Original Research Article

Co-Opetitive Strategy and Business Models of Downstream Retail Enterprises of Telecommunication Sector in the South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated co-opetitive strategy and business models of downstream retail enterprises of telecommunication sector in the south-south region of Nigeria. The specific objectives were to examine the influence of co-opetitive strategy reflected in strategic alliances and collaboration on business models of downstream retail Enterprises of the telecommunication sector in the south-south region of Nigeria. The survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study consisted of 100 retail enterprises in the downstream telecommunication sector, with sample of 80 respondents which were determined using Taro Yamane's formula for sample determination. Data were collected using questionnaire distributed to 80 respondents out of which 78 copies of the questionnaire were correctly completed and returned in usable form. Data collected were analysed using simple linear regression analysis. Findings indicated that strategic alliances and collaboration as proxies of co-opetitive strategy have significant influences respectively on operational cost, revenue and profit of the retail enterprises of downstream telecommunication sector in the south-south region of Nigeria. Therefore, it was concluded that co-opetitive strategy has positive and significant influence on the business models of downstream retail enterprises in the telecommunication sector in the south-south region of Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended that the management of downstream retail telecommunication enterprises in the study should sense and enter into strategic alliance and forge collaboration which define co-opetitive strategy to build, configure and reconfigure their business models to strengthen their competitiveness in the industry.

Keywords: Co-opetitive strategy, strategic alliance, collaboration, operational cost, revenue, profit, business models.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Business models cut across almost all business organisations irrespective of size, age and stage of development. A business model refers to a statement as to how a business organisation intends to generate profit as a function of excess revenue over cost of operations (Grant, 2008). The business model articulates how an organisation desires to make profit taking into consideration its value configuration activities, cost and revenue (Gupta *et al.,* 2009). The organisation orientation to create value, configure the value and appropriate the value technically defines what business model is all about (Meireles, 2019). The notion of business model became dominant business logic around the 1990s when the efforts were targeted to make profit from Internet-based businesses or what was popularly known as the dot.com era (Grant, 2008). The nature and character of business models can be simple or complex depending on the perception and conceptualisation of organisational strategists and thus, vary from one organisation to another. Business model cannot run alone. Rather, it requires a choice strategy to drive it in order to contain and possibly overcome the threats posed to its survival by competitors in the same industry and beyond. Given the important role that business model plays in the operation and sustainability of an average business, it has become an area of strategic concern and research as reflected in extant literature of strategic management (Meena *et al.,* 2023). Besides, previous researches have not looked at business model from the point of view of co-opetitive strategy thereby creating a gap or lacuna in the literature which this work is poised to fill.

There may be different measures of business model. However, in this study business model reflecting value creation, value configuration and value appropriation (Velu, 2018; Meireles, 2019) would be operationalised in terms of cost, revenue and profit in relation to co-opetitive strategy (Thompson & Strickland, 2003; Gupta *et al.,* 2009). Extant literature informs that co-opetitive strategy has been extensively researched (Limoubpratum *et al.,* 2015), but its influence on business models seems to have received scant attention. Co-opetitive strategy ignites and provokes the idea of simultaneous co-operation and competition. Within the purview of co-opetitive strategy, it becomes obvious that there are some business objectives and/or goals that an organisation can achieve via individual pursuit in competition with others and there are yet others, which can only be achieved through co-operative and collaborative efforts reflected possibly in strategic alliances, partnerships and collaborations. Hence, co-opetitive strategy can be defined as a combination of competition and cooperation at the same time in the pursuit of nominated organisational goals and purposes. Meena *et al.,* (2023) consider co-opetitive strategy to be an integration of co-operation and competition. Grant (2008) views co-opetitive strategy in terms of the dual nature of business relationships often reflected in co-operation and competition. Dimensions of co-opetitive strategy vary in the extant literature to include management commitment, relationship management and communication management (Limoubpratum *et al.,* 2015). However, co-opetitive strategy would be operationalised in this study using strategic alliances and collaboration (Ritala *et al.,* 2014; Velu, 2018) to examine its possible influences on business model reflected in cost, revenue and profit identified as measures and depicted in the conceptual framework labelled figure 1 subsequently.

The aim of this study was to examine the influence of co-opetitive strategy on business models of down-stream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector in the south-south of Nigeria. The specific objectives included the following:
1. Examine the influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south of Nigeria.
2. Investigate the effect of strategic alliance on revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.
3. Probe the influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.
4. Examine the relationship of collaboration with profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

In pursuit of the above objectives, the following research questions arose:
1. What is the influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria?
2. How does strategic alliance affect revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria?
3. What is the influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria?
4. How does collaboration relate to profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria?

In view of the above questions, the following tentative answers were provided in the forms of null hypotheses:
Ho₁: There is no significant influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria.
Ho₂: There is no significant effect of strategic alliance on revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.
Ho₃: There is no significant influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.
Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between collaboration and profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

The outcome of this study would be significant in a number of ways. It would better understanding of how co-opetitive strategy could be leveraged to enhance the performance of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria and other enterprises that may wish to adapt the strategy. It would be empirically significant addition to existing co-opetitive strategy literature and thus, boost knowledge in the stream of strategic management.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW
The review revolved around conceptual and theoretical frameworks as well as empirical reviews.
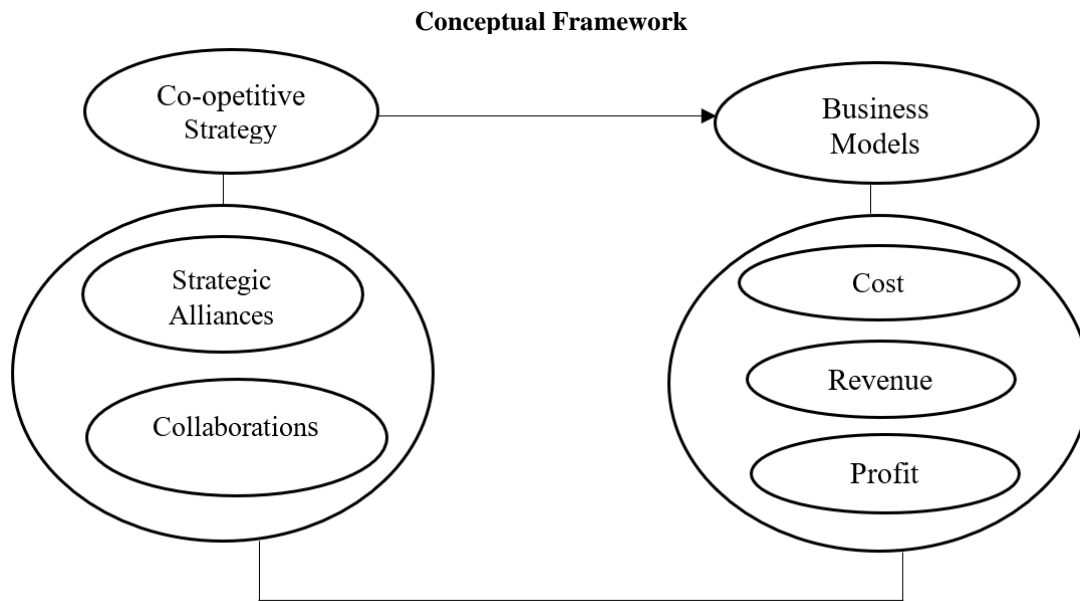
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Co-appetitive Strategy and Business Models
Source: Researcher's Conceptualisation (2024) based on dimensions adapted from Ritala *et al.,* (2014) and Velu (2018) measures adapted from Gupta *et al.,* (2009).

Co-opetitive Strategy

Co-opetitive strategy can be viewed as an interpretive strand of strategy that deals with the merging of cooperation and competition to form a co-opetitive system of value creation (Dagnino, 2009). Since coopetition takes place when two or more organisations undertake cooperative and competitive actions at the same time, and in the same market, Galvagno and Garraffo (2010) maintain the stance that time simultaneity and market commonality should be incorporated into the definition for completeness. The downstream retail sector of telecommunication companies choose to co-operate and at the same time, compete among themselves and, in this instance, under the aegis of one company with a resounding brand name such as Icon Mobile, Port Harcourt, Rivers State or Royallines, in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State to achieve their respective revenue-generating targets. Each emporium, houses retail telephone outfits with different brand names such as: Infinix, Tecno, Samsung, Geonee, Appo, iPhone, BBM, iTel, etcetera. While these brands canvass competitively for clients to patronise their respective telephone gadgets, they also choose to cooperate in respect of lobbying to get favourable policies from the regulators and on issues of creating enabling environment in terms of supportive infrastructure for their businesses to thrive. The essence of and rationale behind the co-operation are to create a pie and at the same, distribute the same pie through competition (Galvagno & Garraffo, 2010). The notion of co-opetitive strategy is replete with critical questions in extant literature for scholars and researchers' continuous scrutiny such as: vagueness of the content and nature of co-opetition, meaning of simultaneity, definitional confusion as the organisations that cooperate or compete with one another is unclear, it is not clear whether or not coopetition takes place in the same market and whether the cooperation and competition take place along horizontal or vertical relationships (Galvagno & Garraffo, 2010).

Despite these questions, coopetition negates the fact that businesses are always lucked in competition in their choice industries as depicted as one of threats in Porter's five forces model of industry attractiveness (Porter, 1998) which is a major contribution to knowledge. It also seeks a better position in the marketplace where organisations can secure strategic advantage over time even as the cooperative and competitive forces are entangled in each alliance relationship (Galvagno & Garraffo, 2010). Co-opetitive strategy promotes efficiency distribution and effectiveness in supply chain management operations as well (Sutherland, 2003; Limoupratum *et al.,* 2015). Co-opetitive strategy embeds conflict which, sometimes, gives birth to win-win scenario perceived as desirable outcome and one of the veritable instruments to create a better world even beyond the sphere or theatre of business (Afolabi & Owonudinjo, 2008; Ritala *et al.,* 2014). Practical evidence of co-opetitive strategy can be noticed in automobile industry where seven car companies viz: BMW, General Motors, Honda, Hyundai, Kia, Mercedes-Benz and Stelcantis (Fiat, Jeep and Dodge cars) band together. Another example in the same industry is the coming together of Hyundai and BMW to build an electronic-vehicle charging network of 30,000 fast charging plugs to contain competition and contest market position with Telsa which owns the largest supercharger network of 22,000 plugs in North America (Business Insider, 2023). Just as Pepsi and Coca Cola, Boeing and Airbus, GM and Ford compete and cooperate as the case may be, so also do MTN and Airtel, Air Peace and Ibom Air, Guiness Nigeria Limited and Nigeria Brewery Limited and each case, underscores the presence of coopetition. The drivers of coopetition include: creating new markets, efficiency in resource usage, increasing the size of current markets and improvement of the organisations' competitive position (Ritala *et al.,* 2014).

Strategic Alliances

Decisions inform corporate actions and as such, strategic alliances are products of corporate decision making. Strategic alliance can be defined as agreements which may range from simple deals involving one or two individuals or independent organisations to comprehensive agreement that enable organisations to accomplish mutual goals such as exchange, sharing information, co-development of products, technology or provision of services (Lamrari, 2019). Strategic alliances appear to be most attractive option compared to strategic initiatives such as mergers and acquisitions, joint ventures and internal research and development investment even though its outcome in terms of performance is, sometimes, not quite satisfactory (Martynov, 2016). Strategic alliances are contracted mostly in bio-tech and pharmaceutical industries including telecommunication industry to which the focal organisations in the study belong (Lamrari, 2019). The high rate of competition across industries, risk and cost sharing, myriads of technology and R & D platforms especially inertia to go alone provide motivation, rationale and impetus for organisations with similar goals and aspiration to maximise mutual benefits to engage in strategic alliances to explore and exploit (Ritala *et al.,* 2014; Velu, 2018; Lamrari, 2019). Strategic alliances function as a portfolio of licensing and co-development and licensing reflects in co-promotion and co-marketing which apply squarely to the focal enterprises in the study. Strategic alliances aim to attract firms with resources in respect of management capability to leverage to create synergy and thus, boost performance of organisations involved in the alliance (Lin *et al.,* 2007; Velu, 2018; Lamrari, 2019). The notion of capability is crucial to the success or otherwise of strategic alliance in the sense that it helps to bring about value creation and value capture or configuration which, ultimately, leads to value appropriation (Wang *et al.,* 2015). The identified key drivers of strategic alliance include: structural interface between partners, structural interface within partners, formalisation, centralisation and specialisation (Albers *et al.,* 2013). All these interfaces and structural linkages need to be sufficiently lubricated for the strategic alliances to achieve the desired results.

Collaborations

The business environment is becoming increasingly complex and organisations exist within this context striving to realise their set goals and/or objectives. The chain of activities of leading to attainment of these set objectives are ridden with problems affecting product development, shorter product life cycle, marketing research and communication, convergence of many technologies and exorbitant costs of financing research and development as well as provision of services (Velu, 2018; Lamrari, 2019) that need to be solved. The problems coupled with the complexity of the operating environment demands and informs, over the years now, that collaborations be forged across organisations, disciplines, industries, sectors and cultures including business model reconfiguration. Extant literature has acknowledged that collaborative problem-solving ability can stand organisations on advantage over their rivals in terms of review of strategy when technologies and strategies across the industry are converging, reinvigorate the company's growth when operations get to a stall or strategic inflection point, solicit and aggregate inputs to better revenue inflows, build consensual strategy to resolve cross-functional issues and create ownership mind-set and commitments necessary to see strategy implementation succeeds (Thompson & Strickland, 2003;Ritala *et al.,* 2014;Velu, 2018). Chan and Cho (2022) corroborate that collaboration in area such as marketing research and communication premised on resource-based view can lead to competitive advantage. This implies that the collaborative problem-solving ability in connection with marketing research and communication is perceived as valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable resource in line with the tenets of resource-based view (Nkuda, 2017; Hall *et al.,* 2018). In the context of coopetition relative to downstream retail telecommunication enterprises, marketing communication, for an example, is vital to stimulate the market and patronage for the mobile phones and gadgets displayed for sale.

Business Models

The operation of organisations is undergirded by business models just as engines power automobiles. Zott and Amit (2008) define business model as a structural mechanism with which the transactions of a given organisation with its stakeholders are captured and accounted for. Gupta *et al.,* (2009) identify cost, revenue and profits as variables that define business models. Velu (2018) and Miereles (2019) refer to these identified variables as value creation, value configuration or capture and value appropriation within the purview of coopetition. Business models apply to business organisations irrespective of contexts and are most vulnerable to the threats and vagaries of environmental dynamics which may easily cause them to fail to work (Drucker, 1994). The implication to organisational strategists is that they need to exercise more or less eternal vigilance on the performance of their organisational business models at all times to be able to detect early signals of malfunctioning and sub-performance. The production, operating and related costs must be controlled, revenue streams carefully tracked and captured and the differentials accounting for value appropriated ascertained as it indicates the viability, survival and sustainability of the organisation even in the context of coopetition. Business models define the financial performance of the organisations in the short and long terms assessable in terms of Return on Assets (ROA), Return on Equity (ROE) and Return on Sales (ROS) to ascertain the overall financial health of the organisations (Tailab, 2014).

Cost

Businesses undertake the production of physical products and/or provision of services with intent to make profit as a hallmark or driver of their survival. Behesalea (2015) describes cost from the management accounting lens as the expenditure involving the production of a product and sale of asset, execution of work or rendering of service. This definition impliedly encapsulates the direct cost of manufacturing, labour and overheads. Oni (2005) corroborates that the answer to the question as to why a business wants to survive is to make a profit or at least, break-even at which point, its total cost equals its total revenue. From the point of view of a firm's theory of business, it also means satisfying or making customers as strategic stakeholders from whom the revenues are generated to be happy (Drucker, 1994; Zahra, 2003; Daly & Walsh, 2010). The issue of cost is very sensitive and critical in the business model of business organisation irrespective of stages of development, sizes and ages because if cost is allowed to over-run, it naturally ruins the business as profits will be difficult to maximise. The total production cost incurred in the process of creating value should be minimised so that the revenue realised in terms of value configured or value captured can increase so as to maximise expected profits or value appropriated at the end of the financial year (Meireles, 2019). Doing otherwise, will have serious negative impact on the business model and raise a lot of questions as to the effectiveness of the model. To Drucker (1994), this effectively means that their theories of business or simply, business models no longer work.

Revenue

The economic sustainability of organisations depends, to a great extent, on the revenue-generating capacity of the concerned organisations. Revenue can be defined as the inflows of assets expressible in terms of cash and account receivables generated from sale of products and/or provision of services to customers and other end-users (Hongren *et al.,* 2003). Revenue generation is a function of aggressive marketing of the products and/or services of the organisations at the fixed prices. The revenue or value captured (Meireles, 2019) is what enables the organisations to meet their financial obligations to their stakeholders. Inefficiency and slack in the revenue-generating capacity of organisations can trigger a number of problems for the organisations particularly in relation to their working capital used to cover cost of products, strength sales promotion and physical distribution including settlement of matured financial obligations to creditors and stakeholders. In extreme cases, poor revenue generation can dent the reputation of the company.

Profit

The primary motive of venturing into a business is to maximise profits. Like the umbilical cord which helps to provide nourishment to a foetus, profit signals how well or otherwise a company is performing. That explains why profit is viewed as the indicator or barometer with which the soundness, viability and sustainable survival as well as performance of a business can be measured. It can also be viewed as the pointers to organisaton's excellent performance from its chain of activities and operations (Evwuierhurhoma & Onuoha, 2020). Profit represents in empirical, economic and accounting terms, the difference between revenue and cost driven and underpinned by efficient allocation of scarce resources (Pandey, 2005). Alternatively, profit can be described as the excess of revenue over cost. Profitability as a financial measure or index to assess the performance of a business in relation to growth over time. Lipsey *et al.,* (2003) therefore define profitability as the capacity of a business to make much more revenue than incurring cost in its overall operations. That means, the value captured should be more than the cost associated with the value created so as to increase the quantum of value available for appropriation.

Co-opetitive Strategy and Business Models Relationship

Co-opetitive strategy has been perceived as the panacea to the ever competitive business environment of the 21st century. The question becomes: what is co-opetitive strategy? Lado *et al.,* (1997) provide an answer thus: coopetition takes place when two or more firms pursue competitive and cooperative strategies at the same time. Though the strategies appear to be diametrically opposed to each other, cooperation leads to the contribution to the "pie" and competition comes in in the distribution of the "pie" thereby throwing up the logics of converging and conflicting interests simultaneously (Galvagno & Garraffo, 2010). Given the fact that business model involves value creation, value configuration and value appropriation (CCA), leveraging co-opetitive strategy implies that the companies cooperate to create value and capture the value and at the same time, compete to appropriate the value so created. Extant literature raises a number of salient questions bordering on confusion and complexity of execution, in a straightforward manner, the co-opetitive strategy and one of such questions which this author opts to ask is: do companies involved in coopetition gain or lose equally given the fact that each firm has unique resource endowments? This poser resonates with Ritala *et al.,* (2014) who state that extant literature is yet to how expected gains of coopetition can achieved with the passage of time as integral part of individual enterprise's business model. It may be beneficial to co-opetitive firms to cooperate to lobby to attract favourable policies from regulatory agencies to their choice industry. But the benefits thereof may not be accessed on equal scale given the disparity in resource endowments reflected in learning and competencies as well as opportunistic tendencies as espoused in transactional cost economics theory (Barney *et al.,* 2012). Notable applications of co-opetitive strategy can be found in cases of alliances, network and channel relationships ((Galvagno & Garraffo, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Many theories exist which can be used to anchor work on coopetition and business models or business performance. However, game theory, organisational learning theory and transactional cost economics theory are used to base this study as succinctly elucidated below:

Game Theory

Game theory is a branch of mathematics that dealt with strategies used in competitive contexts where the result of a participant's choice of action is critically and tangentially dependent on other participants' actions (Omalaja & Eruola, 2011). The lack of general theory of strategy triggered and prompted Von Neumann and Morgestein in 1944 to introduce the game theory to bridge the gap (Grant, 2008; Nkuda, 2017). The game theory is apt and mostly relevant in connection with understanding competitive behaviour and interaction as its utility became popular around the 1990s. Game theory plays decisive and pivotal role in the context of cooperation and competition taking place at the same time which vividly describes co-opetitive strategy. Game theory fosters commitment, promotes deterrence and somewhat modifies the structure of the game such that actors in the competitive marketplace or industry face outcomes like: win-win, lose-lose or win-lose. The game theory applies to co-opetitive setting where actors and players face similar strategic alternatives in respect of budget for advert, price changes, capacity to take decisions and new product introductions etc., (Grant, 2008). The prisoner's dilemma can be used to explicate how the game theory works thus; two suspects arrested for alleged crime, interrogated individually began to blame each other for the crime and both of them ended up in prison as they indirectly admitted to commission of the crime. Whereas, they could have been acquitted granted that they kept silent and in which case, no evidence would have been found against any of them. Similarly, in a co-opetitive scenario therefore organisations are expected to leverage the code of silence by maintaining collusion and rid themselves of mutual fear, distrust and tendency to cheat on one another to mutually maximise beneficial advantages (Grant, 2008). Although the application of game theory is limited and restrictive in scope, it thus resonates with co-opetitive strategy as elucidated above (Nkuda, 2017).

Organisational Learning Theory

A popular dictum states that learning is a life-long and continuous process which means that individuals and organisations of which they are a part, continue to learn every day. The early contributors to the idea of organisational learning included Cyart and March (1963) and Cangelosi and Dill (1965) both of whom cited in (Castaneda & Rios, 2007). Senge (2004) has done extensive work to popularise the concept of learning organisation. Organisational learning is a multi-disciplinary, multi-processed and multi-levelled construct that centres on building organisational knowledge as a product of learning experience gained over the years an organisation has been in existence and operations. The knowledge so acquired both tacit and explicit, enables organisation to cope with and adapt to environmental changes, introduce improvement, share and transfer knowledge from organisational repository and above all, exercise ambi-dexterity (Rios & Castaneda, 2007; Argote, 2011; Aponte & Zapata, 2013). Organisational learning also allows team work, leverages people's commitments, employees' empowerments and conscientious participation premised on continuous learning to sharpen, retool and update skills set of organisational members to improve performance (Senge, 2004; Schermerhorn, 2010).To be sustainably successful in the competitive business world of the 21st century warrants that organisations and their members must become much more "learnigful" because it is in human nature right from infancy to learn (Senge, 2004).Therefore, organisational learning theory fits and helps to explain away the intricacies associated co-opetitive strategy in relation to business models.

Transactional Cost Economics Theory

The idea of transaction cost economics theory is associated with the work of Williamson in 1986 (Barney *et al.,* 2012; Islam, 2015). The bedrock of this theory is that public institution, like corporate organisation, is a bundle of contracts which can be transacted without cost in respect of which certain circumstances warrant market-testing or contracting out in preference to in-house arrangement because doing so allows for competition and choice with attendant reduction in administrative costs ultimately (Islam, 2015). The underlying essence is the choice to curb the risk of opportunism on the behaviour of actors to foster economic efficiency of which governance choices are all about and desirable to be attained (Barney *et al.,* 2012). This explains why Bass, Avolio, Jung and Berson (2003) buttress that transactional leader accomplishes goals by rewarding employees who meet stated expectations and perhaps, exceed. This explains why Mbaegbu and Obadan (2013) buttress that transactional leaders utilise physiological needs or lower-order needs reflected in market-like transactions and organisational rewards such as offering high status, job security and regular salary increases or raises to motivate their subordinates. However, experience in Nigerian clime has shown that most times the tenet of transaction cost economics theory is subverted by corrupt bureaucrats and over-zealous public officers to foster their vested interests at the costly expense of public interest and good (Giauque, 2003).

Empirical Review

Beliski and Mariani (2023) studied "The effect of knowledge collaboration on business model reconfiguration" in UK. The study which spanned 2002 and 2014 made use of large sample of UK firms to capture the effect of both

knowledge collaboration and firm size on business model reconfiguration. The results showed that the presence of knowledge collaboration and its intensity positively influenced incremental forms of business model reconfiguration (BRM). But collaboration with customers and suppliers by large firms engendered radical forms of business model reconfiguration (BMR). However, both incremental and radical forms of BMR do not benefit equally firms of different sizes in terms of collaboration with suppliers as it is a different ball game altogether.

Evwierhurhoma and Onuoha, B. C. (2020), investigated "knowledge management tools application and organisational performance of manufacturing firms in Rivers State." The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and there was no sampling as target population of 48 firms was covered resulting in a census design. The primary data collection method was a questionnaire graduated in 5-points Likert's scale. Face and content validities were adopted and the reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha yielding values greater than 0.70 for both the dimensions and measures of the predictor and criterion variables. Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) was used for data analysis purposes. The results showed that knowledge management tools application significantly and positively related with organisational performance of manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

Lamrani (2019) investigated "Strategic alliances and financial performance: Some empirical Evidence of Bio-Pharmaceutical Industry." The study involved 158 alliances drawn from panel data set between 2003 and 2013. The results showed that alliances impacted financial performance negatively. However, partnership types like co-development and licensing had positive relationship with financial performance.

Akinrata (2019) studied "Assessing critical success factors for project alliance among contractors in Nigerian construction industry." The study which focused on large number of contractors in the western region of Nigeria made use of survey and questionnaire graduated on 5-points Likert's scale to collect primary data. The results showed that mutual trust was critical to the success of project alliance. The study outcome also emphasised the need for contracting firms to share and transfer risks among themselves and a call for government's support was made as well.

Martynov (2016) conducted a study on "Do strategic alliances, acquisitions and R&D investments act as complements or substitutes?" The study made use of panel data spanning 1998 to 2009 and was focused on medium to large U.S., companies. The results indicated that companies with high absorptive capacity showed both substitution and complementary effects between acquisition and R&D investments of the affected U.S., firms in terms of profitability, sales growth and market-to-book value.

Sukoco (2016) studied "The effects of convergence and divergence alliance portfolio on firm performance." The study which focused on S&P 500 firms used panel data from 2000 – 2007. The results showed that domain learning in alliance positively related to firms' performance moderated by the nature of interdependencies especially when the firm depends less on its partners.

Boyce, Mano and Kent (2016), in a study of "The Influence of Collaboration in Procurement relationships" among purchasing firms and suppliers. The target respondents were procurement professionals. Structural equation modelling was employed as analytical tool. The results based on 86 responses analysed showed that firms involved in procurement do not yet optimally and fully exploit the potentials of collaboration.

Limoubpratum, Shee and Ahsan (2015) studied "sustainable distribution through coopetition strategy" of newspaper supply chain, including transporters and newsagents in Thailand. One thousand firms were involved in the study and the sample size became 239 after excluding unusable copies of questionnaire of 129 out of 368 responses received representing a response rate of 24%. The reliability of instrument was established using Cronbach alpha and structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data. The results showed that co-opetitive strategy significantly influences sustainability in newspaper supply chain in Thailand and collaboration among competitors in horizontal relationship leads to sustainability in terms of economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Mbugua and Njoroge (2011) investigated "effects of strategic alliances on firm performance of Postbank financial partners in Kenya." Cost efficiency, revenue and profitability in the short, medium and long-terms were the specific objectives the study on strategic alliances sought to examine using rate of return on assets (ROA), document analysis, descriptive statistics and correlation analysis as inferential statistics to establish possible relationships. The results showed that strategic alliances have a positive effect on revenue and profitability and no effect on cost efficiency of Postbank financial partners.

Cao and Zhang (2011) conducted a study into "Supply Chain Collaboration: Impact of Collaboration Advantage and Firm Performance" of U.S., manufacturing firms. The used web survey of U.S., manufacturing firms across different industries to gather data and analytical tools consisted of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation

modelling (LISREL). The results showed that supply chain collaboration moderated by collaborative advantage has positive influence and improvement on bottom-line or profitability of the manufacturing firms judging from the perspective of firm performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative, longitudinal and correlational design using a mix of census and cross-sectional surveys as the study sought to empirically determine the influence co-opetitive strategy on business models. The study population covered downstream retail telephone outfits in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and Port Harcourt, Rivers State namely: Royallines and Icon Mobile respectively with each housing ten (10) brands of mobile phones with five (5) staff used census survey. The respondents from both emporia totalled 100 staff including managers, supervisor and marketers. Taro Yamene's formula was used to determine the sample size of 80 respondents selected using purposeful non-probabilistic sampling techniques. Primary data were obtained after face and content validation through structured questionnaire based on 5-pointLikert's scale. The empirical indicators of predictor and criterion variables were adapted with modifications from (Limoubpratum *et al.,* 2015; Zhou & Wit, 2009; Al-alak & Tarabieh, 2011). The research instrument satisfied Cronbach's alpha (α) $\geq$ 0.70 threshold specified by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). A total of 80 copies of questionnaire were distributed in line with Bowley's (1964) proportional formula cited in (Dike & Onwuka, 2015) out of which 76copies (representing 95% response rate) were retrieved and used in the study. The linear regression technique was used to analyse the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version…).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected were analysed using simple linear regression which indicated that out of 80 copies of questionnaire distributed 78 copies were filled and returned which had 97% response rate and formed the basis for the analysis

Table 4.1: The Descriptive Statistics on the influence of Strategic Alliances, Collaboration on Operational cost, Revenue and Profit of Downstream Retail Enterprises in Telecommunication in South-South, Nigeria

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategic Alliance	78	1.00	4.00	2.1667	1.24229
collaboration	78	1.00	4.00	2.0641	1.20970
Operational Cost	78	1.00	4.00	2.0000	1.22739
Revenue	78	1.00	4.00	2.0662	1.23641
Profit	78	1.00	4.00	2.1538	1.19606
Valid N (listwise)	78				

Table 4.1 shows the mean scores of 2.1667, 2.0641, 2.000, 2.0662 and 2.1538 and the corresponding minimum score of 1, maximum value of 4 and standard deviation of 1 above. This implies that 5 questions asked to address each question were spread across each respondent to ensure the respondents answered each question without bias. It further shows that the data are not skewed to a particular, meaning that the answered given was able to measure what it intends to measure effectively.

Test of Hypothesis
Hypothesis
Ho1: There is no significant influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria.
Ho1: There is no significant influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria.

Table 4.2: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on The Influence of Strategic Alliance on operational cost of down-stream Retail Telecommunication Enterprises in South-South Region of Nigeria

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.981[a]	.963	.962	.24625	.849

Model fit					
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	118.840	1	118.840	1959.802	.000[b]
	Residual	4.609	76	.061		
	Total	**123.449**	**77**			

Coefficientsᵃ					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.012	.056		-.205	.838
Strategic Alliance	.976	.022	.981	44.270	.000

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

Table 4.2 yielded R^2–value of .963, F- value of 1959.812, T-value of 44.270 Beta coefficients of .976 and P-value of .000. This implies that strategic alliances can account for 96.3% variation in operational cost of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication sector in Nigeria. The result also means that strategic alliances have the explanatory power to predict operational cost in down-stream retail enterprise. The result was supported by the beta coefficients of .976 which means that to every 1 unit increase of strategic alliances, there would be 97.6% increase in operational cost in down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. However, to evaluate the fit of the model, the F-statistics was computed and result shows the value of 1959.812. This indicated that the interaction between strategic alliances and operational cost is positive correlated and that the model is fit for the evaluation of the influence of strategic alliances on operational cost of down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication sector in Nigeria. Also, the T-value of 44.270 reveals the differences in the mean which implies that strategic alliances significantly influence operational cost in down-stream retail enterprises. Therefore, since the P-value of .000 lies below the alpha level of 0.05% with F-value of 1959.812, it can be affirmed that the null hypothesis which stated that strategic alliances have no significant influence on operational cost of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, meaning that strategic alliances have significant influence on operational cost of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector, Nigeria (P<0.05).

Hypothesis 2
Ho₂: There is no significant effect of strategic alliance on revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.
Ho₂: There is significant effect of strategic alliance on revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria

Table 4.3: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Effect of Strategic Alliance on revenue of Down-Stream retail Telecommunication Enterprises in the South-South Region of Nigeria

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.909ᵃ	.826	.824	.50178	2.260

Model Fit					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	91.018	1	91.018	361.493	.000ᵇ
Residual	19.136	76	.252		
Total	**110.154**	**77**			

Coefficientsᵃ					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.258	.115		2.245	.028
Strategic Alliance	.875	.046	.909	19.013	.000
a. Dependent Variable: R evenue					

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

Table 4.3 indicated R^2–value of .826, F- value of 361.493, T-value of 19.013 Beta coefficients of .875 and P-value of .000. This means that strategic alliances can account for 96.3% variation in revenue of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication sector in Nigeria. The result also means that strategic alliances have the explanatory power to predict revenue of down-stream retail enterprise. The result is supported by the beta coefficients of .875 which reveals that to every 1 unit increase of strategic alliances, there would be 87.5% increase in revenue of down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. However, to evaluate the fit of the model, the F-statistics was computed and result indicates the value of 361.493. This means that the association between strategic alliances and revenue is positive connected, and that the model is fit for the evaluation of the influence of strategic alliances on revenue of down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication sector in Nigeria. Also, the T-value of 19.013 show the differences in the mean which mean that strategic alliances significantly influence revenue in down-stream retail enterprises. Therefore, since the

P-value of .000 lies below the alpha level of 0.05% in social sciences, with F-value of 361.493, it can be affirmed that the null hypothesis which stated that strategic alliances have no significant influence on revenue of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, meaning that strategic alliances have significant influence on revenue of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector, Nigeria (P<0.05).

Hypothesis 3

Ho₃: There is no significant influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Table 4.4: The Simple linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Collaboration on Operational cost of down-stream Retail Telecommunication Enterprises in the South-south Region of Nigeria

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.831ᵃ	.690	.686	.68734	2.248

Model Fit						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	80.094	1	80.094	169.533	.000ᵇ
	Residual	35.906	76	.472		
	Total	**116.000**	**77**			

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.260	.155		1.680	.097
	Collaboration	.843	.065	.831	13.020	.000

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

Table 4.4 reveals R^2 –value of .690, F- value of 169.533, T-value of 13.020 Beta coefficients of .843, Durbin Watson –value of 2.248 and P-value of .000. This means that collaboration can account for 69.0% change in operational cost of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication sector in Nigeria. The result also reveals that collaboration has the predictive power to explain operational cost of down-stream retail enterprise. The result is supported by the beta coefficients of .843 which show that to every 1 unit increase of collaboration, there would be 84.3% increase in operational cost of down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. However, to evaluate the fit of the model, the F-statistics was computed and result yield the F- value of 169.533. This means that the interaction between collaboration and operational cost is positive related, and that the model is fit for the evaluation of the influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. Also, the T-value of 13.020 shows the differences in the mean which implies that collaboration has significant influence on operational cost in down-stream retail enterprises. Therefore, since the P-value of .000 lies below the alpha level of 0.05% in social sciences, with F-value of 169.533, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis which states that collaboration has no significant influence on operational cost of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, meaning that collaboration has significant influence on operational cost of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector, Nigeria (P<0.05).

Hypothesis 4

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between collaboration and profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Ho₄: There is significant relationship influence of collaboration on profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

Table 4.5 The Simple linear Regression on the Influence of Collaboration on Profit of Down-stream Retail Telecommunication Enterprises in the South-South Region of Nigeria

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	85.635	1	85.635	265.436	.000ᵇ
	Residual	24.519	76	.323		
	Total	**110.154**	**77**			

Coefficients					
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1 (Constant)	.354	.128		2.773	.007
Collaboration	.872	.054	.882	16.292	.000

Source: Researcher's Computation (2024)

Table 4.5 shows R^2 –value of .777, F- value of 265.436, T-value of 16.292, Beta coefficients of .872, Durbin Watson –value of 2.202and P-value of .000. This means that collaboration can account for 77.7% variance in profit of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication sector in Nigeria. The result also indicated that collaboration has the predictive power to explain profit of down-stream retail enterprise. The result is supported by the beta coefficients of .872 which implies that to every 1 unit increase of collaboration, there would be 87.2% increase in profitability of down-stream retail enterprises of telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. However, to evaluate the fit of the model, the F-statistics was computed and result shows the F- value of 265.436. This reveals that the relationship between collaboration and profit is positive correlated and that the model is fit for the evaluation of the influence of collaboration on profit of down-stream retail enterprises of Telecommunication Sector in Nigeria. Also, the T-value of 16.292 indicates the differences in the mean which means that collaboration has significant influence on profit in down-stream retail enterprises. Therefore, since the P-value of .000 lies below the alpha level of 0.05% in social sciences, with F-value of 265.436, it can be affirmed that the null hypothesis which states that collaboration has no significant influence on profit of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, meaning that collaboration has significant influence on profit of downstream retail enterprises in telecommunication sector, Nigeria (P<0.05).

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
There is significant influence of strategic alliance on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria
The finding of hypothesis 1 indicated that the interaction between strategic alliances is positive influence operational cost down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria. This was indicated in the beta coefficients of .976 which implies that 97.6% were contributed by the association between the strategic alliances and operational cost in the down-stream retail enterprises on Telecommunication sector in Nigeria (P<0.05). This finding negates the work of Mbugua and Njoroge (2011) who indicated that. The results showed that strategic alliances have no influence on cost efficiency of Post bank financial partners. But correlated with the work of Lin *et al.,* (2007), Velu (2018) and Lamrari (2019) who posit that strategic alliances operate as a portfolio of licensing and co-development and licensing reflects in co-promotion and co-marketing which apply squarely to the focal enterprises in the study. Strategic alliances aim to attract firms with resources in respect of management capability to use to create synergy and thus, boost performance of organisations involved in the alliance

There is significant effect of strategic alliance on revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria
Also, the finding of hypothesis two shows that strategic alliance significantly influences revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria. It therefore, means as companies align together to crease synergy through trust and teamwork, organisations are to improve on its revenue base with 87.5% optimal levels. This finding is supported by the work of Mbugua and Njoroge (2011) that strategic alliances have a positive and a significant effect on revenue and profitability of Postbank financial partners. The finding further align with the work of Lamrari (2019) who maintained strategic alliances are contracted mostly in bio-tech and pharmaceutical industries including telecommunication industry to which the focal organisations in the study belong.

There is significant influence of collaboration on operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria
The finding of hypothesis three revealed that collaboration has the explanatory power to predict operational cost of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria. This finding is supported by beta coefficients of 84.3% increase showing that collaboration has positive contribution to operational cost. The assertion is in line with the work of Cao and Zhang (2011) who opined that supply chain collaboration moderated by collaborative advantage has positive influence and improvement on bottom-line or profitability of the manufacturing firms judging from the perspective of firm performance. Also, the finding further supported the work of Chan and Cho (2022) that collaboration in area such as marketing research and communication premised on resource-based view can lead to competitive advantage. This implies that the collaborative problem-solving ability in connection with marketing research and communication is perceived as valuable, rare, unique and non-substitutable resource in line with the tenets of resource-based view

There is significant influence of collaboration on profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria.

The finding of hypothesis four revealed that collaboration significantly influences profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria. This finding was affirmed with R^2 – Value of .777 and F-statistics of 265.436 which implies that collaboration has explanatory power to explain the interaction between co-opetitive stategy and its association with profit and how to function independently to influence the performance of down-stream retail enterprises in Nigeria with a particular reference to Telecommunication sector of Nigeria. This finding is in agreement the work of Beliski and Mariani (2023) who indicated that the presence of knowledge collaboration and its intensity positively influenced incremental forms of business model reconfiguration (BRM). But collaboration with customers and suppliers by large firms engendered radical forms of business model reconfiguration (BMR).

SUMMARY

The findings from the study revealed that strategic alliance has positive and significant influence on operational cost and revenue of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in south-south region of Nigeria. There are significant influences of collaboration on operational cost and profit of down-stream retail telecommunication enterprises in the south-south region of Nigeria. Leveraging on these findings of this study, it was empirical to conclude that co-opetitive strategy influences business models of downstream retail telecommunication enterprises in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Therefore, it was recommended that the management of downstream retail telecommunication enterprises in the study should sense and enter into strategic alliance and forge collaboration which define co-opetitive strategy to build, configure and reconfigure their business models to strengthen their competitiveness in the industry.

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