
INNOVATION CULTURE AND SURVIVAL OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between innovation culture and survival of small and medium scale enterprises in Rivers State. Innovation culture had two sub-constructs – creativity and learning and market orientation. The cross-sectional research design was adopted in the study. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) owners, managers and supervisors of event management companies in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, constitute the population of the study. The research instrument is a well-structured, close ended questionnaire administered to the respondents. Upon distribution of the questionnaire, ninety-six (96) owners, managers and supervisors returned theirs, representing a response rate of 83.5%. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses, and the outcomes revealed that there is a significant relationship between innovation culture and survival of SMEs. Precisely, the results showed that creativity and learning, as well as market orientation have significant correlations with the survival of SMEs in Rivers State. Consequently, it was concluded that innovation culture significantly boosts the chances of small and medium scale enterprises to survive and remain as a going concern. On that premise, it is recommended that the owners, managers and supervisors of event management companies should: provide their workers more chances for personal growth and development; doing so has been shown to boost innovation and creativity in the workplace, leading to the creation of more and better goods and services; and adopt an orientation that is driven by the market in order to boost the chances of their enterprises surviving in a market that is very competitive.

Keyword: *Innovation Culture, Creativity and Learning, Market Orientation, Survival*

Introduction

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are private sectors that can be considered as vital entities which serve as the backbone of most developing economies (Nasir et al., 2017; Yoshino et al., 2016). SMEs no doubt contribute to the economic development for a country and the accomplishments of SMEs also indicate the efficacy of government policy in nurturing entrepreneurial culture in an economy (Abdul-Halim et al., 2018). SMEs are critical to the long-term development of nations around the world, not only because they add to a country's Gross Domestic Product, but also because they help to eliminate unemployment and raise the standard of life for the masses (Srikalimah et al., 2020). However, they are largely affected by external factors that inhibit their survival and truncates their remaining as a going concern (Methammem, 2022).

Firm survival shows the level of resilience of the company in the face of competition and environmental changes; changes in the environment that drastically drained the company's resources quickly and it threatened its survival (Methammem, 2022; SantosaUtomo, 2020). Survival is a primary consideration for any commercial enterprise (Angelo & Arboló, 2015). In light of this, Jones and Barteff Publishers (2008) restate that survival and expansion are implicit organisational goals that necessitate the commitment of energy and resources. Given its importance, it is intrinsic to the going concern concept, which states that a company will keep operating past a certain point in time without ceasing operations. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine possible factors that could predict the survival of small businesses.

According to Abdul-Halim et al. (2018), innovation is expected to be essential for SMEs' survival, thus all modern organizations must embrace innovation if they are to prosper in a world characterised by competition, technological advancement, and periodic crises. The adoption of new technology or management approaches by an organization to achieve a specified improvement in its operations is referred to as "innovation" (Gerald et al., 2020). The ability to innovate has always been crucial to a company's success, but in today's competitive market, it is absolutely essential for businesses of all sizes to be innovative (Lukoschek et al., 2018). Although rapid technology progress has become the norm, unexpected industry-wide disruptions should be anticipated. There are many simultaneous changes that businesses must deal with, therefore it is crucial that they embrace a culture of constant learning (Begum et al., 2017; Grunberg et al., 2008).

Having a common set of values and goals is essential for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to innovate (Minh & Hjorts, 2015), so that innovation may take place within the bounds of the social and economic structures, cultural norms, and political customs of the nation (Wan Ismail & Abdul Majid, 2007). It is acknowledged that a cultural viewpoint may be adopted in comprehending innovation due to its complexity and difficulty (Brettel et al., 2015). In this regard, it is essential for a creative company, even a very small one, to adopt "a culture of pride and a climate of achievement" (Anahita et al., 2012). In a similar vein, Tushman and O'Reilly (1997) argue that cultural factors are an integral aspect of effective innovation management. That is because it is crucial to flourish in any kind of business setting to learn to appreciate the norms and beliefs that sustain the culture there. Strengthening unity and loyalty while establishing ground rules for proper behaviour are all benefits of fostering a culture of innovation (Mahmoud et al., 2017). To this end, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in fostering an environment that rewards innovative endeavours (Abdul-Halim et al., 2018).

It is on this premise that this study seeks to ascertain the relationship between innovation culture and survival of small and medium scale enterprises in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

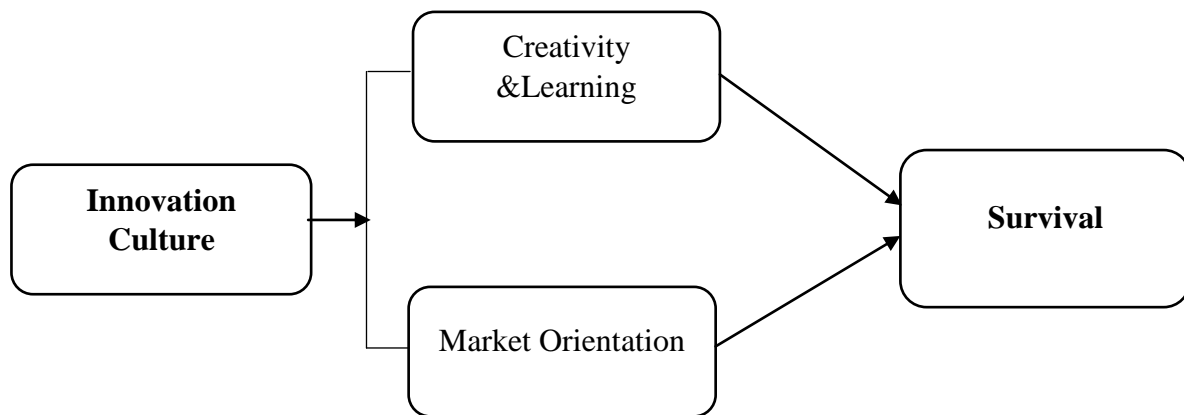


Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Innovation Culture and Survival

Hypotheses

To guide the study, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- i. There is no significant relationship between creativity and learning and survival of SMEs in Rivers State.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between market orientation and survival of SMEs in Rivers State.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Resource Based View (RBV) Theory

The resource-based approach emphasises how a company's internal features and external environment interact to shape its chances of survival and growth (Bruderl et al., 1992). An organization's competitive advantage may be maintained indefinitely, the theory posits, by making use of its whole spectrum of diverse resources (Robson et al., 2009). The Resource-Based View (RBV) characterises a company as a collection of diverse assets and attributes, offering an explanation for why some businesses thrive while others fail by highlighting the role of internal, firm-level determinants and the value of innovativeness as a distinct resource (Barney et al., 2011; Schumpeter, 1934). According to Chiang and Yan (2011), RBV's basis establishes universal acceptance of the notion that distinct collections of productive resources and skills are linked to firm survival, development, competitive advantage, and sustainability.

Innovativeness is a source of potential variation in firm-level performance, and the RBV hypothesis is required to explain why (Grigoriou & Rothaermel, 2014). The effects of RBV on the competitive advantage of a company, the longevity of that advantage, and the company's very existence are all discussed in this research to great effect (Barney, 2001; Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010). In addition, RBV laid the groundwork and provided insight into why and how a business's culture of innovation and its resources for creating competitive advantage contribute to the long-term success of its small and medium-sized enterprises (Robson et al., 2009).

Innovation Culture

Indicative of a company's propensity for innovation is its embrace of a cultural trend that values initiative in seeking out novel solutions (Adiguzel et al., 2022). Companies that want to foster a culture of creativity need to recruit people who think in a similar way. Cultures of innovation can only emerge when its members consistently try new things and are able to pass on their practises to others (Ghasemzadeh et al., 2019). A company's innovation culture consists of shared norms and practises that encourage people to think creatively and try new things (Sattayaraksa& Boon-itt, 2016).

The ability to improve and expand the quality of current goods, services, or operations is a direct result of a company's investment in enhancing or replacing its current business processes. With an innovation culture in place, organisations may build crucial institutionalisation infrastructure based on centralising the distillation of the capacity to innovate independently from people (Adiguzel et al., 2022). Meanwhile, with creative actions, substantial help for long-term rivalries is possible. The positive effects of an innovation culture can only be comprehended by returning to the concept's origins.

According to Adelekan (2016), an innovation culture emphasises the generation of as many novel ideas as possible in a given time frame. These groundless continuous changes that meet the demands of growth are crucial to the organization's long-term viability in a competitive environment, and hence to the success of the organisation as a whole (Adiguzel et al., 2022).

Creativity and Learning

The ability to come up with fresh ideas and implement them successfully in the face of obstacles is a common definition of creativity (Zhou &Shalley, 2011). What constitutes original work in a business setting is the creative application of existing ideas and information in a new situation (Lau, 2016). As a result, originality is now one of the most valuable assets any business can have (Mathieu, 2015). It's probable because of the correlation between mental adaptability and originality of ideas. Cognitive flexibility, or the capacity to overcome preconceived notions and form innovative links between ideas, has been linked to improved creativity, as shown by Müller et al. (2016). To be truly creative, one must also be able to come up with novel and interesting ideas (De Bloom et al., 2014). Similar to originality, which is characterised by concepts that do not conform to the status quo, divergent thinking is correlated with high levels of creativity (George & Wiley, 2018).

Market Orientation

The success of new products and innovations can be affected by a company's market orientation (Morgan &Anokhin, 2020; Mu et al., 2017; Najafi-Tavani et al., 2013). By utilising market orientation methods, a company may learn about both the overt and covert wants and requirements of its consumers. This knowledge allows the firm to develop and release goods that are well suited to the demands of the market (Morgan et al., 2019). Companies with a keen eye on the market make sure their new product has been thoroughly evaluated by customers before going on sale by spreading the collected data around the company at regular intervals and encouraging everyone to think like the customer (Guo et al., 2018). Hence, these businesses have more product-market fit, leading to better results from their new products (Dogbe et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2018; Morgan et al., 2019). As a result, market-focused businesses benefit from enhanced communication, cooperation, and dedication across divisions as a result of company-wide distribution of market knowledge (Zhang & Zhu, 2016). Higher levels of performance are achieved as market-oriented businesses respond creatively to the market by developing new goods in response to the

demands and preferences of consumers (Dogbe et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2018; Zhang & Zhu, 2016).

SMEs Survival

If you can weather potential setbacks and organisational fatalities, you have survived, as defined by Recker (2002). The ability of a company to satisfy its customers, employees, stockholders, investors, locals, officials, and other important parties is at the heart of this concept. Angelo and Arbolo (2015) Survival is a primary consideration for any commercial enterprise. In light of this, Jones and Barteff Publishers (2008) restate that survival and expansion are implicit organisational goals that necessitate the commitment of energy and resources. Given its importance, it is intrinsic to the going concern concept, which states that a company will keep operating past a certain point in time without ceasing operations.

Organizational survival and growth, according to Ogunro (2014), are driven by a number of elements, the first of which is technical advancement, which includes R&D efforts, financial incentives, and the rate of technological change. Secondly, environmental and contextual elements, such as climate and weather, have an impact on agricultural and industrial enterprises because of their connection to the natural world. Finally, economic considerations include interest rates, inflation rates, and currency rates, while legal aspects include anti-discrimination legislation, consumer law, anti-trust law, employment law, safety law, and health law. Gabriel (2015) ruminates at length on the organization's potential to endure as a result of its having dealt with and exploited specific environmental obstacles and opportunities. To now, the company has proven its viability by attracting a stable clientele and keeping them happy with its offerings. Success should be measured not by short-term profits but by the longevity of the organisation.

Empirical Review

S/No.	Author/Year	Country	Topic/Objective	Method Used	Findings
1.	Nwankwo & Kanyangale (2019)	Nigeria	Market Orientation and Survival of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria.	The hypotheses were tested using IBM SPSS-AMOS version 25 and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM).	The findings reveal that market sensing has a direct, powerful, and significant impact on the survival of manufacturing SMEs in Nigeria. In contrast, the effect of alliance formation is considered weak and insignificant to the survival of mature manufacturing SMEs.
2.	Arafat et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Market orientation and the sustainable growth of firms: The moderating role of access to external finance: a study of manufacturing SMEs in Kpk, Pakistan .	A questionnaire was developed using the Likert Scale for the collection of data. The Partial Least Square Analysis (PLS-SEM) is used to examine the research model as it is most appropriate for the sample size.	The results show that Market Orientation (MO) is significantly positively associated to Sustainable growth of SMEs, which is consistent with previous research. Access to Finance also impacts positively the Sustainable growth variable. Further, it is revealed that Access to Finance moderates the link between Market Orientation and Sustainable Growth for SMEs.
3.	Iorun (2014)	Nigeria	Evaluation of survival strategies of small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.	Chi square method was employed to analyze the data.	The results reveal that creativity is a strategy for the survival of small business enterprises in Nigeria. The results also indicate that high risk taking is a strategy for the survival of SMEs in Nigeria. Lastly, the results also show that, areas of opportunities for business are a panacea for the survival of SMEs in Nigeria.
4.	Saunders et al. (2014)	United Kingdom (UK)	SME innovation and learning: the role of networks and crisis events.	Mixed method study, comprising 13 focus groups, over 1000 questionnaire responses from SME managers, 13 focus groups and 20 case studies derived from semi-structured interviews.	SMEs that are innovative are significantly more committed to learning than those which are less innovative, seeing employee learning as an investment. Innovative SMEs are more likely to have a shared vision, be open-minded and to learn from crises, being able to reflect on their experiences.
5.	Juliana et al. (2021)	Nigeria	The impact of creativity and innovation on entrepreneurship development: Evidence from Nigeria.	A valid sample of 257 impacted the study using Yemane sample size determination formulae. The research employed the Ordinary Least Square method and ANOVA Test for data analysis.	Interestingly, the matrix analysis established a strong relationship between creative thinking and innovative ability, as well as technological advancement although was negatively estimated on entrepreneurship development. This indicates that technological advancement is support for creativity and innovation. However, its direct effect on entrepreneurship development was not significantly estimated. This can further be investigated to ascertain reality.

Methodology

This study adopted cross-sectional research design. A total of one hundred and fifteen (115) owners, managers and supervisors of event management companies in Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas, constitute the population of the study. The research instrument is a well-structured, close ended questionnaire administered to the respondents. Upon distribution of the questionnaire, ninety-six (96) owners, managers and supervisors returned theirs, representing a response rate of 83.5%. The research instrument satisfied face and content validity, and the pilot test results revealed that all the variables met the Cronbach’s Alpha 0.7 minimum threshold. To test the afore-stated null hypotheses, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used, through the aid of the Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results and Analysis

Bivariate Analysis

The study focused on the desire to examine the existent relationship between innovation culture and survival of SMEs, utilizing key dimensions such as creativity and learning, and market orientation against SMEs survival. In order to determine the existent relationship between study variables, the study deployed the Pearson Correlation is used to test the correlations and strength of relations.

Table 1: Creativity and Learning, and Survival

		Correlations	
		Creativity & Learning	Survival
Creativity & Learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.657**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	96	96
Survival	Pearson Correlation	.657**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	96	96

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Creativity and Learning and Survival

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows a significant level $p < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), $r = 0.657$ between creativity and learning, and survival. This means that there is a significant, strong and positive relationship between creativity and learning, and survival. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that *there is a significant relationship between creativity and learning, and survival.*

Table 2: Market Orientation and Survival

		Correlations	
		Market Orientation	Survival
Market Orientation	Pearson Correlation	1	.623**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	96	96
Survival	Pearson Correlation	.623**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	96	96

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

H₀₂: There is no significant nexus between market orientation and survival

The result of the analysis in Table 2 shows a significant level $p < 0.05$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), $r = 0.623$ between market orientation and survival. This means that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between market orientation and survival. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that *there is a significant nexus between market orientation and survival*.

Table 3: Model Summary for innovation Culture and Survival

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.895^a	.802	.798	.632

a. Predictors: (Constant), Market Orientation, Creativity and Learning

Source: SPSS Output (2023)

The model summary reported above indicates that the dimensions of innovation culture (creativity and learning and market orientation) contributed 79.8% (.798) of the change in survival; also the R value of .895^a corroborates the correlation coefficient values recorded in table 1 and 2.

Test of Hypotheses with Regression

Table 4: Regression Analysis of the Dimensions of Innovation Culture with Survival

		Coefficients ^a				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.458	.576		2.534	.013
	Creativity and Learning	1.288	.303	.570	4.249	.000
	Market Orientation	.898	.358	.337	2.509	.014

a. Dependent Variable: survival

Source: SPSS Output (2023)

The results from the regression analysis indicated that creativity and learning as a dimension of innovation culture exhibited a significant positive effect on survival ($\beta = .570$, 0.01) thus yielding a calculated value of .000 which is less than the P-value set at 0.05 ($r = .000 < .05$) resulting to non-

acceptance of the stated null hypothesis (**H₀₁**) affirming that there exist significant relationship between creativity and learning and survival.

Also, market orientation as the second dimension of innovation culture used in this study exhibited a significant positive effect on survival ($\beta = .337, 0.01$) thus produced a calculated value of .014 which is less than the P-value (marginal error) set at 0.05 ($r = .014 < .05$) resulting to non-acceptance of the stated null hypothesis (**H₀₂**) indicating that there exists significant relationship between market orientation and survival of small and medium scale enterprises in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The test of the hypotheses showed that there is a significant relationship between innovation culture and survival of small and medium scale enterprises in Rivers State. Specifically, the outcome of the analyses revealed that creativity and learning and market orientation are significant predictors of the survival of small businesses in Rivers State. These outcomes are in tandem with several empirical studies (Arafat et al., 2021; Iorun, 2014; Juliana et al., 2021; Nwankwo & Kanyangale, 2019; Saunders et al.; 2014).

For instance, Iorun (2014) evaluated the strategies for survival of small businesses in Benin, Nigeria, and found that creativity is one of the strategies for SME survival. Saunders et al's (2014) study on SME innovation and learning revealed that innovative businesses are given to learning than less innovative businesses. Such businesses thrive and survive due to that orientation that employee learning is an investment to the organization. A more recent study by Juliana (2021) established that an organization with creative thinking are more innovative and will do better in a competitive setting. Nwankwo and Kanyangale (2019) carried out a study on market orientation and the survival of SMEs in Nigeria and his findings showed a significant and affirmation correlation between the variables. Similarly, Arafat (2021) found that market orientation is a significant predictor of the continuity and growth of small businesses.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Drawing from the outcome of the test of hypotheses, it is concluded that innovation culture significantly boosts the chances of small and medium scale enterprises to survive and remain as a going concern. Specifically, creativity and learning, and market orientation are essential aspects of innovation culture that could enhance the survival of small and medium scale enterprises in Rivers State. Consequently, it was recommended that the owners, managers and supervisors of event management companies should provide their workers more chances for personal growth and development; doing so has been shown to boost innovation and creativity in the workplace, leading to the creation of more and better goods and services. This may be done by providing guidance, training, and information to employees about the company's goals and the need of finding unique approaches to problems in order to maintain a competitive edge. In addition to always being on the lookout for new ways to improve their own knowledge and skills, leaders should also regularly update their workers with the latest intelligence they have gathered about the competition, as well as market and industry developments. It is also crucial to have open dialogue about the blunders, so that employees may gain insight from one another and learn how to prevent them in the future.

Also, they should adopt an orientation that is driven by the market in order to boost the chances of their enterprises surviving in a market that is very competitive. This may be accomplished by placing a strong emphasis on both the overt and the latent demands of their consumers and incorporating those needs into the company's strategy.

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