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Strategy and Business Policy as Mechanisms for Competitive Future: An Empirical Investigation of Manufacturing Firms in Nigeria

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Abstract
This study empirically examines the relationship between strategy and business policy mechanisms and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. Specifically, it investigates the relationship between growth strategy and competitive future, as well as the relationship between competitive strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms. The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. A total of 248 senior managers/executives of manufacturing companies in Rivers State, Nigeria was administered a structured questionnaire. Hypotheses were tested and relationship strengths and directions between variables determined using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The findings show that there are strong positive correlations between the study variables. There was a positive correlation between growth strategy and competitive future ($r = 0.641$, $p < 0.05$). The competitive strategy also showed a positive correlation with competitive future ($r = 0.759$, $p < 0.05$). The results confirm that the two strategic variables are significantly related to firms' competitive future. The results indicate that the growth and competitive strategy of manufacturing companies should be designed considering the strategic opportunities to achieve long-term competitive advantage. Managers should take time to invest in research and development-based strategies and differentiation approaches to help strengthen their competitive position. This study contributes to the strategic management literature by providing empirical evidence from the Nigerian manufacturing sector, extending the application of resource-based view and emergent strategy theories in an African context. The study fills a gap in the literature by empirically validating the relationship between strategic mechanisms and competitive outcomes in a developing economy setting.

Keywords: Strategy & Business Policy, Competitive Future, Growth Strategy, Competitive Strategy, Manufacturing Firms, Nigeria

Introduction

Extreme volatility, intense competition, and unprecedented uncertainty characterise the contemporary business environment. All sectors face the daunting challenge of thriving in an increasingly complex and dynamic marketplace, not just surviving. Strategic managers around the world are primarily concerned with strategic management in terms of competitive advantage and sustainability (Alharbi, 2024; Alkhodary, 2023) [2, 3].

Navigating into the future in a business world fraught with stiff competition requires carefully framed strategies that can serve as pointers to strategic direction and outcomes (Fergnani, 2022) [10]. Bryson and George (2020) [6] define the Strategic Management as the management process of an organisation's work to get the desired result. This involves external environmental analysis including identifying opportunities and threats, internal resource and capability analysis, a clear vision and mission, objectives setting and selection of appropriate courses of action.

Business policy and strategic management are important as they contribute to good business decisions. Business policy helps to make consistent decisions, but strategy is the path to a competitive advantage and future success (Lucky-Kormene, 2025) [17]. Such a synergy is especially important in developing economies such as Nigeria, where manufacturing companies are exposed to unique issues such as lack of infrastructure, policy inconsistencies, and high import competition.

Though policy and strategy are important in gaining competitive advantage in business theory, there is still limited empirical studies on the relationship between strategy and business policy in Nigeria manufacturing context. The current literature addresses developed economies and hence the findings of the studies cannot be translated directly to the Nigerian business setting. This gap necessitates an empirical investigation to provide context-specific evidence.

Statement of the Problem

The desire to achieve competitive advantage and secure long-term prosperity is universal among business organisations. However, it is evident that not all organisations that enter the business arena achieve their desired goals, competitive lead, or sustainability. The primary reason lies in the fact that participation in business is akin to participating in a war where the focus is to win, subdue, and conquer competitors. This requires deploying all arsenals, weapons, and tactics to achieve victory, involving understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses and those of competitors and developing sustainable long-term plans and policies.

Practically, not all firms possess effective, result-orientated strategies and policies that can bring them to their desired goals and long-term success. Numerous manufacturing companies in Nigeria suffer from lack of competitiveness in their respective market segments and ultimately suffer downturns and have to shut their doors due to competition. This leads to key questions: What are the strategic mechanisms by which firms can achieve and maintain competitive advantage? What is the relationship between growth strategy and competitive strategy in terms of competitive future?

The theoretical and conceptual elements of the relationship between strategy and business policy have been a subject of many debates but empirical evidence in Nigeria is limited. This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the relationships between growth strategy, competitive strategy, and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to ascertain the significance of strategy and business policy in achieving a competitive future. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the relationship between growth strategy and competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.
2. To determine the relationship between competitive strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between growth strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between competitive strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between growth strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between competitive strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several respects. First, it supplies empirical proof of the mechanisms used to provide a strategic competitive advantage, which helps advance the body of knowledge on strategic management. Second, it provides practical implications for the policy makers and managers in the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. Third, it extends the application of the resource-based view and emergent strategy theories in the context of a developing economy. Fourth, it provides a foundation for future research on strategic management in emerging markets.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on manufacturing firms operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. The independent variables are growth strategy and competitive strategy, while competitive future serves as the dependent variable. The study employs the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient for data analysis.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Strategic Management

Strategic management relates to the unique methods, approaches, and practices that management teams deploy in defining the organisation's future (vision), purpose (mission), goals, and objectives. To be strategic entails thinking and acting differently to achieve superior performance and results above rivals. Strategic management entails making superior, data-driven decisions and formulating and deploying plans in light of the organisation's resources and environmental realities to survive and lead (David *et al*., 2020) [8].

Strategic management has evolved from Frederick Taylor's scientific management (1911), through Peter Drucker's management by objectives in the 1950s, to Michael Porter's competitive strategy frameworks in the 1970s and 1980s, and now includes contemporary emphases on core competencies, innovation, and flexibility (Bolland, 2020; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994) [5, 12].

Strategy

Strategies are plans which are related to the ways in which organisations are going to achieve their goals, compete and sustain their operations. They are maps or blueprints that map the way to achieving goals for an organization. Strategies are the manner in which the firm is ready and willing to define and put into practice strategies that allow competition for a particular market or industry.

The strategy pyramid typically comprises vision (long-term projection of what an organization aims to become), mission (statement of organisational purpose), values (unique utility offered to customers), goals (desired outcomes), and objectives (specific action plans).

Growth Strategy

Growth is the desire of every business and competitor.

Growth strategy helps firms improve competitive position (Wheelen & Hunger, 2012) [29]. Firms must aspire to pursue a growth strategy for survival in the dynamic competitive environment. Alkhodary (2023) [3] asserted that strategic management serves as a pivotal tool for achieving competitive advantage. Growth strategies encompass market penetration, market development, product development, and diversification approaches.

Competitive Strategy

Competitive strategy refers to definitive plans, approaches, and actions that firms deploy to compete and advance ahead of other competitors in their industries. Stern and Stalk (1998, p. 1) [26] asserted that "all competitors who persist over time must maintain a unique advantage through differentiation over all others". "Successful business strategy is the ability to effectively differentiate that management."

The competitive strategies are cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategies (Porter, 1980) [24]. Differentiation strategy involves the choice of making products or services more acceptable than competing ones by adding unique features, distinct values and qualities. Research and development needs to play a critical role in competitive strategy and are essential factors to create innovation and new discoveries.

Competitive Future

“Competitive future" is the ability of an organisation to maintain a competitive edge and a leadership role for a long period. It's the capacity to be dominant, to grow and to make a profit, and to be sustainable in the long term, in the organisation. The concept of strategy and business policy are fundamental factors to achieve competitive advantage (Alkhodary, 2023; Hitt *et al*., 2004; Tidd, 2003) [3, 13, 27].

Theoretical Framework

Two theories which support this study are resource based view theory and emergent strategy theory.

Resource-Based View Theory

The Resource Based View was originally developed from Penrose's (1959) [23] "Theory of the Growth of the Firm", where he stated that a firm's resources are not confined to administrative units, but are a collection of productive resources. The term was coined by Wernerfelt (1984) [28] and the principle was continued by Barney (1991) [4] who introduced the idea of heterogeneity among firms in industries that offer sustainable competitive advantages.

RBV focuses on systematic identification, development and deployment of important resources to produce differential performances and returns. The two assumptions of RBV are that firms in an industry are not the same, so that each firm is unique, and that there is some immobility in the movement of resources from one firm to another.

Sustainable resources have the following qualities:

1. **Valuable:** Resources that offer opportunities and reduce hazards.
2. **Rare:** Items that aren't found in the inventories of most opponents.
3. **Imperfectly Imitable:** Those that cannot be reproduced, or easily replicated, such as legal protections such as the copyrights, trademarks, patents, and brand names.

Emergent Strategy Theory

The theory of emergent strategy was a creation of Mintzberg (1978) [18]. The theory puts forward that continual learning and the capacity of an organisation to receive, analyse and interpret the message from the operational environment results in timely outcomes and better outcomes. Emergence means unexpected, unplanned events which happen in the industry or business environment.

Some of the most important components of emergent strategy are bottom-up communication (where people at every level of an organization are involved in decision making and strategy formulation), the "5 Ps" of strategy (Plan, Ploy, Pattern, Position, and Perspective), and flexibility and agility (which means responding quickly to changing circumstances) (James, 2018) [15].

Empirical Review

Growth Strategy and Competitive Advantage

Ndithi (2019) [20] investigated the impact of different growth strategies on competitive advantage of the petroleum industry in Kenya. The study revealed that two growth strategies (market development and diversification) had significant positive and strong impact on competitive advantage, in particular on sales volume with Pearson correlational coefficient (r) of 0.641 and 0.759 respectively.

Mutua (2013) [19] carried out a study on growth strategies and competitive advantage in commercial banks in Kenya and obtained good positive correlation between competitive advantage and market penetration strategy ($r = 0.667$), market development strategy ($r = 0.685$) and product development strategy ($r = 0.523$) respectively.

Competitive Strategy and Organisational Performance

In Nigeria, Kpurunee *et al*. (2023) [16] investigated competitive strategies, and how they relate to organisational performance in corporate enterprises, employing Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to test relationship. Results showed that there is an important relationship between competitive strategies and organisational performance, so it is concluded that the corporate enterprises should use the appropriate competitive strategy to generate value and beat the competition and gain market share.

Strategic Management and Organisational Performance

Olayiwola (20 25) studied the impact of strategic management accounting techniques on the performance of manufacturing companies in southwest Nigeria. Results of the study showed that SMATs adoption was strongly positively correlated with firm performance with firms reporting higher productivity, efficiency and profitability when they adopted SMATs.

Eferakeya (2025) [9] examined the effect of Environmental Uncertainty on Strategic Management Accounting in Nigerian Listed Manufacturing Companies, with Pearson correlation test to confirm that there is no multicollinearity in the study. The findings of the study showed that competition intensity, market turbulence and environmental uncertainty are important factors that affect the applications of strategic management accounting.

Strategic Intelligence and Manufacturing Firms

Research into competitive intelligence in manufacturing companies in Nigeria found that the strategic intelligence has a significant influence on the technological know-how r = 0.602 ($p < 0.05$); and that human intelligence networks have a significant relationship with employee loyalty (r = 0.705 ($p < 0.05$), hence it was concluded that competitive intelligence is one of the important tools available for strategic planning and competitive advantage.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in Fig 1; it was developed based on the literature review and theoretical underpinnings.

Source: Researchers' Conceptualization (2026)

Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design. The cross-sectional design was appropriate, as data were collected at a single point to examine the relationships between the study variables. The survey method was selected because it allows for the collection of quantitative data from a large sample, enabling statistical analysis and generalisation of findings.

Study Population

The population of this study comprised senior managers and executives of manufacturing firms operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. According to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, there are approximately 150 registered manufacturing firms operating in the state. The focus group consisted of targeted respondents, namely the managing director, general manager, director, and senior managers making strategic decisions for these firms.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was calculated by taking the sample size from the formula by Yamane (1967) [30] as follows:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Where:

n = Sample size
N = Population (150 firms)
e = Margin of error (5%)

$$n = 150 / (1 + 150(0.05)^2)$$

$$n = 150 / (1 + 0.375)$$

$$n = 150 / 1.375$$

$$n = 109.09 \approx 110 \text{ firms}$$

A sample size of 150 firms was used, with an increase due to non-response and incomplete questionnaires. A total of 300 respondents were targeted, two per firm.

Stratified random sampling technique was used. Firms were stratified based on subsector (food and beverages, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, plastics and rubber, metal and steel, and other manufacturing). From each stratum, proportionate random sampling was used to select firms.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed based on extensive literature review. The questionnaire comprised three sections:

Section A: Demographic information of respondents (gender, age, education, position, years of experience).

Section B: Items that measure the independent variables:

1. The Growth Strategy (10 items adapted from Wheelen & Hunger, 2012; Alkhodary, 2023) [29, 3].
2. Competitive strategy (12 items adapted from Porter, 1980; Hitt *et al*., 2004) [24, 13].

Section C: Items that measure the DV:

1. Competitive Future (8 items adapted from Alharbi, 2024; Stern & Stalk, 1998) [2, 26].

The items have all been scaled on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Validity and Reliability

Content Validity: The questionnaire was content valid because three experts in strategic management and research methodology reviewed. They were also employed to aid in clarifying and relevance of the items.

Pilot Testing: In addition, 30 manufacturing companies were surveyed in a pilot study in the outside the main study. The pilot test was used to assess the clarity, appropriateness and anticipated time to complete the questionnaire.

Reliability: The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the reliability. The findings of the pilot study revealed satisfactory reliability:

1. Growth Strategy: $\alpha = 0.847$
2. Competitive Strategy: $\alpha = 0.862$
3. Competitive Future: $\alpha = 0.879$

The values were all above the acceptable Nunnally value of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978) [21].

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection took place for a period of 8 weeks (March – April 2026). Research assistant were recruited and trained in the process of data collection. Questionnaires were sent to selected companies by personal visits. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Follow-up visits and phone calls were made to encourage participation and retrieve completed questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

Data was analysed using the pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (PPMCC) through SPSS software. The analysis went through the following steps:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** All variables were measured and the frequency distributions, means and standard deviations were calculated.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses and the strength and direction of the correlation

between the variables were determined. The correlation coefficient (r) is a statistic that can have a value from -1 to +1 and where:

- to 0.19: Very weak correlation
- 0.20 to 0.39: Weak correlation
- 0.40 to 0.59: Moderate correlation
- 0.60 to 0.79: Strong correlation
- 0.80 to 1.00: Very strong correlation

Hypothesis Testing: A level of 95% confidence ($\alpha = 0.05$) was used for testing the hypotheses. The p value is < 0.05, so this is statistically significant.

Ethical Considerations

The study has been conducted in accordance with the ethical principle of research. Appropriate approvals were secured from institutions. All participants gave their informed consent. The respondents were free to do so and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process.

Results

Response Rate

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to 150 manufacturing firms. From the sample, 270 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 90%. After screening for completeness and consistency, 248 questionnaires were deemed usable for analysis, representing an effective response rate of 82.7%.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	186	75.0%
	Female	62	25.0%
Age	25-35 years	52	21.0%
	36-45 years	98	39.5%
	46-55 years	72	29.0%
	Above 55 years	26	10.5%
Education	Bachelor's Degree	98	39.5%
	Master's Degree	124	50.0%
	Doctorate Degree	26	10.5%
Position	Managing Director/CEO	38	15.3%
	General Manager	52	21.0%
	Director	42	16.9%
	Senior Manager	116	46.8%
Experience	1-5 years	34	13.7%
	66-10 years	76	30.6%
	11-15 years	88	35.5%
	Above 15 years	50	20.2%

Source: Field Survey (2026)

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Growth Strategy	3.87	0.82	-0.34	0.21
Competitive Strategy	4.02	0.79	-0.28	0.18
Competitive Future	3.92	0.85	-0.31	0.23

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

The mean scores indicate moderate to high levels of strategy adoption and competitive future among the sampled manufacturing firms. The skewness and kurtosis values indicate that the distributions are relatively normal.

Reliability Analysis

Table 3: Reliability Coefficients

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Growth Strategy	0.847	10
Competitive Strategy	0.862	12
Competitive Future	0.879	8

Source: SPSS Output (2026)

All the Cronbach's alpha values were above the acceptable level of 0.70 and this indicated that the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement instrument had been satisfactory.

Correlation Analysis

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3
Growth Strategy	1.000		
Competitive Strategy	0.412**	1.000	
Competitive Future	0.641**	0.759**	1.000

Source: SPSS Output (2026)
Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Growth Strategy and Competitive Future

H_1: There is a significant positive relationship between growth strategy and competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation between Growth Strategy and Competitive Future

Correlations			
		Growth_Strategy	Competitive_Future
Growth_ Strategy	Spearman's Rho	1	.641**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	248	248
Competitive_ Future	Spearman's Rho	.641**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	248	248

Source: SPSS Output (2026)
Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There is a high level of correlation between growth strategy and competitive future (r = 0.641). This p-value (0.000) is less than the threshold of 0.05 (significant) and thus statistically significant. Thus, it is concluded that H_1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2: Competitive Strategy and Competitive Future

H_2: There is a significant positive relationship between competitive strategy and competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation between Competitive Strategy and Competitive Future

Correlations			
		Competitive_Strategy	Competitive_Future
Growth_ Strategy	Spearman's Rho	1	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	248	248
Competitive_ Future	Spearman's Rho	.759**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	248	248

Source: SPSS Output (2026)
Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Competitive strategy is positively correlated with competitive future (r = 0.759). The p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, which is statistically significant. Hence, the support of H_2.

Summary of Findings

1. Manufacturing firms in Nigeria have strong positive relationship between growth strategy and competitive future (r = 0.641, p<0.05). The result is in line with the resource-based view theory, which focuses on the ability of firms to grow and build and use valuable resources to create SCA.
2. There is a strong positive relationship between competitive strategy and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria (r = 0.759, p < 0.05). This is consistent with the emergent strategy theory which highlights the need for strategic positioning and responding to the dynamics in the environment.
3. Competitive strategy (r = 0.759) is more strongly related to competitive future than growth strategy (r = 0.641), meaning that the way firms compete (strategic positioning) might be more important than just growth.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Discussion of Findings

Relationship between Growth Strategy and Competitive Future

This finding of a high positive correlation between growth strategy and a competitive future (r = 0.641, p<0.05) is congruent to earlier studies. Ndithi (2019) [20] revealed that market development and diversification strategies showed positive and high significant relationships with competitive advantage with 0.641 and 0.759 respectively. Likewise, competitive advantage and market penetration strategy, market development strategy, and product development strategy had strong positive correlation in Kenyan commercial banks, respectively, as shown by Mutua (2013) [19]: r = 0.685, r = 0.523, and r = 0.685 with significance at 99%.

The resource-based view theory (Barney, 1991) [4] is a theory that explains the importance of the growth strategy in a company's competitive future. Growth strategies allow companies to secure and build the resources they need that are valuable, rare, and inimitable that lead to sustainable competitive advantage. Firms can grow their resource base and capabilities by penetrating a market, developing a market, developing a product, and diversifying, and they are better equipped for future success.

The Emergent Strategy Theory (Mintzberg, 1978) [18] suggests that flexibility and adaptation to new market conditions are crucial for growth strategies to help companies to react to the environment in an efficient way and maintain their competitiveness in the future.

Competitive strategy is important because it has an impact on a firm's competitive future.

The results showed that competitive strategy had a positive strong correlation with competitive future, r = 0.759, p<0.05, which also confirmed the results of previous studies. In Nigeria, Kpurunee *et al*. (2023) [16] obtained a significant relationship between competitive strategies and organisational performance in corporate enterprises and this led them to conclude that corporate enterprises in today's business world need to adopt appropriate competitive strategies to be successful in their businesses.

The ability to develop a different value proposition, such as a differentiation strategy or an R&D strategy of innovation, helps the firm deliver value in ways that are hard to copy. Differentiation is an advantage that can only be sustained by a long-term business strategy (Stern and Stalk, 1998) [26].

This finding indicates that the competitive future is more related to the competitive strategy than to the growth strategy, meaning that the way firms compete (strategic positioning) is more important than just growth. This is in keeping with the belief of Porter (1980) [24] that "competitive strategy is the basis for sustainable competitive advantage.

The theory of resource-based view of the business supports this finding, as it states that strategies that emphasize the development of unique capabilities and resources can yield better performance. Competitive strategies that tap into valuable, rare and inimitable resources are ways of avoiding the imitators and gaining sustainable competitive advantage.

The Complementary Nature of Growth and Competitive Strategies

It shows that the growth strategy and the competitive strategy were well correlated (r = 0.412, p<0.05), indicating that these strategies are complementary and inter-reinforcing. This finding is consistent with the theoretical proposition that organisations need both growth-orientated and competition-orientated strategies to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Conclusion

This study empirically examined the relationships between strategy and business policy mechanisms and the competitive future of manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that both growth strategy and competitive strategy have significant positive relationships with firms' ability to achieve and sustain competitive advantage.

The current business environment is already fraught with profound dynamism and volatility; the future predictably may be more hostile and perilous. Consequently, to overcome the unpredictable future, firms must develop, adopt, and deploy relevant strategies, such as growth and competitive strategies driven by research and development that are orientated towards learning, to open themselves to innovations and emerging trends. These will provide firms with the capacity to embrace flexibility and responsiveness, embedded in real-time orientation, to face future competition.

The study confirms the relevance of the resource-based view and emergent strategy theories in explaining how strategic mechanisms contribute to competitive advantage in the Nigerian manufacturing context. The findings emphasise the value of strategic alignment and the synergy between strategy and business policy in achieving a competitive future.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. **Adoption of Emergent Strategy:** Manufacturing firms should adopt emergent strategy to complement corporate strategy for quicker responses to emerging elements in both the external and internal environments. This will enable real-time adaptation to environmental dynamics.
2. **Investment in Research and Development:** Firms should conceive research and development as a strategic competitive arsenal integrated into corporate strategy to achieve a desired future business outlook. Research and development should be the main force behind new products and marketing plans.
3. **Embracing Differentiation Strategy:** Differentiation strategy should be adopted to develop a unique value proposition that differentiates the product/services of manufacturing companies from their competitors. Differentiation leadership enables companies to generate a premium price and competitive edge.
4. **Flexibility and Agility:** Businesses need to be flexible and agile in their business operations to have a competitive future. Considering the dynamic competitive conditions, the ability to move and respond to new developments in the environment is extremely important.
5. **Bottom-up Communication:** Organisations need to adopt a bottom-up communication strategy, whereby the ownership and decision-making process is open to all levels within the organisation. Staff members who are directly involved in the day to day running of the business are best placed to notice trends and should be able to feed back to management and make decisions accordingly.
6. **Policy Framework Development:** Manufacturing companies should create a thorough business plan with clear-cut business policies to ensure that the business plan is aligned with the business strategy and that the business acts accordingly.
7. **Strategic Management Accounting Practices:** Strategic management accounting techniques should be considered by manufacturing companies to improve performance and competitiveness because the techniques are found to be highly positively related with firms' performance.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to the knowledge in several ways:

1. **Theoretical Contribution:** The study brings the application of Resource Based View (RBV) and Emergent Strategy theory to the developing economy, and empirically tests the theories with case study data from the manufacturing sector of Nigeria.
2. **Empirical Contribution:** The study empirically validates the relationships between growth strategy, competitive strategy and competitive future, a gap in the literature of strategic management in Nigeria. The study has confirmed that strategic management has a significant correlation with the performance of the organisation and economic development.
3. **Methodological Contribution:** The study illustrates the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in Strategic Management Study to serve as a framework for future empirical research.
4. **Practical Contribution:** The findings provide practical implications to manufacturing managers and policy makers in Nigeria on strategic approaches to gain competitive advantage in Nigeria's manufacturing sector.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study offers some many lessons but there are some limitations that should be borne in mind:

1. **Geographic Scope:** We could only find it in Rivers state, Nigeria, in manufacturing companies. Other states/regions should be utilized in future studies for more broad generalisability.
2. **Cross-sectional Design:** There are limitations in the cross-sectional design to establish causal relationships. In the future, strategy and competitive futures should be explored using longitudinal research designs to determine their dynamic relationship over time.
3. **Limited Variables:** The relationship between growth strategy and competitive future, and the relationship between competitive strategy and competitive future were examined in the study. Further research could account for other strategic factors like innovation strategy, digital transformation strategy and sustainability strategy.
4. **Industry Scope:** The study was conducted with manufacturing companies. Other industries such as services, technology and agriculture should be explored in future research.
5. **Moderating Variables:** There is a need for future studies to investigate possible interaction of moderating variables including environmental uncertainty, organisational culture and top management support with strategy and competitive future.
6. **Qualitative Approach:** Qualitative tools such as case studies and interviews could then be used in future research to gain a more in-depth look at the strategic mechanisms that help to create a competitive advantage.
7. **Advanced Analytical Techniques:** Future studies could use a more complex model, such as a structural equation model or multiple regression model, to test more complex relationships and to determine the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable.

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