

Aggressiveness and Exploration strategies of mobile communication Firms in Rivers State

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to present the relationship between aggressiveness and organizational exploration strategies for assessing opportunities, especially in high velocity mobile communication market as evidenced in Nigeria. A sample size of 115 was drawn from a population of 162 which consisted of 4 top level managers, 37 middle level managers and 121 supervisory staff from the four regional offices of the four mobile communication firms in Rivers State. A total number of 115 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 112 copies were returned and in the analysis of the study. Data generated through quantitative means were analysed using mean and standard deviation for univariate. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to ascertain the relationship between the variables. Finding revealed that strategic aggressiveness allows mobile communication firms to extend their variety of experiences and competencies and not focus heavily on the capabilities they are good at. The study hence, concluded that strategic aggressiveness has significant relationship with organizational exploration strategy of mobile communication firms in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that strategic aggressiveness should be focused on adequate research and information gathering concerning market trends.

Keywords: Aggressiveness, Exploration, Mobile communication firms, Strategy.

1.0 Introduction

Businesses seen to be operating within modern dynamic paced environments are usually faced with innumerable environmental issues which holds significant potentials in influencing the actual performance of the institution against their various expectations occasioned by glaring short falls. Towing the line of the uncovered fact above, it can be equally observed from records thaty conscious academics and business practitioners have incessantly maintained and called for an absolute attention on the inevitability and imperative of integrating the concept of ambidexterity in organizations that would want to be efficient in active business indulgence for the actualisation of their predetermined objectives as a strategy for exploiting their capabilities, capacities and special skills that are in existence and more importantly, to also be able to accommodate completely the demands of the market through the exploration inclination for the development of new capabilities, adequately well qualified employees and also operational skills (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004., Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996., Duncan, 1976).

Empirical researches that have been conducted have proved without doubts that having the absolute drive to provide the needs of the existing market without compromising with the needs of the external environment and in addition, having the skill or drive to be responsive to sudden changes in the future volatile environment of the market is confirmed to have a positive link with good organisational processes of functioning which are believed to be acceptable as a result of the presented acceptable evidence that ambidexterity provides the organizations with conforming features, inclinations and organizational structures in respect of meeting their objectives of innovation desire without negatively impacting on the organisation's on-going competitive endeavours and processes of their existing business (He & Wong, 2004; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2004).

Strategy therefore is believed to be an expensive mental engagement expressing the most enduring and acceptable means of performance, decision making and for the accomplishment of organisation's required activities, evaluation and measurement of standards. It also involves the means of identifying opportunities and threats from the external environment and also strengths and weaknesses from the internal environment and also brings together all actions involving the actualisation of business activities such that the organisation's system of operations could be valuable to the generational customers and to measure an organisation's effective and greater performance. Achieving the unprecedented performance therefore, strategic orientation function needs priority cognisance in course of developing strategies (Slater, Olson, & Hult, 2006). Strategic orientation is therefore

positioned mean a source for an organisation's detailed strategy formulation and implementation (Slater, Olson, & Hult 2006). Different researchers have acknowledged that organizations have varying distinctive strategic orientations that are strongly different with emphases on the influence of the factors inherent in the internal and external environments that affect individual business operations. These distinctive dominant strategic orientation dimensions are aggressiveness, defensiveness and proactiveness have been acknowledged to be conspicuous in all strategy literature (Paladino, 2007; & Hakala, 2010).

Strategic aggressiveness in organization is used for the pursuit of increased market share as a means of achieving profit in the current business dispensation. This corroborate with the notion that the aim of the firm is to possess higher market share ahead of competitors (Abiodun, 2009).

In many ways, aggressors respond to their chosen environments in a method known to be almost the opposite of the defender. For an aggressor, maintaining a reputation as an innovator in product and market development may be as important as, perhaps even most significant than high profitability.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The study investigated the relationship between aggressiveness and exploration strategies in mobile communication firms in Rivers State.

1.2 Research Question: The major research question asked was: What is the relationship between aggressiveness and exploration strategies of mobile communication firms in Rivers State?

1.3 Research Hypothesis: The research hypothesis was stated in the null form as.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between aggressiveness and exploration strategies of mobile communication firms in Rivers State.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Aggressive Strategy

This dimension of strategic orientation measures the organizations capacity to engage and apply organizational resources in executing aggressive strategies and the pursuit of increased market share as a means to achieving business unit and profitability. The aim of the firm is to possess higher market share ahead of competitors (Abiodun, 2009). This strategy takes the form of cost leadership (Wright *et al.*, 1992; Thompson and Strickland, 1999; Hitt *et al.* 2007; Chang *et al.* (2002), It is an explosion and expansion strategy which according to Wissema *et al.* (1980) involves product innovation (Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Miller, 1988), and al price and image differentiation (Mintzberg, 1988).

In many ways, aggressors respond to their chosen environments in a method known to be almost the opposite of the Defender. In one sense, the aggressor is exactly like the Defender and establishing an elevated amount of consistency among its solutions to the three problems of adaptation. Generally speaking, the aggressor enacts an environment that is more dynamic than the rest of others within the similar industry. Unlike the Defender, whose success comes primarily from efficiently serving a stable domain, the aggressor's prime capability exclusively involves finding and exploiting new product and market opportunities.

In defining its entrepreneurial problem as how to locate and develop product and market opportunities, the aggressor's domain is usually broad and in a continuous state of development. The systematic addition of novel products or markets, frequently combined with retrenchment inside other segments of the domain, gives the aggressor's products and markets an aura of fluidity uncharacteristic of the defender.

To locate new areas of opportunity, the aggressor must expand and uphold the capability to survey an extensive volume of environmental conditions, trends, and events. This type of organization invests heavily in persons and groups who scan the atmosphere for potential opportunities. Because these scanning activities are not restricted to the organization's current domain, aggressors are frequently the creators of transform in their relevant industries. Transformation is one of the most important tools accepted by the aggressor to gain an edge over competitors, so aggressor managers typically perceive more environmental transformation and doubt than managers of the defender.

Being much more concerned in serving its changing domain properly, the aggressor requires a good deal of elasticity in the use of its technology and administrative systems. Differently from the defender, the choice of products and markets by the aggressor is not restricted to only those that are found within the category of the organization's present technological capability, but aggressor's technology is contingent upon both the organization's present and future product mix. Therefore, the aggressors' overall adaptation problem is hinged on how to avoid long-term commitments to a single type of technological process, and the organization usually does so by creating multiple, prototypical technologies involving a low degree of normal route and mechanization.

2.2 Exploration

March's (1991) article presented in a seminar describes exploration as an intellectual skill used in the testing of a new idea and an alternative in creating something new (innovative alternatives). Slater and Narver (1995) defines this intellectual skill as a sign of organisational learning through questioning, extending the knowledge barrier, engaging in pro-activity and taking of risks. Exploration comprises of activities such as uncovering, concept testing, creative criticism and research and development. Creative criticism refers to the discarding of what has been previously learnt of various capabilities and the abolishment of current mental models of reference (March, 1991).

Exploration creates variety in experience through search, discovery, novelty, innovation, and thrives on experimentation. Where organisations have a tendency to master the things they repeatedly do successfully, they could be subjected to a competency trap. However, giving the different types of experiences that exploration allows, organisations could extend their competencies in such a way that they do not focus too heavily on only those capabilities or intellectual skills for which they are good at (Holmqvist, 2004). More recently (Auh & Menguc 2005) have asserted that exploration is much more concerned with revolutionary change. That is, change that requires the operation of any organisation to be carried out under new assumptions and paradigms.

In addition, (March, 1991) argues that the short term returns from exploration are difficult to quantify. The short term returns can be interpreted to be uncertain and distant. Furthermore, (March, 1991, p85) states that the difference in time and space between the period of learning and the period for the realisation of returns is generally greater in the case of exploration than in the case of exploitation as is the uncertainty. In addition, Auh and Menguc (2005,) agree with March's argument by stating that "exploration might be effective but due to its long term nature, it might lack a high degree of efficiency". This then implies that the concept of exploratory innovation can be described as radical innovations designed to meet the needs of emerging markets where there exists an opportunity to create new products or processes. The essence of this kind of innovation is that it can create new designs or markets and with sufficient variety, it could redefine these markets.

The creation of something new or explorative innovations result from the search for new organisational routines and the discovery of new approaches to technologies, businesses, processes or products (McGrath, 2000, p3). Exploratory inclinations for innovations are acknowledged are concerned with continuously pursuing new knowledge and moving away from existing knowledge and paradigms (Jansen et al. 2005). They are characterised by the desire for looking out for something new, differences, testing of an idea, being adaptable, and risk-taking (March, 1991). Over-all innovation is based on varying set of rules or principles as against incremental innovation which would usually create access to entire markets and meet the future needs of the markets.

2.3. Mobile communication Firms in Nigeria.

Enormous infrastructure challenges persist in Nigeria and other developing countries in a manner that severely disrupts economic growth and productivity, leading to poor quality of life in every ramification. To address the huge infrastructure deficits, sector reforms have been embraced in recent years as a remedial measure, given the observed success of similar initiatives in advanced nations (Okonji, 2013).

Two crucial components of these reforms are privatization and competition. The leading argument is that private sector expertise and profit motive will make private sector-run infrastructure industries more efficient than the state's. This is though, not likely the issue where competition does not follow privatization, especially at the time where there is weak regulatory oversight. This has resulted to viewing competition to be regarded as one of the most essential options of acceptable reforms that will produce the fruits of infrastructure development to developing nations (Okonji, 2013).

The Nigerian telecommunication industry has somewhat toed the pathway of improvement of the universal telecommunication industry – from state monopoly to liberalization, to weak competition, to growing competition and to growing service innovation. The record of the nation’s telecommunication industry dates back to 1886 when the first telegraphic submarine cable was laid by the British firm, Cable & Wireless Ltd. From this time up till sovereignty in 1960, Nigeria had 18,724 fixed telephone lines (Okonji, 2013). Then, the telecommunication industry was conquered by the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), a government-owned monopoly operator (Mawoli, 2009). NITEL’s services include the stipulation of fixed telephone, Telegraph (gentex), and Payphone etc. Its main objective was to harmonize the exterior and interior telecommunications services, rationalize investments in telecommunications development and provide easy access, efficient and affordable services.

Ndukwe (2003) notes that between 1987 and 1992, no remarkable improvement was recorded in the functioning of NITEL and consumer demands were largely unmet. This encouraged the Federal Government to embark on market oriented reforms by partially liberalizing telecommunication industry. Obviously, Liberalization inclination actually began in the year 1993, which was followed with the setting up of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) as enacted into law by Decree 75 of 1992.

2.4 Business Strategy

Business strategy elucidates how a firm differentiates itself from competitors concerning how it generates substantial revenues. It is seen to be a high-level plan undertaken by firms to achieve specific business objectives. In other words, strategies could only be successful when they lead to business growth, lead to a strong competitive position and financial performance of a firm. If the high-level strategy becomes disadvantageous, the firm has no choice than to either reverse the strategy or prepare to go out of business.

Fred R. David (2009) defined strategy as potential actions that require decisions by top level managers which involve large sums of an organizations resources. In other words, he maintains that it is the means of achieving long-term objectives. Thompson and Stickland (2003) asserts that strategy consists of the competitive efforts and business approaches that managers employ to please customers, compete successfully and achieve organizational objectives.

The business world is rapidly changing followed by sane rapid change in industries and firms than ever, especially in the telecommunication industry. Fred R. David (2009) believes that high-velocity change in telecommunication influences the firms to have the choice of whether to react, anticipate or lead the market as a result of its strategies. This scenario can be addressed by a choice of business strategy which involves choosing different set of activities, position to reduce best value by mastering the competitive environment. In the business world, the choice of strategy is an outcome of the focus on achieving the highest level of objectives.

Miles et al. (1978) defined strategy as a process that is going for the purpose of evaluating, questioning, verifying and redefining the interaction manner with the competitive environment. Fred R. David (2009) asserts that strategy is a master plan which is comprehensively formed to state how mission and objectives of an organization can be achieved. This according to him it means that this can be realized by maximizing competitive advantage and minimizing the disadvantages that could arise from competition.

There are also different types of strategies formulated in different levels of an organizations hierarchy which could be at the corporate level for the overall direction of company and management of business, the business level strategy for competitive or corporate and functional strategy for the maximization of resources and productivity (Wheelen & Hunger, 2010).

3.0 Methodology

This section comprises of research design, population and sampling procedure, data collection methods, measurement of study variables, test of validity and reliability, and the data analytical methods or techniques utilized in the analysis of the data generated from the target units of measurement for this study.

3.1 Research Design

In this study, a cross sectional survey design was adopted and data generated through self-administered structured questionnaire copies distributed personally to the target organizations of interest. This design is

chosen as a result of the nature and characteristics of the study, which primarily engages social phenomena concerned with human interactions and organizational activities.

3.2 Population

The population for this comprised of top level managers, middle level managers and supervisors within all the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) registered GSM mobile communication firms in Rivers State. A total of 162 (where top level managers = 4) middle level managers=37 and supervisory staff = 121) drawn from the regional offices of the four (4) mobile communication firms in Rivers State formed the population of the study. Presented in table 3.1, is the distribution of the population and the list of the four (4) mobile communication companies that met the criteria of the study.

Table 3.1 Population for the study

S/N	Firm	Top level managers Rivers State	Middle level Managers Rivers State	Supervisors Rivers State	Total
1	MTN	1	13	54	68
2	GLOBACOM	1	6	27	34
3	AIRTEL	1	8	33	42
4	9 MOBILE	1	10	7	18
	Total	4	37	121	162

Researcher's field survey (2018)

3.3 Sampling Technique

As a result of the relatively small size of the population, the sample procedure that was adopted is the non-probability sampling technique (i.e selective or judgmental sampling) which ensured that not all members of the population had equal chances of being selected.

3.4 Sample Size Determination

This study therefore utilized the Taro Yamane 1970 sampling formula in its decision on an appropriate size for representing the entire population. An error precision value of 0.05 was adopted in calculating the sample size given the adoption of a confidence interval of 95% (Baridam, 2001; Bryman & Bell, 2003). The Taro Yamane's Formula is shown as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = the sample size to be determined

N = the population of the study

e = Limit of the error acceptable for the study = 0.05

1 = constant

Table 3.2 Proportionate distribution of the sample across the firms

S/N	Firms	Top level managers Rivers State	Middle level managers Rivers State	Supervisors Rivers State	Total	Proportion Calculation	Proportion allocated
1	MTN	1	12	54	68	$\frac{nh = 68(115)}{162} = 48$	48
2	GLOBACOM	1	6	27	34	$\frac{nh = 34(115)}{162} = 24$	24
3	AIRTEL	1	8	33	42	$\frac{nh = 42(115)}{162} = 30$	30
4	9 MOBILE	1	10	7	18	$\frac{nh = 18(115)}{162} = 13$	13
	TOTAL	4	37	121	162		115

Source: Research Survey 2018

3.5 Method of Data Collection

These included the questionnaire and the personal interview methods. The questionnaire has the advantage of providing more valid data that can be easily quantified. Each questionnaire was structured and designed to elicit information from respondents.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

The scales for this study were pretested and validated. In addition, the research instrument was made subject to content and face validity.

However, we verified reliability outcomes through confirmatory test of internal consistency on the instrument with our sample using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient.

3.7 Operational Measures of the Variable. The four point Likert – type scale was used to measure a set of 5 indicators for each variable with each ranging between Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 4.

3.8 Data Collection and Analysis Technique:

The data which concerned the extent to which aggressiveness correlate with exploitation strategy was analysed using mean and standard deviation descriptive statistical tools.

4.0 Discussion of Findings.

Findings are consequences of data generated and presented in tables as shown below.

Table 4.1 Survey result

S/N	Firms	Distributed Questionnaire Copies	Retrieved Questionnaire copies	Percentage
1	MTN	48	46	40%
2	GLOBACOM	24	24	21%
3	AIRTEL	30	30	26%
4	9MOBILE	13	12	10%
	TOTAL	115	112	97%

Source: Research survey, 2018

Survey activities as presented in table 4.1, can be considered as substantially successful at a 97% retrieval rate. All retrieved copies were examined and considered as suitable for inclusion in the analysis of the study. All data were thereafter coded into the SPSS version 21. Soft-ware for analysis.

4.1.1 Demographic Section

Analysis in this section utilized simple percentage distributions and charts to illustrate frequencies.

The evidence revealed that a higher proportion of the study participants are male as compared to the proportion for female with a percentage difference of 42%, implying a high level of unequal distribution within the workforce for the telecommunication firms.

WORK EXPERIENCE

The distribution for the participants based on their length of work experience with particular mobile communication firm revealed that a majority of the participants have work experiences ranging between 10 – 15 years.

QUALIFICATION

From the distribution for the participants based on their qualifications, the results of the analysis revealed that on a generality, most of the participants only have first degree certifications, followed by post graduate degree holders and other forms of certifications .

MARKET POSITION

The distribution for the participants' views of the market positions of their organizations revealed that most of the participants believed their organizations have dominant market positions followed by the frequency for those who view their market positions as being relatively substantial and finally the least frequency for participants who view their market positions as being good enough. The data distribution revealed MTN as having a higher proportion of participants affirming dominant positions.

Table 4.2. Distribution for the indicators of aggressive strategic orientation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Aggressive1	112	2.8929	.94304	-.701	.228	.304	.453
Aggressive2	112	2.7679	.78249	-.713	.228	1.003	.453
Aggressive3	112	2.8482	.98831	-.601	.228	-.356	.453
Aggressive4	112	2.9464	.76922	-.512	.228	1.465	.453
Aggressive5	112	2.7143	1.01723	.027	.228	-.005	.453
Valid N (listwise)	112						

Source: Research survey, 2018.

Illustrated in table 4.3 above is the distribution for aggressive strategic orientation, the first dimension of strategic orientation. The dimension is measured using five items with each indicating significant manifestations based on their mean values. The first (aggressive1 and 2 have significant mean values of ($x_1 = 2.8929$ and $x_2 = 2.7679$) respectfully which implied aggressiveness in terms of market positioning and market share.

Items 3, 4 and 5 have their corresponding mean values of ($x_3 = 2.8482$; $x_4 = 2.9464$ and $x_5 = 2.7143$). This affirmation is based on the $x > 2.5$ base for assessing significant manifestations of the variables. As such, given the evidence presented, it is in the opinion of the participants that their organizations are keen on dominance and often engage in price slashes which are projected towards capturing market segments and clients of their competitors.

Table 4.3. Distribution for the measures of exploration

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Exploration1	112	2.9643	.84819	-.473	.228	.939	.453
Exploration2	112	3.1071	1.06844	-.262	.228	-.265	.453
Exploration3	112	2.9554	.92404	-.050	.228	.323	.453
Exploration4	112	2.8750	.91164	-.111	.228	.176	.453
Exploration5	112	3.0268	.86431	-.137	.228	.184	.453
Valid N (listwise)	112						

Source: Research survey, 2018

Illustrated in table 4.2 is the distribution for exploration which is the first measure of organizational ambidexterity. The evidence from the analysis depicts the indicators of the variable as being substantially manifested by the examined target mobile communication firms of the study. The results indicate that majority of the participants of the study affirm to their experiences when it comes to the explorative capacity of their organizations. This is as the items 1 and 2 which reflect the organizations drive for new technology are both observed to have significant mean coefficients ($x_1 = 2.9643$; $x_2 = 3.1071$) reflecting strong indications of the organizations pursuit for advantages through new technology.

The evidence also reveals that items 3, 4 and 5 have significant levels of manifestations based on their mean coefficients ($x_3 = 2.9554$; $x_4 = 2.8750$; $x_5 = 3.0268$).

Test of Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between aggressiveness and exploration

Table 4.4 Test for hypotheses

		Aggressive	Exploration	Exploitation
Aggressive	Pearson Correlation		1	.722**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N		112	112
Exploration	Pearson Correlation	.722**		1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	112		112

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Sources: Research survey, 2017

Aggressiveness and exploration: The first hypothesis which assessed the relationship between aggressiveness and exploration revealed that there is a significant relationship between the variables given the correlation (R) coefficient of $R = .722$ where $P = 0.000$ ($P < 0.05$). The results present aggressiveness as being a substantial predictor of exploration. The evidence also suggested that aggressiveness contributes to enhancing the manifestations of exploration. As such, both variables can be considered as having a significant relationship. Hence, the null hypothetical statement is on the basis of the evidence presented rejected.

5.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Business around the world operates in complex and dynamic environments. Mobile communication firms in Rivers State fall within one of the organizations that operate in retailing, commercial and corporate levels. With the enormous amount of competition in Rivers State, all the mobile communication firms strive towards gaining a greater percentage and dominant of the market.

Exploration therefore, is a strategy used by firms to experiment new and innovative capabilities. In other words, it creates variety in experience through search, discovery and innovation which enables them to meet the needs of the emerging markets. As a consequence, it is the mechanism that drives aggressive strategy which is seen as engaging in high risk activities for change and innovation. In other words, adoption of aggressive strategy facilitates improvement to the organizations exploration strategy towards gaining larger market share.

Aggressive strategy measures an organization's capacity to engage and apply organizational resources in executing strategies in pursuit of increased market share. In many ways, aggressors respond to their chosen environments in a manner that is almost the opposite of the defender by maintaining a reputation as an innovator in product and market development. To locate new areas of opportunity, the aggressor must develop and maintain the capacity to survey a wide range of environmental conditions, trends and events.

Based on the relationship between aggressiveness and exploration strategy outcomes of the study, it was recommended as follows;

1. Mobile communication firms in Rivers State should adapt aggressive strategies as means of enhancing exploration.
2. Use the strategies as the most suited for Nigerian telecommunication industry.
3. Aggressive strategy should be based on sound research and understanding of the market trend.

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