

**COMPETITIVE AGGRESSIVENESS AND BUSINESS SUCCESS OF FINTECH IN
SOUTH/SOUTH GEOGRAPHIC ZONE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study empirically investigated the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and business success of fintech firms in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study adopted a quantitative research method with emphasis on generalizability of findings across the study population. The population comprised thirty-six (36) fintech firms operating within the South-South region and registered with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as obtained from the official regulatory database (www.cbn.gov.ng). Given the relatively small and accessible population, a census sampling technique was employed, whereby all firms were included in the study. Ten (10) managerial staff were selected from each firm, resulting in a total sample size of three hundred and sixty (360) respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was validated through a pilot study. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with all constructs achieving a reliability threshold of not less than 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The formulated hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0. The empirical results revealed that competitive aggressiveness has a strong and positive influence on customer loyalty and new customer acquisition among fintech firms in the study area. This indicates that firms demonstrating higher levels of competitive aggressiveness are more likely to achieve improved customer retention, acquisition, and overall market expansion. The study concludes that competitive aggressiveness significantly enhances business success by strengthening customer loyalty and facilitating new customer acquisition in the fintech industry within the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Accordingly, the study recommends that fintech firms should intensify competitive strategies at both organizational and individual managerial levels to sustain growth, improve market positioning, and enhance long-term business performance.

Key definition of terms: Competitive aggressiveness, business success, fintech, customer loyalty and new customer acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Government and development agencies all over the world, have been pointing at small businesses as a development tool since they are the most sustainable ways for local economic growth, employment creation and poverty reduction but their contributions to the Nigerian economy is still very small and negligible when compared with other countries such as the Asian tigers (Owualah, 1987; Olayemi, 2013). This is evident from high mortality rate of the SMEs, turbulent environmental factors and failure to generate employment as expected among other issues. Until recently, the effort of Nigerian Government is not enough to generate the expected changes in economic growth. Apart from financial support, little is being done by the government about other environmental supports such as infrastructure and technology that drive new financial system.. There is no doubt, that, in Nigeria and indeed as in many other developing countries, poverty level is still very high. Some scholars have maintained that, high rate of poverty can be linked to the investment environments which have not been friendly to the survival and development of fintech businesses in Nigeria. This challenging business environment requires the need for firms to be more entrepreneurially oriented by been competitively aggressive if they are to grow and become relevant. The rapidly changing technologies and shortened product life cycles have made organizations to innovative by developing new ideas, products, and processes. This is with a view

of having improved performance, which is of great importance to its start up business owners, managers, policy makers and society at large. Despite the potential benefits of entrepreneurship as an important contributing factor to a firm's success, and growth, very few studies have examined why some business owners are more competitively aggressive than others in Nigeria. Although, there are few indications that firms that have exploited entrepreneurial opportunities are bracing up and have potentials for high performance and tendency to compete favourably, existing empirical studies suggest that most fintech firm owners that adopted EO components often have superior performance both in the developed and undeveloped economies (Luo, Sivakumar and Liu, 2005). The conceptual arguments of previous research converge on the idea that firms benefit from highlighting newness, responsiveness, and a degree of boldness. Extensive discussion of the arguments can be found in Lumpkin and Dess (1996). Indeed, these suggestions form the basis for the interest in studying the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and performance (Miller, 1983).

However, competitive aggressiveness remains a somewhat underdeveloped construct. Though competitive aggressiveness may be underdeveloped, the competitive dynamics research stream (Ketchen, Snow, & Hoover, 2004) has significantly advanced our understanding of competitive behavior and its relationship with performance. Competitive dynamics researchers have determined, for example, that the visibility of the attack is positively related to the likelihood of a response (Chen & Hambrick, 1995; Chen & Miller, 1994) and that an increased volume of firm competitive actions is positively related to firm performance (Ferrier, 2001). It has been fully agreed about the role of high competitive behaviour of fintech challenging the conventional financial institutions to be more pro active and innovative. In south/south Nigeria the fintech business operation is predominantly among the young business owners.

Therefore, this study attempt to appraise the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and business success of fintech in south/south geographic zone, Nigeria by integrating insights from competitive dynamics research on competitive behavior and success as an important step. Hence, the under listed objectives, research questions and hypotheses are stated to guide the direction of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The study is motivated to look into impact of operation of competitive aggressiveness as entrepreneurial orientation in the space of firms' marketing functionalities where market is already saturated with new entrants who are willing to provide alternative processes. The poor business success, weak customer loyalty and decline in new customer acquisition impact the expansion of the market is the reason why this study is considered. The role of entrepreneurial competitive aggression cannot be down play if the market of fintech in south/south geographic zone must grow.

Study Variables and Conceptual Framework

The independent or predictor variable of this study is competitive aggressiveness. This construct is considered as a unique construct (Gladson & Diepriye, 2020). Thus, the dependent or criterion variable is business success which is divided into two measure; customer loyalty and new customer acquisition. (Nwekeala, 2023). The conceptual model is depicted thus.

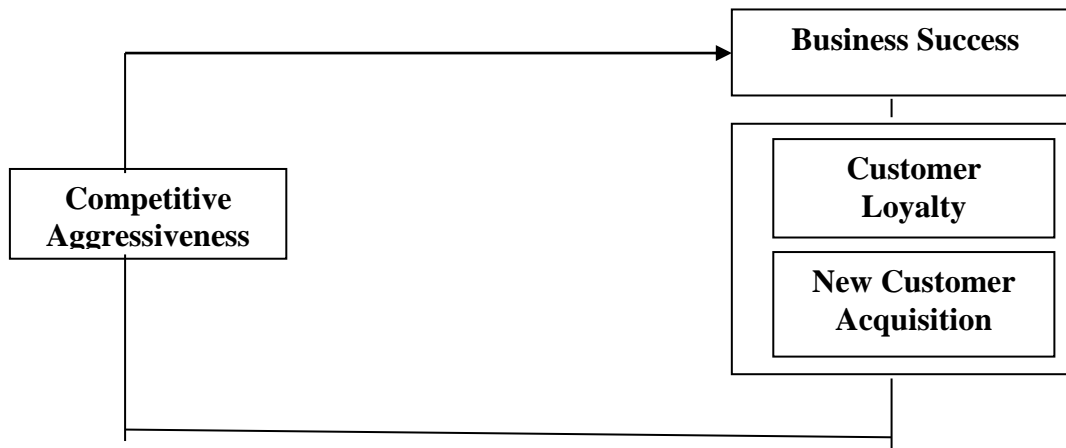


Fig 1: Conceptual framework of the impact of competitive aggressiveness on business success
Source: Gladson & Diepriye (2020) and Nwekeala, (2023)

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The general aim of the study was to investigate the extent of relationship between competitive aggressiveness and business success of fintech in south/south geographic zone of Nigeria. Specifically, this study tends to

- i. determine the extent of relationship between competitive aggressiveness and customer Loyalty
- ii. determine the extent of relationship between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition.

Research Questions

The following research questions shall be answered

- i. To what extent does competitive aggressiveness relate to customer Loyalty?
- ii. What is the extent of relationship between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses shall be tested:

- Ho1. There is no significant relationship between competitive aggressiveness relate to customer Loyalty
- Ho2. There is no significant relationship between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Competitive Aggressiveness

Competitive aggressiveness is the tendency to intensely and directly challenge competitors rather to avoid. Aggressive moves can include price-cutting and increasing spending on marketing, quality, and production capacity. Fintech platforms are competitors to traditional banking in Nigeria. The Fintech though have not replaced banking in totality but challenging them through so many ways. Competitive aggressiveness refers to behaviour that implies dynamic experimentation and realization of research and development policy aiming at maintaining a constant flow of new products or services introduced on the market (Perez-Luno, 2017). Furthermore, competitive aggressiveness is the organizations' predispositions which constantly confront its competitors to improve its market position and outperform industry rivals in a marketplace (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). It should be expected that competitively aggressive organizations will scan the environment in order to find new trends and keep up with the competition. That is why

competitiveness means also the forward-looking perspective feature for an industry leader that has the capacity to seize and opportunity to predict future demands (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005). The tendency of competitive aggressiveness is oriented in achievement, anticipation, emphasis on taking initiatives, predicting changes towards a significant situation, creating change and early preparation to the happening of an impending uncertain risk (Boohene, MarfoYiadom & Yeboah, 2016). As an entrepreneurial orientation dimension, competitive aggressiveness is a forward-looking and seeking opportunity perspective that means that the firm acts in anticipation of future trends and demands with a motive of capitalizing on the opportunities for profit gain (Kropp et al, 2008). Indeed, the prior research has shown that competitively aggressive firms are more likely to improve their competitive positions, market share, and increase their performance. More specifically, the more total actions a firm carries out with greater average speed (aggressiveness) the better is its profitability and market share (Ferrier et al., 1999; Young et al., 1996). In turn, firms that initiates competitive actions slower than their rivals often do not succeed in the competition (Derfus et al., 2008). Lee and Lim (2009) opined that for a firm to be successful in its business endeavor, it must be competitively aggressive, in order to beat competitors to the punch. Covin and Slevin (2009) posited that some evidence of competitive aggressiveness can be reached when evaluating the management attitude in terms of designing business operations. It is the propensity to directly contest with rivals instead of trying to elude them. Aggressive moves include price-cutting and high spending outlay on marketing quality, and manufacture ability. Competitive aggressiveness is very similar to pro-activeness and it is therefore necessary to clarify the difference between these two dimensions. Competitive aggressiveness refers to how a business relates to competitors and how it responds to the existing demand in the market. It can be explained as organizations in the market competing for demand (Chang, Lin & Chen, 2007). The reason for competitive aggressiveness is thus to outperform rivals in the market and be prepared for possible competition (Antonic & Hisrich, 2003).

The subdivision of dimensions of competitive aggressiveness

Response to competitors

One of the most outstanding authorities in the area of market competition response is Michael Porter. Competition plays a core role in the success or failure of the firm. Competition determines whether the firm's activities are appropriate or not, which can be helpful to its performance, such as competitiveness, innovation, culture cohesion, or very good to realize. Competitive strategy is helpful to search for reasonable competitive position in relation to their competitors (Porter, 1985). "Competitive strategy aims to establish a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition." (Zuckerman, 2007). Porter (1980) mentions that the strongest competitiveness determines the industry's profitability, and the formulation of strategy plays greatest importance to a firm or industry. Formulation of competitive strategy can change the competitive position of a company in an industry; such as appropriate competitive strategy can make the companies to prevent potential competitors from threatening their own products. For example, even a company with a strong position in an industry unthreatened by potential entrants will earn low returns if it faces a superior or a lower-cost substitute product. In such a situation, coping with the substitute product becomes the first strategic priority (Porter, 1980).

Response to consumers

Remember, competitive actions are significant competitive moves taken by a company that are designed to gain a competitive advantage in a market with the type of competitive action taken based on the company's strategy. Competitive actions can be classified based on the scope or breadth and significance of the action. Strategic actions are designed to help implement a company's business-level strategy and represent significant commitments of specific and distinctive organisational resources and are difficult to implement and to reverse. Tactical actions are taken to fine-tune a strategy. They involve fewer and more general organisational resources

and are relatively easy to implement and reverse, if necessary. The likelihood of a competitive response to an action depends on the type of action taken--strategic or tactical--and the potential effect on competitors. Because strategic actions require the use or dedication of specific organisational resources, are more difficult to implement successfully, are more time consuming, and are difficult (and often costly) to reverse, it is more likely that tactical actions will be implemented and responded to more often. Because tactical actions require fewer organisational resources and are relatively easy to implement and reverse, their effects on the competitive situation are more immediately felt. Thus, rapid competitive responses to tactical actions are highly likely. A positive initiator reputation will likely increase the probability of a competitive response while an uncertain or negative reputation will decrease the likelihood of a competitive response. Actions taken by market leaders are likely to energise a larger number of rapid responses (and imitation) by competitors than are actions initiated by small companies in the industry. Actions initiated by companies with a previous history of success also will be more likely to result in quick reactions and imitation. Actions taken by companies with reputations for risk-taking and for initiating complex and unpredictable actions are less likely to be responded to. Actions taken by price predators (companies who cut prices to capture market share and then raise prices) are seen as having a negative effect on competitors and their actions receive only minimal response and imitation. Companies that are highly concentrated in--or dependent on--an industry (or market) in which a competitive action has been taken are more likely to respond than are companies who do business in multiple industries and markets. This implies that single- and dominant-business companies (classifications that will be described fully later) will be more likely to respond to competitive actions initiated in their primary industry than would a diversified company (a company that does business in multiple industries). If the action has a major (negative) effect on these market- or industry-dependent companies, a competitive response is likely regardless of whether the action taken was strategic or tactical. Because responding to competitive actions requires organisational resources, small companies--or companies with few available resources--will be more likely to respond to tactical than to strategic actions because responses to tactical actions require fewer organisational resources and are easier to implement.

Value Creation

The word value is usually used to talk about an item or service's worth, significance, or usefulness. Value creation is the process of turning resources into something valuable with work. In economics, it is a broad term that includes the production of tangible goods and services. It also includes investment in capital goods and intellectual property products. Value is instrumental in the creation of a business because it's one of the four key components in a business model: product, place, price, and promotion. Without question, value contributes to marketing and promotion because all three (promotion, pricing, and product) rely on understanding value.

Creating Value

Value creation is the process that converts inputs into outputs that have more worth than their components. Value can be seen as how much customers will pay for a product or service compared to what a company spends in producing it. Value is the perceived worth of an entity. The more customers perceive a product or service to be valuable, the more they will buy it. Understanding the basic meaning of value is critical for any business owner or entrepreneur because value creation is at the heart of a company's success. What determines value? There are three things that affect a product's perceived worth: utility, rarity, and egoism. If a company produces something that people need and want, it will be seen as valuable by them. If a company produces something that not many people can find or access, it will also be seen as valuable by them. Finally, if a company provides something that gives a person a feeling of self-worth, they will see it as valuable too.

Delivering Value

Delivering value involves doing things right in terms of delivering responsible products and services to the right stakeholder at the right time, place and price. Value can only be delivered when products and services and other outputs from the business model deliver stakeholder outcomes as well as long term economic profitability. To deliver value therefore involves effective decision making processes, including profitability planning and improvement and project appraisal. These are enabled by an enterprise performance management approach that provides the necessary information around resources and processes, revenue, costs and risks in the context of business and value objectives. Organizations deliver value by providing products and services to customers that meet their, and society's needs, at a price they are prepared to pay. To achieve this, the marketing management and its team need to understand the business including different customer segments, the channels to reach each segment, and the key resources and processes that underpin value delivery many of which will be intangible and not reflected in marketing information, such as sales, marketing, research and development, production, logistics and financing. Entrepreneurs need to capture revenue and cost models based on an operational perspective of the business to help support the delivery of value. This modeling also needs to incorporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors which cover environmental or social performance and impacts, and broader governance issues related to conducting business responsibly. These models are an important basis for understanding and capturing value, making decisions, and deciding where to invest and how a financial surplus is distributed and used.

THE CONCEPT OF BUSINESS SUCCESS

In the field of strategic management and organizational studies, organizational performance has been attracting scholars' attention as one of the most important constructs (Combs, Crook, and Shook, 2005). This is why, over the last few decades, practitioners as well as researchers focused attention to explore the determinants of the organizational performance and what are the mechanisms through which some variables can affect positively or negatively, the organizational performance (Jing and Avery, 2008). Nevertheless the extensive research work related to the organizational performance, there is no universal definition of the construct. Lebas and Euske (2002:68) define performance as "doing today what will lead to measured value outcomes tomorrow". A firm's performance is an important dependent variable in business research (Rauch, Unger and Rosenbusch, 2007:1). The performance of a firm can be viewed from several different perspectives, and various aspects can jointly be considered to define firm performance. Assessing a firm's performance and its measurement is difficult, because performance refers to several organisational outcomes, which include both subjective and objective elements. Rauf (2007) asserts that most managers are likely to act on their subjective opinions with regard to a competitor's performance. With regard to objective measures, Guest, Michie, Conway and Sheehan (2003) believe that there are clear attractions in objective measures. Consequently, Rauf (2007) believes that it will be helpful to select a blend of some key organisational outcomes when measuring a firm's performance. While Antony and Bhattacharyya (2010) defined organizational performance as the measure of organizational success with regards to the value it creates and delivers to internal as well as external customers.

Traditionally, the organizational performance has been measured using the cost and account-based measures. Due to the differences in the definitions of organizational performance, there has been a continuous debate regarding which one is the best measure of the organizational performance. The empirical literature reports a high diversity of performance indicators (Combs, Crook, and Shook, 2005) a common distinction is between financial and non-financial measures. Non-financial measures include goals such as satisfaction and success ratings made by owners or business managers; financial measures include assessments of factors such as sales growth, profitability and ROI (Smith, 1976). The proponents of each financial and non-financial performance measures tried to support their point of views. Although, the majority of the studies measuring organizational performance used the account-based measure, this study chooses the

non-financial measures due to the following reasoning. First, the financial measures of organizational performance are not stable and might be so sensitive to changing of the industry-related factors. Second, the financial measures can be easily manipulated and hence do not reflect the real or actual performance. Third, the financial measures, as argued by Kaplan and Norton (1996), lack the strategic focus since they describe the past performance and they might be misleading when used to predict the future performance. This may justify why this study used the perceptual measures to measure the organizational performance.

Many researchers also advocate growth as the most appropriate performance measure in small firms (Brown, 1996). It is argued that growth is a more accurate and easily accessible performance indicator than accounting measures and hence superior to indicators of financial performance. An alternative view is that performance is multidimensional in nature and that it is advantageous to integrate different dimensions of performance in empirical studies (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). It is possible to regard financial performance and growth as different aspects of performance revealing important and unique information. A firm could for instance choose to trade-off long-term growth for short-term profitability (Zahra, 1991). Taken together, these two aspects give a richer description of the actual performance of the firm than each aspect separately. While these concepts are empirically and theoretically related, there are also important differences between them (Combs et al., 2005).

Measure of Business Success

a. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty has usually been regarded as the continuous buying of a product of interest (Hsu, Huang, Ko & Wang, 2014). Customer loyalty is a desire to maintain a relationship with a service provider (Moorman, Deshpande & Zaltman, 1992). Customer loyalty is also defined by Bose and Rao (2011) as the customer's commitment to engage in transaction with a specific organisation that leads to repeat purchases of products offered by that organisation. To Rai and Srivastava (2014), for survival, companies need repeat buying due to the fact that such actions in customers can imply the customers' preference for a brand, disclose the customer's purchase intentions, and obtain long-term profitability. Therefore, satisfying a customer is of great importance to business survival. Fintech can get a part of the customers' wallet if they can maintain customer loyalty (Izogo, et al., 2017). Rauyruen and Miller (2007) view customer loyalty as the constant longing or readiness of the customer to repurchase and stay with the company and as well as make the customer advocate for the business. Loyal customers are persons who have the passion about the products they consume. The more passionate a customer is, the bigger the profit the brand obtain (Malcolm, 2008). Loyalty is customer's show of unwavering faithfulness to an organisation regardless of the occasional mistakes. According to Bagram and Khan (2012), "customer loyalty is defined as the action of a customer in which he or she demonstrates the willingness to repurchase from a firm and remain in relationships with the same firm in his or her future purchases." Jaiswal and Niraj (2011) opine that nurturing loyalty and retaining customers are important for every organisation. This is due to the fact customer loyalty is the strategic objective of several organisations and the competitive advantage it offers. Roberts-Lombard (2014) opines that to secure loyal customers, firms are expected to invest in relationship-building in areas of customer intimacy, customer orientation and to improve on their reputation, because creating such relationships and intimacy will lead to stronger loyalty.

b. New Customer Acquisition

The statement goes thus from Peter Drucker, the celebrated management guru, that the "sole purpose of any business is to create a customer (Drucker, 1973)." Customers are assets that need to be acquired before they can be managed for profits (Levitt, 1986). Customer Acquisition is a sensitive aspect of business and can make or break an organization. Customer Acquisition has been defined as, "finding the right customers that provide a profitable return (Kolter & Armstrong,

2009).” Customer acquisition is paramount for any business to create profitability and it remains relevant in situations where switching costs are relatively lower and repeat purchase is infrequent (Shukla, 2013). While customer acquisition it is a prerequisite for organization to find the right customers to serve before decide how they can be acquired. It is the first objectives of Customer Relationship Management to acquire a new customer and maintains that a new customer deserves the same attention as that given to a potential customer (Becker, Greve & Albers, 2009). Customer acquisition is always a dependent process and certainly exerts influence on customer retention (Thomas, 2001) and consumer behaviour (Verhoef & Donkers, 2005). It has also been termed as customer initiation (Becker et al., 2009). It remains a challenging task to acquire promising customers (Thomas, Reinartz, and Kumar 2004; Blattberg, Getz, and Thomas 2001) subject to the condition that the costs of acquiring such customers do not outweigh the benefits (Blattberg, Getz, and Thomas 2001; Gupta and Lehmann 2003). Acquiring a new customer is a multistage process, represented as the sales funnel, where not all the suspects become the actual customers (Cooper & Budd, 2007; Yu & Cai, 2007; Patterson, 2007). The articles in the recent past reflects that firm’s future prospects and value can only to strengthened by its customer base (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996; Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2000; Gupta & Lehmann, 2003). Customer acquisition for Fintech Product takes different dimension where financial services strategies are employed to create customers and retain them strategically.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Agency Theory

Mitnick (1973) proposed the agency theory; he introduced the now common insight that institutions form around agency and evolve to deal with agency, in response to the essential imperfection of agency relationships. He applied regulation extensively and introduced the study of delegation as the creation of agents in governments. Ross (1976) introduced the study of agency in terms of problems of compensation and contracting; agency was seen as incentives problem. Jensen and Meckling (1976) originated the institutional theory of agency and were the first to make explicit applications of agency theory to social institutions .Both continued building on the work of Ross. The basic assumption of agency theory is that principal interest may not align with the agents thus causing a conflict which need to be resolved. The owners are termed as principals and the managers as agents. The manager’s role is to represent the owners’ interests and be independent of management. The separation of control from owners means that managers will manage all the process of the organization on behalf of the owners. The principals have to bear agency costs which are borne in trying to enforce the contractual obligations between them and the agents. They arise out of the inefficiencies of the principal- agent relationship. Agency costs can be reduced by providing appropriate incentives to align the interests of both agents and principals. Though agent banking has not grown to maturity in Rivers State despite the effectiveness of agency banking in other part of the country. Bushs&Mathisen (2005) Agency banking is a concept that allows banks to engage third parties to offer products and services on their behalf. An agency bank is an organization/company that acts on behalf of another bank, it thus cannot accept deposits or extends loans in its own name; it acts as agent for the parent bank. It is a retail outlet contracted by a financial institution or a mobile network operator to process clients’ transactions. Rather than a branch teller, it is the owner or an employee of the retail outlet who conducts the transaction and lets clients deposit, withdraw, and transfer funds, pay their bills, inquire about an account balance or receive government benefits or a direct deposit from their employer. The convenience of access to banking services and the extended hours that the agencies work has been the most attractive features to the customer (as most agencies work between 8am up to 8pm). The rural population especially has heartily welcomed this idea since they have had to sometimes go through Vexing experiences to access banking services due to the poor road infrastructure and high costs (Kaane,2007).

Technology Acceptance Model

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use a technology that will encourage economic growth. The model suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it. Davis, 1989 has been one of the most influential models of technology acceptance, with two primary factors influencing an individual's intention to use new technology: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. An older adult who perceives digital games as too difficult to play or a waste of time will be unlikely to want to adopt this technology, while an older adult who perceives digital games as providing needed mental stimulation and as easy to learn will be more likely to want to learn how to use digital games. While TAM has been criticized on a number of grounds, it serves as a useful general framework and is consistent with a number of investigations into the factors that influence older adults' intention to use new technology, (Braun, 2013). Based on the [theory of reasoned Action](#), Davis (1986) developed the Technology Acceptance Model which deals more specifically with the prediction of the acceptability of an information system. The purpose of this model is to predict the acceptability of a tool and to identify the modifications which must be brought to the system in order to make it acceptable to users. This model suggests that the acceptability of an information system is determined by two main factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness is defined as being the degree to which a person believes that the use of a system will improve his performance. Perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a person believes that the use of a system will be effortless. Several factorial analyses demonstrated that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use can be considered as two different dimensions (Hauser et Shugan, 1980 ;Larcker et Lessig, 1980 ; Swanson, 1987).

As demonstrated in the theory of reasoned Action, the Technology Acceptance Model postulates that the use of an information system is determined by the behavioral intention, but on the other hand, that the behavioral intention is determined by the person's attitude towards the use of the system and also by his perception of its utility. According to Davis, the attitude of an individual is not the only factor that determines his use of a system, but is also based on the impact which it may have on his performance. Therefore, even if an employee does not welcome an information system, the probability that he will use it is high if he perceives that the system will improve his performance at work. Besides, the Technology Acceptance Model hypothesizes a direct link between perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. With two systems offering the same features, a user will find more useful the one that he finds easier to use (Dillon and Morris, on 1996).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research approach anchored on a descriptive survey research design with hypothesis testing. The choice of this design is appropriate as it enables the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to examine relationships among variables within the study context. The population of the study comprised thirty-six (36) fintech firms registered with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) as of 2025, as obtained from the official CBN directory (www.cbn.gov.ng). Given the relatively small and accessible size of the population, a census sampling technique was adopted. Consequently, all 36 firms were included in the study, eliminating sampling bias and enhancing representativeness. The unit of analysis consisted of key managerial personnel within each firm, specifically: customer service managers, sales managers, relationship managers, marketing managers, regional managers, brand managers, innovation and sustainability managers, digital content managers, channel marketing managers, and product marketing managers. A total of ten (10) copies of the questionnaire were administered per firm, resulting in an aggregate sample size of three hundred and sixty (360) respondents. The research instrument (structured questionnaire) was subjected to content validation through expert review and a pilot study, ensuring clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of measurement items. The

instrument demonstrated acceptable validity for the purpose of the study. Data collected were analyzed using both univariate descriptive statistics (such as frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation) and bivariate inferential statistics, employed to test the stated hypotheses. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 22.0.

Table 1: Population Table
South/South State Number of Fintech Firms

Rivers	13
Bayelsa	3
Detal	5
Edo	4
Cross Rivers	6
Akwa Ibom	5
Total	36

Source: www.cbn.ng.org

The questionnaires were reliably tested to measure its consistency. The test-tested method was adopted with correlation coefficient observed to yield expected reliability of coefficient not below 0.78 for the study.

Table 2: Reliability Test Table

S/N	Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Competitive Aggressiveness	2	0.897
2	Customer Loyalty	2	0.856
3	New customer Acquisition	2	0.879

Source: SPSS Output (Field Survey), 2025

The reliability test results on table above showed that variables in the study have high correlation coefficient, surpassing the threshold of 0.7 set by Nunnally (1978). This means that if this study is carried out again, in a similar condition the results may not vary significantly from the present result. Also, the table below was used as the decision rule for hypotheses testing.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data Presentation

Table 3: Questionnaire Response Pattern

Number administered	Number returned	Number used	Percentage used
360	341	341	94.7%

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	224	65.8
Female	117	34.2
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 5: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25	31	9.2
26-35	114	33.3

36-45	88	25.8
46-55	68	20.0
56-Above	40	11.7
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 6: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	122	35.8
Married	205	60.0
Widowed/Divorced	14	4.2
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 7: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ph.D./Master's	68	20.0
B.Sc./HND	222	65.0
Secondary	45	13.3
Primary	6	1.7
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 8: Organization's Years in Operation

Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-10	125	36.7
11-20	131	38.3
21-30	58	17.5
31-40	26	7.5
41-Above	0	0
Total	341	100

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Univariate Analysis

Table 9: Respondent's View on Competitive Aggressiveness

SN	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	The organization partners with other organisations in order to establish new businesses.	2.54	.743	**
2	The organization gets involved in many programmes for new business ideas, subsidiaries and branches.	2.55	.454	**
3	The organization encourages innovative programmes as they move into new markets.	2.81	.469	**
4	Venturing into new businesses has helped in the development of new products.	2.61	.761	**
Grand mean		2.63	.607	**

**** Agree. * Disagree.**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 9: represents respondents' views on competitive aggressiveness. The respondents agreed to the first question on the table which stated that the organization partners with other organisations in order to establish new businesses ($\bar{x} = 2.54$, $SD = .743$). To the second item, the respondents agreed to the question the organization gets involved in many programmes for new business ideas, subsidiaries and branches ($\bar{x} = 2.55$, $SD = .454$). To the third item, the respondents agreed to the question organization encourages innovative programmes as they move into new markets ($\bar{x} = 2.81$, $SD = .469$). To the fourth item, the respondents agreed to the question Venturing into new businesses has helped in the development of new products ($\bar{x} = 2.61$, $SD = .761$).

Table 10: Respondent's View on Customer Loyalty

SN	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	The increased number of our branches have led to an increase in our customer satisfaction	2.83	.548	**
2	Our staffs are very polite and friendly	2.75	.426	**
3	Our service quality is consistently maintained	2.84	.652	**
4	Our facilities and goods are in good and pleasant condition	2.81	.498	**
Grand mean		2.81	.531	**

** Agree. * Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 10 represents respondents' views on customer loyalty. The respondents agreed to the first question on the table which stated that the increased number of our branches have led to an increase in our customer satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 2.83$, $SD = .548$). To the second item, the respondents agreed to the question our staffs are very polite and friendly ($\bar{x} = 2.75$, $SD = .426$). To the third item, the respondents agreed to the question our service quality is consistently maintained ($\bar{x} = 2.84$, $SD = .652$). To the fourth item, the respondents agreed to the question our facilities and goods are in good and pleasant condition ($\bar{x} = 2.81$, $SD = .498$).

Table 11: Respondent's View on New Customer Acquisition

SN	Items	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Competitor acquisition by the organization has helped them to tap into the newly acquired firm's customer base.	2.80	.583	**
2	Word of mouth communication due to quality product offerings can increase or add new customer base to the firm.	2.64	.621	**
3	The organization has enjoyed significant increase in its market share due to attained success in the area of customer turnover rate.	2.59	.593	**
4	The organization has maintained its market share by building a strong customer relationship.	2.61	.487	**
Grand mean		2.66	.571	**

** Agree. * Disagree.

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 11 represents respondents' views on new customer acquisition. The respondents agreed to the first question on the table which stated that competitor acquisition by the organization has helped them to tap into the newly acquired firm's customer base ($\bar{x} = 2.80$, $SD = .583$). To the second item, the respondents agreed to the question word of mouth communication due to quality product offerings can increase or add new customer base to the firm ($\bar{x} = 2.64$, $SD = .621$). To the third item, the respondents agreed to the question the organization has enjoyed significant increase in its market share due to attained success in the area of customer turnover rate ($\bar{x} = 2.59$, $SD = .593$). To the fourth item, the respondents agreed to the question the organization has maintained its market share by building a strong customer relationship ($\bar{x} = 2.61$, $SD = .487$).

Bivariate Analysis

Table 12: Description of the Degree of Association between Variables

Correlation Coefficient (r)	Description/Interpretation
± 0.80 – 1.0	Very Strong
± 0.60 – 0.79	Strong
± 0.40 – 0.59	Moderate
± 0.20 – 0.39	Weak
± 0.00 – 0.19	Very Weak

The positive (+) sign in the value of r indicates a direct/positive relationship while negative (-) sign in value of r indicates an indirect/negative or inverse relationship. Therefore, the sign of the r value explains the direction of association or nature of relationship between the variables.

Decision Rule

Decision: If sig = p > 0.05 the hypothesis is rejected
If sig = p < 0.05 the hypothesis is accepted

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Competitive aggressiveness and customer loyalty of Fintech businesses in South/South of Nigeria.

Table 13: Relationship between Competitive aggressiveness and customer loyalty

		Correlations		
		Competitive Aggressiveness	Customer Retention	Decision
Competitive Aggressiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.741	Rejected
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	
	N	341	341	
Customer Retention	Pearson Correlation	.741	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
	N	341	341	

***S= Significant p<0.05**

In the statistical testing of hypothesis eight, a strong positive relationship was revealed to exist between Competitive aggressiveness and customer loyalty of Fintech in South/South geographic zone of Nigeria, this can be shown in the correlation coefficient value of r = 0.741 (74.1%). Furthermore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Competitive aggressiveness and customer loyalty of Fintech in South/South geographic zone, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate hypothesis upheld [(P = .001) p<0.05].

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition of Fintech businesses in South/South geographic zone of Nigeria.

Table 14: Relationship between Competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition

		Correlations		
		Competitive Aggressiveness	Market Share Growth	Decision
Competitive Aggressiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.829	Rejected
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	
	N	341	341	
Market Share Growth	Pearson Correlation	.829	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		
	N	341	341	

***S= Significant p<0.05**

In the statistical testing of hypothesis nine, a very strong positive relationship was revealed to exist between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition of Fintech businesses in South/South geographic zone of Nigeria, this can be shown in the correlation coefficient value of $r = 0.829$ (82.9%). Furthermore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition of Fintech businesses in South/South geographic zone, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate hypothesis upheld [($P = .002$) $p < 0.05$].

Discussion of findings

Competitive aggressiveness and customer Loyalty

The first hypothesis focuses on the prominent role played by competitive aggression and customer loyalty in the Fintech business of Nigeria's South/South geographic zone. The data reveals a narrative that establishes a strong correlation between these two factors. A substantial association is seen, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.741 or 74.1%. The statistical significance of the link is strongly supported by a p-value of 0.001, which falls much below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This result provides a robust confirmation of the relationship's genuineness.

Fintech operating in the South/South area have a notable advantage in client loyalty through the strategic use of competitive aggression. Through their assertive advertising strategies, innovative service improvements, and resilience in adapting to the market, they appear to resonate with their customer base. The unwavering enthusiasm exhibited by these firms not only signifies their goal, but also reflects the fundamental nature of consumer loyalty and dedication they foster.

Nevertheless, this assertive disposition encompasses more than just dominance in the market; it encapsulates a commitment. The commitment to maintaining a consistent level of service quality and fostering innovation. Within this steadfast commitment, clients discover a sense of trust, a confidence that their affiliation with the platform safeguards them against accepting anything that falls short of excellence. The findings presented in this study demonstrate a clear resonance with the scholarly works of Porter, who extensively discussed competitive dynamics, and Reichheld, who explored the concept of loyalty. These earlier academic endeavours have had a lasting impact and are reflected in the present research. These examples provide as evidence of the enduring knowledge that in the realm of competition, success is not just determined by being the most skilled, but also by maintaining a position of preference. However, it is important to proceed with caution. Although the data obtained from the South/South area provides a visually compelling representation, it should be noted that it only constitutes a partial component of a broader mosaic. Different areas, characterised by their distinct market peculiarities or chronological variations, may present an alternative narrative. The story around the first hypothesis highlights a fundamental fact within the Fintech landscape of South/South Nigeria. In the pursuit of success, it is essential to recognise that achieving the desired outcome is not just contingent upon swiftness, but also on the ability to cultivate and maintain a cohesive team throughout the process. In the context of Fintech firms, it may be argued that the adoption of assertive techniques, along with a steadfast commitment to customer-centricity, transcends mere pathways to achievement and instead shapes its very essence.

Competitive aggressiveness and new customer acquisition

Within the dynamic realm of Fintech business in the South/South geographic zone of Nigeria, the second hypothesis explores the intricate connection between competitive aggressiveness and the expansion of new customer acquisition. This analysis uncovers a narrative that is not only enlightening but also carries significant implications. The data exhibits a striking correlation between the two variables. The strength of this association is notably evident, as indicated by a correlation value of 0.829, which corresponds to an impressive 82.9%. Enhancing the strength of this association is a p-value of 0.002, which significantly exceeds the commonly recognised threshold of significance at 0.05. The complex interplay of numerical elements provides several

valuable insights. Firstly, it should be noted that competitive aggression within the South/South Fintech industry is not only a theoretical approach, but rather a practical and effective strategy that has the potential to significantly enhance a platform's market reach. The ability of platforms to gain a larger portion of the market is often facilitated by their adoption of aggressive strategies, such as intensive marketing campaigns, innovative services, and a relentless pursuit of market possibilities. These approaches have shown to be very effective in resonating with consumers and establishing a strong market presence. Furthermore, it is important to consider the subtle nature of such aggressive behaviour since it has a significant impact on shaping perceptions. Businesses that continuously outperform their competitors have an innate ability to construct a perception of being superior, forward-looking, or the preferred option for customers. Over the course of time, this perception has the potential to consolidate and strengthen, resulting in the establishment of a robust brand equity, therefore establishing a lasting dominance in the market. It is noteworthy to observe that these findings align with the perspectives of renowned experts. Porter's influential contributions to the understanding of competition and strategy emphasise the strategic importance of using aggressive approaches to capture and expand new customer in the market. This feeling is echoed in the present research. Likewise, the book authored by Barney on the utilisation of distinctive corporate resources to achieve sustainable competitive advantage appears to exhibit a comparable connection in this context. Competitive aggressiveness may serve as a distinctive and significant resource within the Fintech industry. Nevertheless, it is important to adopt a measured viewpoint while considering these findings. While the aforementioned dynamics may be observed within the South/South setting, it is important to note that these dynamics may manifest differently when applied to various geographical or industrial contexts, as well as in response to changing market environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of competitive aggressiveness and business success of fintech in south/south geographic zone, Nigeria. From the empirical results we conclude that competitive aggressiveness positively and significantly impact and improve business success. More so, competitive aggressiveness enhance customer loyalty and new customer acquisition of fintech market and bring about expansion of market of fintech in south/south geographic zone, Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the researcher made the following recommendations

- i. **Feedback Loops:** Establish mechanisms for ongoing collection of user input. This practise guarantees that the firms remain responsive to the demands of their audience and may make necessary adjustments to their products that enhance patronage.
- ii. **Adaptive Technology Roadmaps:** In light of the fast progression of technology, it is imperative for fintech to formulate adaptable technology roadmaps. This enables them to adapt their technological methods in response to the emergence of new tools and paradigms.
- iii. **Regulatory Engagement:** Actively engage with regulatory authorities to verify that the activities of the fintech are in compliance with local rules. This can also facilitate the
- iv. establishment of policies that have a positive impact on economic growth and encourage innovation that appeal to the customers that can lead market growth. People want security for their financial transactions with no frustration.

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