CULTURAL DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between cultural diversity and performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. As a macro level study, the population of the study comprised of the four major mobile GSM companies (MTN, Airtel, Glo and 9-Mobile). Given that the population size is small and can be adequately covered, our study adopts a census method. Consequently, from our population, the study sample size is the same as our population while the study elements are one hundred and thirteen (113) respondents. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and the performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Therefore, this study concludes that the adoption of cultural diversity helps in improving organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Hence the study recommends that telecommunication companies in Rivers State should actively promote and embrace cultural diversity within their workforce.

Keywords: Cultural diversity, organizational performance, profitability, growth and innovation

INTRODUCTION

Culture has been defined in many different ways, reflecting the variety of cultural phenomena that can be observed, such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, religious background, education values, beliefs, norms, and many others. Islam (2020) defines culture as the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them. On the other hand, diversity refers to differences between individuals on any attribute that may lead to the perception that another person is different (Williams &O‟Reilly, 2008).

Cultural diversity takes different forms such as gender, ethnicity, and age among others. Mkoji and Sikalieh (2012) suggest that managers need to be aware that there might be gender differences regarding the relative importance assigned to distributions and communication. This may imply different communication strategies for dealing with male and female subordinates as management tries to create an optimal environment of fairness. Failure of communication among different gender may lead to unfavorable performance in an organization.

Policymakers, scholars, and managers have all recently paid attention to the conversation surrounding organizational performance. Nonetheless, there are various perspectives on what organizational performance looks like in the twenty-first century. Organizational performance is made up of a number of ideas, including the effectiveness, efficiency, and results of the business model (Almatrooshi, Singh, & Farouk, 2016; Boyatzis & Ratti, 2009). According to Kipleting (2017), the term "performance" is used to refer to all ideas that take into account how well a business and its operations are going. Performance might therefore relate to the actual outcomes or outputs of specific activities, the manner in which an activity is carried out, or the capacity to eventually produce outcomes. Maintaining company performance is a constant struggle for organizations all around the world. Due to the industry's dynamic nature, open market rivalry, and globalization, most business organization managers find it challenging to consistently accomplish intended business performance. Businesses across a variety of industries have encountered unstable performance, seeming uncertainty about the methods to use in response to flexible rules, and unstable performance brought on by difficulties in the local and global business climate (Arokodare & Asikhia, 2020). This study therefore sought to examine the relationship between cultural diversity and performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This is illustrated by the conceptual framework in figure 1.

Conceptual Framework

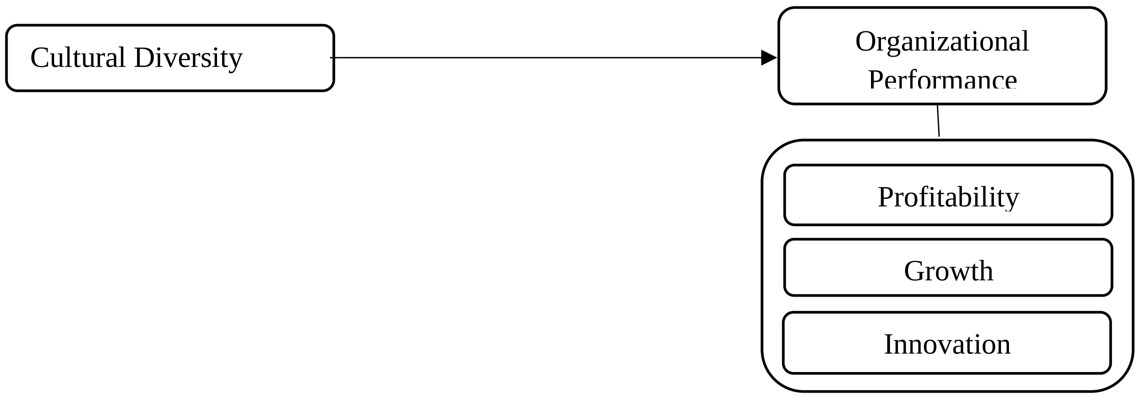

Figure 1: Cultural diversity and organizational performance
Source: Desk Research (2023)

From the foregoing, the following rwsearch questions were posed to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between cultural diversity and the level of profitabilty of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between cultural diversity and the level of growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?
3. What is the relationship between cultural diversity and the level of innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Social Identity Theory

This theory predicts that people tend to coalesce themselves into specific groups based on certain areas which are of personal importance to them such as demographic characteristics like ethnicity, gender among others. The result of this is that they tend to favour colleagues of their in-group at the expense of the out-groups. Tajfel (1986) proposed it, and it holds that social identity among people is a reflection of their social categories, grouping, and networks that an individual conforms or may belong. Social Identity Theory (SIT) declares that bunch participation makes ingathering/self-arrangement and improvement in manners that favour the in-bunch to the detriment of the out-gathering. The principal point of view of the hypothesis is that gathering of individuals with a comparable personality will bring about expanded confidence as the standards are progressed in a way that they help the in-gathering (Cinnirella, 1996).

Ashforth and Mael (2004) contend that social identity evolves when an individual demonstrates common behaviour with other individuals of the in-group. That is, humans will always have a tendency to improve their self-regard and hence they would like to develop positive social identities (Trepte, 2006). Social character hypothesis can be named as a hypothesis of individuals having a place with a specific enrolment and depicting comparative conduct (Hogg, 2001). As per the social character hypothesis, individual personality creates among individuals as per the gathering to which they fit in (Hogg, Terry, and White, 1995). Being an individual from a specific gathering happens when people generalize themselves by ascribing to their practices, perspectives, and different qualities.

Conceptual Review

Cultural Diversity

Okolie (2020) refers to management of cultural diversity as a variety of management issues and activities related to hiring and effective utilization of personnel from different cultural backgrounds. In his view, the activities include proper management of organization culture, mind-sets about diversity, cultural differences, education programs, HR management systems, higher career involvement of women and heterogeneity in race, ethnicity and nationality (Okoloe, 2020). However, according to Grobler (2003), diversity management programmes have not had great success in firms as top management view diversity as a human resource issue that does not contribute to the organization's long-term success, while line management often see diversity management as another activity that complicates their current role.

The culture inherent to each member of society comprises a variety of values, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs that can often be used to compete within the competitive outer environment (Atiyah, 2016). People can identify themselves with one particular culture and this can vary among members of society depending on factors present in their lives and their habitual environment (ibid). Hence, as every human being has a culture which differs from one another, the concept of cultural diversity becomes quite complex. Individuals will often identify themselves with an organisation by internalizing and adapting to the firms' philosophy, visions and values and this process is known as organisational identification (Park, 2005). The reason employees identify with their workplace is to take corrective actions that can drive positive outcomes and eventually feel satisfied with their achievements and their job (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015). Job satisfaction and commitment driven by organisational identification brings benefits in form of increased productivity and enhanced motivation. The notion of organisational identification has a strong correlation with the belief that once the employee contributes positively to their company, it will eventually benefit them as well, for instance through rewards and promotion (ibid). Ultimately, when employees define themselves in terms of their organisation, they can develop common goals and most importantly become an exemplar that would represent the organisation in the best possible light (Park, 2005).

Organizational Performance

Organisational performance is identified as a process through which work groups engage in collaborative efforts in order to achieve organisational goals and objectives (Kifordu, 2014). Bartoli &Blatrix believe that organisational performance can be achieved through employee "productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of work" (Bartoli &Blatrix, 2015). The concept of organisational performance is considered to be ambiguous as it consists of a number of critical assumptions and reflections (Ion &Criveanu, 2016). It has multiple definitions but generally this concept relates to notions such as efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, competitiveness, profitability and others. However, this notion becomes volatile due to constant changes of organisational objectives. The achievement of an entity's objectives is strongly linked to the achievement of organisational performance. Since objectives can often change, it is very difficult to measure the level of performance at a point in time (ibid). According to Didier Noyé (2002), performance in a workplace is not purely the result of a generated outcome but rather the difference between the outcome and the initial objective. Michel Lebas (1995) stated that performance is a future-oriented aspect of an organisation and that a business can be successful only when its goals are achieved. Hence, he believes that performance is very much depended on capabilities of a firm and its future. The author also points out that there is a difference between the terms ‘a performance’ and ‘performance’. He believes that ‘a performance’ is a measured result that represents a positive association whereas ‘performance’ is a result that can be both positive or negative (ibid).

Measures of Organizational Performance

Profitability

Profitability is critical to a company's survival in the long term, and it measures a company’s past ability to generate returns (Santos & Brito, 2012). The ultimate long-term goal for a business should be growth rate in the bottom line. Ambad and Wahab (2013) argue that to ensure survival in the industry, profitability is a key issue for every profit-oriented company, maximising its goal. To achieve higher profitability, every company must have its strategy to fit into the current rapidly changing business environment. The final goal of every productive or industrial activity is more profitability. This involves the correct use of productive factors like resources and facilities and engagement in cost reduction schemes, all of which will increase productivity. Profitability or getting an advantage means the relation of profit with used capital. So, a company has to emphasize the two cases of increasing productivity and price improvement to achieve as much profit as possible (Tangen, 2003). The consequence of this is that no business can survive for a significant amount of time without making a profit. Therefore, the measurement of a company's profitability, both current and future, is critical in evaluating the company. Profitability has been considered as a measure of improved internal efficiency and value-added. In the binning, companies may not enjoy higher net profits to repay investment or fund further investment. However, internal efficiency gained later may lead to reduced costs, while improved product performance may increase the product's price in the market (Geroski& Machin, 2019).

Growth

Growth refers to the rate at which variables in an organisation such as earnings have been or are expected to grow (FTE, 2008). Growth rate refers to the percentage change of a specified variable within a specific period with a stipulated context which acts as benchmarks. An organisation's growth rate measures the percentage increase in the value of a variety of markets in which an organisation operates (Zack, 2009). An organisation's growth rate can be achieved/improved on by boosting the organisations top line or revenue of the business with greater product sales or by increasing the bottom line or profitability of the operation by minimizing costs (Xesha, Iwu, Slabbert, & Nduna, 2014). Growth rate refers to the percentage change of a specified variable within a specific period with a stipulated context which acts as benchmarks. Growth rate refers to the rate at which variables in an organisation such as earnings have been or are expected to grow (FTE, 2008). An organisations growth rate measures the percentage increase in the value of a variety of markets in which an organisation operates (Zack, 2009). An organisation's growth rate can be achieved/improved on by boosting the organisations top line or revenue of the business with greater product sales or by increasing the bottom line or profitability of the operation by minimizing costs. Organisations are seen as living organisms and therefore, they possess similar characteristics with living organisms. In other words, organisations also have life cycle, they are formed (born), grow to maturity, decline, and finally die of age.

Innovation

Innovation in businesses can be classified into; product market innovation and technological innovation (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Callaghan, 2009). Innovation represents a continuum ranging from willingness to try new innovations to a serious commitment to innovation. Firms that are highly innovative grow, however researches have reported that an innovative strategy is essentially speculative, with returns unknowable in advance, innovators run the risk of wasted resources if investment does not yield the hoped-for results. Innovations that become successful also risk imitation. However, alertness to and investment in new ways to create and capture value are key characteristics of businesses that pursue entrepreneurial strategy

(Deakins & Freel, 2012; Callaghan, 2009). Drucker (2007) introduced the concept of knowledge-based innovation as the super star of entrepreneurship. Such innovations could be scientific, technical or social in nature. Knowledge Based Innovation require careful analysis of all the necessary factors and clear focus on the strategic position which entails developing systems, market focus and occupying the strategic position for effective business performance.

If companies are not innovative, they die. Since the beginning of the recent decade when the competitive environment went through a major transformation due to globalization, business organizations have intensified their search for strategies that will give them a sustainable competitive advantage. Such strategies generally require that the firm continuously differentiates its products and process, that is, firms must constantly be innovative (Popadiuk & Choo, 2007; Mehrdad, *et al.,* 2011). In such condition, where innovation in products and process regarded as an essential prerequisite for the organizational survival and success, attention to entrepreneurship orientation and change to an entrepreneur organization attracted the much attention of academic researchers and organizational members (Mehrdad, *et al* 2011).

Empirical Review

Cultural Diversity and Organizational Performance

Tantua and Opara (2019) examined the influence of cultural diversity on organizational performance in food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. A cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. Primary data was collated through self-administered, structured questionnaire. A cross sectional research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study comprised of the entire Food and Beverages Firms in Rivers State. A survey by the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN), Rivers State branch revealed that seventeen (17) registered Food Beverages Firms in Port Harcourt Rivers State Nigeria. The population was made up of 115 managers made up of plant managers, depot managers, trade managers and commercial managers in three selected Food and Beverages Firms. A sample size of 89 was determined using Taro Yamene sample size determination formula. The research hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient. The study findings revealed that cultural diversity significantly influences organizational performance in food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt.

Based on the foregoing, the study thus hypothesized that:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and profitability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. As a macro level study, the population of the study comprised of the four major mobile GSM companies (MTN, Airtel, Glo and 9-Mobile). Given that the population size is small and can be adequately covered, our study adopts a census method. Consequently, from our population, the study sample size is the same as our population while the elements of the study were one hundred and thirteen (113) respondents. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Statistics. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the result of correlation matrix obtained for cultural diversity and measures of organizational performance. Also displayed in the table are the rho-values while the statistical tests of significance (p - value) was used to accept or reject the hypotheses and generalize our findings to the study population.

Table 1 Correlations Matrix for Cultural diversity and Profitability

			Cultural Diversity	Profitability
Spearman's rho	Cultural Diversity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.873**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	93	93
	Profitability	Correlation Coefficient	.873**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	93	93

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and profitability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 1 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.873 which indicates a positive very high relationship between cultural diversity and profitability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between cultural diversity and profitability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and profitability of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 2: Correlations Matrix for Cultural diversity and Growth

			Cultural Diversity	Growth
Spearman's rho	Cultural Diversity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.737**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	93	93
	Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.737**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	93	93

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

Ho$_2$: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 2 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.737 which indicates a positive very high relationship between cultural diversity and growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between cultural diversity and growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Similarly displayed in table 2is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and growth of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 3: Correlations Matrix for Cultural diversity and Innovation

			Cultural Diversity	Innovation
Spearman's rho	Cultural Diversity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.571**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	93	93
	Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.571**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	93	93

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

Source: SPSS 23.0 data Output, 2023

Ho$_3$: There is no significant relationship between cultural diversity and innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

Table 3 shows a Spearman's correlation coefficient (rho) of 0.571 which indicates a positive very high relationship between cultural diversity and innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This is indicative of a very strong correlation between cultural diversity and innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. Also displayed in table 3 is the statistical test of significance (p - value), which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained the probability value is (0.000) < (0.05) level of significance; hence the researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and innovation of telecommunication companies in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results from the tests of hypotheses revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between cultural diversity and each of the organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This finding agrees with the Krishnam and Banerjee (2017) affirmed that employee from administration and finance, human resource, investigation and legal service, monitoring and inspection, research, education and documentation, executive director's office, and leadership office, showed appropriate data from respondents regarding the evaluation of the role of performance planning of job description in determining employee performance.

Ibinabo and Zeb-Obipi (2020) carried out a study to examine the relationship between cultural diversity and organizational performance of 3-star hotels in South-South, Nigeria. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between cultural diversity and organizational performance of 3-star hotels in South- South, Nigeria. The study concludes that cultural diversity significantly predicts organizational performance.

Recent studies have showed that in order to improve the performance of employees and the organization as a whole, the study also recommended that job descriptions be updated whenever there are changes to the commission (Akinlabi, Dogo & Asikhia, 2021; Casio & Aguinis, 2008; Owino, Oluoch & Kimemia, 2019).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that cultural diversity enhances organizational performance of telecommunication companies in Rivers State. This implies that by embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive work environment, companies can leverage the unique perspectives and talents of their diverse employees to drive innovation, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement, ultimately leading to improved overall performance

Based on the foregoing, the study thus recommends that telecommunication companies in Rivers State should actively promote and embrace cultural diversity within their workforce. This can be achieved by implementing inclusive hiring practices, providing diversity training programs, and fostering an inclusive work environment where all employees feel valued and respected

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