that the more intense the organization improves on innovating their product, the higher the level of sales growth. This is in agreement with the findings of Rajee, (2005) which points out that product innovation is the basis for sales growth that will enable the innovator to implement the required and at the same time could result to an increase in sales growth most especially at challenging times.

The Strategic flexibility has very high correlation with Competitive advantage at 86.6%. This implies that the increasing level of flexibility in organizational strategy, the better the organization will have advantage over its competitors. This finding is in agreement with the study of Srour, Baird and Schoch (2016) which found an agreement with the role of strategic flexibility and management control system. It is also in agreement with the findings of Asikhia (2010) which examined the relationship between market-based strategic flexibility and sales growth and subsequently evaluated the effect of competitive intensity and technological turbulence among Nigerian banks.

The Decision making has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 80.3%. This implies that the better or effective the decision making capacity of the organization, the higher tendency of organizational survival. The finding also corroborates the findings of Ibidunni, Oluwole, and Ayodotun (2014) which investigates the impact of product innovation strategy on the survival of the small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Their study found a significant relationship between decision making of product innovation and the survival of SMEs. Also, with the study of Elbana and Naguib (2008) that examined the effect of sustenance of a enterprise on its strategic decision making, using the influence of two aspects of

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sustenance (financial and business) on three dimensions of strategic decision making process rationality, intuition and political behaviour. It was also found that organizational effectiveness is a better predictor that can well explain the dimensions of strategic decision-making process than the financial and business sustenance. It is also in agreement with the study of Alao (2013) which found that strategic decision making enhance the usage of the balance score-scored which is a strategic planning analytical tool that enhances managers to be in line with and have better understanding of how sustenance relate to the overall growth of an enterprise.

The Competitive intensity has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 95.3%. This implies that the more strategies put in place for organizational competition, the higher tendency of organizational survival. Finally on correlation analysis, the Technological turbulence has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 92.7%. This implies that the intensity of technological turbulence in an organization, the higher tendency of organizational survival. This is particular because the organization will try to adopt several technological measures in the face of high technological turbulence. This is in agreement with the study of Oghojafor *et al*. (2014) which found a high significant effect of technology issue on enterprise survival. It is also in agreement with the study of Seabra, Abrantes Nd Teixeira (2015) which found that technological turbulence has impact on enterprise innovation, innovative strategy, and technological capacity.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

	Enterprise survival	Enterprise efficiency	Competitive advantage	Sales growth
Product innovation	0.016	0.018	0.002	**0.840**
Strategic flexibility	0.032	0.182	**0.866**	0.008
Decision making	**0.803**	0.183	0.027	0.051
Technological capacity	0.071	0.288	0.102	0.044
Competitive intensity	**0.953**	0.199	0.001	0.056
Technology turbulence	**0.927**	0.164	0.019	0.011

5. Conclusion

Many years back, business enterprises have been witnessing unparalleled and exceptional degree of transformation, conversion, intense and forceful competition, and tumultuous environment globally. These transformations emanates as a result of market fragmentation, changing technology, active management, the convergence of different business enterprises, supplier attitudes, changing customer demands, changing customer expectations, reduced lifecycle of product, etc. which have direct and indirect implication on business sustenance. The aim of

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Statistically, AMOS Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) version 22.0 was employed to examine the research model. From the data collected, 539 responses were analysed.

The result from the Structural Equation Modelling showed that Product innovation was explained in a variance of 70.5% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 47.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Strategic flexibility was explained in a variance of 75.1% of Competitive advantage, and a critical ratio of 66.7% and ($p < 0.001$). Decision making was explained in a variance of 64.4% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 35.7% and ($p < 0.001$). Competitive intensity was explained in a variance of 90.8% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 53.6% and ($p < 0.001$). Technology turbulence was explained in a variance of 85.9% of Enterprise survival, and a critical ratio of 59.4% and ($p < 0.001$).

From the correlation analysis, Product innovation has very high correlation with Sales growth at 84.0%. Strategic flexibility has very high correlation with Competitive advantage at 86.6%. Decision making has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 80.3%. Competitive intensity has very high correlation with Enterprise survival at 95.3%. For the control of business network capacity, product innovation, strategic flexibility, decision making, competitive intensity and technological turbulence were essential to control the sales growth , competitive advantage, and enterprise survival of food and beverage enterprises in Lagos, Nigeria.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Author Responsibility Statement

GCB: Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Introduction, Methods, Analysis, Discussion,Conclusion; IEN: Conceptualization, Writing - original draft, Introduction, Conclusion; BAA: Discussion,Conclusion, Editing; SM: Editing, Writing. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.