

Business Networking Variations and its Effects on Organisational Survival of Male and Female-led Branded Eateries in South-West Nigeria.

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Abstract

The study examined business networking variations and its effects on organisational survival of male and female-led branded eateries in south-west Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Adoption of survey design was based on the fact that, survey design through the collection of primary data gives researcher an opportunity to describe prevailing circumstances. The sample size was drawn from all the owners, managers and operators of the selected Branded Fast Food Eatery. All the population was used as the sample size. Therefore, 174 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the selected Branded eateries. Regression analysis was used to measure the effect of business networking on organisational survival. Analysis of Variance ANOVA which measured variations among variables was used with independent t-test to ascertain the degree of significance of the measured variation among women and men-led Branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria. Results revealed that the mean scores of women and men-led Branded eateries were compared by means of an independent t-test indicated that the model had a correlation value of 0.914, which manifests a good and strong linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The table further showed that the goodness of fit (R^2) is 0.810 which depicted that 81% of the change in dependent variable (organizational survival) is accounted for by the independent variables (business networking. More so, the adjusted R square is 79.3% which explained the importance and contributions of the explanatory variable on the dependent, that is the explanatory variable of business networking affect organizational survival of male-led branded eateries by 79.3% leaving the remaining 20.7% accounted for stochastic error term (other variables outside the regression model). Furthermore, ANOVA result which indicated the strength of the model reported the F-value of 30.814 and F-(probability) value of 0.00 to be statistically significant. Based on the findings, the study concluded that business networking has significant effects on the organisational survival of male and female-led branded eateries in South-West Nigeria. The study, therefore, concluded that business networking referred to as forging alliances within the business environment where business operate, promotes firm's survival.

1.1 Introduction

Branded eateries' businesses in Nigeria started out in 1986, when a multinational company named UAC Foods introduced its brand "Mr. Biggs" to the Nigerian market with the aim of replicating the McDonalds' experience in Nigeria. The McDonalds' experience entailed offering

a snack-dominated menu to customers using the quick service model. Aroloye (2017) continues that Mr. Biggs' operations began to grow exponentially due to an upgrade in product offerings (its food was not only dominated by snacks but began to include local and continental dishes) and the availability of beautiful sceneries in their branches for corporate meetings and socializing.

Emelike and Bailey (2019) reveal that between 1986 and 1988, one Mr. Biggs' branch was opened across Nigeria, every 6 months. This happened more often at Lagos. Emelike and Bailey (2019) added that some of these new branches were equally opened in some fuel refilling stations across the nation (Mr Biggs' outlets were opened in Mobil Filling Stations while Sweet Sensation outlets were opened in Oando Filling Stations). Emelike and Bailey (2019) further added that between 1986 and 1994, eateries businesses expanded even more when new entrants such as Sweet Sensation and Tantalizers joined the fray.

However, the trend of new branded eateries springing up all over the place started to change as many of them began to experience dwindling sales or complete loss of business. Aroloye (2017) reveals the reasons why branded eateries stopped springing up across the country and also why many of them did not eventually survive. Aroloye (2017) states that Mr. Biggs success which was backed by numerous eatery expansions premised on franchising arrangements; was negatively impacted due to the Fast Food Eatery's inability to undertake effective Quality Control activities in its branches.

As a result, taste and ambience of the Mr. Biggs' offerings and restaurant varied with reports of many of them being sub-standard. Other issues that led to the closure of many of its branches were hygiene factors. Aroloye (2017) also reports that many of Mr. Biggs' customers complained of being served leftovers which sometimes were stale or spoilt. These problems were attributed to the franchisees who prioritized quick returns for their investments more than customer satisfaction. Aroloye (2017) further highlights the problems of Mr Biggs to be caused competing brands such as Tantalizers and Sweet Sensation.

Several branches of Branded eateries globally, including those in South West Nigeria have folded up due to their inability to survive but these incidents are seldom reported due to possibilities of brand devaluation (Parsa *et al.*, 2014). Most times, these folded up branches are franchises that are re-purchased or re-sold; leading to a high number of under-reported failures in the Branded Fast Food Eatery market (Parsa *et al.*, 2014). Emelike and Bailey (2019) reveals reasons why some Branded Eateries have not survived and eventually folded up in Nigeria to include stiff competition; high operational costs; lack of communication between affected eateries and their customers clamoring for re-branding/innovation and/or sustainability of quality and the multiplicity of taxation. Ajayi (2016) posits that these reasons are inclusive of what inhibits SMEs including Branded Eateries from networking and eventually leads to them folding up. Some popular branded eateries with branches that have folded up include Mr. Biggs, Tantalizers; Chicken Republic and Sweet Sensation

Networking is the building of relationships by firms needed for improved performance, competitive advantage and survival (Huynh and Patton, 2014). Insufficient networking activities by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have typically constrained them by lowering their performance, competitiveness and ultimately, their abilities to survive (Turyakira & Mbidde, 2015). Networking is essentially the performance of an organisation because it links it with needed resources internally and externally, for the achievement of its goals. Gibson *et al* (2013)

opine that networking builds personal and professional relationships, boosts communication within the organisation and eases access to needed resources. Franco (2018) describes networking as a tool needed by organisations to cooperate by sharing resources which could be in the form of ideas, information, capital or opportunities. Since many organisations face the challenge of insufficient resources, achieving organisational goals and objectives many times, may be daunting. The use of networking can greatly help to provide the needed platform to secure critical organisational resources.

Globally, Branded eateries have had various challenges which have culminated in survival problems. Studies done in developing countries including Nigeria have revealed that so many factors have been alluded to as causes of these businesses' failure ranging from: lack of business strategies leading to business decline (Ukorebi, 2018; Zebet *et al.*, 2021);

Networking is also a presumed critical factor to the survival of any organization and can be embarked upon by either male or female owners, managers or operators. Watson (2011) explains that both men and women owners/managers of SMEs are seen engaging in networking. However, it was noted that SMEs owners who were men, made better and frequent use of formal networking (with associations and organisations) more than women enterprise owners who made greater use of informal networking (with friends and family). For Branded eateries, being in the business of food-making normally should attract a high number of patronage. Nevertheless, the prevailing economic condition is such that without being embedded in different networks to gather information or leverage resources, the survival of any organization will be in great jeopardy.

Most studies on SME networking have been done in developed countries (Shokri *et al.*, 2014; Priyanka and Sekar, 2020; Wang & Chung, 2020; Vatamanescu *et al.*, 2017; Lofsten, 2016; Watson, 2011; Breuer & Ludeke-Freund, 2017; Sungur, 2015). Other business networking studies done on SMEs in Asia include (Anwar *et al.*, 2018; Lau, 2020; Ali *et al.*, 2020; Shah *et al.*, 2019; Hassan *et al.*, 2018; Mohamad & Chin, 2019; Nuryakin, 2020; Faroque *et al.*, 2017; Konsti-Laakso *et al.*, 2012) and few related studies in African Countries including Nigeria (Mlotshwa & Msimango-Galawe, 2020; Haddoud *et al.*, 2017; Fatai *et al.*, 2018; Idowu & Ogundipe, 2013; Bukki *et al.*, 2020; Ekeh *et al.*, 2019; Ojo & Irefin, 2011). However, studies conducted in Nigeria have not been done on Branded eateries, in the South West.

2.0 Literature Review

Networking

Networking is essentially the performance of an organisation because it links it with needed resources internally and externally, for the achievement of its goals. Gibson *et al* (2013) opine that networking builds personal and professional relationships, boosts communication within the organisation and eases access to needed resources. Franco (2018) describes networking as a tool needed by organisations to cooperate by sharing resources which could be in the form of ideas, information, capital or opportunities. Since many organisations face the challenge of insufficient resources, achieving organisational goals and objectives many times, may be daunting. The use of networking can greatly help to provide the needed platform to secure critical organisational resources.

Networking is important for SMEs in their bid to manage risks, reduce costs and achieve higher performance. Atanassova and Clark (2015) expound further on this by stating that networking improves on the internal resources of SMEs such as their marketing competencies. These competencies help SMEs to maximize their strengths, reduce their weaknesses, exploit opportunities while protecting themselves from threats. This has remarkably assisted SMEs in their market planning, decisions and other related activities, particularly their competitiveness (Turyakira & Mbidde, 2015). Other competencies that networking helps develop within SMEs include entrepreneurial and managerial competencies especially of the owners (Muzzi & Albertini, 2014). Entrepreneurial competencies are opportunity, organizing, strategic, relationship, commitment, and conceptual competencies (Man *et al.*, 2002); while managerial competencies are communication skills, teamwork, being proactive, vision, self-management, being result-oriented, being strategic-oriented, ambition, persistence, decision making, risk taking and creativity (Bhardwaj & Punia, 2013).

While competencies of network actors can determine the type of resources being exchanged, networking comes with the mechanism of governance for the purpose of deciding the content of resources to be exchanged, how it will be exchanged and the quality of the exchange (Omar *et al.*, 2020). Omar *et al* (2020) also posit three main mechanisms of governing networking activities to be strong intimacy and high emotional attachment, trust, reciprocity, power and influence, threat of being ostracized and loss of reputation. Basically, all exchange relationships in a network are based on the strength (strong or weak) of relationships between network actors; emotional/social ties or a decision to trust in another network party's ability or knowledge; expectations that networking activities will be rewarded; power and influence over network resources or actors; fear of being boycotted and blacklisted.

Koohborfardhaghighi and Altman (2016) opine that networking is a utility (social welfare) maximization process by members of the network. Riccobono *et al* (2011) opine that networking is a competitive advantage strategy and activity useful for sourcing, alliance building, joint venturing and outsourcing among others. Networking can also be considered as a form of organizational capital that contributes to the performance of an organization. Networking has contributed to financial performance, cost-effective and quick entry into markets, exploitation of internal capabilities and mitigating competition (Darbi, 2016).

Darbi (2016) state that networking are exchange-value practices at individual, business, institutional, field, state or the larger society level required to meet needs that arise from inaccessibility to capital, strategic capabilities, technology and markets. Carson *et al* (2004) view networking from the marketing perspective in SMEs and define it as effective and strategic procedures for managing markets and their components especially in the face of constraints. Therefore, networking should be prioritized by managers who constantly face resource limitations and dynamic markets.

Ibarra and Hunter (2007) refer to networks as an important tool for leaders in transition or newly promoted managers to build personal contacts for information and resource gains, such that they can rally support and make future business predictions capable of shaping their environment. They further opine that networking is the shifting of resource components from one sector of a network to another deficit sector of a network to achieve results. Huynh and Patton (2014) view networking as a new firm's capability of extending resource, opportunity and market creation and usage beyond its locality.

Ferreira and Plessis (2009) point out that networks and community interactions improve human resources through knowledge and norms transfer. They further expound on knowledge to be human capital, social capital, organizational capital, intellectual capital and network capital. All these capital forms are responsible for network diversity and positioning which, Wu (2013) opines that it is necessary for increase in revenue and job retention. Wu (2013) adds that these network positions are a function of human capital.

Guanxi (business and political) networking aids organizational learning and result(s) generation by positioning firms to get necessary information and resources (Chung *et al.*, 2015). They also view learning (explorative and exploitative) as a performance indicator in firms that practice networking. They go further to expound on the forms of learning which can be within supply-chain network (exploitative) and outside supply-chain network (explorative). Dimitratos *et al* (2014) also opine that networking activities can eliminate learning impediments as the networked organizations evolve and adjust.

Networking is also described as the breakdown of targets and the development of strategies needed for nurturing and governing inter-organizational and intra-organizational networks fuelled by trust to achieve organizational goals (Eckenhof, 2011). Intra-organizational networking refer to exchanges that take place between employees while inter-organizational networking refer to exchanges that take place between other stakeholders such as customers, competitors, suppliers, shareholders and government representatives among others.

According to Ibarra and Hunter (2007), networking is the link to information that enhances personal and organizational goal achievement by initiating managerial relationships.

The objectives of networking practically work tandem with organizational objectives because they facilitate their achievement. The overall objectives of networking therefore is to facilitate the flow of a broad variety of resources (tangible: money, goods or intangible: information, skills, prestige and support) among others, between the parties in the network.

The summary of the extant literature in this study shows that networking is the process by which top managers establish relationships with the internal and external actors of the focal organization to access information on the state of their organization and the environment while unraveling the future priorities of the organization such that the required resources and stakeholders' buy-in are secured and organizational goals are achieved.

Theoretical Framework

The theories most relevant to this study is the "Social Network Theory" and "Entrepreneurship Theory" as postulated by Stanley Milgram in 1967 and Schumpeter in 1912. The Social Network Theory takes care of the independent variable while the Entrepreneurship Theory is the most suitable for the dependent variable under consideration.

The Social Network Theory is considered most appropriate for the independent variable "Networking" because it entails the organisation leveraging its strong and weak ties while coming together with different and independent individuals and/or organisations alongside their interactions to access resources, which are otherwise outside their control but necessary to achieve the objectives of their organisations.

The Entrepreneurship Theory is also considered suitable for the dependent variable "Organisational Survival" because it is based upon the concepts of adaptability, innovation and flexibility of organisations. When organisations adopt adaptability, innovation and flexibility, they can better achieve the objectives of the organisation.

3.0 Methodology

Research Design

As this study intends to look into networking and organisational survival in Branded eateries in South West, Nigeria, survey research design was adopted. Adoption of survey design was based on the fact that, survey design through the collection of primary data gives researcher an opportunity to describe prevailing circumstances. This study was undertaken in namely: Chicken Republic, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Tantalizer, Country Kitchen, Byte More, Foodco, Aroma, West Grill, Foodmataz and Captain Cook in Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti States. These eateries were chosen because they have branches in more than one of the six states chosen, where they are presently operating.

Population and sample techniques and sample size

The sample size was drawn from all the owners, managers and operators of the selected Branded Fast Food Eatery. All the population was used as the sample size. Therefore, 174 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the selected Branded eateries.

3.3.2 Sampling Technique

The manner and source of obtaining data is important to prevent problems of improperly collected data. Considering the small size of the population, it was entirely used as sample for the study. As a result, census sampling technique (collection of data from a whole population) was employed in this study.

Method of Data Analysis

Regression analysis was used to measure the effect of business networking on organisational survival. Analysis of Variance ANOVA which measured variations among variables was used with independent t-test to ascertain the degree of significance of the measured variation among women and men-led Branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria since an independent t-test measures the difference between two independent, unrelated groups. The mean scores of women and men-led Branded eateries were compared by means of an independent t-test.

4.0 Results

Presentation of Core Issues of Investigation

Table 4.2 shows mean response of the respondents on each of the statement in the research tool. All the mean responses were higher than 3.0 which led to the decision in the last column of the table. The analysis in table 4.2 indicated that the respondents gave an overwhelming affirmation on business networking engagement and organizational survival in eateries in Southwest Nigeria. Members agreed that workshop and conferences; cultivating connection with buyers; connections with other relevant business associates; connections with competitors; maintaining connections with buyers etc contributed greatly to their organizational survival in their respective eateries in order to increase organisational performance. The respondents further agreed that they kept maintaining good relationships with ex-colleagues, especially, those that are very vast in the business, as this is imperative in order to stay long in business arena as well as increasing organizational space across regions.

Table 4.2 Members Perception of the Relevance of Business Networking on Organisational survival (n=154)

S/N	Statement on proxies of Business Networking	Mean	S.D	Remark
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	Business Networking			
1	Spent much effort and/or money on cultivating connections with buyers	5.49	0.697	Agree
2	Spent much effort and/or money on cultivating connections with suppliers	4.68	0.356	Agree
3	Spent much effort and/or money on cultivating connections with competitors	5.37	0.560	Agree
4	Spent much effort and/or money on cultivating connections with business communities such as trade associations	3.01	0.777	Agree
5	Spent much effort and/or money on cultivating connections with other relevant business associates	3.64	0.579	Agree
6	Spent much effort and/or money in attending workshops and conferences	5.68	0.328	Agree
7	Spent much effort and/or money in maintaining good relationships with ex-colleagues	5.26	0.659	Agree
8	Spent much effort and/or money on maintaining connections with buyers	5.42	0.417	Agree
9	Spent much effort and/or money on maintaining connections with suppliers	3.44	0.327	Agree
10	Spent much effort and/or money on maintaining connections with competitors	4.27	0.820	Agree
11	Spent much effort and/or money on maintaining connections with business communities such as trade associations	3.99	0.960	Agree
12	Spent much effort and/or money on maintaining connections with other relevant business associates	5.41	0.713	Agree
	Grand Mean	4.638	0.599	Agree

Source: Researcher's computation using SPSS

Similarly, table 4.3 indicates the responses of the respondents on the research tool. The table showed that the respondent agreed on all the statement on political networking with mean greater than 3.0. Nonetheless, the respondent opined that the owners of the organization lobby for political appointments as a way of political networking, also, they persuade people to vote for a political party or show solidarity for the government, accordingly, the respondent affirmed that their organisation provides government agencies and political leaders timely business sector information, they seldom agreed that politicians occupy top management positions in organization and etc. As such, political networking enhances organizational survival as reflected in the grand mean of 3.785.

Hypothesis One

Business networking does not vary significantly as it impacts on organisational survival of male and female-led Branded eateries in South-West Nigeria.

Table 4.7 showed that t-value 4.277 is greater than critical t-value 1.960 at 5% level of significance. So, the null hypothesis is rejected, which thereby implies that there is a significant difference

between business networking among male and female-led branded eateries in

Southwest. Table also showed that the mean score of business networking of male-led branded eateries is greater than the mean score of business networking of female-led branded eateries, so it is concluded that male-led branded eateries exhibit more business networking than their counterpart in female led-business eateries in Southwest.

Table 4.7: t-test on difference between business networking among male and female-led branded eateries in Southwest

Branded eateries	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df = (n1+n2) -2	t-cal	t-table
Male	72	2.49	1.697	152	4.277	1.960
Female	82	1.68	1.356			

Source: Field Survey Report

P<0.05

ANOVA regression test was employed to test the extent to which networking parameters significantly affect organizational survival among male and female-led branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria.

Table 4.12 indicated that the model had a correlation value of 0.914, which manifests a good and strong linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The table further showed that the goodness of fit (R^2) is 0.810 which depicted that 81% of the change in dependent variable (organizational survival) is accounted for by the independent variables (business networking. More so, the adjusted R square is 79.3% which explained the importance and contributions of the explanatory variable on the dependent, that is the explanatory variable of business networking affect organizational survival of male-led branded eateries by 79.3% leaving the remaining 20.7% accounted for stochastic error term (other variables outside the regression model). Furthermore, ANOVA result which indicated the strength of the model reported the F-value of 30.814 and F-(probability) value of 0.00 to be statistically significant. This showed that the model is reliable, error free and do not suffer from specification bias, as such, the study established that the regression model is too good to be rejected, and hence the model is significant. Therefore, the study concluded that business networking practices have positive and significant effect on organizational survival of male-led branded eateries in southwest Nigeria.

Table 4. 12: Business Networking and Organisational Survival of Male-led Branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria

Southwest Nigeria

Model Summary						
Model		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1		.914 ^a	.810	.793	1.191	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Business network						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	218.393	5	43.679	30.814	.000 ^b
	Residual	209.789	66	1.417		

	Total	428.182	71			
a. Dependent Variable: Organisational survival						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Business network						
Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.425	.500		4.847	.000
	Business networking	.440	.121	.357	3.633	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Organisational survival						

Source: Field Survey Report

Report from table 4.13 expressed a correlation value of 0.749, which manifests a good linear relationship between the dependent and independent variable, the goodness of fit (R^2) was also expressed as 0.621 which depicted that 62.1% of the change in dependent variable (organizational survival) is accounted for by the independent variable (business). More so, the adjusted R square is 60.1% which explained the importance and contributions of the explanatory variable on the dependent, that is the explanatory variable of business networking affect organizational survival of female-led branded eateries by 60.1% leaving the remaining 39.9% accounted for stochastic error term (other variables outside the regression model). Furthermore, ANOVA result which indicated the strength of the model reported the F-value of 29.491 and F-(probability) value of 0.00 to be statistically significant. This showed that the model is reliable, error free and do not suffer from specification bias, as such, the study established that the regression model is too good to be rejected, hence the model is significant.

Nonetheless, the study concluded that networking practices have positive and significant effect on organisational survival of female-led branded eateries in southwest Nigeria.

Table 4. 13: Networking and Organisational Survival of Female-led Branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria

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Model Summary						
Model		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1		.749 ^a	.621	.601	1.191	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Business network						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	127.093	5	25.419	21.491	.000 ^b
	Residual	175.044	76	1.183		
	Total	302.136	81			
a. Dependent Variable: Organisational survival						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Business network						
Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Model					

1	(Constant)	3.556	.481		7.398	.000
	Business networking	.198	.059	.239	3.356	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Organisational survival						

Source: Field survey Report

Discussion of Findings

In other to affirm the test of hypotheses, t-test was employed to determine the differences between male and female-led branded eateries as it relates to networking and organisational survival while ANOVA regression test was applied to test the individual and overall effects of networking and organizational survival among male and female-led branded eateries in Southwest Nigeria. Summarily, based on the test of hypothesis one, the result explicitly showed that business networking varies significantly on organizational survival as it affects male and female-led branded eateries in Nigeria. This result showed that business networking has positive and significant effect on organizational survival of male and female-led branded eateries respectively. This connotes that what is applicable to male-led branded eateries is also applicable to their female counterparts to an extent. However, the mean score of male-led branded eateries is greater than the mean of the female-led branded eateries which indicates that male-led branded eateries employ more business networking than their female counterparts. Wang and Chung (2020) stressed that business networking is the job of top executives in forging connections with other “Business-to-Business” firms that typically make up the focal firm’s supply and distribution chains. This connection involves the interconnectivity of organisations, employees and resources within a business landscape that may be interdependent, interacted or joined. As such, organisations need to incorporate all and sundry into its connectivity plan in order to achieve the same objective. The study is in conformity with Omwenga, Mukulu and Kanali (2013) that the performance of women-owned enterprises is determined by business networking activities. It also validates the finding of Mohamad and Chin (2019) that business networking is directly linked to entrepreneurial orientation and both business networking and entrepreneurial orientation significantly impacts on business sustainability and by extension organisational survival.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concluded that business networking has significant effects on the organisational survival of male and female-led branded eateries in South-West Nigeria. The study, therefore, concluded that business networking referred to as forging alliances within the business environment where business operate, promotes firm’s survival.

Recommendation

As business networking impact organisational survival positively, managers, especially those in Branded Fast Food Eateries, should not relent but continually embrace the practices of business networking so as to improve their performance and ultimately their survival.

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