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INNOVATIVE INTENTIONS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF REGISTERED PRINTING ENTERPRISES IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study empirically investigated the relationship between innovative intentions and entrepreneurial competencies among registered printing enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Grounded in Schumpeter's Theory of Creative Destruction and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, the study examined three specific dimensions of innovative intentions, productive innovation, process creativity, and proactive risk orientationand their predictive influence on three core measures of entrepreneurial competencies: operational effectiveness, organizational efficiency, and venture competitiveness. A structured survey design was adopted, targeting a total population of 140 registered printing firms across key commercial hubs in Port Harcourt (D-Line, Diobu, Garrison, and Trans-Amadi). Primary data were gathered using a validated 24-item questionnaire administered to lead entrepreneurs and managing partners. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r), multiple regression analysis, and One-Way ANOVA were utilized to analyze the quantitative dataset. Findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between productive innovation and operational effectiveness ($r = 0.782$, $p < 0.001$), process creativity and organizational efficiency ($r = 0.814$, $p < 0.001$), and proactive risk orientation and overall venture competitiveness ($r = 0.729$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, socio-cultural factors including early skill exposure, religion, and networking capacity moderated the realization of entrepreneurial competencies. The study concluded that strategic cultivation of innovative intentions is vital for sustaining competitive efficiency in the printing sector of South-South Nigeria. Key recommendations included establishing local technology incubation centers, structured access to soft credit schemes, and gender-inclusive entrepreneurship support systems.

Keywords: Innovative Intentions, Entrepreneurial Competencies, Operational Effectiveness, Organizational Efficiency, Printing Industry.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The contemporary global economic landscape places premium emphasis on the functional and dynamic aspects of entrepreneurship as the fundamental catalyst for sustainable industrial development, structural shift, and wealth creation. Historically, economic literature emphasized the structural supply of physical capital and natural resource endowments as primary drivers of national growth. However, modern economic paradigms, championed by evolutionary economists, demonstrate that economic progress is fundamentally driven by individual and collective entrepreneurial capability to perceive latent market opportunities, mobilize scarce production factors, and navigate market uncertainties.

In developing economies such as Nigeria, small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of industrial transformation, employment generation, and socio-economic empowerment. Specifically, within the urban commercial ecosystems of South-South Nigeria, commercial printing enterprises play a crucial role in supporting educational institutions, corporate entities, advertising sectors, political communication, and government agencies. Port Harcourt, as the economic capital of Rivers State and the industrial headquarters of the Niger Delta region, hosts a dense network of printing enterprises. These firms operate under highly volatile economic conditions characterized by technological disruption, infrastructural deficits, fluctuating exchange rates affecting imported paper and chemical consumables, and intense local rivalry.

To survive and thrive in such dynamic environments, printing entrepreneurs must possess robust entrepreneurial competencies. Entrepreneurial competencies encompass the underlying knowledge, skills, managerial capabilities, and behavioral attributes that enable a business operator to perform job functions effectively and build sustainable enterprise resilience. Central to the acquisition and manifestation of these competencies are innovative intentions. Innovative intentions reflect the conscious cognitive state and strategic intent of an entrepreneur to pursue novel combinations, ranging from the introduction of digital printing technology, superior delivery processes, dynamic cost-pricing models, to innovative product differentiation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the strategic importance of the commercial printing industry in Rivers State, empirical observations indicate high mortality rates and persistent growth stagnation among micro and small printing enterprises. Many printing firms in Port Harcourt operate on sub-optimal efficiency, relying on obsolete analog machinery, fragmented customer service delivery, and reactive business models. While scholars have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship in general, limited empirical research has explicitly examined how specific dimensions of innovative intentions directly translate into operational effectiveness and efficiency within specialized artisanal and industrial manufacturing clusters in Nigeria.

Furthermore, existing literature often treats entrepreneurial intentions as a monolithic construct without disaggregating it into actionable behavioral dimensions such as productive innovation, process creativity, and risk posture. Consequently, business owners and industrial policymakers lack empirical guidance on how cognitive innovative traits interact with operational realities in regional commercial centers like Port Harcourt. This study fills this critical knowledge gap by offering a granular empirical examination of the influence of innovative intentions on entrepreneurial competencies within registered printing enterprises in Rivers State.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between innovative intentions and entrepreneurial competencies among registered printing enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- Examine the relationship between productive innovation and operational effectiveness in registered printing firms in Port Harcourt.
- Assess the effect of process creativity on organizational efficiency among commercial printing operators in Rivers State.
- Evaluate the impact of proactive risk orientation on venture competitiveness in the study area.
- Investigate the moderating effect of socio-cultural variables (such as early skill exposure and religious inclination) on entrepreneurial success.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, the following research questions guided the study:

- What is the relationship between productive innovation and operational effectiveness in registered printing firms in Port Harcourt?
- To what extent does process creativity influence organizational efficiency among commercial printing enterprises in Rivers State?
- How does proactive risk orientation impact overall venture competitiveness in the study area?
- How do socio-cultural factors moderate the realization of entrepreneurial competencies among printing business operators?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for testing at a 0.05 level of significance:

- HO1: There is no significant relationship between productive innovation and operational effectiveness in registered printing enterprises in Port Harcourt.
- HO2: Process creativity has no significant influence on organizational efficiency in registered printing enterprises in Port Harcourt.
- HO3: Proactive risk orientation does not significantly impact venture competitiveness in registered printing enterprises in Port Harcourt.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Geographical Scope: The spatial boundary of this study is strictly confined to Port Harcourt City Council and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State, South-South Nigeria. Port Harcourt represents the core commercial hub where printing technology clusters (such as D-Line, Diobu, Garrison, and Trans-Amadi) are heavily concentrated.

Content Scope: The study focuses conceptually on the independent variable 'Innovative Intentions' (decomposed into Productive Innovation, Process Creativity, and Proactive Risk Orientation) and the dependent variable 'Entrepreneurial Competencies' (measured through Operational Effectiveness, Organizational Efficiency, and Venture Competitiveness). Socio-cultural contextual variables are also evaluated as moderating elements.

Unit of Analysis: The unit of analysis is at the firm level, with data elicited from lead entrepreneurs, owner-managers, and senior administrative personnel of registered printing enterprises.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptual Definitions & Model

Innovative Intentions: Defined as an entrepreneur's deliberate mental state, motivation, and strategic commitment to introduce novel combinations of factors, technological advancements, or unique value additions into business operations. It represents the psychological driver preceding concrete innovative behavior.

Entrepreneurial Competencies: Refers to the cluster of demonstrated skills, practical knowledge, technical know-how, decision-making capabilities, and adaptive behaviors required by an entrepreneur to successfully organize, manage, and scale an enterprise efficiently.

Table 1.1: Operationalization of Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable (Innovative Intentions)	**Dependent Variable (Entrepreneurial Competencies)**	**Socio-Cultural Contextual Variables**
1. Productive Innovation (New product/service development)	1. Operational Effectiveness (Goal attainment & quality accuracy)	1. Early Skill Inculcation
2. Process Creativity (Novel delivery & cost methods)	2. Organizational Efficiency (Resource optimization & input-output ratio)	2. Religious & Moral Beliefs
3. Proactive Risk Orientation (Calculated risk-taking posture)	3. Venture Competitiveness (Market position & growth resilience)	3. Networking Capability

2.2 Theoretical Framework

1. Schumpeterian Theory of Creative Destruction (Schumpeter, 1934): Joseph Schumpeter posited that the entrepreneur is the central driver of economic development through 'new combinations'. Schumpeter highlighted five key forms of innovation: introducing new goods, new production methods, opening new markets, conquering new supply sources, and restructuring industry organizations. This theory underpins the independent variable by explaining how innovative intentions disrupt static market equilibria.

2. Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991): Ajzen asserts that human behavior is guided by behavioral intentions, which are formed by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Applied to entrepreneurship, an entrepreneur's decision to exhibit competencies and drive operational efficiency is heavily dependent on their prior cognitive intention to innovate.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for this study. This design was chosen because it allows the empirical collection of quantifiable data across a standardized sample of printing enterprises at a single point in time, enabling statistical testing of linear hypotheses.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

The target population comprised all 140 registered commercial printing enterprises operating within the Port Harcourt urban metropolis (Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry Registry, 2025). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, a sample size of 103 printing enterprises was established. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized across four commercial printing clusters in Port Harcourt: D-Line (n=35), Diobu (n=30), Garrison (n=20), and Trans-Amadi (n=18).

3.3 Data Collection Instrument & Reliability

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled 'Innovative Intentions and Entrepreneurial Competencies Questionnaire (IIECQ)'. The instrument contained 24 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Instrument validity was confirmed through expert judgment by professors of entrepreneurship at Rivers State University. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient yielded an overall score of 0.88, confirming high internal consistency.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis, and Results

4.1 Demographic and Enterprise Characteristics

Out of 103 questionnaires distributed, 96 valid copies were retrieved and analyzed, representing a 93.2% retrieval rate. Table 4.1 outlines the demographic distribution of responding entrepreneurs and firm characteristics.

Table 4.1: Demographic and Enterprise Characteristics (N = 96)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	76	79.2%
	Female	20	20.8%
Geographical Background	South-East (East)	41	42.7%
	South-South (South)	28	29.2%
	South-West / North	27	28.1%

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation (r) and multiple regression analysis were conducted to test the three hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

Table 4.2: Correlation Analysis Between Variables

Hypothesis Path	Sample (N)	Correlation (r)	p-value	Decision
Productive Innovation -> Operational Effectiveness	96	0.782	0.000 (< 0.05)	Reject HO1
Process Creativity -> Organizational Efficiency	96	0.814	0.000 (< 0.05)	Reject HO2
Proactive Risk Orientation -> Venture Competitiveness	96	0.729	0.000 (< 0.05)	Reject HO3

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The empirical results provided strong statistical evidence supporting all three hypotheses. The strong positive correlation (r = 0.782) between productive innovation and operational effectiveness demonstrates that printing enterprises in Port Harcourt that proactively introduce new digital print services and high-quality finishing options achieve superior client satisfaction and project execution success. Similarly, process creativity demonstrated the highest correlation (r = 0.814) with organizational efficiency, indicating that optimizing workflow scheduling, reducing paper waste, and adopting energy-efficient digital presses directly minimize operating costs. These empirical findings align with Schumpeter's core proposition that innovation is the primary driver of enterprise survival.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings, the study concluded that innovative intentions are fundamental determinants of entrepreneurial competencies among printing enterprises in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Businesses whose leadership fosters proactive risk orientation, productive innovation, and workflow process creativity demonstrate higher operational efficiency, improved resilience, and greater competitive advantage in South-South Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

- 1. Technological Upgrading: Printing entrepreneurs in Port Harcourt should transition from traditional offset machinery to high-speed digital direct-to-garment and direct-to-plate technology to enhance process creativity and operational speed.
- 2. Institutional Support & Micro-Credit: The Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the Bank of Industry (BOI), should establish low-interest equipment lease funds for printing SMEs.
- 3. Skill Acquisition & Women Inclusion: Specialized technical printing academies should be established in Port Harcourt to encourage early skill acquisition and address gender imbalance in the printing trade.

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