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SUPPLIER CUSTOMER COOPERATION (SCC) AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF LOGISTICS FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study centered on supplier-customer cooperation (SCC) and marketing performance of logistics firms in Rivers State. The study adopted the correlational research design. The study population consisted of all eighty-two registered logistics firms in Rivers State. A sample of ten of the registered logistics was purposively selected for the study and respondents of the selected firms covered under the following categories: marketing managers, finance managers, information technology managers, procurement managers and R & D managers. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled supplier- customer cooperation and marketing performance. The validity of the instrument was determined through face and content analysis, and the reliability was via the Cronbach Apha method. The result of the reliability test shows that all the study variables have alpha coefficient values that are greater than 0.70, meaning that the instrument was reliable. Mean was used to analyze the responses received from the questionnaire items. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the hypotheses. The study found and held that trust and information sharing significantly influenced the sales growth and market shares trajectory of logistics firms in Rivers State. In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations among others are made: Logistics firms should invest in building and maintaining trust through transparent communication, honoring agreements, and consistently meeting customer and partners' expectations. The firms should establish structured channels for timely and accurate information exchange both within the firm and with external stakeholders to foster innovation and responsiveness.

Keywords: Supplier-Customer, Cooperation, Marketing Performance, Trust, Information Sharing

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A logistics firm needs to develop effective coordination between the suppliers and the customers, in order to maximise the potential for converting competitive advantage into profitability. For example, strategically coordinating the rate of order fulfillment to match actual demand is only successful from the customer's point of view, if it results in satisfying a customer's delivery date and lowers logistics costs. The question is how to achieve the best fit among the supply chain partners, so that the tasks of different players are completed in a manner consistent with the mutual goal, because supply chain performance depends on how well all members work together and not on how well each member performs separately.

The emergence of supply chain management was the effort of companies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, seeking to deliver the best value to the ultimate consumer whilst remaining competitive. (Ritchie & Brindley, 2000). The activities includes; supply and demand planning, material preparation, production and product planning, product service, maintenance and inventory control, distribution, delivery and customer services. (Seyedi, Moosavi, & Heidari, 2009). To ensure efficient process in supply chain management, companies started to focus on establishing strong relationship with one another, especially between customers and suppliers and it was termed as customer supplier relationship (Matsoso & Benedict, 2014). The introduction of Supplier-

Customer Cooperation (SCC) was seen as vital in improving the performance of supply chain management and enhancement of speedy delivery of goods and services to their final destination (Shoghari & Abdallah, 2016). Not only that, SCC is found to easy price and delivery schedules negotiations, smooth operation in the production and so assists with meeting targeted dates on supply to the end customer (Singh 2011). Furthermore, maintaining a close relationship encourages lean production in a 'Just in Time' (JIT) system because there is an advantage for the negotiated delivery schedules (Sagar 2012). The importance SCC didn't end there, Shin et al.,(2000) postulated that, SCC is critical success factor of manufacturing firms performance and survival, Chandra and Kumar, (2009) indicated that, it is vital to institute SCC in order to achieve a successful supply chain, Day et al., (2013) found CSR enhances communication and reduces the level of mistrust among parties involved, which may leverage performance on delivery services that adhere to minimum lead time and Liao et al., (2010) held that SCC have a strong and significant impact on cost, quality, time, responsiveness and satisfaction of the customer in the chain.

A supplier-customer relationship is a complex form of organization involving both learning and innovation to jointly create value, but also self-interest bargaining to claim value being created (Ghosh & John, 1999; Subramani, 2004). Due to the fact that global competition has increased buyers' interest in using market mechanism to govern suppliers, and that buyer-supplier relationships are often asymmetric with the power dependence position favoring the large industrial customer, there is a reason to be concerned for the profitability and survival of smaller suppliers (Gomes-Casseres, 1997; Forrest, 1990). However, prior studies have shown relatively little interest in suppliers' performance (and especially that of small and medium sized suppliers) within value systems, calling for supplier-customer cooperation. No doubt, SCC is seen to be important in different perspectives it is not easy to be achieved if there is no trust between parties in the supply chain (Day et al., 2013). Moreover, trust is not the only key element in building strong and long-lasting SCC, other key dimensions include the level of conformity, communication, commitment and cooperation (Hoof & Thiell., 2014; Shoghari & Abdallah, 2016; Shahram et al., 2012; Seyedi, Moosavi & Heidari, 2009; Maboodi et al., 2010; Vazifedoost & Tehrani, 2008; Fynes, Voss & Burca, 2005). Though logistics firm are found to put much effort and resources in ensuring strong and long-lasting SCR, still the main focus managers of logistic firms should make sure they increase is customer satisfaction, patronage, and profitability (Abbasi, & Torkamani, 2016). Given customer is central to all organization's activities (Gilaniniaet al., 2016), senior management know well that their success in achieving the overall goals of the organizations is customer satisfaction (Seyedi, Moosavi, & Heidari, 2009). As Lagat, Koech, & Kemboi, (2016) insisted that, customers are important stakeholders in organizations and their satisfaction is a priority to management and in today's business environment organizations are obliged to render more services in addition to their offers to exceed customer's expectations.

Statement of the Problem

One of the primary challenges confronting logistics firms in Rivers State is the way to improve their supplier –customer cooperation practices and marketing overall performance as a way to grow and live on. An eager remark indicates that maximum of the logistics firms inside the country are finding it difficult to compete favorably in the market that is proof from the low call for their products ensuing in low sales and decrease marketplace percentage. An excellent range of logistics firms have ceased from operations due to their incapacity to growth, income and compete favorably inside the marketplace. The inability of these firms to compete favorably in the marketplace could be linked to their incapacity to practice supplier-customer cooperation.

Interestingly, Asil, (2005) identified some major glitches in logistics firms like lack of adequate entrepreneurial skills, poor management practices, low return on investment, high rate of enterprise mortality, overbearing business environment, constrained market access, low customer patronages, bureaucracy, no access to relevant information among others. Nevertheless, there are limited studies on CRM process and firm performance in under-developed economies (Ngambi & Ndifor, 2015). This study is therefore set to investigate supplier customer cooperation (SCC) and marketing performance of logistics firms in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

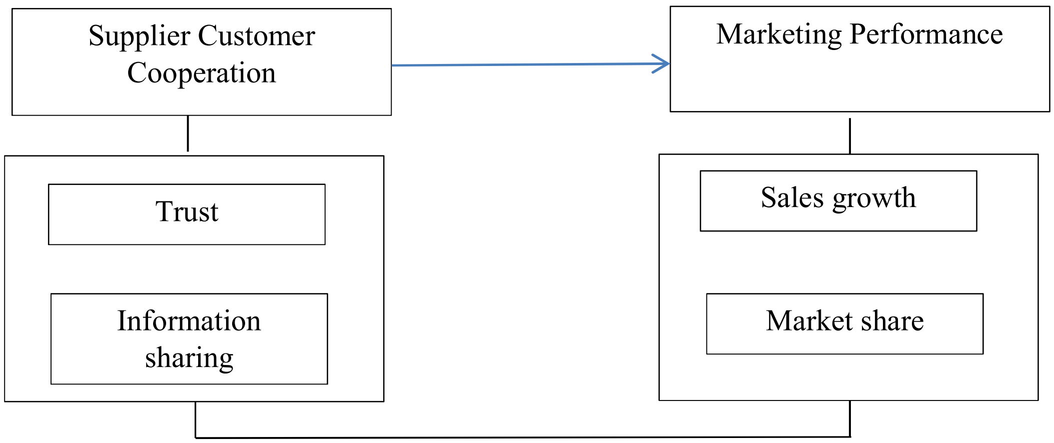

Fig.1.1: Conceptual framework of supplier customer cooperation (SCC) and marketing performance of logistics firms in Rivers State.
Sources: Amoako-Gyampah, K., Boakye, K. G., Adaku, E., & Famiyeh, S. (2019)

Aim and Objectives of the Study
The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between supplier-customer cooperation (SCC) and marketing performance of logistics firms in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:
1. determine the relationship between trust and sales growth of logistics firms in Rivers State
2. ascertain the relationship between information sharing and market share growth of logistics firms in Rivers State;

Research Questions
Attempts were made to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the relationship between trust and sales growth of logistics firms in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between information share and market share of logistics firms in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses
The following formulated hypotheses guided the study:
Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between trust and sales growth of logistics firms in Rivers State.
Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between information sharing and market share of logistics firms in Rivers State.

Literature Review
The review covers the conceptual, theoretical and empirical reviews.
Conceptual Review
Concept of Supplier –Customer Cooperation (SCC)
Supplier-customer cooperation (SCC) is a management approach that manages all interactions between a company (supplier) and its customer (Kroenke, 2012). Suppliers in this context refer to any organization that sells something to the company. The primary goal of supplier relationship management is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of inter-organizational processes, with the delivery of superior value to customers taking precedence. Previously, the customer was the

primary focus of organizations, but the supplier has grown in importance with the global sourcing of non-core operations. Suppliers handled adversarial, with transactional techniques predominating. Although, the growth of information communication systems, total quality management, and industrial restructuring shift buyer behaviour from transactional to more cooperative strategies (Sheth & Sharma, 1997). Tight collaboration with suppliers produces more perks than opportunism for one party. Diplomatic suppliers in the twenty-first millennium are more reliant on their resource base and technologies. Firms depend on suppliers to lower costs, increase quality, and build innovative products and processes faster than competitors (Webb, 2017). They also add value to a company by providing access to technology, markets, and information (Chen, 2019). All of this has compelled firms to handle suppliers strategically and value to customers.

By value co-creation, supplier-customer partnerships have the power to promote mutual profitability (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Enz & Lambert, 2012). Managers must do this by establishing long-term strategic relationships with suppliers and customers by proactive supplier-customer relationship management. Supplier relationship management (SRM) focuses on the preparation, execution, development, and tracking of a company's existing and future supplier relationships (Akamp & Müller, 2013). Arguably, creating a relationship with the best suppliers can facilitate the timely delivery of products and services and improve product quality. Links between operations and suppliers have been shown to improve firm efficiency (Swink et al., 2007; Singh & Power, 2009; Flynn et al., 2010) and the potential to co-create value (Enz & Lambert, 2012). According to research, supplier partnership management has become a challenge (Muhia & Afande, 2015), and company maturity is limited (Klemettinen, 2018). Several scholars (e.g. Gatobu & Moronge, 2018; Njagi & Shalle, 2016; Kähkönen & Lintukangas, 2012) have called for further research on supplier relationship management in different contexts. Customer relationship management (CRM), on the other hand, is concerned with the direct relationship between consumers and advertisers, as well as the retention of new customers and the development of long-term partnerships with them (Sanzo & Vasquez, 2011). The opportunity for customer relationship management has arisen as a result of the changing market climate (Soltani & Navimipour, 2016). Customer relationship management (CRM) aims to boost customer loyalty by providing goods and services that match or surpass their expectations. CRM has been shown to have an effect on corporate success (Day & Van den Bulte, 2002; Reinartz, Krafft, & Hoyer, 2004), business performance (Palmatier, et al, 2006), and consumer performance (Day & Van den Bulte, 2002). (E.g. Mithas, Krishnan &Fornell, 2005).

Dimension of Supplier-Customer Cooperation

Trust: Trust is an abstract concept that is hard to define because of the sheer number of factors involved in its complexity: vulnerability (Chow, et al., 2012) cognition, emotions, behaviors (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), integrity, competence (Pinto et al., 2009), specific asset investments, behavioral uncertainty, reputation, perceived conflict (Kwon & Suh, 2004), risk, and interdependence (Rousseau, et al., 1998), have all been mentioned along with many others. The high number of possible interrelations between these factors has force researchers to simplify and make efforts to describe trust. We can find many typologies of trust based on cognitive and emotional characteristics (McKnight & Chervany, 2001; Chow et al., 2012) or on the strategy and economics behind it (Dyer & Singh, 1998). Trust then, as a social concept, embedded in how people interact and behave and unlike psychology theorists suggest its conceptuality is better defined when looked under the people's lens instead of characteristics of the self-mind characterized by a single person's previous experience, bounded rationality, etc. Trust is defined as a "social platform" which is composed by the mix of two main elements; the emotional and the cognitive part. The contribution level of each one and the external environment will generate behavioral trust; the actions or physical representation of trust actually has an impact in others. Is this social platform composed of emotional, cognitive and behavioral trust from which people builds intricate and complex networks that sustain modern societies (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Trust's effectiveness as a social glue that comes from its main function; Society's structures are complex and trust is a complexity reducer. Trying to calculate all of the probabilities of decision-making based only in rational efforts would be nearly impossible as there are an infinite number of possible outcomes when it comes to relationships. Social structures in order to function properly have to rely on a predictable, consistent, behavior from its participants and trust provides this function (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Mcknight & Chervany, 2001; Pollitt, 2002). Under profit driven organizations like businesses, trust provides the same capabilities as demonstrated by the project management literature which claims that for high complexity situations, business leaders should employ a transformational perspective (based on trust, reciprocity, charisma) instead of a transactional approach (rewards) which is better aimed for simple and repetitive tasks (Turner & Müller, 2005). Trust has been also analyzed as a tool capable of generating rents and providing competitive advantage. Under agency theory and transaction cost theory, for example, trust brings benefits to a firm as it lowers the perception of opportunism hence lowering the costs of monitoring and enforcing relationship obligations (Pinto et al., 2009; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Malhotra & Murnighan, 2002). Pollitt (2002) manages trust as one of the main components of the term "social capital"; an intangible asset that if used correctly facilitate transaction economics in society and business equally. Trust then, is an important concept at the network business level where firms who choose to collaborate and join efforts have to necessarily work with each other (De Wit & Meyer, 2010). Because trust is a social phenomenon, embedded in the people's interactions and carried on through the different social structures, it is fair to say that trust at the supply network level preserves the same effects than at other levels of organization. The mechanisms and concepts to build trust, maintain it, and exploit it are fundamentally the same between two single persons as it is between two different companies whether they are collaborating as separate entities or in a supplier-customer relationship. Indeed, trustworthy relationships, no matter at which level, share the similar benefits and problems but depending on external factors the perspectives of trust and its components varies. For example in their work Chow et al. (2012) focused on mechanisms that enhance cooperation in the construction industry. Their empirical data shows that networking and calculativeness - "how a trustor secures the anticipated outcome and impose negotiated rules to the trustee" (Chow et al., 2012), are effective mechanisms that can create trust which shows that in this industry, in Hong Kong, the emotional part is more important than the cognitive part as networking, knowing people and integrating them to one's environment, came highly rated. Pinto et al. (2009) also found that, inside this same industry, the perception of the importance of trust varies from owner to contractor; the first value more integrity and competence related trust, the latter considers only integrity as important for a satisfactory relationship.

Information Sharing: The worth of germane information is capitalized on only when dispersed adequately, information flow is a vital aspect of supply chain management; it is one of the major supply chain "flows" (Lambert, Cooper & Pagh 1998) as cited in (Poi & Okwandu, 2021). According to Savolainen, (2017), information sharing is an activity through which thoughts, views, truths and documents are moved from an individual (or group) to others. Moreover, Poi & Okwandu, (2021) found that information sharing does not necessitate customer satisfaction but boosts customer loyalty, because for it to directly influence customer satisfaction, timely information must be shared and managed before sales, during sales and after sales. Information sharing involves activities of dispensing valuable information among individuals, and structures in an open environment. Due to the volatile nature of today's business environment, Khaliunaa & Ramzani, (2019) indicate that information sharing between supply chain firms is done at operational, tactical, and strategic levels. In supply chain relationships, business-based data between supply chain partners are shared through software technologies such as electronic data interchange (EDI) or Enterprise resource planning (ERP), Vendor Managed Inventory (VMI), Collaborative Planning, Forecasting, and Replenishment (CPFR), Continuous Replenishment Program (CRP), and sharing of Point-of-Sale (POS) demand information. Omar, Ramayah, May-Chuin, Sang & Siron, (2010) opined that information sharing ought to consider issues like; "what exactly to share", "whom to share", "how to share", and "when to share" in order to reduce cost of sharing, information deficit or surplus and enhance the overall supply chain performance. According to the United States of America Department of Homeland Security (DHS), information sharing is a vital resource for critical infrastructure security and resilience (Lee, 2022). It follows that organizations need to strike the required balance of protecting and sharing sensitive information because sharing too much information can become detrimental to both customers and organizations. The inability to create a benign and effective information-sharing system is counterproductive to parties involved.

Concept of Marketing Performance

Marketing performance is a famous idea in marketing literature. The popularity of this idea stems from the rapid adjustments in client flavor and choice, market structure, in addition to the intense competition within the production enterprise which has pressured entrepreneurs to do things in an extraordinarily new way to improve their overall performance. Advertising and marketing overall performance refers to how nicely a firm is doing in the marketplace against its competition (Kiama & Kagiri, 2016). It is by far the potential of an employer to dominate the market, growth client patronage and retention and have advantage performance part over its competitors in the marketplace. This performance edge implies imparting services or products which are advanced to what competitors offer to the market (Lopez-Fernandez, 2019). Roman et al (2012) described marketing performance as the capacity of an organization to produce services or products that its customers value more than those supplied by way of its competitors inside the same industry. D'Ippolito (2014) described marketing performance as the ability of an enterprise to capture huge part of the marketplace and serve clients greater successfully than their competitors do.

Marketing performance in a nutshell is the functionality of an employer to gain overall performance benefit over their competitors inside the equal enterprise (Gecheo et al, 2016). Gaining a performance advantage entails growing a completely unique characteristic for the product in order that the market can perceive the business enterprise's product as being particular and advanced to different corporations presenting comparable merchandise (M'kuma, 2015). Improving marketing performance requires a company to create superior cost that customers cannot discover some other place. Somuyiwa and Mcilt (2012) said that an organization can improve its performance through growing value or merchandise which might be superior to their competitors' offerings. This consists of improving the nice of its product and attaching a decrease fee to it. An organization's performance results from presenting greater cost at a decrease rate (Antonova, 2014). Kireru et al (2016) argued that a company that is determined to improve its advertising performance creates a position in which its competitors can't effortlessly imitate. Such organisation creates something that is difficult to find some other place, something of advanced price and at a lower cost. This enables it establish a shielding role over its competitors in the equal industry. A company can improve its advertising performance by diversifying and differentiating its merchandise from competitors' offerings. This includes developing an impossible to resist patron fee which could assist to advantage a superior gain over its opponents (Roman et al, 2012). A company that has an advanced gain in its industry for a long time frame is stated to be taking part in a performance gain over its competitors (M'kuma, 2015). Somuyiwa and Mcilt (2012) stated that a company can gain a performance advantage in its industry by embracing innovation considering the reality that the business environment is dynamic occasioned with the aid of the fast exchange and development throughout all sectors. No doubt, the quality manner for a company to enhance its performance is to create competitive strategies which need to be consistent with the tendencies and development in its enterprise and the firm ought to also not forget its sources as well as its talents when selecting a performance approach to undertake (Antonova, 2014). A firm's potential to produce product in specific way which its opponents cannot imitate now assist to construct a performance advantage (Gecheo et al, 2016).

Measures of Marketing Performance

Sales Growth

Sales growth may be defined as a growth in the quantity of goods bought through an agency over a period of time (Bertuzzi, 2015). Income boom may be decided by using comparing the quantity of sales made with the aid of an organization inside the gift 12 months with the quantity of income made on the previous year. As an instance, a business enterprise is said to have skilled income growth if its income have been #4 million in 2019 and #5 million in 2020. The additional amount of #1 million in 2020 is recorded because the income boom. Income growth could also be expressed as a percent increase in sales over a time frame (Roberge, 2014). This is frequently known as the increase fee of income. The usage of our initial instance, the percentage increase in sales in 2020 is 20%. Income growth allows booming the profit margin of a business enterprise. As Reibstein et al (2006) stated an increase in sales way a corresponding growth in sales for the corporation and this brought about increase in shareholders' dividend. Sales increase is fundamental indicator of market overall performance. It indicates that the company is doing properly in the marketplace (Roberge, 2014). Cross (2012) said that income increase is an important overall performance component because it demonstrates to buyers that the agency is doing well as against its competitors. while an investor study the financial announcement of a company, he attempt to listen extra on the income parent to recognize whether or not the organization's income is growing continuously from 12 months to years. The reason for this is that the investor might determine how well the employer is doing in the marketplace mainly against its competition. If the investor discovers that the income of the organization is developing continuously from year to year, he or she may additionally determine to buy its proportion and make earnings via dividend.

Many buyers connect greater importance to income increase when comparing the economic statements of agencies for funding selection. This is based on the fact that income increase signifies a firm's economic balance and commercial enterprise increase (Schenket al, 2015). Schenket al, (2015) stated that groups need to have a steady sales growth price due to the fact it'd allow them to manipulate the growth of the commercial enterprise. Consistent with him, an organization wouldn't exist for lengthy if its sales drop consistently from year to year. It will require numerous cash to restore the business whilst sales drop continually; subsequently there may be need for companies to manage their sales boom rate correctly. An enterprise that is searching out investors desires to provide them the self-belief that the company is developing and that its sales parent do now not fall outdoor its growth metrics. The business enterprise's income growth has to additionally look profitable. It is far of no need selling extra merchandise and losing money on every item bought. An organization that makes greater income on a daily basis and preserve to lose cash on each object offered will now not closing for long. The corporation will handiest be round for the length that it has cash to cover the loss (Reibstein et al, 2006).

Market Share Growth

Market share percentage can be described as the part of a market captured by means of a corporation (Reibstein et al, 2006). It represents the proportion of the market that is served via a business enterprise at a specific time frame (Antonova, 2014). A corporation's marketplace percentage may be ascertained by means of calculating the income made by means of the company at a given length and divided by the entire income of the industry over the equal length. The result that is expressed in percent permits the agency to understand how clients value its products in relation to competitors' services. For example, if an agency like Toyota sold #200 million really worth of vehicles in Nigeria for the year 2024, and the overall motors bought in Nigeria become #400 million on the identical period, Toyota's Nigeria market percentage for motors would be 50%.

Increasing market share is the most essential purpose for businesses because it has a direct impact on sales (Amelia, 2017). Commonly, market share proportion is frequently taken into consideration as an essential asset for competing corporations as it facilitates to boom sales and enhance business increase. However, an employer that reviews a decline in market percentage could have a severe hassle on the lengthy-run. Armstrong & Greene (2007) said that groups whose market proportion is under a positive degree will no longer be profitable and may cease from operation every time quickly. Many traders who intend to shop for the percentage of a company use the business enterprise's marketplace proportion index to make selection. They cautiously study the price of increase and reduce of the marketplace proportion from one period to the alternative because it indicates the relative performance of the enterprise's products inside the marketplace. If the market share of the employer is growing progressively, it suggests that the business enterprise's revenue is growing on the equal price as its market proportion. Amelia (2017) stated that an enterprise whose marketplace share is growing from year to year grows its revenue faster than its opponents within the identical enterprise. Whilst the marketplace share of an agency will increase from year to year, it enables the employer to extend its operation and growth earnings. Nigerian corporations are decided to grow their marketplace proportion with the aid of drawing the attention of the public to their merchandise through advertising, reducing charges and granting discounts. Market share is a key indicator of a firm's overall performance i.e. how nicely a firm is doing against its competitors. It is the percentage of a market (defined in terms of either units or revenue) accounted for by a specific entity. It is a company's percentage of sales in a particular industry. Both increases and decreases may affect profits, so managers typically adjust operations and marketing strategies to increase or decrease it as needed. People also look at this figure before they invest in a company, since it can indicate a business's competitiveness. When discussing this topic, it's important to remember that a share market is something different: it's the exchange of companies' stocks. Victor (2009) maintained that market share represents the percentage of an industry or market's total sales that is earned by a particular company over a specified time period. Market share is calculated by taking the company's sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the industry over the same period. This metric is used to give a general idea of the size of a company in relation to its market and its competitors.

Market share can be calculated either in terms of the money earned from sales or the number of units sold. The basic way of calculating this percentage is just revenue or units sold divided by that of the total market: for instance, if a computer store sold one out of every four computers, it would have a 25% market share. Real-life calculations are a little more difficult though, since the numbers can change drastically based on how a business defines its market. Adjusting for inflation and the way that sales or units are counted has an impact as well. For instance, a company could get a completely different percentage if it considered itself as compared to a global or local market, or if it calculated orders fulfilled rather than orders made. Likewise, even if a company had a very large share, it may not be as profitable as it initially seems if it has to pay very high taxes or labour costs. Since there are so many factors to consider, managers usually use a combined calculation of units and revenue and use these figures as only one small part of their in-house statistics, and several previous studies have linked market share with profitability McGahan and Porter (1997). O'Regan (2002) opined that market share is a company's sales in relation to total industry sales for a certain period. Pearce and Robinson (2003) also use the same definition that market share is sales relative to those of other competitors in the market. Market share is usually used to express competitive position. It is also generally accepted that increased market share can be equated with success whereas decrease market share is a manifestation of unfavourable actions by firms and usually equated with failure.

Relationship between Supplier-Customer Cooperation and Marketing Performance
Organisations are striving to create long-term strategic partnerships with innovative suppliers and cooperate with them in providing solutions and responding to changing business needs. Strategic supplier relationship management creates value to organisations through creativity among suppliers

(Tarafdar & Qrunfleh, 2013). Supplier relationship management enables firms to optimize their supply base to achieve competitive advantage (Schuh et al., 2014). Indeed, strategic partnerships with suppliers can enable firms to develop new and efficient products and enhance their performance. Arguably, firms can reduce costs create new products and value by optimising long-term collaboration with key suppliers. Researchers have reported that suppliers play a major role in driving firms' operational performance (e.g., Wagner & Krause, 2009; Modi & Mabert, 2007). Tangus et al. (2015) found that supplier relationship management activities were linked to manufacturing company success in Kenya. Supplier partnership management affects procurement efficiency in fast-moving consumer goods manufacturing companies (Gatobu & Moronge, 2018). According to their report, strong supplier coordination frees up managerial time, lowers job costs, and increases organisational stability. Al-Abdallah et al. (2014) investigated the impact of supplier relationship management activities on competitive success in Japan, Korea, the United States, and Italy. They observed that firms cannot rely only on their internal resources and capabilities but must strategically manage the relationship with their suppliers to achieve competitive performance. Krause, Handfield, and Tyler (2007) found that firms' loyalty to long-term partnerships with main suppliers, common priorities and principles with suppliers, and participation in supplier growth programmes have a major impact on purchasing company competitive success in the US automotive and electronics industries.

Theoretical Review

Customer Service Theory

The theory of customer service is based on identifying and satisfying customers' needs and exceeding their expectations. A company must be totally committed to delivering consistently high standards of service to gain and retain customer loyalty. Everyone from top management to down must be tuned into what the customer wants. Creating a customer service culture within a company can help build success. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are inextricably linked to the quality of customer service and, ultimately, to the company's profitability (Mbuthia & Rotich, 2014). Key assumptions of the theory are; build a customer service culture, know your customers, set customer expectations and communication (Mbuthia & Rotich, 2014; Dorling, 2015). In connection to this study, this theory insists on investing on best possible means to satisfy customers. The one best way is to invest in SCC as through partnering with other supply chain parties, the synergy effect can prevail which leads to companies to have prompt delivery, quality, low product costs and they can serve the customers at low costs.

Empirical Review

Koh, et al. (2007) examined the impact of supply chain management practices on performance of SMEs. The study adopted a variance-based structural equation modeling approach; partial least squares method was used to test its hypotheses. Data for the study were collected from a sample of two hundred and three (203) manufacturing (SMEs) operating in fabricated metal products and general-purpose machinery within the city of Istanbul in Turkey. The results indicate that both factors of strategic collaboration and lean practices (SCLP) and outsourcing and multi- suppliers (OMS), do not have a significant and direct impact on supply chain management- related organizational performance. Also, as the direct relationship between the two performance-constructs was found significant, it indicates that (SCM) practices might directly influence operational performance of (SMEs).

Nsikan, Okon, Sylvester & Uduak, (2019) examined supply chain management practices and hospital operational efficiency: The Nigerian example. The study adopted a survey design on a population of five hundred and eighty-four (584) healthcare supply chain executives. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain primary data which were analyzed quantitatively. The study found that operational efficiency significantly and positively influenced strategic supplier partnership, supplier selection decision, and integration of information communication technologies among supply chain partners. It concluded that exchange of timely inventory and demand data along the supply chain network can enhance supply operations efficiently.

Sukati, Sanyal & Awaain, (2020) investigated supply chain management practices and organizational performance: An investigation from service industry. The purpose of the study was to assess how (SCM) is related to the performance of business organizations in the tourism service industry. A questionnaire was used for data collection which was administered to a total sample of eighty-five (85) managers in hospitality organizations (hotel, restaurant and transportation companies). The study found that strategic supplier partnership and organizational performance was positively and significantly related, customer relationship management can significantly impact on organizational performance, information sharing is significantly related to organizational performance, information technology can significantly impact on organizational performance and finally there was a significant relationship between internal operations and organizational performance.

Alahmad, (2021) studied the relationship between supply chain management practices and supply chain performance in Saudi Arabian firms. An empirical study was conducted on a sample of one hundred and ninety-six (196) firms. Data were collected from the supply chain managers and those in top management in different industries in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In addition to sequences of interviews conducted with managers of the supply chains, a theoretical model was developed depicting the relationship between supply chain management practices (SCMPs) and supply chain performance (SC performance). The model was also tested using multiple regression analysis. The research concluded that supply chain management practices (SCMPs), including supply chain planning (SC planning), level of information sharing (IS), customer relationship management (CRM), and supplier relationship management (SRM) are all positively related to supply chain performance.

Burca and Fynes, (2017) did a study on the impact of buyer supplier relationship on quality practices and quality performance in Ireland. The study went on comprehensive reviews of CSR and quality management, later the study developed a theoretical model that connected CSR and quality management, with a central proposition of the intensity of the connection between buyer and supplier is a key paramount variable between quality performance and quality practices. The variables incorporated on the side of quality practices and quality performance includes costs, delivery time, quality, business performance and customer satisfaction. Data was collected from 200 electronic suppliers and was analysed by using regression analysis. The results indicated that, CSR has significant influence on quality performance and quality practices like customer satisfaction. The study had contribution from theoretical perspective and policy perspective.

Gilaninia, et al., (2016) conducted a study in Iran on the impact of supply chain dimensions on customer satisfaction. The study employed field research method and data was collected from suppliers and from customers of supply chain by using structured questionnaire. The results of the study indicated that communication has positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Later the study revealed, supply chain management to have direct, positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Otchere, Annan and Quansah, (2018) did a study to examine the implementation and challenges facing supply chain integration in Ghana cocoa industry. The study opted for deductive approach and interview administered and self-administered questionnaire were used to collect data from the farmers. The results revealed that, the supply chain is not functioning effectively, as there were not clearly communication, collaboration and commitment among parties in the chain. It was suggested that, to ensure effective functioning of supply chain parties have to engage in close relationship through communication, trust and commitment of the parties which will later ensure satisfaction to the final consumer.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the correlational research design. The correlational research design was considered appropriate because the researchers seek to understand the kind of relationship that exists between supplier–customer cooperation and marketing performance of logistics firms in Port Harcourt. The study population consisted of all the eighty-two registered logistics firms in Rivers State. A sample of ten of the registered logistics was purposively selected for the study and managers of the selected firms covered under the following categories: marketing managers, finance managers, information technology managers, procurement managers and R & D managers. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "supplier- customer cooperation. The validity of the instrument was determined through face and content analysis, and the reliability was determined using the Cronbach Apha method. The result of the reliability test shows that all the study variables have alpha coefficient values that are greater than 0.70, meaning that the instrument was reliable.

Methods of Data Analysis
Mean was used to analyze the responses received to the questionnaire items addressing the study variables (i.e. univariate analysis). A criterion mean of 2.50 was set for any item to be accepted. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to test the relationship between the two variables in each of the hypothesis (i.e. the bivariate analysis). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient is designated by r and is used to measure the strength of a linear relationship between two variables. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r) was computed with the aid of SPSS version 23.0.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data Analysis (Pearson Correlation Results)

Variable Pair	Pearson r	p-value	Relationship
Trust & Sales Growth	0.945	0.000	Very Strong Positive
Info Sharing & Market Share Growth	0.905	0.000	Very Strong Positive

Data Interpretation

S/N	Research Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value	Strength of Relationship	Nature of Relationship
1	Trust and Sales Growth	0.945	0.000	Very Strong	Positive
2	Information Sharing and Sales Growth	0.910	0.000	Very Strong	Positive

1. Trust and Sales Growth
   - Result: $r = 0.945$, $p < 0.05$
   - Interpretation: Trust is strongly and positively correlated with sales growth. Firms with higher trust levels report better sales growth.
2. Information Sharing and Market Share Growth
   - Result: $r = 0.905$, $p < 0.05$
   - Interpretation: Sharing information boosts market share growth.

The major findings are summarized as follows:

1. Trust and Sales Growth
   The analysis indicated a very strong positive relationship between trust and sales growth ($r = 0.945$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that logistics firms with higher levels of trust among stakeholders experienced better sales performance.
2. Information Sharing and Market Share Growth
   The relationship between information sharing and market share growth was also positive and significant ($r = 0.905$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that information transparency contributes to market expansion.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigated the relationship between trust, information sharing, and the growth outcomes (sales growth, and market share growth) of logistics firms in Rivers State. The findings revealed significant insights into how these relational factors influence organizational performance.

Trust and Growth of Logistics Firms

The study found a very strong, positive, and significant relationship between trust and sales growth ($r = 0.945$, $p < 0.05$), market share growth ($r = 0.938$, $p < 0.05$), and profitability growth ($r = 0.951$, $p < 0.05$). These findings align with prior research (e.g., Whipple & Lynch, 2010) which emphasized that trust strengthens cooperative behaviors, reduces conflict, and enhances business performance. In the context of logistics firms in Rivers State, higher levels of trust among employees, customers, and partners evidently contribute to improved sales, larger market shares, and higher profitability.

Information Sharing and Growth of Logistics Firms

The results also showed strong positive relationships between information sharing and sales growth ($r = 0.910$, $p < 0.05$), market share growth ($r = 0.905$, $p < 0.05$), and profitability growth ($r = 0.918$, $p < 0.05$). This supports the findings of Prajogo and Olhager (2012) who noted that open and timely sharing of information improves operational coordination, responsiveness, and market competitiveness. Logistics firms that promote effective information flow both internally and externally are better positioned to achieve superior growth outcomes. Overall, the findings confirm that trust, and information sharing are strategic relational assets for logistics firms seeking growth in the competitive Rivers State business environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that relational governance mechanisms such as trust and information sharing significantly influence the sales growth and market shares trajectory of logistics firms in Rivers State. Trust enhances credibility and reduces transaction costs, information sharing improves operational effectiveness. Logistics firms that prioritize these factors are more likely to experience increased sales and expanded market share.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Enhance Trust Mechanisms:** Logistics firms should invest in building and maintaining trust through transparent communication, honoring agreements, and consistently meeting customer and partner expectations.
2. **Promote Effective Information Sharing:** Organizations should establish structured channels for timely and accurate information exchange both within the firm and with external stakeholders to foster innovation and responsiveness.
3. **Continuous Relationship Management Training:** Firms should offer regular training on relationship management, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution to deepen relational bonds with all stakeholders.
4. **Develop Monitoring Systems:** Firms should set up systems to periodically monitor levels of trust and information sharing, ensuring that these critical relational factors are nurtured consistently.

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