



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKET ORIENTATION FIRM, INNOVATIVENESS AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF COMPANIES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the issue of interrelationship between market orientation, firm innovativeness and business performance of companies in Nigeria with specific focus on the following dimensions of market orientation variables; collection and use of market information, development of market oriented strategy and implementation of market oriented strategy. This study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained with the aid of a questionnaire, while the secondary data were obtained from extant literature. The primary data was collected from marketing managers, operation managers, and executive managers of a sample of 400 companies in Lagos, Nigeria. Three copies of the questionnaire were administered in each of the 400 companies that served as the sample. The respondents were selected based on convenience sampling method. The selected 400 companies were stratified into the categories of services, manufacturing and others. Out of the total sample of 1,200, 843 useable questionnaires were returned representing a response rate of 70.25%. Factor analysis is used to validate the measures of market orientation firm innovativeness and organizational performance. The research instrument showed high reliability and validity. A correlational analysis is performed to determine whether the market orientation practices are associated with firms innovativeness and business performance. The major findings of the study are as follows: collection and use of market information, development of market-oriented strategy, implementation of market-oriented strategy, and firm innovativeness are correlated with the business performance. These findings are consistent with previous findings on the subject.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For the past three decades, the subject of market orientation in one form or another has occupied the centre stage of the theory and practice of marketing strategy. This is not surprising because from extant literature, market orientation has been seen as an intangible factor that has an effect on organizational factor that has an effect on organizational performance [Hoburg et al. \(2003\)](#), [Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#), [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#), among others. There is a consensus in the literature on market orientation as a valuable tool because it influences firm innovativeness and firm performance by creating superior value to customers [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#), [Kotler \(1994\)](#), [Shapiro \(1988\)](#), [Webster \(1981\)](#), [Hooley et al. \(2005\)](#), [Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#). Organizations must constantly innovate in every aspect of their business operations in order to compete and survive in the competitive market place ([Wood and Bhuian \(1993\)](#), [Atuatiene – Gime \(1995\)](#), [Destipande et al. \(1993\)](#), [Destipande and Farley \(2004\)](#), [Han et al. \(1998\)](#), [Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#) and [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#) are often cited as founders of conceptualization and measurement instruments for assessing market orientation construct. In recent years however, improvements or alternative approaches have been suggested by different authors [Lado et al. \(1998\)](#), [Hooley et al. \(2000\)](#) and among others.

However, several propositions pertaining to the antecedents of market orientation have been advanced by several authors with references to developed countries ([Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#), [Houston \(1986\)](#), [Gray et al. \(1998\)](#), [Day and Wensley \(1988\)](#), [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#), [Matsuno et al. \(2002\)](#), [Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#) and among others). However, arguments have been advanced in extant literature suggesting that a market orientation may have a strong or weak effect on business performance, depending on the environmental conditions such as market turbulence, competitive intensity and technological turbulence ([Houston \(1986\)](#), and [Gray et al. \(1998\)](#)).

[Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#) provided a useful interpretation of the marketing concept and a marketing orientation from a behavioral process. [Matsuno et al. \(2002\)](#) defined market orientation as the organizational wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customers needs, dissemination of intelligence across departments and organization wide responsiveness to it. [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#) focuses on the values and beliefs of market orientation approach, and that it encourages (1) continuous cross functional learning about customers expressed and latent needs and about competitor capabilities and strategies, (2) cross functionally coordinated action to create and functionally exploit the learning. The culture including such values and beliefs results in collection and use of market information, development of market oriented strategy and implementation of market oriented strategy ([Gima, 1995](#)). This paper aims to investigate the relationship between market orientation, firm innovativeness and business performance of companies in Nigeria. The research design and research method adopted is given together with the findings leading to the conclusions related to the prepositions concerning the variables.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Market Orientation

Marketing orientation is the implementation of the marketing concept, which is offering products or services based on customer needs and wants (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) , (Narver and Slater, 1990). An organization may choose the marketing concept as its organizational philosophy, but it cannot be a market oriented company until it effectively implements the marketing concept. Thus, an organization should consider the acceptance of marketing concept as its philosophy of doing business (Mckitterick, 1957) , The implementation of the marketing concept requires certain conditions to be fulfilled by an organization. According to Shapiro (1988), the term “market oriented” represents a set of processes touching on all aspect of the company”. Narver and Slater (1990) defined market orientation as an organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviour for the creation of superior values”. The stress on creating the necessary behaviour indicated the importance of considering the conditions necessary for implementation of the marketing concept.

Destipande *et al.* (1993) noted that “a simple focus on information about the needs of actual and potential customers is inadequate without consideration of the more deeply rooted set of values and belief that are likely to consistently reinforce customer focus and pervade the organization”. This set of values and beliefs that reinforces and pervades the organization is similar to the conditions that are required for the implementation of the marketing concept. Although Kohli and Jaworski (1990) did not mention these conditions in their perspective, however, they stressed the need for these condition and labeled them as antecedents of market orientation. Kohli and Jaworski (1990) define market orientation terms of three dimensions 1) the generation of market information about the needs of customers and external environmental factors, 2) the dissemination of such information among organizational function and 3) the development and implementation of strategies in response to the information. These elements include continuous and systematic information gathering regarding customers and competitors, cross functional sharing of information and coordination of activities and responsiveness of changing market needs (Martin and Grabac, 2003). However, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) postulated that the market orientation of an organization is significantly determined by the several antecedent factors, some of which work in a positive way and some in a negative way. Thus, the appropriate implementation of marketing concept depends on the successful identification of the favourable and unfavourable conditions

Narver and Slater (1990) suggested that market orientation has in some cases a substantial positive effect on profitability. Armstrong and Baron (1998) claimed that the development of competitor oriented objective is detrimental to profitability and therefore, firms should look beyond their competitors when setting objectives and focus directly on profit maximization. Both studies strongly confirm that profit maximization is the ultimate objective of market orientation practice.

2.2. Market Orientation and Business Performance

A number of researchers have examined the link between market orientation and performance. According to Etel *et al.* (2004) managers who adopt a market orientation recognize that marketing is vital to the success of their organization. This realization is reflected in a fundamental approach of doing business that gives the customer the highest priority, called marketing concept. It

emphasizes customer orientation and coordination of marketing activities to achieve the organization's performance objectives. Likewise, Narver and Slater (1990), Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and Destipande *et al.* (1993) actively posited market orientation to be a source of competitive advantage that positively influence business performance. Although between market orientation and profitability, the line between market orientation and innovation appear to be more complex (Martin and Grabac (2003); ..

Several conceptual writings suggest that the importance of market orientation for organizational performance depends on environmental conditions (Narver and Slater (1990), and Atuahene - Gima (1995). A strong market orientation is required to focus organization on those environmental events that are likely to influence their ability to increase customers satisfaction relative to competitors (Baker and Sinkula, 1999). According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990) market orientation may not have critical importance in turbulent environments. Technical turbulence moderates customer and competitor orientations Impact upon innovation performance (Liu *et al.*, 2003), Kohli and Jaworski (1990) suggested that market orientation leads to satisfied customers who spread the good work regarding the product and keep purchasing the product on a continuous basis. This means that market orientation leads to greater customer satisfaction as well as to repeat business Kotler (1994) , Jaworski and Kohli (1993) also put forward that recent research shows that the strength of the relationship between market orientation and firm performance is not influenced by the environment. As a result implementation of a market oriented strategy, reaching to market feedback may allow a firm to adopt successfully to external environmental changes. However, while a strong market orientation may keep a firm on a steady course, it may not necessarily constitute a dominant market position for the firm. Firms with both strong learning and market orientations may be best able to respond to environmental forces through learning that enables innovative and reactive market place behaviour (Baker and Sinkula (1999).

The degree of market orientation displayed directly influences the economic and non-economic performance of business (Jaworski and Kohli (1993). Three environmental characteristics have been proposed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) – market turbulence (the rate of change in the composition of customers and their preferences, competitive intensity and technological turbulence. Organizations that work with rapidly changing technologies may be able to obtain a competitive advantage through technological innovation together with the market orientation. Market orientation assumes a customer focused strategy for market knowledge base generating followed by co-ordinated, inter functional marketing efforts to achieve long term firms success.

In this study, market orientation was measured by a 13 – item scale adopted from Atuahene-Gima (1995) which adopted the information based view of market orientation. Six items pertain to the collection and use of market information, four items tap the development of market oriented strategy and three items measure the implementation of a market oriented response to consumer needs. This questionnaire is designed to be organization oriented rather than competitor oriented.

2.3. Collection and Use of Market Information

In order to serve the market better than competitors, market orientation requires the availability of all the various kinds of information regarding existing and latent needs and wants of the

customers and the factors affecting the fulfillment of those needs and wants. In this connection, Gounaris and Arlonitis (2001) suggested that, having made this information available, a company wide mobilization to satisfy customers' needs and want should follow. Thus, availability of information on customers' needs and wants at a company wide level becomes a major issue in the development of market orientation (Narver and Slater (1990), Kohli and Jaworski (1990)).

Over the years, there has been increasing interest in the role of use of market information for strategic purposes. According to Choe (2003), external factors such as competition, uncertainty and needs are driving forces for strategic applications of market information. Collection and use of market information enabled by information systems is broadly considered to be a competitive weapon to cope with uncertain and volatile environments. Companies can deal with uncertainty by increasing their information inter organizational links between customers and suppliers.

It is essential that senior managers are committed to the concept of market orientation and fully understand the role of market information and sound overall intelligence. Strategy formulation and implementation necessitates the active participation and commitment of staff throughout an organization (Clark, 2000), , posit that, companies need intelligence – gathering capabilities to keep up with technology development, including both formal processes and information systems, and informal systems that involve employees and senior managers to have the responsibility to the company to gather, disseminate and interpret technological information. The more informed individuals engage more in problem solving discussions and create significant number of innovation which is associated with the ability to access knowledge from outside the boundaries of the firm and the ability to integrate knowledge across departmental boundaries within the firm. Drawing from the works by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990), the level of market orientation in a business unit in obtains and uses information from customers, develops a strategy which will meet customers needs, and implements that strategy by being responsive to customer needs and wants.

2.4. Firm Innovativeness

The role of market orientation as an antecedent of organization performance has been extensively investigated in various contexts, Destipande and Farley (2004), Lafferty and Hult (2001) and among others. However, studies concerning the market orientation – firm innovativeness are less common; despite the strategic importance and the high failure rate of new product introduction. Market orientation; moderate the relationship between product advantage as regard firm innovativeness and new product performance. According to Rogers, 1995, an innovation is defined as an idea or object that is perceived as new by an individual or an agency. The perceived newness of the idea from the individuals' point of view determines his or her reaction to it. If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation. An innovation consists of certain technical knowledge about how things can be done better than existing state of the art .

The innovativeness of a new product and firm innovation capability is important for several reasons. According to Calantine *et al.* (2002), , Hurley and Hult (1998), Liu *et al.* (2002). Innovation products present opportunities for firm in term of growth and expansion into new areas as well as allow firms to gain competitive advantage. Innovation by itself is defined as the generation, acceptance and implementation of new ideas, processes products or services. The

innovation process includes the acquisition, dissemination and use of new knowledge and successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization. According to [Liu et al. \(2002\)](#), organization learning is associated with the development of new knowledge, which in turn is crucial for innovativeness and firm performance. [Liu et al. \(2003\)](#) suggested that market orientation might be an antecedent to innovation and that market oriented organizations tend to be more innovative.

2.5. Market Orientation, Firm Innovativeness and Performance

Studying the impact of market orientation, firm innovativeness on firm performance has been a popular research areas in recent years however, it can be seen that they were mainly done and investigated on larger firms in developed economies, ([Narver and Slater, 1990](#); [Lafferty and Hult, 2001](#); [Destipande and Farley, 2004](#)), ([Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#)), and therefore, we do not find extensive empirical evidence of the relationship in developing economies. Meanwhile, this, research opined that, there is a possibility of relationship between market oriented firm innovativeness and business performance in a developing economies environment.

Several theories have link market orientation innovativeness of an organization to its viability and eventually profitability. Market orientation if implemented in an organization leads to increase in the performance of an organization, both financially and non – financial, this is because the organization will be assumed to be in a better position to provide customers with superior goods and services that meet customer requirements through innovativeness and also be in a better position to compete. This will be made possible because market orientation will help the organization to gather information on customers and competitors and disseminate such information within functional units/employees in the organization. This information disseminated will be used to the organization's advantage of creating value (through innovativeness) for customers and also beat the competition.

Market orientation is one of the core aspects of strategic marketing ([Liu et al., 2002](#)), ([Webster, 1992](#)) which together with firm innovativeness increase business performance [Calantine et al. \(2002\)](#), [Liu et al. \(2003\)](#), [Kohli and Jaworski \(1990\)](#), and among others. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formulated to guide the study to explore the relationship between market orientation innovativeness and business performance of companies in Nigeria.

H1a collection and use of market information is positively and significantly correlated with firm innovativeness

H1b collection and use of market information is positively correlated with business performance

H2a development of market oriented strategy is positively associated with firm innovativeness

H2b development of market oriented strategy is positively associated with business performance

H3a implementation of market oriented strategy is positively correlated with firm innovativeness

H3b implementation of market oriented strategy is positively correlated with business performance

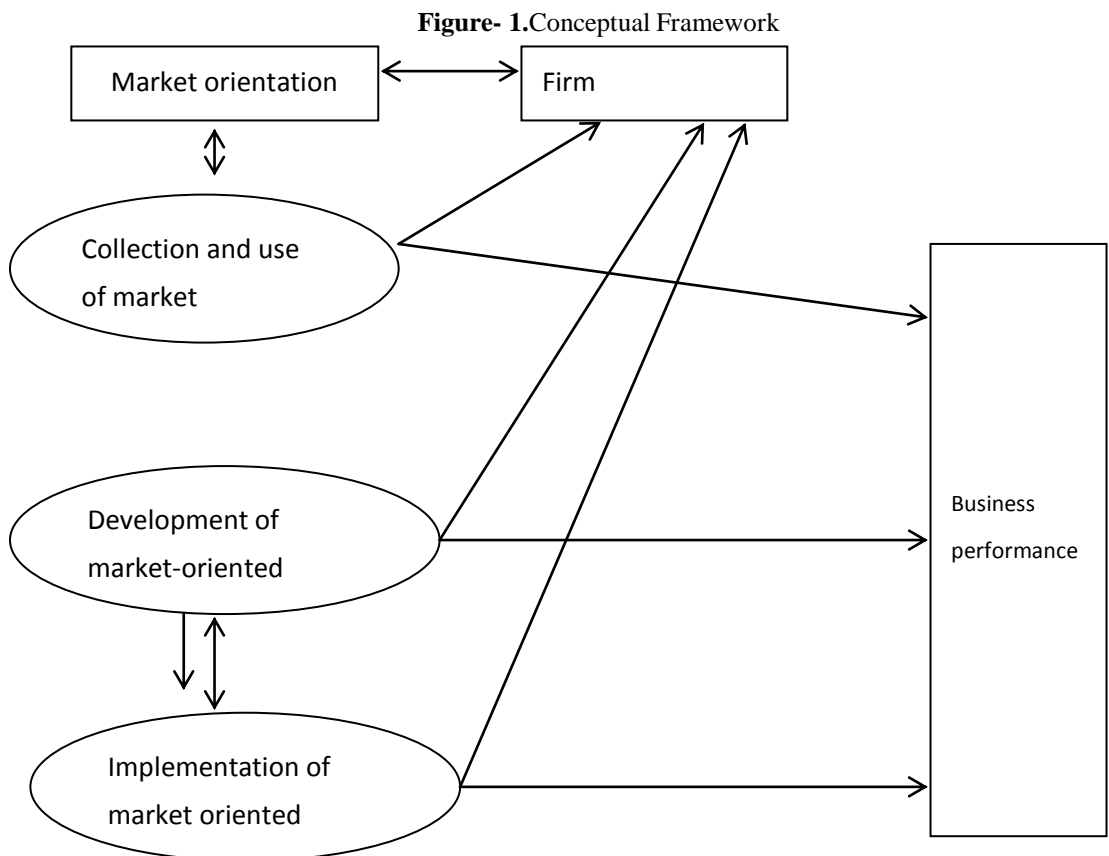
H4. collection and use of market information, firm innovativeness development of market-oriented strategy, implementation and market oriented strategy are correlated with business performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This section introduced research framework and explained hypotheses development. The sections that follow are deviated to explaining research design, population frame data, collection procedure, questionnaire design, measurement of variables and statistical techniques.

3.1. Research Framework

The review of the literatures shows the relationship between market orientation, firm innovativeness and business performance. It posits that market orientation and firm innovativeness as independent variables affect business performance as dependent variable. The conceptual framework in this study is presented below



This study used a descriptive survey design in order to evaluate the propositions listed above. The study used both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been gathered by using structured questionnaire forms distributed and collected from executive managers, marketing managers, and operation managers of a sample of 400 companies in Lagos Nigeria. Three (3) copies of the questionnaire were administered in each of the 400 companies that served as the sample. The respondents were selected based on convenience sampling methods. The use of convenience sample has been found relevant in previous studies (Hall and Lockshin, 2000). The selected 400 companies were stratified into the categories of services, manufacturing and others. Out of the total sample of 1,200 questionnaires, administered to respondents, 843 useable questionnaire were

returned, representing a response rate of 70.25% which is reasonable for the survey of this type. The data were collected using a seven point Likert type scale, anchored by (1) strongly disagree and (7) strongly agree. The study utilized collection and use of market information, development of oriented strategy and implementation of market-oriented strategy scales of Atuahene - Gima (1995) with six, four and three questions respectively. Firm innovativeness was measured with four questions adopted from Hurt and Teigen (1977), Hellenstein (1996). The measure of business performance was adopted from Moonerart *et al.* (1994) and Destipande *et al.* (1993) including three questions. The research instrument employed enjoy tremendous input from literature, thereby possessing content validity. In addition,

convergent validity was determined via factor analysis where the extracted factors could be viewed as an array of common underlying dimensions of the market orientation construct (Blackson and Strokes, 2002). Predictive validity was also assessed via zero-order correlation coefficient (not reported here) and the Cronbach and reliability coefficient, in addition to the results from the pilot study that support the stability of market orientation construct in terms predictive validity (Blackson and Strokes, 2002). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the factors/constructs surpassed the 0.70 threshold recommended (Cronbach (1947) for reliability. The alpha values were as high as 0.87, 0.81, 0.92, 0.86 and 0.84 respectively for market orientation components and firm innovativeness and business performance. The alpha values are shown in table 2 together with the correlation analysis results.

Table- 1.Result of Factor analysis

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|------|------|------|------|---|
| Listens to opinions of customer | .801 | | | | |
| Use of customer information to improve quality of products and services | .784 | | | | |
| Company objectives are based mainly on customer needs | .644 | | | | |
| Obtains ideas from customers to improve products and services | .755 | | | | |
| Company personnel have adequate information about customers and competitors | .608 | | | | |
| Values customers input in new product/services planning | .760 | | | | |
| Company values market position more than financial performance | | .627 | | | |
| Prices are determined by customers value | | .829 | | | |
| Focuses on markets in which we have competitive strength | | .692 | | | |
| Company planning is organized around markets rather than products or services | | .791 | | | |
| Keep promises made to customers | | | .864 | | |
| Responds to customers needs in writing sales contacts | | | .882 | | |
| Responds to customer needs in creating terms of trade | | | .736 | | |
| Our company frequently tries out new ideas | | | | .844 | |
| Our company seeks out new ways to do things | | | | .841 | |

Continue

| | | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Our company is creative in its methods of operation | | | | | | .803 |
| Our company is often the first to market the new products and services | | | | | | .541 |
| Market orientation practices has positive effect on business performance | | | | | | .966 |
| Firm innovativeness has a positive effect on business performance | | | | | | .846 |
| Market Orientation and Firm innovative have a positive effect on business performance | | | | | | .902 |
| Eigen value | 3.28 | 3.29 | 3.66 | 2.62 | 2.29 | |
| Cumulative (%) | 769 | 57 | 54 | 66 | 78 | |

Table- 2.Results of reliability and correlational analysis

| | | Mean | Std Dev. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|--|------|----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | Collection and use of market information | 5.75 | .9151 | $\infty = .87$ | | | | |
| 2 | Development of market oriented strategy | 5.09 | .9594 | .679 | $\infty = .81$ | | | |
| 3 | Implementation of market oriented strategy | 5.43 | .9542 | .726 | .498 | $\infty = .92$ | | |
| 4 | Firm innovativeness | 5.45 | .9743 | .452 | .378 | .246 | $\infty = .86$ | |
| 5 | Business performance | 5.08 | .9436 | .498 | .554 | .276 | .524 | $\infty = .89$ |

$P < .05, P < .01$

The relationship between collection and use of market information and implementation of market-oriented strategy is stronger than the development of market oriented strategy and collection and use of market information ($726 > 679$). Similarly, relationship between the collection and use of market information, and the implementation of market-oriented strategy is stronger than the association between the development of market-oriented strategy and the implantation of market oriented strategy ($726 > 448$).

Correlation analysis also indicates that the collection and use of market information, development of market oriented strategy and implementation of market-oriented strategy are correlated with firm innovativeness. The strongest relationship exists between collection and use of market information and firm innovativeness. Therefore H_{1a} , H_{2a} and H_{3a} are accepted. Collection and use of market information and the development of market-oriented strategy are correlated positively with business performance. Implementations of market-oriented strategy are correlated positively with business performance. Therefore, hypotheses H_{1b} , H_{2b} and H_{3b} are supported. The analysis also indicates that firm innovativeness, performance are correlated positively at 0.01 level, supporting hypothesis H_4

4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Overall, this study has shown also, just like from general consensus in extant literature that there is a positive relationship between market orientation firm innovativeness and business performance (Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Narver and Slater (1990), Destipande *et al.* (1993), Jaworski and Kohli (1993), Etel *et al.* (2004), Liu *et al.* (2003), and among others. It has also been

found that Nigerian companies generally practices market orientation and work consciously toward firm innovativeness and positive business performance through the enhancement of collection and use of market information and implementation of market oriented strategy. Thus, the findings suggest that market orientation can lead to firm innovativeness and positive business performance. Market orientation is a source of new ideas and innovativeness to respond to the environment and promotes innovativeness and positive business performance.

The study result suggests that firm will increase their business performance by developing and implementing market oriented strategies as consistent with literature. The result also suggests that a firm with a market orientation is likely to improve its innovation capacity and business performance.

The isolated major companies, via this orientation in Nigeria companies via this research may be used for assessing and re-assessing market orientation activities in different business categories in Nigeria (e.g. banking, insurance, manufacturing and non profit organization). And also, types of business (e.g. micro, small, medium and large) in Nigeria. This may be a fertile ground for future research. Also the market orientation construct used in the research, in addition to their associated results could enable Nigerian organizational managers to identify their strategic strengths and weakness, and relevant areas that need managerial attention.

The generalization of the findings of this study is limited to the sample space used in the survey. It is suggested that future research replicates this study in other developing economies, apart from Nigeria. In other to enhance the understanding of the practical application of the market orientation, construct in such as orientation innovativeness, business performance need to be extended by considering other variables such as learning orientation, organizational culture, and among others. It is also suggested, that future research work be undertaken using sector specific and industry specific samples. This will go a long way in relating theoretical postulations in marketing and their relevant managerial / executives actions and applications.

5. LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of this study pertain to the confounding associated within industry and between industry variations as a result of pooling companies from different industries combining (apples and oranges) for this research. Focusing on a single sector and specific industry would have taken care of this limitation, even though generalization of findings would have been difficult (Maydeu – Olivares and Lado, 2003). Another limitation of this study, is associated with the context / environment of the study (i.e. Nigeria) which limits the generalisability of the findings to others contexts/environments.

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