

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND BUSINESS SUCCESS OF TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT

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ABSTRACT

This study empirically examined the relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Business success of Telecommunication Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The positivism approach to research was adopted in this study. Also, the correlational research design was adopted. The population of this study comprised all the registered telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Four (4) voice telecommunication companies that are duly registered with the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC). The four (4) telecommunication companies include: MTN Nigeria Limited, Globalcom Nigeria Limited, Airtel Nigeria Limited and 9Mobile Nigeria Limited. The sample for this study consisted of four (4) telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. The managers include top level managers, middle level managers and low level managers. A total of forty-five (45) respondents (managers). The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha test. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data that were gathered for this study. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was used to test various hypotheses formulated. The result revealed that Artificial Intelligence (AI) particularly innovativeness and customer centricity, significantly and positively relate to business success within telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. This study concluded that Artificial Intelligence via its dimensions of innovativeness and customer centricity is a significant predictor of business success of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. Based on the findings and conclusion, this study recommends that: telecom firms should prioritize AI innovations that address localized customer pain points—such as network reliability and service affordability—ensuring that AI tools are inclusive, accessible, and relevant to Port Harcourt's infrastructural realities.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, innovativeness, customer centricity, business success, repeat patronage

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business operations has transformed how organizations deliver value, engage with customers, and sustain competitive advantage. Globally, AI technologies have revolutionized industries by enabling data-driven decision-making, enhancing operational efficiency, and facilitating personalized services (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). In the telecommunications sector, AI tools such as machine learning, chatbots, predictive analytics, and natural language processing have become vital for handling massive data volumes and providing seamless customer interactions (Bughin et al., 2017).

The rapid digital transformation driven by AI has brought two strategic dimensions to the forefront: innovativeness and customer centricity. Innovativeness reflects a firm's ability to generate and implement novel ideas through AI applications, thereby offering new products,

services, or processes (Chesbrough, 2003). Customer centricity, on the other hand, denotes the use of AI to tailor services based on individual preferences, behaviors, and feedback, thus fostering personalized experiences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

These innovations are particularly relevant in the telecommunications industry, where customer expectations are high, and service differentiation is critical. In developing economies like Nigeria, and specifically in urban centers such as Port Harcourt, the demand for reliable, efficient, and personalized telecom services is growing rapidly. Telecommunications firms are now under pressure to deploy AI-driven strategies to remain relevant and competitive in a dynamic market environment (Olayemi & Osibanjo, 2020).

The effectiveness of such AI-driven strategies is often reflected in key indicators of business success, notably repeat patronage and customer loyalty. Repeat patronage refers to a customer's continued usage or repurchase of a firm's services over time, while customer loyalty encompasses emotional attachment and commitment to a brand, often resulting in advocacy and resistance to switching (Oliver, 1999). These outcomes are vital for sustaining revenue streams and market share in an industry characterized by intense rivalry and minimal switching costs.

Empirical evidence suggests that AI-enabled innovativeness fosters new value propositions that resonate with tech-savvy consumers. For example, a study by Duan, Edwards, and Dwivedi (2019) found that organizations that invest in AI-driven innovation such as predictive maintenance, automated network optimization, and self-service platforms report higher customer satisfaction and retention rates. In the telecommunications sector, such innovations help reduce network downtime, streamline service delivery, and offer tailored subscription plans, all of which positively influence repeat patronage.

Similarly, customer centricity enabled by AI technologies like chatbots, sentiment analysis, and behavioral analytics allows firms to respond proactively to customer needs and preferences. According to research by Kumar, Dixit, Javalgi, and Dass (2016), customer-centric firms using AI are significantly more likely to develop strong emotional bonds with customers, resulting in increased loyalty. These technologies provide real-time insights into customer journeys and enable personalized interactions at scale, which are crucial in high-contact service industries like telecommunications.

Moreover, Rust and Huang (2014) emphasized that AI capabilities directly enhance trust and reliability key antecedents to both repeat patronage and long-term loyalty. When customers perceive services as consistent, responsive, and tailored to their needs, their likelihood of continued engagement and brand advocacy rises significantly. This trust is often built through AI systems that ensure speed, accuracy, and a human-like understanding of customer concerns.

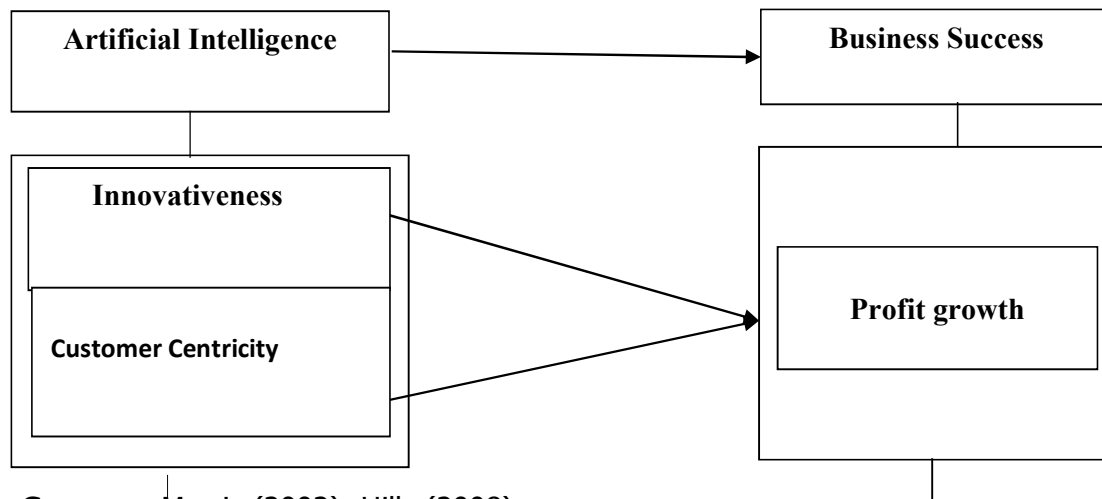
Statement of the Problem

In the current era of digital transformation, organizations across industries are increasingly turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI) to drive innovation, improve operational efficiency, and enhance customer engagement. Globally, AI has proven to be a critical enabler of business competitiveness, helping firms design innovative services and adopt customer-centric strategies that foster long-term relationships and market relevance. However, while developed economies have embraced these technologies at scale, their adoption and impact in emerging economies like Nigeria remain underexplored, particularly within the telecommunications sector—a key driver of digital inclusion and economic growth.

Although existing studies have examined AI in business from a technical or global perspective, few have empirically investigated how AI-driven attributes like "innovativeness" and "customer centricity" specifically influence business success metrics such as repeat patronage and customer loyalty in the Nigerian context. Even fewer studies focus on Port Harcourt, a major commercial hub with unique consumer behaviors and infrastructural constraints that may moderate the outcomes of AI implementation.

This study is motivated by the urgent need to bridge this gap by examining the specific impact of AI-enabled innovativeness and customer centricity on repeat patronage and customer loyalty among telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt.

Conceptual and operational Framework



Sources: Morris (2002); Hills (2008).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Business success of Telecommunication Firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objectives of the study included to:

1. determine the relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
2. determine the relationship between customer centricity and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered:

1. what is the relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised and tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Literature Review

Concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the 21st century, with wide-ranging implications for business operations, customer engagement, and innovation. At its core, AI is about the simulation of human cognitive functions by machines, with the aim of improving decision-making, task automation, and interaction with users. Russell and Norvig (2016) define AI as “the study of agents that receive percepts from the environment and perform actions,” emphasizing its autonomous and adaptive capabilities. While comprehensive, this definition is primarily technical and suited to computer science disciplines, providing limited insight into AI’s commercial and customer-facing applications. In contrast, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) offer a more business-oriented view, describing AI as a system’s ability to interpret external data, learn from it, and adaptively respond to achieve specific goals. This definition resonates with the business environment, particularly in customer service and market responsiveness two critical dimensions in the telecom sector. From an operational standpoint, Davenport and Ronanki (2018) provide a practical classification of AI functions into: (i) robotic process automation (RPA), (ii) cognitive insight (advanced analytics), and (iii) cognitive engagement (e.g., chatbots, voice recognition). This typology is particularly useful for understanding how AI can be aligned with business objectives such as improving customer service, increasing efficiency, and reducing churn.

Concept of Business Success

Business success is a multifaceted construct, particularly in the context of service industries like telecommunications where both financial and non-financial outcomes are important. In literature, definitions often range from broad strategic achievements to customer-focused performance metrics. Kotler and Keller (2016) define business success as the ability of an organization to profitably satisfy customer needs. This definition highlights the centrality of customer value but tends to assume a direct and uncomplicated relationship between satisfaction and profitability, which may not always hold true in volatile markets. Grant (2010), from a strategic management perspective, defines success as achieving sustainable competitive advantage. While this view captures the dynamic nature of competitive markets, it may overlook the behavioral dimensions of customer relationships, such as loyalty, advocacy, and emotional engagement — all of which are particularly vital in telecom services. Critically, many traditional definitions of business success emphasize firm-centric metrics (e.g., revenue, market share), while downplaying customer-centric outcomes (e.g., retention, satisfaction, advocacy). This limits their utility in assessing the impact of AI on service experiences and behavioral loyalty.

This study thus aligns business success with repeat patronage and customer loyalty — two customer-driven outcomes that serve as both leading indicators of long-term revenue and as proxies for service quality and innovation effectiveness. Repeat patronage reflects the transactional continuity of customer relationships, while loyalty indicates a deeper attitudinal and emotional commitment (Oliver, 1999). Both are critical for telecom firms in Port Harcourt, where competition is intense, and switching costs are low.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness in the telecommunications industry refers to the extent to which firms introduce new services, technologies, or value propositions that meet evolving customer needs. Empirical studies suggest that innovation enhances customer satisfaction and increases the likelihood of repeat transactions. According to Nambisan et al. (2019), product and service innovation in digital platforms positively influences customer re-engagement due to improved service efficiency and personalization.

Several studies highlight that when customers perceive a brand as innovative, they are more likely to engage in repeat patronage. For instance, Afriyie, Du, and Musah (2019) showed that innovative telecom offerings such as self-care mobile apps, AI-powered service desks, and digital wallets create convenience and responsiveness, leading to increased repeat usage behavior. These innovations reduce service friction, which directly affects customer return intentions.

Moreover, innovation in service delivery—like usage-based billing or flexible data plans—has been shown to improve customers' perception of value and fairness, both of which are essential precursors to repeat patronage. The study by Kim et al. (2020) on South Korean telecom firms found a direct correlation between perceived service innovativeness and customers' continued usage intentions. However, innovativeness must align with customer expectations and be communicated effectively to influence behavior. A study by Alamgir and Uddin (2021) emphasized that mere technological adoption does not guarantee repeat purchases unless customers are aware and perceive value in those innovations. Hence, transparency in communicating innovation and integrating customer feedback is critical.

Lastly, in emerging markets, innovation must address infrastructural challenges. As noted by Ogbechie and Anyaogu (2020), in the Nigerian telecom sector, repeat patronage is more likely when innovations simplify user experiences in low-bandwidth environments. Therefore, context-relevant innovation significantly predicts repeat behavior. Hence the hypothesis below:

Customer loyalty, a deeper emotional and behavioral commitment, is influenced by perceived innovativeness when customers see a brand as forward-thinking and value-driven. Studies such as that by Lu, Wang, and Lee (2020) found that continuous service innovation fosters emotional attachment to a brand, a critical dimension of loyalty. In dynamic industries like telecoms, customers remain loyal to firms they believe are future-oriented and technologically adaptive.

Innovativeness also influences loyalty through perceived differentiation. When telecom companies offer unique and timely innovations—like smart bundles, AI-powered customer service, or gamified loyalty programs—they set themselves apart from competitors, thereby increasing switching costs for customers (Zameer et al., 2020). This perceived uniqueness strengthens emotional and attitudinal loyalty.

Another aspect lies in relational benefits. Innovative firms often build smarter engagement systems (e.g., proactive network alerts, personalized deals), which increase relational value and foster loyalty. In a study by Chatterjee et al. (2021), AI-based personalization significantly impacted loyalty in service industries, including telecoms, by demonstrating that customer preferences were understood and valued. However, innovativeness may not lead to loyalty if it leads to frequent disruptions or steep learning curves. Lee et al. (2019) caution that over-complicating user experiences with excessive innovation can alienate certain customer segments, thereby eroding loyalty. The key lies in balancing novelty with user-friendliness and usability.

Lastly, in markets like Nigeria, where price sensitivity is high, innovativeness must translate into tangible user benefits. Ogbu and Onuoha (2022) confirmed that loyalty in Nigerian telecoms rises when innovations improve affordability, speed, and accessibility. Therefore, innovation contributes to loyalty when it is inclusive and practical. Hence the hypothesis below:

Customer Centricity

Customer centricity refers to a business philosophy where customer needs, preferences, and feedback are at the core of strategic decisions. It has been empirically validated as a key driver of repeat patronage. According to Shah et al. (2006), customer-centric firms build trust by consistently delivering personalized and value-aligned services, prompting repeated interactions.

Research by Kumar and Reinartz (2018) found that customer-centric telecoms use real-time behavioral data to anticipate user needs and deliver targeted offers, leading to increased customer retention and repeat purchases. This proactive engagement encourages customers to see the firm as responsive and relevant.

Digital customer centricity enabled by AI—allows telecoms to track user preferences and respond promptly to issues like dropped calls or data overcharges. In a study of African telecom firms, Owusu-Frimpong & Amoako (2021) reported that firms which resolved complaints quickly and tailored their services based on customer behavior saw a measurable increase in repeat usage rates.

Customer-centric service design also helps improve satisfaction and reduce service fatigue. In high-contact environments, such as telecoms, repetitive issues (e.g., long wait times) drive customers away. However, a focus on usability, empathy, and accessibility as seen in customer-centric models significantly reduces churn and supports repeat patronage (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, customer centricity alone is insufficient if not matched with consistent service delivery. Alavi and Ahuja (2022) argued that while personalization and empathy win customers initially, repeat patronage depends on sustained reliability and performance. Thus, a blend of personalization and consistency fosters long-term repeat behavior. Hence the hypothesis below:

Customer centricity plays a pivotal role in building loyalty by fostering emotional connection, trust, and satisfaction. Firms that tailor their offerings and communication styles to individual needs make customers feel valued, which significantly contributes to loyalty. According to Keiningham et al. (2017), customer-centric cultures are predictive of stronger customer-brand relationships.

These firms move beyond transactional engagement to relationship-based interactions. AI-powered customer centricity—like intelligent feedback loops, proactive service interventions, and dynamic pricing—further enhances perceived fairness and responsiveness. Research by Chatterjee et al. (2021) found that firms deploying AI to deliver context-sensitive experiences see higher levels of customer advocacy and resistance to churn.

Loyalty also stems from trust developed over time through consistent customer-centric behavior. In Nigerian telecoms, studies by Adeyeye and Bello (2021) showed that customers loyal to certain providers cited feeling “understood” and “valued,” largely due to the provider’s attentiveness and personalized rewards systems.

However, superficial personalization or inconsistent service ruins loyalty efforts. True customer centricity must be deeply embedded in corporate culture, not just in marketing tactics. As highlighted by Rust & Huang (2021), token efforts at personalization fail unless backed by strategic commitment and technology alignment and of 5(ii).

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between customer centricity and customer loyalty of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Empirical Review

Chatterjee et al. (2021) investigated the impact of AI-based personalization strategies on customer loyalty in the Indian telecommunications industry. Using a structural equation modeling approach, the study found that AI-driven personalization (e.g., smart usage predictions, dynamic data plan recommendations) significantly improved customer experience, trust, and loyalty. The study aligns with the customer centricity dimension of AI, showing that data-driven insights can tailor services to individual needs, reduce churn, and deepen brand connection. However, the authors caution that personalization must be transparent and not overly intrusive, as it may backfire if perceived as manipulative.

Okafor and Nnaji (2020) assessed the influence of AI adoption on customer satisfaction and retention in Nigerian banks and telecoms. Their regression analysis showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.78$) between AI deployment (e.g., chatbots, predictive maintenance, voice assistants) and customer retention. Customers appreciated faster response times, 24/7 service availability, and error reduction in billing and complaints handling. These AI-driven innovations were perceived as both innovative and customer-centric, directly leading to repeat business and brand loyalty.

Zhang et al. (2020) explored the role of predictive analytics in reducing churn across telecom providers in the Asia-Pacific region. The study revealed that firms using AI to forecast dissatisfaction or usage decline could proactively intervene — offering incentives or technical support before customers switched providers. They found a 25% reduction in churn and a measurable increase in repeat patronage in AI-active firms versus their conventional counterparts. AI's ability to predict and preempt dissatisfaction highlighted the synergy between innovative analytics and customer loyalty strategies.

Hassan and Yusuf (2022) investigated how AI-powered innovations influenced customer behavior and loyalty in the Nigerian telecom industry. They employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews with customers and telecom managers. Key findings indicated that customers viewed AI tools (e.g., smart apps, real-time network alerts, automatic data top-ups) as signs of a forward-thinking and responsive service provider. These perceptions enhanced customer trust, brand attachment, and the likelihood of repurchase.

METHODOLOGY

The positivism cum quantitative approach to research was adopted in this study. Also, the correlational research design was adopted. The population of this study comprised all the registered voice telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Currently, there are four (4) voice telecommunication companies that are duly registered with the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC). The four (4) telecommunication companies include: MTN Nigeria Limited, Globalcom Nigeria Limited, Airtel Nigeria Limited and 9Mobile Nigeria Limited. The sample for this study consisted of four (4) telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. The managers include top level managers, middle level managers and

lowlevel managers. A total of forty-five (45) respondents (managers) were used as the study subjects. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha test with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, and it stood at 0.78, higher than the benchmark of 0.70. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data that were gathered for this study. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method was used to test various hypotheses formulated with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Telecommunication Companies	Respondents (Managers)			Total
	Top Level Managers	Middle Level Managers	Low Level Managers	
MTN Nigeria Limited	1	4	7	12
Globalcom Nigeria Limited	1	4	6	11
Airtel Nigeria Limited	1	4	7	12
9Mobile Nigeria Limited	1	4	5	10
Total	4	16	25	45

Source; survey Data, 2025.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

No. of Questionnaire Issued	No. of Questionnaire Returned	Useful Questionnaire	Not Useful	%
45	38	35	-	84

Source; survey Data, 2025.

The table above shows the questionnaire distribution and retrieval. The researcher issued 45 copies of questionnaire and from consistent visit, retrieved 35, 35 copies were useful. This represent 88% response rate and it was considered significant for the study.

Test of Hypothesis one (1)

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between innovativeness and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

		Correlations		
		Innovativeness	innovativeness repeat patronage	
Pearson (r)	innovativeness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.738*	
		N	.037	
	repeat patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.738*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.
		N	35	35

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, 2025.

The output analyzed the extent to which innovativeness relate with profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Pearson correlation co-efficient indicates a strong association between the two variables ($r = 0.738$). The test of significance indicates that with $P = 0.037 < 0.05$ we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between innovativeness and repeat patronage of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Thus, higher levels of innovativeness were associated with higher levels of repeat patronage of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between customer centricity and profit growth?

Test of Hypothesis Two (2)

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between customer centricity and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

			customer centricity	repeat patronage
Pearson (r)	customer centricity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.857**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007
		N	35	35
	repeat patronage	Correlation Coefficient	.857**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.
		N	35	35

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, 2025.

The output analyzed the extent to which after customer centricity relate with profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Pearson correlation co-efficient indicates a strong association between the two variables ($R_s = 0.857$). The test of significance indicates that with $P = 0.007 < 0.05$ we can reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between customer centricity and profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Thus, higher levels of customer centricity were associated with higher levels of profit growth of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Test of Hypothesis Four (4)

H_{04} : There is no significant relationship between customer centricity and customer loyalty of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

			customer centricity	customer loyalty
Pearson (r)	customer centricity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.901*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.037
		N	35	35

customer loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.901*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.
	N	35	35

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, 2025.

The output analyzed the extent to which customer centricity relate with customer loyalty of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. Pearson correlation co-efficient indicates a strong association between the two variables (Rs=0.901).The test of significance indicates that with P.037 < 0.05 we reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between customer centricity and customer retention. Thus, higher levels of customer centricity were associated with higher levels of customer loyalty of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Test of Hypothesis Five (5)

Ho₅: Corporate image does not significantly moderate the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and business success of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Control Variables		Partial Correlations	
		Artificial Intelligence	business success
Artificial Intelligence	Correlation	1.000	.871*
	Significance (2-tailed)	.	.004
Corporate image	N	35	35
	Correlation	.871*	1.000
business success	Significance (2-tailed)	.004	.
	N	35	35

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output, 2025.

The table above presents the result of correlation analysis that shows how corporate image moderates the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and business success of telecommunication firms in Rivers State. The result indicates that corporate image positively moderates the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and business success of telecommunication firms in Rivers State (pr = .871) and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level as indicated by the symbol *. Based on this result, the null hypothesis (Ho₇) is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that corporate image significantly moderates the relationship between Artificial Intelligence and business success of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were discovered:

- i. There is a significant relationship between innovativeness and repeat patronage of telecommunication firms in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION

This study has empirically established that Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly through its dimensions of innovativeness and customer centricity, significantly contributes to business success among telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt. The findings demonstrated that AI-driven innovations such as predictive analytics, self-service platforms, and intelligent customer engagement tools foster increased repeat patronage and customer loyalty. Moreover, the study found that the effect of AI on business performance is significantly enhanced when moderated by a positive corporate image, emphasizing the role of brand perception in reinforcing technological effectiveness. This study concluded that Artificial Intelligence via its dimensions of innovativeness and customer centricity is a significant predictor of business success of telecommunication firms in Port Harcourt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Telecom firms should prioritize AI innovations that address localized customer pain points such as network reliability and service affordability—ensuring that AI tools are inclusive, accessible, and relevant to Port Harcourt's infrastructural realities.
- ii. Telecom firms should align AI adoption with strong corporate communication that builds trust and educates customers on the value, privacy, and security of AI systems, thus enhancing acceptance and long-term loyalty.

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