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INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT PACKAGING INFORMATION AND VISIBILITY ON CONSUMER BUYING DECISION FOR BRANDS OF BREAD IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT
The study investigates the influence of product packaging information and visibility on consumer buying decision of brands of bread in Delta State. The study adopted a descriptive research design using a survey research method. The population of the study comprises of the consumers of brands of bread in Warri, Asaba and Sapele. The sample size of 384 consumers was derived using Topman formula, which is used for unknown population. *A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the hypotheses formulated were tested using multiple regression statistical technique at 0.05% level of significance. Findings of the study indicated that product package information and visibility had a positive significant influence on consumer buying decision for brands of bread in Delta State. The study concludes that customer choices for brands of bread in Delta State were significantly and positively influenced by product packaging. The study recommended that bread manufacturers and other stakeholders should continue to invest in and enhance product package information to sustain consumer purchase of brands of bread in Delta State. They should also endure to maintain and improve on the visual attributes of the bread package to sustain consumer patronage.*

Keywords: Product, packaging, information, visibility, buying decision

1.1 INTRODUCTION
In reality, every business firms strive competitively to keep existing customers and encouraging new ones for their products and services in the industry. Packaging is one of the most important operational marketing techniques and practices that certain businesses use to keep and promote both existing and new consumers. To put it another way, packaging serves as a marketing technique that is primarily intended to preserve and uphold a product's reputation in the eyes of the public (Dillon, 2023). Businesses are gradually realizing how effective attractive packaging is at evoking

and establishing instantaneous or spot-on consumer recognition of a brand in recent times (Keller & Armstrong, 2018). Packaging though an aspect of physical product casing is an integral tool of modern-day business operations to protect products and services against competitors in the industry. In the cutthroat business world, it's also a crucial component of the marketing mix that projects the company's brand image. Physical products need packaging to prevent damage and make the product and brand appealing to the intended consumer base for attention and acquisition. It is essentially designed to protect, promote and provide convenient recognition and handling of the product. Displaying a product is very important in attracting the attention of the consumer to buy the product; therefore, an alluring package/packaging becomes imperative.

Dillion (2023) defined packaging as the activities targeted towards the designing and producing the container or wrapper for a product. However, packaging has evolved beyond simply producing a container to protect and preserve the product image; it has evolved into a marketing promotional tool that replaces the traditional salesman system by attracting consumer attention, giving a unique and positive impression of the product, and providing current information about the product as well.

Packaging equally helps consumer to carefully identify and differentiate a product from competing brands of rivals in the market place and space. Package is a product protection and value creation method from the external environment (Rambabu & Porika, 2020). Packaging is also defined as a material that contains a consumer good with the aim of keeping it clean and ensuring that the product can be attractively presented (Hiren, 2022). Product packaging is seen as an external component of a product, meaning that while it is connected to the actual product, it is not a part of the actual product (Maimuna et al., 2021). Packaging is the external part of a product that embraces the physical appearance of the container and it includes the design, colour, shape, label and materials used. The extrinsic element is used to identify, characterize, safeguard, exhibit, and market the product. Additionally, it is designed to be readily marketed, stored, and protected from harm (Nur et al., 2020).

In order to get a competitive edge, the majority of marketing companies also work in packaging, creating a box that presents an appealing image that will draw customers in. The packaging has evolved into a symbol in modern marketing that conveys positive or negative inferred meanings about the product. Packaging is becoming a useful tool in the cutthroat marketing world for capturing consumers' buying intentions. Packaging affects the buying decision-making process of some classes of consumers in the market. It gives firm the ample opportunity to convince a prospective customer towards brand selection, because consumers are exposed to packages as a form of promotion (Benjamin, Ajisafe et al., 2019; Hiren, 2023). Packaging makes identical products stand out from one another and makes it easier for customers to select the ideal product from a large selection of similar products.

Consumer buying decision making process relates to series of activities that the consumer undertakes before purchasing a product; starting from the searching for information and evaluating alternatives about the product before arriving at a decision of choosing and eventually purchase of such a product with the sole aim of satisfying his/her needs and desires (Olalekan & Adewale, 2019). However, the effect of packaging on the consumer's purchasing decision making begins firstly; by influencing his/her perception about the product through the visual elements of the package display, such as design, colour, size, and shape, then, stimulating the emotional areas of his/her brain to influence his/her preferences and choices as well. Often times, most marketing firms have come up with different innovative packaging in order to have more market-share for their brands as a process of motivating consumers to patronize and purchase their products. This has invariably forced the company to take on a variety of innovative projects and calculated risks in order to position their product for competitive advantage. According to Sanfilippo (2023), packaging features typically raise consumer awareness, give clear information about the product and communicate it to the audience of the target consumer, as well as communicate the brand attributes that will position the product in the minds of consumers and, in the end, set it apart from its rivals' or competitors' products. The study' objective is to determine the influence of product package information and visibility on consumer buying decision for brands of bread in Delta State.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Product Package Information

Product package information refers to the creation of the exterior of a product. It contains choices for shape, material, and colour as well as fonts, graphics, and colour that may be used to wrap, a box, a can, a bottle, or any other type of container (Beacom et al., 2021). One useful element that aids in efficiently delivering the goods to the customer is the packaging design. Additionally, it engages us through sight, touch, and sound—and, depending on the product or package, maybe smell and taste—while narrating a tale (Marr, 2023). Understanding the product, who is purchasing it, and how they are purchasing it are all important steps in the packaging design process. Prior to beginning the design process, it is critical to identify the target demographic or ideal customer. The ideal customer should be drawn in by the product's packaging design (Khan & Ullah, 2014).

In the opinion of Yew, et al. (2020), the physical materials and design elements used to encase and present a product are known as product packaging information. It includes the wrapping, box, or container used for protection during storage, display, and transit. Packaging also acts as a brand ambassador and a communication tool. Information about product packaging passes through several design, production, and printing procedures. Information on packaging should ideally be practical and functional, visually appealing, and consistent with the brand's identity. When developing packaging, factors like cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and durability are carefully taken into account (Yew, et al., 2020).

2.1.1 Legal Requirement of Packaging

Design of packaging is characterized by the needed information, which is been required by the relevant regulatory agencies such as National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), International Standard Organization (ISO) and Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) to appear on it. These legal requirements direct all firms to give appropriate information on the product such as:

- NAFDAC number
- Manufacturing date
- Expiring date
- Manufacturing address
- Product description
- Storage condition
- Net weight
- Nutritional Information/ingredients
- Usage Instruction
- Country of origin

These needed information gives credence to the product by motivating the consumers to buy the products. If these legal requirements are not discovered in the product's box design, many customers could believe that the item is low-quality, unoriginal, or (fake) inferior. Some product packaging, however, is so badly made that it is unable to draw in or trick a potential buyer into becoming a customer. For certain products, the majority of these authorities fall short in ensuring compliance.

2.1.2 Obtaining Legal Ownership

The legal ownership is informative, an important aspect of product packaging. This ensures that the product is properly identified and protected. The following are the means of obtaining legal ownership.

Trademark: Trademark is used to differentiate product packaging from other competitor, and all requires the technological and innovative expertise to secure the ownership of these legal rights.

Patent Right: This right is solely given to a manufacturer that came up with new innovation or who invented a new product into the market.

Copy Right: It gives the existence and ownership. The right by law to be the entity which determines who right as it pertains to one or more production.

Logo: Logos serve to represent a given firm through a visual image that can be easily understood and recognized. As a key part of an organization’s identity, a logo must try to communicate the brand essence of a company or what the organization represents.

2.2 Product Package Visibility

Product pack visibility is defined by Shukla et al. (2022) as the capability of products to be discovered, recognized, and interacted with. The conventional view is that the visibility of product packaging is significantly impacted by two primary elements: the product's placement within the store and its presentation to the consumer. The positioning of products inside an online catalogue is important in e-commerce, but how they show up in front of a potential customer has a greater influence on whether or not they make a purchase (Rambabu & Porika, 2020). Product packaging visibility, product safety, weight, cost, ease of opening and re-sealing, ease of use and aesthetics are parameters that must be given utmost importance to during the packaging process and in that particular order.

According to Dillion (2023), product packaging visibility does not only mean the "Shelf-Share" of the product but the packaging aspect of it i.e. (the allure, appeal, and attractiveness). Dillion (2023) highlighted that visibility can have several benefits for businesses. Increased brand loyalty is one of the biggest advantages. Customers are more inclined to trust a company and stick with it when it is open and honest about its goods and services. Walker, McGuinty, Charlebois & Music's research study from 2021 revealed that 94% of consumers are inclined to stick with a brand they believe to be transparent. Furthermore, 73% of consumers are prepared to pay extra for a product that they believe to be completely transparent. Another benefit of product pack visibility is to improved communication among all stakeholders. In addition, when communication is open and honest from the outset, everyone benefits. Product packaging visibility can also lead to transparent consumer buying decision-making, which leads to trust and goodwill among stakeholders.

2.2.1 Attributes of Packaging under Visibility

An increasing number of marketers are becoming interested in using package features as an effective marketing technique to advertise goods and services. Packaging is one of the most important factors influencing consumers' purchasing decisions and has a significant impact on marketing strategy (Lim et al., 2020).

2.2.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the process a customer recognizes a brand in a variety of contexts. Two aspects of brand knowledge are brand awareness and the associative network memory model (Keller & Armstrong, 2018). When making a purchase, consumers take brand awareness into account. A buyer cannot move forward with a purchase unless they have confidence in the product category and the brand they are interested in, and they must be able to comprehend a sufficient number of distinct qualities to make a purchase. According to Keller and Armstrong (2021), creating brand awareness is the first stage in promoting a new product or reviving an established brand. According to Keller et al. (2021), brand awareness is correlated with the ways, in which brand identities are stored in consumers' memories and is quantified by how effectively customers can recognise the brand in different contexts. Strong brand awareness can be a predictor of future brand success, and it plays a significant role in the decision-making process when consumers make purchases.

2.3 Consumer Buying Decision

Buying decision is one of the main components of consumer behaviour. Consumer buying decision is the step by step that consumers use when buying goods and services (Nwobodo et al., 2023). A buying decision is a problem-solving strategy used in human activities to fulfil needs and desires by acquiring an item or service. It includes identifying needs and wants, gathering information, weighing options, making the purchase, and acting on the purchase behaviour (Swastha, 2012). Consumer behaviour can be defined as specific actions taken by an individual that are directly related to the usage of products and services, as well as decision-making regarding the planning and execution of activities. The decision-making process that consumers use to make purchases will depend on their behaviour. The steps a customer must take before making a purchase are described in this buying process. How customers truly make their purchasing decisions require a grasp of the fundamental psychological processes (Okeke & Amobi, 2020). The manner a particular consumer makes his/her buying decision may be differ from that of others;

hence, the individual consumer involved and the context in which the decision is made; determine how the decision will be.

Conceptual Framework

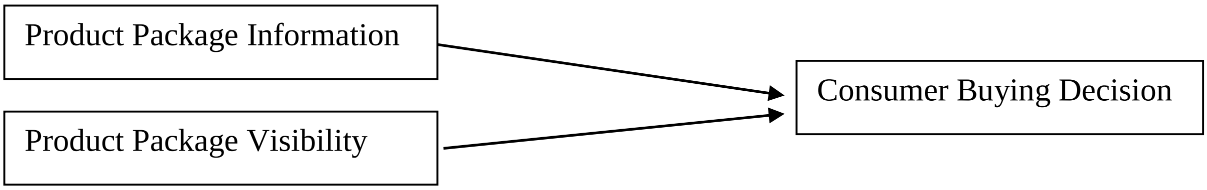

Figure 2.1: Conceptual model of components and their hypothesized relationships

2.3.1 Product package information and consumer buying decision

Information is the most significant aspect of product packaging that impacts on consumer buying decision. Due to increasing self-service and changing consumer lifestyles, impulsive buying behavior is growing increasingly (Ahmad, Billo, & Lakhan, 2012). A product package should be informative with visual appeals, Dibie and Olannye (2022) so that customers can quickly recognize and distinguish a company's products from others. Production package information creates the first impression in the minds of consumers. Consumers tend to develop interest on product when its packaging is informative.

2.3.2 Product package visibility and consumer buying decision

Visibility of packaging can influence consumer’s buying decision and attraction in many different ways. The elements of packaging and its influence on consumers buying behaviour as studies may have it (Adelina & Morgan, 2007) reported that in recent time visibility and packaging could be considered as one of the most essential elements of marketing communications. They indicated that visibility of product’s packaging has an important influence on buying decision of consumers, revealing that the influence of elements of packaging can influence the buying decision of consumers.

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Salem (2022) studied the Effect of Visual and Verbal Elements of Food Product Packaging on Consumer Buying Decision. The objective of the study is to identify consumers’ attitudes toward the visual and verbal elements of food product packaging and to examine its impacts on their buying decision. An online survey research design was used. The population of this study was the consumers in United Arab Emirates. The participants were asked to answer an online survey based on their past or current experience with food products shopping and the extent to which the product's packaging influences their buying decisions. Online questionnaire was used for the collecting of data in order to test the validity of the research hypotheses. The sample was determined based on the number of participants in the online survey. A total of 200 questionnaires were submitted back and used in the final analysis. The questionnaire consisted of three separate parts; the first part was regarding participants' demographic characteristics. The visual elements were measured by 23 five-point items (1=strongly disagree/ very unsatisfied to 5=strongly agree/ very satisfied) included the effects of package design (5 items), package color (5 items), package size, package shape (6 items), and package materials (3 items). Also, the verbal elements measured by (10 items) (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree), including the effect of product information (4 items), brand name (4 items), and country of origin (2 items). The third part included (6 items) to measure the effects of packaging elements on the consumers' buying decisions. The findings shows that the visual elements of packaging (Color – Design – Shape) affect positively consumers' buying decisions for food products. The results also indicates that the verbal elements of packaging (Product Information – Product Name) affect positively consumers' buying decisions.

Ladipo and Rahim (2013) investigates packaging and the incidence of information overload in a low-risk market, with special reference to grocery products. A descriptive research design based on cross-sectional approach was employed. Simple random sampling technique was used to select three retail stores within Lagos metropolis. A total of 300 consumers were surveyed, using convenience sampling technique. The approaches to data analyses were descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, using Pearson moment correlation analysis. Obtained data were analyzed via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-17). Findings of the study shows the following propositions: Firstly, packaging is significantly recognized as a source of product information. Secondly, consumers are aware that packaging carries product information. Thirdly, consumers employ packaging information to make purchase decision. Finally, consumers considers (7 items of product information) adequate in making purchase decisions. The study concludes that consumers make use of few items of product information on packaging and the need for companies to take into consideration only items of product information that are relevant to consumer purchase decision. It was observed that this will reduce information overload and simplify consumer buying decision. However, focusing on these key items of product information will also reduce cost of production, which leads to price reduction, increased patronage and by extension profitability.

2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.3.1 Theory of Reason Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen. According to Idibie and Olannye (2022), theory of reasoned action is a model that has its roots in the study of social psychology, a relationship between a person's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, norms, and behaviors. This paradigm asserts that a person's behavior is impacted by their desire to carry it out. The individual's opinions and subjective rules about conduct form this intention in and of itself. According to the idea, subjective norms are a person's view of what the majority of key people in his life feel he should or should not do. According to the reasoned action theory, people's intentions influence their actions, while their behaviors foretell their intentions. Intentions are determined by attitudes toward the conduct, perceived norms, and perceived behavioral control (Idibie and Olannye, 2022). However, TRA model has an equation whereby: Behavioural Intention (BI) = (Attitude Towards the Behaviour (ATB) + Subjective Norm (SN)). This theory shows how consumers make buying decisions based on information, attitude norms are stable and consistent while behavioral intentions predict actual behaviour. It is obvious that, this theory is relevant in terms of purchasing decision.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design with a survey methodology. The research design provides an all-inclusive technique for data collecting; the significance of the research design is to choose a research approach, a sample plan, an experiment, and a questionnaire (Penneerelvam, 2014). Survey research design is one in which a group of items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few items believing or considered to be representative of the whole group.

The study was carried out in Warri, Asaba and Sapele that represented the three senatorial districts of Delta State namely; Delta North, Delta South, and Delta Central. Delta State is a state in the South South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria with a common boundary with Ondo to the West, Edo to the North, Bayelsa to South, and Anambra to the East. Delta State has a population of 4,112, 445 people according to the last census figure (National Population Census 2006) with a Landmark of 17,163.056km^2 (square meters). The state has the following as their ethic nationality; Urhobos, Isokos, Ijaws, Itsekiris, Ukwanis, Delta Igbos and immigrants. The population of the state comprises of both Federal and State civil servants, private business men/women, farmers and Artisans. The population of the study comprises the consumers of brands of bread under study in Warri, Asaba and Sapele. The population size is unknown because there is no sampling frame, no register or data base that specified the total number of consumers of brands of bread in the specified areas under review. The sample size of the study was determined using Topman formula which is used for unknown population or population proportion determined through a pilot survey, previous survey, intuition or using already established parameter. The estimation of the proportion; P (bread consumers) and Q (non-bread consumers) was sought through a pilot study as contained on table 1.

Table 1: Determination of Proportion of P and Q through Pilot Survey

Name	Consumers of brands of bread under review (Yes)	Non-consumers of brands of bread under review (No)	Total
Asaba	9	11	20
Warri	27	33	60
Sapele	12	8	20

Grand total	**48**	**52**	**100**
Proportion	**P (0.48)**	**Q (0.52)**	**1.00**
Percent	**48%**	**52%**	**100%**

Source: Pilot Study, 2024.

Table 1 shows that out of one hundred persons contacted in Asaba, Warri and Sapele, 20 persons each from Asaba and Sapele and 60 from Warri to determine the proportion of the consumers of brands of bread under investigation and also those who are not. 48 persons representing P (0.48) were consumers while 52 persons representing Q (0.52) were not consumers of bread brands under review in the geographical areas visited. This was supported by (Malhotra & Birks, 2007).

Applying the Topman formula:

$$n = Z^2 (PQ)/e^2$$

Where:
n = Sample size
Z = Confidence level of 95% ie 1.96
P = Proportion of positive response or those likely to be included (consumers) = 0.48
Q = Proportion of negative response or those to be excluded (non- consumers) = 0.52
e = Error margin (5% level of significance)

Applying the formula

$$n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.48 \times 0.52 / (0.05)^2$$

$$n = 3.8416 (0.2496) / 0.0025$$

$$n = 0.95886336 / 0.0025 = 383.54$$

Therefore, the sample size (n) = 384 (approximately).

A structured questionnaire was employed to collect pertinent data for this study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: part A contains the respondent's personal bio-data, and section B contains the study's specific objectives, which include 25 questions. The study used the Likert scale approach, which ranged from Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The sampling elements were reached using a convenient sample technique. This means that only consumers who were present at the shopping locations and consented to participate in the study were given copies of the questionnaire and returned promptly after completing it out.

The data generated from the field survey were presented in frequency and percentage tables, with descriptive and inferential statistical techniques used to reach generalizations and conclusions. The descriptive statistics made use of simple percentage to analyze the questionnaire response background profile and also to reveal the pattern of responses from each of the multiple regressions. Multiple regression analysis was utilized to evaluate the hypotheses at a 5% level of significance. This is for the purpose of ascertaining the strength of relationship that exists among the variables. Also determine to what extent the independent variables accounted for change on the dependent variable, as well as to test the statistics significance that exists among variables respectively. This was done by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computation software version 23.0 for window package.

If the probability value calculated is lesser than the critical value of 5% (0.05) it is vital to conclude that the given parameter is significant. In this scenario, it is accepted that there is need to reject the null hypothesis and to accept the alternative. Gujarat and Porter (2009) stated that when we reject the null hypothesis, we say that our findings are statistically significant and vice versa thus the p-value is at (0.05).

Accept Ho, if the p-value if greater than 0.05 and reject Ho if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05.

4.0 RESULTS

Table 2: Frequency Table Showing Respondents' Responses on Product Package Information

	Items	(4) Strongly Agree	(3) Agree	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly Disagree	Total
5	I know that product package message is very crucial in purchase decision.	103	124	71	48	346
6	I like bread package that has enough information.	88	128	69	61	346
7	I consider the information on the label of the bread package before buying.	123	114	86	23	346
8	Information on product's manufacturing and expiry date is crucial.	156	118	57	15	346

Source: Field Survey, 2024

A careful look on table 3 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that product package message is very crucial in purchase decision. Majority of the respondents agreed that bread package that has enough information. A careful look on table 3 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that the information on the label of the bread package before buying. Also, majority of the respondents agreed that information on product's manufacturing and expiry date is crucial. This implies that consumers of brands of bread agreed that information on the product package is a significant factor.

Table 3: Frequency Table Showing Respondents' Responses on Product Package Visibility

	Items	(4) Strongly Agree	(3) Agree	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly Disagree	Total
1	I believe that product design draws customers to a point of purchase.	89	112	77	68	346
2	I think that packaged bread with unique appearance is easily identified by customers.	101	131	88	26	346
3	I trust that product package aesthetic label attracts consumer's attention.	99	115	79	53	346
4	I concur that packaging colour makes product stand out on the shelf.	114	126	67	39	346

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

A cursory look on table 2 shows that majority of the respondents agreed and also believed that product design draws customers to a point of purchase. Also, majority of the respondents agreed that packaged bread with unique appearance is easily identified by customers. Furthermore, majority of the respondents agreed that product package aesthetic label attracts consumer's attention. In addition, majority of the respondents agreed that packaging colour makes product stand out on the shelf. This implies that consumers of brands of bread agreed that product package visibility is a significant factor.

Table 4: Frequency Table Showing Respondents' Responses on Consumer Buying Decisions

	Items	(4) Strongly Agree	(3) Agree	(2) Disagree	(1) Strongly Disagree	Total
1	I buy brands of bread because of the visibility of the package.	102	118	67	59	346
2	I decided to be buying brands of bread due to information on the package.	137	149	38	22	346

Source: Field Survey, 2024

An examination of table 4 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that they buy brands of bread because of the visibility of the package. Furthermore, majority of the respondents agreed that they decided to be buy brands of bread because of information on the package.

Table 6: Multiple Regression Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.781	.734	.718	1.012	2.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), PVIS, PINF
b. Dependent Variable: Consumer buying decisions on brands of bread

Table 7: Multiple Regression Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	P-value (Sig.)	Decision
		B	Std. Error	β (Beta)			
	Constant	0.692	0.035		7.834	.000	
1	PINF	0.497	.039	0.483	5.423	.001	Significant (Accept HA)
	PVIS	0.428	.065	0.419	4.371	.012	Significant (Accept HA)

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer buying decisions on brands of bread

Test of Hypothesis One

Ho_1: Product package information has no significant influence on consumer buying decision of brands of bread in Delta State.

Hi_1: Product package information has a significant influence on consumer buying decision of brands of bread in Delta State.

Based on table 7, the t-value of product package information is 5.423. There is a 0.001 p-value. Based on the specified significance level of 0.05, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, we conclude that product package information has a significant influence on consumer buying decisions of brands of bread in Delta State.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Ho_2: Product package visibility has no significant influence on consumer buying decision of brands of bread in Delta State.

Hi_2: Product package visibility has a significant influence on consumer buying decision of brands of bread in Delta State.

Based on table 6, the t-value of product pack visibility is 4.371. There is a 0.012 p-value. Based on the specified significance level of 0.05, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, we conclude that product package visibility has a significant influence on consumer buying decisions of brands of bread in Delta State.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Product packaging has proved to be a significant marketing tool primarily designed to hold and protect the firm's products in the minds of the consumers. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that product package visibility has positively and significantly influenced consumer buying decisions on brands of bread in Delta State. Additionally, product package information has had a positive and significant effect on Delta State consumers' decisions about which brands of bread to purchase. Based on the findings from this research work, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Bread manufacturers, brand managers and dealers as well as other stakeholders should continue to invest in and enhance product package information so as to sustain consumer purchase of brands of bread in Delta State.

2. Bread manufacturers, brand managers and dealers as well as other stakeholders should keep upholding and enhancing the bread package's visual attributes of the bread package so as to maintain consumer patronage.

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MARKETING INTELLIGENCE AND MARKETPLACE PERFORMANCE OF PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS IN IKEJA BUSINESS DISTRICT OF LAGOS STATE.

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Abstract
This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of firms' adoption of marketing intelligence as a competitive strategy for marketplace dominance. Arising from the fact that marketing intelligence is a multidimensional construct, four specific objectives were examined in the study. This paper adopted a cross –sectional survey research design. Data were collected with a structured questionnaire. From purposively selected pharmaceutical firms in Ikeja Lagos state, 120 sales/ marketing employees from 10 firms serves as the sample size of the study. With the aid of SPSS version 26, the collected data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation and formulated hypotheses validated with multiple linear regression at 5% level of significance. The report shows that all the components of marketing intelligence exert direct and significant influence on pharmaceutical firms' marketplace performance. The study further report that all the dimensions of marketing intelligence except customers' intelligence exhibit a strong effect on firms' performance. Contingent upon these findings, this study affirms that marketing intelligence is a potent weapon to contest and sustain marketplace competition. This study recommends among several others that managers of pharmaceutical corporations should embrace marketing intelligence as a competitive strategy in order to attain marketplace dominance.

Key Words: Annual Sales, Firms Performance, Marketing Intelligence Dimensions, Pharmaceutical Firms, Nigeria.

1.0 Introduction

Globally, citizens consider health and wellness as one of the basic necessities of life. The emergence of new diseases as well as advancement in medical knowledge has compelled individuals to increasingly seek medical solutions to their health concerns. It is a common evidence that the pivotal roles individual's well-being plays in societal development spur corporations to venture into drugs manufacturing. Furthermore, increasing the global population also result in high the demand for health and wellness enabling substances. In fact, the raising demand has also serve as a lever to corporations to venture into the manufacture of health enhancing medications. Due to high market demand several drugs manufacturing corporations have emerged resulting in fierce competition. Interestingly, literature recognize that firms compete among others on the basis of product, technology and service delivery. Contingent upon pharmaceutical firms' competition for customers' patronage, these drugs manufacturing firms now constantly seek for new avenues to attain and sustain competitive advantage. Consequently, drugs manufacturing firms now leverage on the available large volumes of data to make well informed marketing decisions. Without much ado, the success of any business organization is largely predicated upon its information generating centers. It is indeed altruism among marketing managers that operating without well sought out data is liken to a rudderless firm. It is a matter of fact that information albeit data serves a compass to a firm that could be helpful in navigating any competitive ocean. Since the ultimate dream of every corporation is the dominance of its customers' landscape, firms are left with no option than to engage in a systematic gathering and analysis of generated information. This presupposes that marketplace decisions are strongly dependent on sophisticated and robust data rather than allow corporate decisions to be hinged on intuition and gut feeling. In fact, marketplace decisions predicated upon sophisticated data closely resonates with marketing intelligence.

As a matter of fact, literature recognize marketing intelligence as an organizational strategy. Scholars believe that this strategy when embraced is designed to enable firms compete in the marketplace. Simply put, marketing intelligence is concerned with the day to day gathering and analysis of information obtained from the environment. The truth is that marketing intelligence enable marketers and other decision-makers gain meaningful insights into their marketing activities. These insights equip the managers with requisite knowledge on how to search for the most promising opportunities. The truth is that, in todays' competitive environment, marketing intelligence plays a crucial role in facilitating the performance of corporations.

A purview of marketing literature reveals a plethora of studies on marketing intelligence. In fact, the concept has attracted research attention from several scholars. The truth is that marketing intelligence studies are reported to be suitable in Small and Medium scale businesses as well as in multinational corporations among several other business domains. Several studies on marketing intelligence abound in literature. Of recent, Harami and Hossan (2024) examines the influence of marketing intelligence on the performance of small businesses in India. Similarly, Yusuf, Adamu, Barde and Abdullahi (2024) study listed consumers' goods firms in Nigeria. The intent of the study was to ascertain the outcomes of firm's adoption of marketing intelligence on its marketplace performance. Due to the wide application of marketing intelligence activities in portraying the competitive posture of firms, this study seeks to examine the influence of firms' adoption of marketing intelligence on the marketplace performance of selected pharmaceutical firms in Nigeria. This paper specifically seeks to examine the nexus between market intelligence and sales performance, investigate the connection between product intelligence and sales performance, ascertain the linkage between customer intelligence and sales performance and examine the extent to which competitive intelligence drives sales performance of selected pharmaceutical firms in Nigeria. The outcome of this study will enable manufacturers of pharmaceutical products glean valuable insight into the drivers and strategies that confers competitive advantages.

2.0 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Concept of Marketing Intelligence

In common parlance marketing intelligence is concerned with the day to day gathering of information from the environment. This marketplace information assist managers to prepare and adjust firms marketing plans. In fact, a firm's marketing intelligence activities is indicative of its information requirements. The truth is that a firm's marketing intelligence is obtained from diverse sources. Prominent among these sources are employees in the human resource department, technical staff and procurement or sales employees. As a result of the crucial roles marketing information plays in firms' survival, operating managers as a matter of priority often emphasize the necessity of information gathering to employees. To complement the activities of in-house employees in information gathering, most corporations have now embraced the practice of engaging outsiders in information gathering.

Interestingly, many scholars now recognize marketing intelligence as an organizational strategy that is designed to enable a firm compete in the marketplace (Yusuf *et al*, 2024). Consequently, experience has shown that firms have now seamlessly embrace the practice of marketing intelligence as a weapon of competition.

Dimensions of Marketing Intelligence

Crowley 2014 seminal work identified the components of marketing intelligence. The scholar in particular recognized market intelligence, product intelligence, customers' intelligence and competitive intelligence as the essential components of marketing intelligence. The unique features of these dimensions are examined as follows.

Market Intelligence: Crowley (2014) conceive market intelligence as the capturing of a firm's market relevant information. In simple term, market intelligence is concern with the collection, evaluation, and sharing of data pertinent to the market segment of a corporation. This implies that a firm's market intelligence can be deduced from the quality and quantity of all the relevant information that are most suitable to a corporation. In actual fact, firms now engage personnel that among other things are involved in market intelligence. These personnel are expected to have a thorough understanding of the market as well as being able to adduce reasons for the required information. Essentially, market intelligence entails the use of various data collection methods. One common way firms gather market intelligence is through primary research, which involves collecting data directly from customers, competitors, and other stakeholders. Also, firms conduct secondary research in their market intelligence activities. This entails analyzing existing data and reports from market research firms, industry publications, and government agencies (Maune, 2014). Experience has shown that firms now deploy up-to-date competitive and market intelligence techniques and technologies to obtain updated market intelligence. Gebhardt, Farrelly and Conduit (2019) report that firms use market intelligence outcomes for market development, short- and long-term plans, and market opportunities and decision making. Furthermore, market intelligence serves as a veritable avenue for firms to understand its current market situation and the activities of competitors therein.

Interestingly, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) study of 230 managers in US corporations sought to ascertain the effect of market intelligence on firms' marketplace performance. Relying on the use of MARKOR measurement of scale the result of the study indicates a direct relationship between market intelligence and business performance. In the same vein, Mobusher (2023) study the influence of market orientation on the performance of banks located in Vehari district of Pakistan. The scholar measured organizational performance with non-financial indicators. Analyzing primary data obtained from senior bank employees, with the aid of multiple regression analysis, the study report that all the components of market intelligence exhibit direct relationship with firms' marketplace performance. The foregoing suggests any organization that engage on a comprehensive market intelligence can stay ahead of competition while driving organization's growth ever competitive environment. Consequently, this paper hypothesize that,

Ho_1: Market intelligence has no significant effect on sales performance of pharmaceutical firms

Product Intelligence: Product intelligence refer to the process of gathering and analyzing data related to a firm's products. The sole purpose of product intelligence gathering is enable the firm to gain an understanding of customer preferences, market trends, competitive landscape that could aid in decision making. The outcome of these information help companies improve their product offerings, enhance customer satisfaction, and drive sales. Other benefits include but not limited to effective management of users' experience, identifying recurrent issues and facilitate product quality management. Truth be told, in today's competitive marketplace, product intelligence has become a critical tool for companies to gain a competitive edge and stay relevant in the rapidly evolving market landscape. In fact, through a thorough analysis of market insights, corporations could provide unique products, optimize pricing strategies, and compete favorably in the marketplace.

Interestingly, Chen, Chiang and Storey (2012) study of the importance of product intelligence in e-commerce found that companies that leverage on product intelligence are better positioned to identify market trends. It also assist the firm in monitoring competitor offerings at the same time help in tailoring their product strategy to effectively meet customer needs. Similarly, Grewal, Roggeveen and Nordfält, (2017) study explored how product intelligence enhances customer experience and loyalty. The study found that firms that deploy product intelligence can ultimately develop customized product offerings and experiences that resonate with their target audience resulting in increased customer loyalty. Mubeen, Han, Abbas, Raza and Bodian (2022) study examines the influence product market competition has on Chinese firms performance. From 2502 observations, the study found that product market competition positively influences firm's performance. From the foregoing, a comprehensive product intelligence study is crucial for enhanced sales performance. In fact, product intelligence plays a pivotal role in shaping firms data-driven decisions, improve product performance while driving business growth. This paper hypothesize that;

Ho_2: Product intelligence has no significant influence on sales performance of pharmaceutical firms.

Customers' Intelligence: Present day realities indicate that customer intelligence is a crucial aspect of modern business strategy. In fact, customers' intelligence entails the gathering, analyzing, and utilizing data about customers. The information obtained enhances firms marketing efforts as well as improve overall customer experience. Furthermore, this information enables companies to gain valuable insights into customer behavior while facilitating more targeted and personalized interactions. Elbashir, Collier and Davern (2008), perceives customer intelligence as the process of gathering, evaluating, and applying quantitative and qualitative data about the customer and its surroundings. Without dispute, customers' intelligence initiatives directly affect firms' profitability and ultimately revenue growth. In particular, Watson and Wixom (2007) assert that customer intelligence exercise serves as an avenue that help firms magnify the role of customers to increasing the income of organizations. This has led many scholars to conclude that customer intelligence is a veritable tool that enable corporations add value to its operations. Arising from the accrued benefits of customers' intelligence, Decker and Hoppner (2006) remark that companies need to gain a comprehensive understanding of customers and their behavior. The outcome of such an exercise, the scholars, believe will enable the firm establish a more reliable customer contact while achieving a higher degree of customer loyalty. Furthermore Hashem, Al-Aqra, and Haikal (2017) recognizes that social media has emerged as an efficient, accurate, and useful marketing tool for customer intelligence. Social media and indeed other technological devices have caused an explosion in the use of customer-focused management tools within organizations. The truth is that these emerging technological tools has replaced the hitherto product-focused management initiatives.
Several studies exist that buttress the fact that there is a strong relationship between customer intelligence and sales performance. Specifically, Tan and Ahmad (1999) report that organizations that have a deep understanding of their customers' needs and preferences are better equipped to tailor their sales strategies and offerings to meet those needs effectively. The scholars' further report that such knowledge leads to improved sales performance and higher customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Igbaekemen (2014) study of selected firms in Nigeria highlights that utilizing customer intelligence enables sales teams to develop more personalized and targeted sales approaches. The authors found that these situations result in increased customer engagement, loyalty and ultimately higher sales performance. Therefore, it is germane for firms that seek a deeper insight of customers' needs and preferences to invest in customer intelligence capabilities that could enhance their sales performance. In the light of the foregoing, this paper hypothesize that,
Ho_3: Customers' intelligence has no significant relationship with sales performance of pharmaceutical firms.

Competitive Intelligence: Simply put, competitive intelligence consist of firms activities that enable it gain an insight into the strengths, weaknesses and anticipate the future actions of their competitors. Wright, Eid and Fleisher (2009) perceive competitive intelligence as an activity that enables which organizations generate information from competitors and the competitive environment. Interestingly, several scholars see competitive intelligence from the process-based and product-based perspectives (Johns & Van Doren, 2010.,Gaspareniene, Remeikiene, & Gaidelys, 2013).The process base view considers competitive intelligence as a procedure for acquiring, evaluating and analyzing information about competitors while the product base perspective regard competitive intelligence as a set of data on competitors in the marketplace. The outcome of a comprehensive competitive intelligence study is expected to assist the firm in maintaining and developing a competitive advantage (Adidam, Gajre & Kejriwal (2009). This study considers competitive intelligence as the process of gathering, analyzing, and utilizing information obtained from the market environment to make strategic business decisions. Nwokah and Onduku (2009) conclude that a firm's thorough understanding of the strengths, weaknesses of competitors, as well as industry trends and customer preferences confers competitive advantage. It is an obvious fact that competitive intelligence involves a wide range of activities. In practice, firms' personnel or outside consultants are often engaged to conduct competitive intelligence. With the digitalization of business operations, corporations now deploy technologies in competitive intelligence gathering. The reality is that modern day competitive intelligence entails the deployment of technology in data gathering and analysis. These activities encompasses the use of web scraping, social media monitoring, and data analytics software. Experience has shown that firms that leverage on these technologies often stay ahead of competition. Several benefits accrue to firms that embark on competitive intelligence activities. Some of these benefits include anticipating competitors actions, help businesses identify new market opportunities, as well as enable the firms improve on their products and services.

Literature is replete with several empirical studies on competitive intelligence (Yusuf, *et a*l, 2024, Harami &Hossan, 2024). Specifically, Al-Rfou in 2015 studied the consequences of competition on the sales performance of baby food companies listed in The Amman Stock Exchange Jordan. The scholar surveyed 33 listed firms, with the aid of multiple regression analysis, found that firms that deploy competitive intelligence as a strategic thrust exhibits a consistent advantage over its competitors. The study also report that competitive intelligence has a significant direct impact on sales performance. In the same vein, Yusuf, Adamu, Barde and Abdullahi (2024) study of listed consumers' goods firms in Nigeria was to ascertain the outcomes of firm's adoption of marketing intelligence on marketplace performance. From a sample of 126 purposively selected respondents, the researchers with the aid of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Smart software, found a significant direct relationship between competitors intelligence, customers intelligence and the performance of consumer goods firms. The study also shows that product intelligence exhibit a direct and insignificant effect on the performance. In sum, competitive intelligence has emerged as a valuable tool to firms that are proactive in today's fast-paced business environment. From the foregoing, this paper hypothesize that;

Ho_4: Competitive intelligence exert no significant effort on the sales performance of pharmaceutical firms.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Knowledge Based View Theory of the Firm

Grant is reputed to have propounded the knowledge-based theory of firm in 1996. The scholar advocate that knowledge albeit information is the most crucial asset of a firm.

In fact, the quality and quantity of information available to a corporation confers competitive strength on it. This implies that firms can increase its competitive advantage through adequate knowledge and skills. A firm's possession of cutting edge knowledge in a wholesome combination with learning and abilities enable it develop new products as well as gain access to new territories. To Grant (1996), a firm's knowledge base handsomely equip it to develop new products, modify existing products in addition to conquering new sales territories more successfully and profitably.

Experience has shown that the intent of firms that deploy marketing intelligence as a strategic thrust is to leverage on and utilize the knowledge and information at its disposal. In fact, this information enhances the firms' performance while conferring on it competitive advantage. This suggests that firms gain competitive edge through the utilization of existing knowledge. This knowledge equip the firms to gain greater insight of market trends, consumer preferences, and competitive strategies. Ultimately, the knowledge base view theory posits that firms that are able to effectively leverage on their existing knowledge and information reservoir are more responsive to marketplace changes, more competitive and report higher performance levels. In sum, the knowledge base view theory highlight the place of effective usage of information and knowledge to drive firm performance. The truth is that firms that embrace marketing intelligence are able to gain valuable insights into marketplace happenings, sharpen the firms' decision-making process as well report improve marketplace performance.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a cross sectional survey research design method. This research method allows the researchers collect data with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The focus of this study is on drugs manufacturing industry in Lagos state. According to Nte, Omede, Enokie and Bienose (2019), there are 56 pharmaceutical firms spread across the entire Lagos state. Spatial distribution shows that about 50% are located in Ikeja area of Lagos state. As a result, this study is situated on the pharmaceutical firms in Ikeja business district in Lagos state. Out of the 25 firms, 10 corporations were conveniently selected for this study. From the firms, 12 staff each from the marketing and sales department constitute the respondents. This implies 120 employees as sample size. The study adopted and modified Ismaeel, Alkhawaldeh and Alafi (2023) research instrument. The draft structured questionnaire consist of five segments was subjected to Test, Retest during a pilot survey of pharmaceutical firms located in Ikorodu area of Lagos state for its validity and reliability. The outcome of the pilot survey were incorporated into the final questionnaire. 120 copies of questionnaire were conveniently self-administered on the respondents in their various offices. 108 of the 120 copies were retrieved while 100 copies were usable.

The study relied on Ismaeel, Alkhawaldeh and Alafi (2023) to measure the constructs product, market, customers and competitive intelligence. In the same vein, the study operationalize marketplace performance with annual sales volume. The respondents' were expected to use a five point Likert- type of scale that consist of 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Undecided 4, Agree and 5, Strongly Disagree. With the aid of SPSS 26 the collated data were analyzed with descriptive statistic mean and standard deviation while formulated hypotheses were tested with multiple linear regression and one way analysis of variance at 5% level of significance.

Mathematical model

$$MkP = f\,(PIn, MIn, CIn, CmIn) \qquad (1)$$

Equation (i) variables can be further reduced to the general regression format to obtain

$$MkP = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 PIn. + \alpha_3\, MIn. + \alpha_3\, CIn + \alpha_4 CmIn. + e \qquad (2)$$

Where; MkP= Marketplace Performance, PIn= Product Intelligence, MIn= Market Intelligence, CIn = Customers Intelligence, $CmIn$ = Competitive Intelligence α = coefficients of the independent variables, e = error term

4.0 Results/Discussion of Findings

Result Presentation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Marketing Intelligence Components and Marketplace Performance.

Variables	Mean	Standard Dev.	1	2	3	4	5
Firm Performance	4.301	.765	1				
Market Intelligence	4.118	.791	.745**	1			
Product Intelligence	3.827	.801	.641**	.594**	1		
Customers Intelligence	3.431	.921	.592**	.562**	.497**	1	
Competitors Intelligence	4.216	.973	.612**	.563**	.498**	.408**	1

Source: SPSS 26 Output

From Table 1, marketplace performance report a mean score (4.301) with competitors' intelligence (4.216) closely follows. In the same vein, Table 1 shows that customers' intelligence (3.431) reports the least mean score. Similarly, Table 1 reports the standard deviation of the variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient test result shows that all the dimensions of marketing intelligence has a direct relationship with marketplace performance. To be specific, the test reveals that market, product and competitors intelligence respectively exerts a strong (.745**, .641** and .612**) influence on marketplace performance. Also, customers intelligence shows a moderate (.592**) relationship with marketplace performance.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis (Product Intelligence, Market Intelligence, Customers' Intelligence, Competitive Intelligence and Sales Performance)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.918	.899	.869	.755112

Source: SPSS 26 Output

The adjusted $R^2 = 0.869$ in Table 2 implies that all independent variables can jointly explain 86.9 percent of the systematic variation in the dependent variable (sales performance). This result further suggest that about 14 percent variation in marketplace performance is accounted for by other extraneous factors not captured by the model.

Table 3: ANOVA[a] for the Model

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	230.714	1	230.741	121.188	.002[b]
	Residual	188.509	99	1.904		
	Total	419.223	100			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketplace Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), marketing Intelligence

Source: SPSS 26 Output

Table 3, reports the ANOVA test for the study. From the result, the F- value 121.188 is indicative of the capacity of the model to express the relationship between the aggregate marketing intelligence dimensions and marketplace performance of pharmaceutical firms. Also, the p- value of 0.002. This indicates a significant relationship between marketing intelligence activities and marketplace performance of pharmaceutical firms. This conclusion is predicated upon the fact that the p-value (0.002) is less than the permitted threshold of 0.05 (Hair, *et al*, 2006).

Table 4: Multiple linear Regression Coefficients (Product Intelligence, Market Intelligence, Customers' Intelligence and Competitive Intelligence and Sales Performance)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.64	.024		11.05	.000
Product Intelligence	.708	.016	.202	1	.001
Market Intelligence	.542	.051	.101	3.130	.005
Customers'	.419	.076	.383	2.118	.000
Intelligence	.889	.129	.008	9.721	.007
Competitive	.			.180	
Intelligence	.905	.015	.058		.001
Sales Performance				1.626	

Source: SPSS 26 Output.

The multiple regression coefficients in Table 4 were used to establish the relationship between the marketing intelligence components and marketplace performance of pharmaceutical firms. In fact, Table 4 indicates that all the dimensions of the independent variable exhibit direct relationship with marketplace performance. These findings implies that product intelligence, market intelligence, customers intelligence and competitive intelligence has significant relationship with marketplace performance (sales) of pharmaceutical firms

Discussion of Findings

With respect to the effect of market intelligence on sales performance of pharmaceutical firms, the study found a positive and significant relationship. Specifically, the study found that firms engagement of market intelligence strongly influence its marketplace performance. This finding corroborates earlier Mobusher (2023) study of the influence of market orientation on the performance of banks located in district Vehari of Pakistan. Furthermore, the finding of this study affirms, Yusuf, Adamu, Barde and Abdullahi (2024) Nigeria study of listed consumer goods firms.

Similarly, on product intelligence, this study report that, firms employment of product intelligence as a component of its competitive strategy exerts a positive and significant influence on the sales performance of pharmaceutical firms in Nigeria. In fact, the study reveals that product intelligence exhibit strong influence of the sales performance of pharmaceutical firms. This finding concur the study of Mubeen, Han, Abbas, Raza and Bodian (2022) of Chinese corporations. The study examines the influence product market competition has on Chinese firms performance. In the same vein, the findings of this study also corroborates Yusuf, Adamu, Barde and Abdullahi (2024) Nigeria study

On the third objective, this study found that customers' intelligence also report a direct and significant relationship with firms' sales performance. However, the study report that customers' intelligence has moderate effect on pharmaceutical firms' sales performance. This findings contradict Yusuf, Adamu, Barde and Abdullahi (2024) Nigeria study that report that customers' intelligence strongly influence the marketplace of listed consumer goods firms. The most probable reason for this contradictory finding could be associated with the nature of the product. It is common knowledge that customers attitude varies with product. It is expected that customers attitude towards pharmaceutical product would vary as a result of large volume of fake and adulterated pharmaceutical products in Nigeria,

On the result of the fourth objective, the study reveal that competitive intelligence report a direct and significant relationship with sales performance. This result is as expected. This fact is premise on the reality that a thorough understanding of competitors activities would strongly position a firm to deal with competition be it in new product development, product pricing and product distribution among several other areas.

Finally, an aggregate study of the variables shows that firms deployment of marketing intelligence as a competitive strategy can explain approximately 87 percent variation in pharmaceutical firms' marketplace performance. This finding is as expected as experience has shown a single strategy is grossly inadequate to account for a firm's performance. As a matter of fact, Literature affirms that employee compensation, sales force training among others can positively influence a firm's marketplace performance (Ewanlen, 2023).

5.0 Conclusion/Recommendations.

This study examines the imperatives of firms' adoption of marketing intelligence on the marketplace performance of pharmaceutical firms in Ikeja, Lagos State. Literature recognize marketing intelligence as a multidimensional construct that firms could adopt to contend with competition. It is altruism that marketing intelligence is essentially concern with marketplace information gathering, analysis and utilization. It is quite evident that information plays crucial roles in decision making processes. This information could be about the customers, competitors, market trends, suppliers as well as stakeholders. Literature affirm that market intelligence plays a critical role in enhancing sales performance. This role is implicated in the provision of sales teams with necessary information and insights that enables the manager to better understand customers, competitors and market trends that could effectively drive sales.

This result of this study shows that all the dimensions of marketing intelligence report a direct and significant relationship with pharmaceutical firms' marketplace performance. In fact, all the marketing intelligence dimensions except customers' intelligence exert strong influence on sales performance. In more specific terms, the study found that a firm that adopts marketing intelligence as a competitive strategy should be able to attain about 87 percent marketplace rate of success. From the foregoing, this paper concludes that marketing intelligence significantly influence firms performance.

Consequently, this paper recommend that,

1) Firms should invest in marketing intelligence as it has the capacity to enhance marketplace decision-making. In actual fact, marketing intelligence equip operating managers with the requisite skills to initiate and execute value-enabling actions.
2) Firms should embrace data-driven marketing strategy that relies on marketing intelligence as a competitive platform.
3) Firms should formulate and deploy appropriate strategies that would inspire customers' confidence in the quality of pharmaceutical products. This enhanced confidence would help to mitigate .customers apathy towards locally manufactured drugs.
4) Scholars and marketing managers should engage in further disaggregated studies of the construct and practice marketing intelligence. This studies could be with the intent of ascertaining the individual contributions of marketing intelligence components to marketplace dominance.

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BOARD DIVERSITY AND TIMELINESS OF FINANCIAL REPORTING

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Abstract

This study examined board diversity and the promptness of financial reporting for Nigerian listed firms. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 21.0 was used to analyze secondary data collected from the Firms Annual Financial Report, which covered a period of four years between 2019 and 2022. The divergent of board composition as indicated in the various firm's financial reporting which included the Board Independence, Board size, Gender diversity, Board duality and Board diligence. It was revealed that timely financial reporting and board diversity are essential to good corporate governance. The study there recommended that businesses should establish explicit, quantifiable, and time-bound targets for board diversity.

Key words: board diversity, financial reporting, due diligence, timeliness and duality.

1.0 Introduction

Financial reporting needs to be done on time for a good financial account. It is seen as one of the features of financial symmetry of qualitative financial reporting. In achieving organization objectives, financial report must be available on time to inform decision making (Emeh and Appah, 2013). Organizational goals and decisions need to be based on fast financial reports. According to Accounting Principle Board (1970) timeliness is one of the qualitative objective of financial reporting disclosure, financial statements must be made public between 30 and 270 days after the end of the accounting year. This is based on the idea that financial data loses value and usefulness over time, making it less helpful in making decisions. Timely information reporting and presentation improves the credibility of business organizations since it demonstrates managerial effectiveness and efficiency. Any delay in the release of financial reports, however, would allow knowledgeable investors—particularly the wealthy and powerful—to get information in an unauthorized manner, which might lead to information asymmetry or distortion. Accuracy, completeness, and reliability are functions of timeliness since faulty timely facts might lead to an incoherent management decision.

A business might be quick to give out its annual financial records, but they might not have all the information that is important. As was already said, the quality of the information is determined by how accurate, complete, and reliable it is. So, giving fake or incorrect information to meet a goal could be dangerous or even fatal.

According to Emeh & Appah (2013), information must be provided to the user in a timely way so that they may utilize it. When the financial statement is released later than expected, the uncertainty around investment decisions increases (Atkas & Kargin, 2011). Due to the delay, this knowledge will continue to be relevant. In other words, even if the financial report may be quite reliable once it is made public, the auditor's delay in receiving all the information might make it less advantageous for the users. The promptness of an organization's financial reports has been one of its strengths. Many businesses often miss the deadline for releasing their financial accounts to the public because of problems with the board of directors, audit committee, or external auditor.

Board diversities are essential part of the corporate governance process (Blanchet, 2002). Kulzich (2004) and Prickett (2002) outlined transparency using eight concepts of accuracy, consistency, appropriateness, completeness, clarity, timeliness, convenience, governance and enforcement, however, this research only focuses on just one aspect of transparency which is timeliness. The issue of timeliness has various aspects. There is an inverse relationship between the quality of financial reporting and its timeliness (Kenley and Staubus, 1974).

Emeh&Appah (2013), reported that information should be provided to the user in time for use to be made of it. Delay in releasing of the financial statement increases uncertainty associated with investment decisions (Atkas&Kargin, 2011). This delay will reduce the relevance of such information. In other words, delay to know all facts by the auditor might render the financial report less useful to the users even though it may be highly reliable when later released to the public. Timeliness of the financial report has been one of the good qualities of an organization. Many organizations always failed in reporting their financial statement to the public on time due to either problem from the board of directors, audit committee or external auditor.

Since the 1980s, there has been a lot of talk about corporate governance because it is so important to the financial health of business groups (Enofe, Aigboduwa, and Okuonghae, 2015). Corporate governance is a broad word that includes the practices, standards, rules, policies, and organizations that tell companies and businesses how they should act, run their businesses, and keep an eye on how they are doing. It manages the organization's relationships with all of its partners, such as the board of directors and the owners, and works to reach the organization's goals. A result of good and efficient corporate governance is that the financial report is made public more quickly and in a better way.

Emeh and Appah (2013) said that the audit committee, the external inspector, the fact that there are two CEOs, the internal audit, and the size of the board are all parts of corporate governance. Internal auditors, senior management, financial management, the board of directors, owners, and external auditors all need to work together to make sure that a powerful organization's control functions are safe. So, board size is one of the things that affects how quickly financial reports are turned in. People think that a good audit committee that regularly looks at financial reporting will have an effect on the quality of financial reporting. This is why the audit committee has a say in when financial information is released. This study looks at how company control affects how quickly financial reports are made. Also, each part of the board's variety will be mentioned in terms of how quickly the financial reports are made.

2.0 Review of related literature

2.1 Conceptual review

The speed of financial reporting is a topic that researchers from all over the globe are growing more and more interested in (Aigienohuwa & Ezejiofor, 2021). The capacity of managers to provide financial statements by the dates required by law is referred to as financial reporting speed (Lukason and Camacho-Minano, 2020). According to Song et al. (2020), "board diversity" refers to the many board member types that a corporation may have. Office workers provide a variety of talents, traits, and abilities to the decision-making process (Ozgur, 2020). A wide board may aid managers in doing their duties more effectively since different board members would wish to provide various points of view (Wahid, 2019).

According to Okaiwele (2018), when financial reporting is completed on time, the financial markets are in excellent condition. It is crucial for both developed and developing countries to declare their finances on time since most nations have regulations on how late annual financial statements and reports of publicly listed firms may be (Adedeji et al., 2020).

The literature had also examined financial reporting timeliness from a wide range of perspectives. Speed is defined by Oladipupo and Ilaboya (2013) as the interval between the end of the fiscal year and the release date of the audit report. It is crucial to comprehend how each of these board features relates to producing financial reports on time, even if the various board characteristics may be used to measure how fast financial reports are produced. The functionality of the board is related to its characteristics. The shareholders may benefit from several board procedures

(Imasuen, 2021). How rapidly financial statements are produced may be impacted by a number of board characteristics, including duality, age, gender diversity, diligence and experience of board members, the proportion of women directors, and changes in the composition of the board (Alsmady, 2018). Quick financial reporting includes two components, according to Al Daoud, Ismail, and Lode (2017): how often the reports are produced and how long it takes to make them. Companies may provide reports every quarter, every month, or every six months. The financial reporting lag is the interval between the end of the financial reporting period and the publication or transmission of the financial reports to the governing authorities. Additionally, audit report lag and management report lag are two distinct types of financial reporting delays. Elshawarby (2018), Abed, Bataineh, and Suwaidan (2020), Rahmawati (2018), Efobi and Okougbo (2014), and other publications all refer to this period as the "management report lag," which occurs between the conclusion of the fiscal year and the publication of the audited financial reports. The audit report lag is the interval between the conclusion of the company's fiscal year and the publication date of the audit report. One of the most significant sources of information is annual financial reports (Mailafia & Adamu, 2021). They are made public by corporations and include a wide variety of information. The board's ability to quickly provide financial information is one of its characteristics. According to Mehdi and Shiva (2015), board features are what alter board composition. In order to facilitate accurate corporate financial reporting, 80% of the world's nations have embraced International Financial Reporting Standards (Hoogervorst, 2016).

As a result, rules that govern financial reporting and establish accounting standards now have a voice. Financial reporting quality aims to increase transparency and the usefulness of financial statements via full disclosure (Shehu, 2013). Even the highest accounting standards won't be able to provide a variety of user’s reliable and reliance accounting information in the absence of enforcement (Aliyu & Ishaq, 2015). A key tool for raising the quality of financial reporting is enforcement, a timely report is one that has the external auditor's blessing no later than the day after the fiscal year's end. According to Zaitul and Ilona (2019). Timely completion of financial reporting is essential for reducing information asymmetry and enhancing decision-making. The vitality of a healthy capital market depends on investors increasing the valuation they are willing to pay for shares of companies that diligently adhere to industry norms by promptly disclosing their financial data, as highlighted by Armand, Handoko, and Felicia (2020) and Bedard, Chtourou, and Courteau (2014). According to Zandi and Abdullah (2019), this practice not only gives investors and decision-makers a positive perception of a company's performance and financial results, but it also improves the effectiveness of financial reporting while reducing the risks of fraud and other financial irregularities. According to Firnanti and Karmudiandri (2020) and Al-Rassas and Kamardin (2016), this in turn protects the interests of shareholders and assures the timely release of financial report statements.

2.2 Empirical review

Khaldoon et al. (2014) looked into how different factors, such as board independence, board size, CEO duality, board vigilance, board financial knowledge, the position of an audit committee, and sector type, affect how quickly Jordanian businesses report their financial information. The study looked at the audit report lag (ARL) and the management report lag (MRL) to figure out how timely financial reports are. In particular, their study focused on financial data from 2011 and 2012 for 112 companies that were sold on the Amman Stock Exchange and were open to the public.

The results of the ARL model showed that companies with independent board members took a lot less time to put together and distribute their financial reports. Also, the data showed that there was a significant link between the number of company directors on a board and how long it took to get an audit report. Firms where the roles of CEO and chairman were kept separate were better at sharing financial information than those where the roles were kept together. The study also supported the idea that having an audit committee could help close the knowledge gap between management and external accountants. This would mean that the time between the audit report and the management report would be shorter.

Concerning the MRL model, the study showed a positive correlation between bigger board sizes and board care with the management report lag, but a negative correlation with the presence of an audit committee. Together, these data show how important good company governance systems are for improving the accuracy and speed of financial reports.

Emeh and Appah (2013) looked at how corporate governance affects how quickly companies in Nigeria report their finances to the public. They got information from books, bank records, and magazines, among other places. As relevant diagnostic tests, they used Granger causality and different regression models as they looked at the data they had gathered.

The results of the study showed that there were statistically significant links between a few key factors and how quickly financial reports were made. Notably, there was a strong link between how independent the board was and how quickly the financial reports were made. Also, the size of the board, the skills and knowledge of board members, as well as their experience, were all strongly linked to the financial reports being sent on time.

But the study didn't find any strong links between submitting financial reports on time and having two CEOs or between submitting financial reports on time and board meetings.

Overall, the research's findings show that good corporate governance practices can greatly improve both how quickly financial reports are made and how good they are overall. Based on the study's results and findings, the researchers suggest that publicly traded companies make it a priority to use corporate governance standards in their daily operations so they can reach their short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Also, the government should take an active part in making sure that regulatory groups keep a close eye on business actions to make sure they follow best practices.

Bakare, Taofiq, and Jimoh (2018) did a study to find out how board traits affect how quickly Nigerian insurance companies that are traded on the stock market report their financials. The size of the board was one of the most important independent factors that were looked at. The study was based on a correlation research method, and GLS multiple regression was used to analyze the data. The study looked at 15 insurance companies in Nigeria that were chosen from a group of 28 public insurance companies. The study's results showed that there was a significant and positive link between the size of the board of directors and how quickly financial reports were submitted. This showed that the size of the board affected how long it took to submit financial reports. The insurance industry was the main focus of the study, and different companies were found to have different filing times.

Ahnaf (218) looked into how the structure of ownership and the traits of the board affect how quickly financial reports are turned in. The study looked at the years 2011 through 2015 and used information from 68 yearly reports of businesses that were sold on the Amman Stock Exchange (ASE). According to the data, there was no clear link between the size of the board and how quickly financial reports were turned in. Boards with fewer than eight members were linked to delays in financial reporting, while boards with more than eight members had a good effect. The study showed that boards with more than eight people may have trouble keeping track of things and may be less productive.

Imen and Anis (2016) looked at how well audit reports were made on time in Tunisia from 2006 to 2013. The study looked at a group of 28 Tunisian businesses that trade on the Tunisian Stock Exchange and are open to the public. The study found that the size of the board affected how quickly financial reports were made. The study emphasized that having a bigger board of directors made management more effective and made it easier to make strategic decisions based on good information.

In the meantime, Chai et al. (2017) did a study in Malaysia with a sample of 250 publicly traded businesses to look at the effects of different corporate governance parameters, such as CEO duality, board size, ownership concentration, and audit committee diligence and competency, on the audit report lag. The data for this study came from external sources, like Bursa Malaysia, and focused on the time after the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was put in place in 2015. Multiple linear regressions and the Pearson correlation value were used to look at the connections in the study. The data showed that there were strong links between the audit report delay, the number of CEOs, the number of owners, and the audit committee's thoroughness. But neither the size of the board nor the skills of the audit committee were directly linked to audit report lag. There were some problems with the study, like simple random picking, a short time period for research, and problems with the model structure.

There were also questions about how accurate and useful the audit lag measurement was. Still, this study gave new information about how different parts of corporate governance work together to affect audit report lag and backed the use of agency theory in the audit report lag model.

Kwame (2018) did a study whose main goal was to look at how certain aspects of corporate governance are linked to the delay in financial reports and how that affects the financial success of companies listed on the Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE). The data set used in this study was made up of 90 firm-year records from companies listed on the GSE from 2012 to 2014. Each yearly report was carefully read and sorted so that the financial reporting lag could be found. First, a descriptive analysis was done to get some basic information about the factors under study. Then, a regression analysis was done to look at the main data. The basic data show that the average amount of time it took to report financial information (ARL) was 86 days over three years, with a standard variation of 21 days. The least amount of time between reports was 55 days, and the most was 173 days. The regression study showed that there is a statistically significant link between late reporting and poor business success. In this case, the negative sign means that companies want to tell the public about good financial news as soon as possible. Firms that don't report their finances on time may have trouble getting financing because their reputations will be hurt.

Eslami, Armin, and Jaz (2015) looked at how corporate governance affected the speed with which public companies on the Tehran Stock Exchange reported their financial data from 2010 to 2014. The study used multiple regression analysis to look at the data from a group of 90 companies that were traded on the Tehran Stock Exchange. The study showed that there is a strong and positive link between the size of the board of directors and how quickly financial reports are turned in. It was found that audit and management reports caused delays that made it hard to get financial records out quickly. The results of the study also showed that putting in place a corporate governance system was linked to fewer cases of bad behaviour by managers, fewer mistakes in reporting, and shorter delays in financial reporting.

Based on the results of the above studies, there is still a need for more study on the current state of corporate governance and how it affects how quickly financial reports are made. This sentence indicates that the literature we already have has different points of view and results, which leaves room for more research. So, it is very important for experts to find the best and most appropriate models for these factors. It should be looked into more how company governance affects how quickly financial reports are made in Nigeria

3.0 Methodology

The study adopts *a quantitative* research design by relying on ~~**a**~~ secondary source of data for the study variables. Yearly data sourced from Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin and the Nigerian Stock Exchange Fact books of various editions spanning from 2019 to 2022 was used. Timeliness of report was the dependent variable while gender diversity, average board experience and duality of chief executive officer were the independent variables. The study employed Multiple Linear regression Analysis. The regression model used in the analysis is as follows:

$$\text{Timeliness\_of\_Reporting} = \beta 0 + \beta 1 * \text{Gender\_Diversity} + \beta 2 * \text{Avg.\_Board\_Experience} + \varepsilon$$

This model assesses the relationships between the dependent variable (Timeliness_of_Reporting) and the independent variables (Gender_Diversity and Avg._Board_Experience). The coefficients (β) represent the magnitude and direction of these relationship.

4.0 Analysis and discussions

In time series research, the use and transformation of gathered observations, typically generated from secondary sources, are involved in data display, analysis, and interpretation. According to Bamgbose (2019), this process allows us to make assumptions and lays the groundwork for further research and interpretation. Prior to being methodically organized, analyzed, and displayed in a variety of forms, such as bar charts, pie charts, graphs, or frequency tables, with the precise format dictated by the selected statistical approach, raw data often lacks clarity and comprehension in its unprocessed form. According to Jaiyeoba (2020), the value of data analysis and presentation may be seen in a wide range of contexts, including academic research, business ventures, industrial operations, marketing initiatives, and professional practices. When raw data is presented without explanation, it might be difficult for laypeople to understand. In order to transform complicated data into more understandable visual representations, usually in the form of charts or graphs, data analysis is a vital first step. As a result, data analysis facilitates the understanding of raw data and the discovery of insightful information. According to Analytics Hub (2022), the extraction of meaningful information is facilitated by the translation of raw data into understandable representations. The researcher provides and evaluates the study's data in the context of this chapter. Tables and linear regression methods are used in this study to look at secondary data, which consists of historical data and information from earlier studies. These results provide the foundation for suggestions for more research in the next chapter.

4.1 Data presentation and analysis

Regression results

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method

1	Gender_Diversity, Avg_Board_Experience[b]	.	Enter

Dependent Variable: Timeliness_of_Reporting

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.974[a]	.949	.946	1.01609

a. Predictors: (Constant) Gender_Diversity, Avg_Board_Experience

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1026.194	4	256.549	248.487	.000[b]
	Residual	54.720	53	1.032		
	Total	1080.914	57			

Dependent Variable: Timeliness_of_Reporting

Predictors: (Constant) Gender_Diversity, Avg_Board_Experience

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	149.115	4.937		30.206	.000
	Avg_Board_Experience	-7.478	1.022	-1.509	-7.320	.000

	Gender_Diversity	.252	.102	.425	2.461	.017

Dependent Variable: Timeliness_of_Reporting

Model Summary:

- R: The correlation coefficient (R) measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the dependent variable (Timeliness_of_Reporting) and the predictor variables. In this case, R is approximately 0.974, indicating a strong positive linear relationship.
- R Square (R^2): The coefficient of determination (R^2) represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the predictor variables. In your model, R^2 is about 0.949, indicating that approximately 94.9% of the variance in timeliness of reporting is explained by the predictors.
- Adjusted R Square: This is a modified version of R^2 that adjusts for the number of predictors in the model. It is about 0.946, still indicating a strong explanatory power of the model.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

- The ANOVA table assesses the overall statistical significance of the regression model. In your output:
- The regression model is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), as indicated by a highly significant F-statistic (248.487).
- The Residual represents unexplained variance in the dependent variable.

Coefficients:

- The coefficients table provides information about the individual predictors (independent variables) in the model:
- Constant: The intercept of the regression equation. It's approximately 149.115.
- Avg_Board_Experience, and Gender_Diversity, are the predictor variables.
- Unstandardized Coefficients (B): These values represent the change in the dependent variable (Timeliness_of_Reporting) associated with a one-unit change in the predictor variable.

- Std. Error: Indicates the standard error of the estimate for each coefficient.
- Standardized Coefficients (Beta): These values indicate the strength and direction of the relationship between each predictor variable and the dependent variable, taking into account their respective scales.
- t: The t-statistic tests whether the coefficients are significantly different from zero.
- Sig.: The p-value associated with each coefficient. If $p < 0.05$ (or your chosen significance level), it indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant.

4.2 Discussion

1. Constant (Intercept):

   - Coefficient (B): 149.115

   - Interpretation: When all other predictor variables are zero, the estimated value of timeliness of financial reporting is 149.115. This represents the expected timeliness score when no other factors are considered.

2. Avg_Board_Experience:

   - Coefficient (B): -7.478

   - Interpretation: For each one-unit increase in Avg_Board_Experience, the timeliness of financial reporting is expected to decrease by 7.478 units. This coefficient is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher average board experience is associated with lower timeliness.

3. Gender_Diversity:

   - Coefficient (B): 0.252

   - Interpretation: For each one-unit increase in Gender_Diversity, the timeliness of financial reporting is expected to increase by 0.252 units. This coefficient is statistically significant ($p = 0.017$), indicating that higher gender diversity on the board is associated with higher timeliness.

In summary:

- Average board experience (Avg_Board_Experience) was statistically significant at the 0.1% level and had a negative coefficient. This implies that more experienced boards are associated with less timely financial reporting. One possible explanation could be that experienced boards feel less urgency to report.
- Gender diversity on the board (Gender_Diversity) was positively associated with reporting timeliness at the 1.7% significance level. This provides evidence that greater gender balance on boards may lead to more timely reporting, perhaps due to diverse perspectives and skills.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding financial reporting timeliness, this study embarked on a rigorous investigation into the influence of CEO Gender and Average Board Experience. The primary hypothesis of this research were as follows:

The regression results allow us to evaluate the hypothesis that gender diversity does not affect the timeliness of financial reporting. If this hypothesis was true, we would expect to see no significant relationship between the variables in the regression model. However, that is not what the output indicates. Firstly, the positive coefficient value of 0.250 for gender diversity suggests that as diversity increases, so too does reporting timeliness. This direction of effect contradicts the premise of no impact. More importantly, additional statistical tests show this relationship is unlikely to be merely due to random chance in the sample.

Specifically, the t-value of 2.473 associated with gender diversity falls well above the critical threshold, meaning we can be fairly certain the effect did not occur by accident. Reinforcing this, the p-value of 0.017 is lower than the standard 0.05 level used for significance testing. This indicates there is less than a 2% probability the results could be observed if the true relationship was zero in the population. Finally, while the effect size according to the standardized coefficient is small, statistical significance tests are not affected by magnitude. They simply evaluate whether a relationship plausibly exists at all between the variables. In this case, both the t-test and p-value provide strong evidence against the proposed hypothesis of no relationship between gender diversity and reporting timeliness.

Therefore, based on the direction of the coefficient combined with the statistical significance of the results, we are compelled to reject the null hypothesis that gender diversity does not impact reporting timeliness. The regression analysis reveals a measurable association between these factors which directly contradicts the hypothesis under examination.

Based on the regression results, the hypothesis that Average board size does not affect the timeliness of financial reporting can also be rejected. The regression analysis provides evidence against this position. Specifically, there is a negative coefficient value of 7.478 units for Average board experience, indicating larger boards correlate with more prompt reporting.

While the effect size according to the standardized coefficient is small, significance tests are independent of magnitude and simply assess whether a relationship exists. Taken as a whole, the positive coefficient, significant t-value, and highly significant p-value constitute strong evidence against the hypothesis that board size does not influence reporting timeliness. Parallel to the findings for gender diversity, all of the regression evidence contradicts the position that board size has no impact on the dependent variable. Therefore, like the first hypothesis, we must reject the claim that board size does not affect timeliness of financial reporting based on the statistical significance demonstrated in the regression analysis.

Recommendation

In view of the findings and conclusion, the study thus, made the following recommendations:

Enhance Board Diligence: Organizations should prioritize initiatives to develop active and engaged boards of directors given the enormous influence that board diligence has on the timeliness of financial reporting. This may be accomplished by establishing open lines of communication between the board and management and by providing continual training and development opportunities. The promotion of a diligent culture among board members may result in more timely and precise financial reporting.

Promote Gender Diversity in Leadership: Although the CEO's gender may not have had a significant impact on timely financial reporting in this study, businesses should nonetheless work to increase gender diversity in leadership roles. A diverse leadership team may enhance corporate governance and transparency by bringing a variety of viewpoints and talents to the decision-making process. Organizations ought to work for inclusion and granting all genders an equal chance at leadership positions.

Monitoring and Evaluation in Real Time: Organizations should set up systems for monitoring and evaluating their financial reporting procedures in real time. This involves routine evaluations of reporting accuracy, timeliness, and adherence to pertinent rules. Organizations may make sure that financial reporting stays a priority and satisfies the highest standards of openness and integrity by putting in place strong internal controls and audit processes.

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INFLUENCE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF MTN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The influence of diversity and inclusion (D&I) on organizational performance has become a critical area of study in today's competitive and globalized business environment. This research explore the dimensions of religion and ethnicity as a measure of D &I, and employee productivity and motivation to measure organizational performance. The study adopts a quantitative approach, collecting data through structured questionnaires distributed to 225 employees from MTN Nigeria in Taraba State. Using Pearson correlation analysis, the study investigates the relationships between religion, ethnicity, and employee outcomes. The results reveal significant positive correlations between religion and employee productivity ($r = 0.731$, $p < 0.05$), as well as employee motivation ($r = 0.536$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, ethnicity was found to have a strong positive relationship with both employee *productivity ($r = 0.909$, $p < 0.05$) and motivation ($r = 0.490$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that fostering diversity and inclusive policies and programs can significantly enhance organizational performance by boosting employee engagement, productivity, and motivation. The study concludes that organizations prioritizing D&I, particularly by cultivating inclusive policies, are better positioned to thrive in a dynamic market. The study therefore, recommended that government and firms should build an ethnically inclusive work culture through diversity training and cross-cultural teamwork, foster a unified organizational identity to enhance employee loyalty and reduce turnover.*

Key words: Diversity, Inclusion, **Organizational Performance**, **Employee Productivity**, **Employee Motivation**, **Religion**, **Ethnicity**.

1.0 Introduction

This study seeks to evaluate the impact of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the current globalizing and competitive business world. In the context of promoting diversity, diversity means having people of different genders, ethnicities, ages, cultural backgrounds, and abilities (Nishii and Mayer 2020). While diversity acknowledges that these individuals are different and unique, inclusion assures that they are welcomed and appreciated within an organization to perform their optimum in their work tasks (Roberson & Perry, J. L. 2022). The outreach of diversity and inclusion in organizational performance has recently been of particular interest. Based on our literature review, companies with dedication to D&I ensure that they receive more innovation, better decision making, and increased employee satisfaction (Dueland, L. J. B. 2023; Mor Barak, et al., 2016). Given that, a diversified workplace introduces different ideas that allow businesses to be more responsive to change within markets across the globe (Ajgaonkar et al., 2022). Diversity means that everyone within the organization is encouraged to contribute ideas and talents towards the betterment of the company; thus, operational performance is improved by diversity (McKinsey & Company, 2020). Companies that adopt D&I have not only a heightened competitive edge but also enhance their companies' reputation and comprehensive customer relationships (Dara, F. 2022). However, the question then turns to how to successfully manage diversity and inclusiveness to gain the most benefit. Based on the above facts, the general objective of the study is to determine the influence of diversity and inclusion on organization's performance in MTN Nigeria. The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

i. To determine the relationship between religion and employee productivity in the MTN, Nigeria.
ii. To determine the relationship between religion and employee motivation in MTN Nigeria.
iii. To determine the relationship between ethnicity and employee productivity in MTN Nigeria.
iv. To determine the relationship between ethnicity and employee motivation in fostering a collaborative work environment in MTN Nigeria.

1.1 Problem Statement

The role and significance of D&I are increasingly being understood in terms of its contribution to organizational performance. At the same time, most organizations experience a high degree of difficulty in building or enhancing proper D&I policies. This is because organizational decision-making processes, especially within selection and promotion, are indirectly influenced by prejudice and racism (Dueland, L. J. B. 2023). It is challenging for body talent to improve from across, thus restricting talent development in an organization.

Furthermore, culture-generated barriers in the mode of communication, such as religious or ethnic divergences, hinder collegiality; thus, cooperation among the team declines and resolves into conflicts. As two valuable diversity elements, religion and ethnicity can substantially impact organizational employee effectiveness and engagement levels. Lack of faith in the organization or management can produce religious prejudices that reduce motivation and collaboration and, in general, result in low performance; the same applies to ethnic prejudice in organizational culture. Moreover, organizational cultures that are skeptical of change are also problematic because they create a barrier to the effectiveness of D&I endeavors, notably religious and ethnic ones (McKinsey & Company, 2020). Of course, the business cannot achieve a worthwhile return on investments in diversity when the leadership is not fully committed to such efforts, and there are no proper ways to track how well these initiatives work, and therefore, impact organizational performance.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual framework

This research will explore the concepts of diversity and inclusion as independent variables and measures them against the outcome of employee productivity and employee turnover as dependent variables to assess the organization's performance.

2.1.1 Concept of Diversity

As a concept, diversity is the existence of difference within a certain context, related to the biological characteristics as well as the nature of a person such as race, sex, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, income, and disability among others (Dara, F. 2022).Over the course of the last few decades, the topic of diversity in organizational environments has received considerable attention in the scientific literature because diversity adds different perspectives, ideas, and problem-solving strategies that could make volatile processes fecund (Martinez et al., 2017). The concept has been increasingly recognized over the past few decades, as it brings a variety of perspectives, experiences, and problem-solving approaches that can enhance innovation and improve decision-making processes (Martinez, et al., 2017).

In recent years, both academic and practical literature has expanded the conceptualization of diversity by adding cognitive and experiential diversity: the way in which people process and address challenges, respectively (Van Knippenberg, D., & However, I. J. 2023). Creating a diverse work force is very good, but they need to be managed properly because having diversity will lead to creativity as different views and experiences (Saxena, A. 2014). When individuals feel accepted in the workplace, they are committed to delivering organizational objectives, increased productivity, and innovation, as supported by Guillaume et al. (2017).

Nevertheless, mere diversity is not enough to produce positive results; the effectiveness of diversity enhancement strategies depends on the promotion of an inclusive environment that effectively integrates all employees, regardless of the sources of their diversity (Mor Barak, 2021). However, when diversity is not complemented by inclusion, it is likely that organizations may not reap the strengths of diversification, which may result in incidents such as tokenism or even conflict within teams, as highlighted by McKay et al. (2015).

2.1.2 Concept of inclusion

Organizational inclusion refers to the characteristics of practices and policies within organizations that make people feel welcomed, wanted, and included in the organization's environment (Haslam et al., 2021). Rather than just offering diverse opportunities in organizations, promoting the idea of organizational diversity puts a premium on how organizational members can contribute according to their potential. Inclusion is not merely the incorporation of diverse people, but they also get to nominate and vote and have equal chance at resources among other things (Nishii & Mayer, 2020). Contemporary scholars has also shown that diversity success requires the effective implementation of inclusion. If accommodative measures are not implemented, diversity becomes a source of friction, misunderstanding and non-commitment, which eliminates the possibility of a boost in productivity that diversity brings (Saxena, A. 2014).

Roberson, Ryan, and Ragins (2017) posit that integration enables managers to maximize organizational resources and capitalize on variety within the group to improve problem solving and decision making. The cooperation within such teams can result from cognitive diversity, enabling them to develop more effective strategies than competitors, which grants organizations the advantage they need in competitive and saturated markets (Zia-ur-Rehman, M., Imran, S., & Bokhari, Z. F. 2021). Inclusion creates a feeling that everyone within a group, diverse in one way or the other, feels comfortable to unmask their diversity, and brings ideas forward for consideration without feeling erased. This, in turn, promotes creativity, collaboration, and innovation within teams to enable organizations to tap into the full potential of their work force (Roberson & Perry, J. L. 2022).

However, the inclusion did not occur automatically with increased diversity. Leaders play a crucial role in establishing a foundation for inclusion by fostering open communication, demonstrating inclusive behaviors, and ensuring that all perspectives are heard and respected (Carmeli et al., 2021). Recent studies emphasize the necessity for continuous evaluation and implementation of tailored strategies that address the specific inclusion requirements of diverse demographic groups within organizations (Nishii & Mayer, 2020). Intersectionality, which acknowledges the multiple overlapping identities that individuals possess (e.g., race, gender, and age), is also increasingly considered essential in designing truly inclusive practices (Søraa, R. A., et al., 2020).

Moreover, the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1979), as cited by Carmeli et al. (2021), supports the proposition that inclusivity mitigates the risks of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, which are potential impediments to the cohesion and performance of diverse teams.

Religion

Religion plays a significant role in shaping the values, behaviors, and attitudes of individuals, including those within the workplace. Its impact on employee productivity and motivation can be both positive and negative depending on how religious diversity is managed.

On the positive side, organizations that create an inclusive environment where employees' religious beliefs are respected and accommodated tend to experience higher levels of employee engagement and motivation (Zia-ur-Rehman, M., Imran, S., & Bokhari, Z. F. 2021). The authors further posited that employees who perceive their religious practices, such as prayer times or religious holidays, as recognized by their employers, are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction and commitment to their work. This sense of inclusion can enhance motivation and productivity, as employees feel supported by aligning their personal values with organizational goals.

Research suggests that employees who perceive their workplace as respectful of their religious identities demonstrate increased engagement and motivation, leading to improved performance (Shrestha, P., & Parajuli, D. 2021). However, when religious diversity is not effectively managed, it can lead to conflict, alienation, and reduced motivation (Sharmaa & Singh, R. K. 2021). Moreover, religious conflicts in the workplace, stemming from differing beliefs or practices, can undermine team cohesion and collaboration, resulting in decreased overall productivity (Jelil, A., Sunday, O., & Rufus, A. 2018).

Organizations must implement inclusive policies and practices to harness the positive aspects of religious diversity. These include allowing flexible work schedules to accommodate religious practices, offering prayer spaces, and promoting open dialogue about religious diversity. By doing so, organizations can foster an environment that not only respects religious differences, but also utilizes these differences as a source of motivation and increased productivity (Shaari, N., Subramaniam, G., & Hassan, R. 2020).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity may be conceptualized as a shared cultural, linguistic, or ancestral characteristic that unifies a group of individuals. It encompasses various elements such as nationality, language, religion, and customs. Ethnic groups frequently share a common history, cultural traditions, and sense of identity that distinguishes them from other groups (Guillaume et al., 2017). Employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds have unique perspectives that can lead to more comprehensive strategies and improved work processes. Ethnic diversity fosters a sense of inclusiveness and equity, which motivates employees to engage more fully in their roles, leading to enhanced performance and overall productivity (Cox & Blake, 2020).

However, inadequately managed ethnic diversity can result in challenges that adversely affect employees' motivation and productivity. Issues such as ethnic stereotyping, discrimination, and exclusion may arise if ethnic differences are not addressed appropriately in the workplace. Such negative experiences can demoralize employees from minority groups, resulting in decreased motivation, increased absenteeism, and ultimately reduced productivity (Zia-ur-Rehman, M., Imran, S., & Bokhari, Z. F. 2021).

Concept of organization's performance

The concept of organizational performance, also the dependent variable, has gained significant attention from profit and non-profit organizations. Organizational performance refers to how effectively an organization meets its objectives, and is often measured in terms of financial outcomes, operational efficiency, market position, and customer satisfaction. It reflects the capacity of an organization to utilize its resources and capabilities to achieve goals and maintain competitiveness. The concept has evolved to include not only financial metrics but also non-financial dimensions, such as employee well-being, innovation, and sustainability.

Recent research has emphasized the multidimensional nature of organizational performance. For instance, (Donbesuur, F., et al., 2020) argued that performance is increasingly linked to innovation, particularly in dynamic environments, as organizations must adapt to technological advancements to sustain competitive advantage.

Employee Productivity

Employee productivity refers to the efficiency with which employees complete tasks and contribute to organizational goals. It is often measured by output per employee over a specific period; however, modern assessments of productivity also consider quality, creativity, and alignment with strategic objectives. This concept has evolved with the rise of remote work, technological advancements, and changing workforce expectations.

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of workplace environment and employee engagement in boosting productivity. According to Yost, M. R. (2024), providing employees with autonomy, flexibility, and adequate resources significantly enhances their productivity, especially in remote or hybrid work setups. The shift to remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about new challenges and opportunities for maintaining productivity, with technology and communication tools becoming essential for collaboration and task completion. Moreover, performance management systems (PMS) play a vital role in enhancing productivity. Real-time feedback, goal alignment, and personalized incentives have been shown to improve employee output and engagement (Mbugua, L. M. (2021).

Employee Motivation

Employee turnover refers to the rate at which employees leave an organization and are replaced by new hires. High turnover can disrupt operations, increase recruitment and training costs, and affect overall organizational performance, whereas low turnover can signal employee satisfaction and organizational stability. Recent research has highlighted the key factors influencing employee turnover, particularly job satisfaction, organizational culture, and leadership. Asiedu-Appiah et al. (2015) found that turnover is closely linked to job dissatisfaction, lack of career advancement opportunities, and poor work-life balance. Employees who feel undervalued or unsupported are likely to leave, particularly in highly competitive industries. Work environment and organizational culture are additional key factors. For example, Saxena, A. (2014) points out that inclusive, diverse, and positive workplace environment tend to retain employees longer by creating a sense of belonging. It is a critical element in enhancing organizational performance, productivity, and employee satisfaction. Motivation is often categorized into intrinsic motivation (driven by personal satisfaction or interest in the work) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards, such as money, recognition, or promotions).

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is closely tied to employees' sense of purpose and personal fulfillment. Gagné and Deci (2020) highlight that employees who find meaning in their work are more likely to stay motivated, exhibit creativity, and perform well, even in the absence of external rewards. This sense of purpose can be fostered by providing employees with autonomy, skill-development opportunities, and challenging work that aligns with their values. In contrast, extrinsic motivation often revolves around tangible rewards such as salaries, bonuses, or promotions. Although extrinsic factors can boost short-term performance, their effects on long-term motivation are debated. Judge et al. (2021) argue that heavy reliance on extrinsic rewards, without attention to intrinsic factors, can lead to burnout or decreased engagement over time. Thus, a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is necessary for sustained employee commitment.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, as cited by Ashforth and Mael (2020), provides a framework for understanding how individuals derive their self-concept from their membership in various social groups. These social groups can include demographic factors, such as ethnicity and gender, as well as professional or organizational affiliations. In the workplace context, SIT offers valuable insights into how group memberships influence employee behavior, motivation, and perceptions. By recognizing the role of social identity, organizations can better understand the dynamics that shape employee interactions and their impact on organizational performance.

In organizational settings, SIT explains the phenomena of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, where employees may favor colleagues who share their group identity, such as department, gender, or cultural background (Ashforth and Mael 2020). In addition, SIT sheds light on team dynamics, highlighting how a strong shared identity within teams can enhance cohesion and cooperation. However, excessive identification with subgroups can create internal divisions that detract from the overall organizational objectives (Rink & Ellemers, 2021). Leadership is also crucial in shaping social identity within organizations; transformational leaders can promote collective organizational identity, reduce intergroup conflict, and enhance unity and performance (Haslam et al., 2021).

The practical applications of SIT in the workplace are extensive. For instance, it can be used to manage and mitigate intergroup conflict by addressing the underlying in-group and out-group dynamics, thereby promoting cross-group collaboration and unity (Ashforth & Mael, 2020). Lastly, SIT underscores the importance of promoting inclusivity within organizations. By encouraging employees to identify with the company as a whole, rather than smaller subgroups, organizations can reduce the negative effects of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination, ultimately improving overall organizational performance (Rink & Ellemers, 2021).

2.3 Empirical Review of Literature

Guchait, P., & Namasasu, M. (2022) investigated the Role of Religion in Shaping Employee Motivation and Job Performance in Multinational Companies in Africa.

This qualitative study employed interviews and focus groups with employees of various multinational companies across Africa to examine the influence of religion on motivation and performance. The research findings indicate that religious beliefs significantly impact employee motivation and job performance, with religion often providing a framework for ethical behavior and teamwork. However, this study also notes potential conflicts arising from divergent religious practices and beliefs. The authors concluded that comprehending the role of religion in the workplace is essential for enhancing employee motivation and performance. This study recommends that organizations cultivate an inclusive culture that respects religious diversity and facilitates open dialogue about religious beliefs to enhance workplace harmony and productivity.

Ede, A. J., & Eweoya, I. O. (2019) conducted a study on Ethnic Diversity, Workplace Conflict, and Employee Performance in Nigeria: The Mediating Role of Employee Motivation. This research employed a mixed-method approach that incorporated quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with employees in various organizations in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. These findings indicate that ethnic diversity is associated with workplace conflict, which negatively affects employee performance. However, this study also revealed that employee motivation can mediate this relationship, mitigating the adverse effects of ethnic conflict. The authors concluded that managing ethnic diversity is crucial for enhancing employee performance, and that motivation can help mitigate conflict. The study proposed that organizations implement policies that promote cultural understanding and provide motivation-enhancing incentives such as recognition programs and career development opportunities.

Luu, T.T., et al. (2019) conducted a study on addressing employee diversity to foster work engagement, using 31 Vietnam-based manufacturing firms with 200 employees each that had established HR systems. The study utilized multilevel structural equation modeling for data analysis and found that diversity-oriented HR practices foster employee work engagement by cultivating a positive diversity climate. The study concluded that there is a positive relationship between diversity-oriented HR practices and employee work engagement, demonstrating the importance of diversity-focused initiatives in improving organizational outcomes. The study recommends that organizations, particularly in the manufacturing sector, should actively implement diversity-oriented HR practices. These could include diversity training programs, inclusive recruitment policies, and equitable promotional pathways. By cultivating a positive diversity climate, companies can enhance employee engagement, leading to improved productivity and job satisfaction.

Binsiddiq, Y. A., and Alzahmi, R. A. (2013), in their paper titled "Work Engagement and Group Dynamics in Diverse and Multicultural Teams", conducted a critical literature review published in the *Review of Management Innovation & Creativity*. The study aimed to explore how group dynamics influence work engagement in diverse teams and identify gaps in the existing literature. The authors reviewed literature in three areas: work engagement, group dynamics, and how the latter mediates engagement in multicultural teams. The paper found that group dynamics—including communication, collaboration, and conflict management—play a key role in shaping engagement. Multicultural teams present both opportunities (creativity, innovation) and challenges (conflict, communication barriers), with contradictory findings across studies. Some research highlighted the benefits of diversity, while others emphasized the challenges it creates for engagement. The authors concluded that more empirical research is needed to test the theoretical models discussed. They recommended conducting real-world studies using multilevel analysis and focusing on specific organizational contexts, like multinational corporations, to better understand how group dynamics influence work engagement in diverse teams.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to investigate the influence of diversity and inclusion on organizational performance.

3.2 Sampling

The target population for this study was employees from MTN Nigeria in Taraba State. The participants were selected from three branches representing the three zones in Taraba: Jalingo, Mutan Biyu, and Wukari, with 125, 47, and 53 employees, respectively, totaling 225 employees (sourced from their respective offices in August

2024). Because of the manageable size of the population, a census approach was employed. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on employee demographics, organizational diversity, inclusion practices, and perceived organizational performance. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = agree to 5 = strongly disagree).

3.3 Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, where the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation were employed to provide an overview of the contingency table. Inferential statistics were also used, where Pearson correlation analysis was employed to determine the relationship between the variables under study.

3.4 Research Philosophy

The research is grounded in a positivist philosophy for the quantitative aspect, as it seeks to objectively measure the relationships between variables such as the level of diversity, inclusion practices, and organizational performance. Simultaneously, an interpretivist approach was adopted for the qualitative portion to understand employees' subjective experiences and perceptions regarding diversity and inclusion.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Internal consistency of the survey items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (target ≥ 0.70). Test-retest reliability was used to ensure stability over time. The result is displayed below.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

S/N	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value
1	Religion	0.79
2	Employee productivity	0.75
3	Employee motivation	0.78
4	Ethnicity	0.81

Source: SPSS V24, 2024

The survey was reviewed by experts in human resource management and organizational behavior to ensure it covers all relevant aspects of diversity and inclusion.

4.0 Result and Discussion

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Religion		1.00	5.00	3.5650	1.01912
Employee productivity		1.00	5.00	3.3049	1.10312
Employee motivation		1.00	5.00	3.8496	1.08691
Ethnicity		1.00	5.00	2.9146	1.14144
Valid N (listwise)	225				

Source: SPSS V24, 2024

This table presents the descriptive statistics for four variables: Religion, Employee productivity, employee motivation, and ethnicity. Descriptive statistics provide an overview of the data, indicating the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation for each variable under investigation. Religion exhibited a mean of 3.5650 with a standard deviation of 1.01912, indicating a moderately high level of diversity in the workforce, as perceived by the respondents. Employee Productivity demonstrated a mean of 3.3049, with a standard deviation of 1.10312, suggesting that employees' productivity levels were moderate. Employee Motivation had a higher mean of 3.8496, with a standard deviation of 1.08691, indicating that motivation levels among employees were relatively high. Ethnicity displayed a mean of 2.9146 and standard deviation of 1.14144, reflecting that ethnicity was perceived to be moderate among the respondents.

Overall, these statistics provide an overview of how respondents perceive religious and ethnic diversity in the workforce, as well as their own levels of motivation and productivity. The minimum and maximum values (ranging from 1.00 to 5.00 for all variables) show that the scale used for these measures allowed participants to rate their experiences across a full spectrum from very low to very high.

Test of Hypotheses and Discussion of Findings

$H0_1$: Religion does not have any relationship with employee productivity in MTN Nigeria Taraba State

Table 3: *Correlations*

		Religion	Employee productivity
Religion	Pearson Correlation	1	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	225
Employee productivity	Pearson Correlation	.731**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

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

The correlation analysis in Table 3 reveals a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.731 between Religion and Employee Productivity with a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. This indicates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between religion and employee productivity at the 0.05 level.

The data suggest that, as religious diversity or consideration within the workforce increases, employee productivity also tends to increase. A significance level of 0.000 (less than 0.05) confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, indicating that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. Consequently, religious diversity appears to play a substantial role in influencing employee productivity.

This finding aligns with Guchait, P., & Namasasu, M. (2022), who found that inclusive workplaces that acknowledge and respect employees' religious practices tend to experience higher levels of employee engagement and productivity. The authors emphasized that when employees perceive their religious beliefs are respected, it fosters a supportive work environment, leading to improved performance outcomes. Similarly, this study demonstrates that religious inclusivity in the workplace in MTN, Nigeria, is associated with enhanced employee productivity.

H0$_2$: Religion does not have any relationship with employee motivation in MTN Nigeria Taraba State.

Table 4: *Correlations*

		Religion	Employee motivation
Religion	Pearson Correlation	1	.536
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	225
Employee motivation	Pearson Correlation	.536	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

The correlation analysis in Table 4 reveals a moderately positive relationship between religion and employee motivation, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.536 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. This indicates that as religious diversity or inclusivity within the workforce increases, employee motivation tends to increase significantly. A p-value of less than 0.05 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, suggesting that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

These findings are consistent with the research of Guchait, P., & Namasasu, M. (2022), who demonstrated that workplaces that acknowledge and respect employees' religious practices tend to foster higher levels of employee motivation and satisfaction. Employees who perceive that their religious beliefs are valued contribute to a more supportive and motivating work environment.

Similarly, Luu et al. (2019) emphasized that an inclusive organizational culture positively influences employee engagement and motivation, particularly when employees perceive that their diverse backgrounds, including religion, are recognized and respected. This aligns with the present study, indicating that religious inclusivity in Nigeria positively impacts employee motivation, which is essential for maintaining high levels of organizational performance.

H0$_3$: Ethnicity does not have any relationship with employee productivity in MTN Nigeria Taraba State.

***Table 5**: Correlations*

		Ethnicity	Employee productivity
Ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	1	.909**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	225
Employee productivity	Pearson Correlation	.909**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

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

Table 5 indicates a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.909 with a significance level of 0.000. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H03). This shows that ethnicity has a strong and significant positive relationship with employee productivity in MTN Nigeria, Taraba State. This finding is consistent with the research by Ede, A. J., & Eweoya, I. O. (2019), who found that ethnicity significantly, enhances team performance in diverse groups by promoting a shared identity and goals. The authors emphasized that leaders who are inclusive can align diverse teams toward common objectives, leading to higher productivity. The results of this study support this perspective, indicating that inclusive ethnic background in MTN Nigeria is crucial in driving employee productivity, especially in a diverse workforce.

$H0_4$: Ethnicity does not have any relationship with employee motivation in fostering a collaborative work environment in MTN Nigeria.

***Table 6:** Correlations*

		Ethnicity	Employee motivation
Ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	1	.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	225
Employee motivation	Pearson Correlation	.490**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	225	225

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

The correlation analysis in Table 6 shows a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.490 with a significance level of **0.000**. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H04). This indicates that ethnicity has a significant positive relationship with employee motivation in MTN Nigeria, Taraba State. This finding is closely related to the work of Ede, A. J., & Eweoya, I. O. (2019) who discussed how fostering a strong, shared organizational identity in diverse workplaces enhances cooperation and loyalty among employees. The findings from MTN Nigeria reinforce this, demonstrating that inclusive ethnic background does not only enhances productivity but also plays a critical role in motivating employees, which is essential for achieving long-term organizational goals.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that diversity and inclusion significantly influence organizational performance, particularly through religion and ethnicity. The positive correlations between these factors and employee productivity and motivation underscore the importance of fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment. Organizations like MTN Nigeria that emphasize diversity and inclusivity are better positioned to achieve higher employee engagement, productivity, and overall performance, thereby gaining a competitive advantage. Based on this finding the study recommends the following:

i. Organizations in Nigeria should accommodate diverse religious practices by providing flexible work hours for religious observances and creating multi-faith spaces, fostering an inclusive environment that enhances productivity.

ii. Firms should implement religious diversity programs and interfaith dialogues to educate employees and promote tolerance, increasing their motivation by ensuring that their beliefs are valued.

iii. Government and firms should build an ethnically inclusive work culture through diversity training and cross-cultural teamwork, foster innovation, and improve employee productivity.

iv. Firms should encourage collaboration by celebrating diverse cultural events and promoting mentorship across ethnic groups, creating a motivated and cohesive workforce.

Limitations of the Study

- **Self-Reported Data**: Survey responses may be influenced by social desirability bias, where participants provide answers they believe are favorable rather than reflective of their true experiences.
- **Generalizability**: Although the sample covers various industries, the findings may not be fully generalizable to smaller organizations or those outside the geographic region being studied.

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