Information Integration and Communication: A Resourceful Instrument for Business Growth among Small-Scale Telecommunication Firms in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

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Abstract
The paper investigates the role of information integration and communication in business growth. Specifically, the purpose was to examine the relationship between information integration and business growth and to ascertain the relationship between information communication and business growth. The study adopted the resource-based view theory (RBV). The correlational survey design was employed, and a questionnaire was adopted as the primary source for data collection from the top management employees of the studied telecommunication firms. Inferential analysis was done using the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between information integration and business growth, and there is a significant relationship between information communication and business growth. This paper concludes that information integration and communication play a significant role in business growth. The study recommends that business organizations should invest in standard information technologies that support information integration and communication from multiple sources within and outside the business organization.

Keywords: Information integration, small-scale firms, business growth, information communication

Introduction
Growth is a positive shift in the level at which a business organization initiates a strategy for expansion to increase its profitability. Business growth is determined by the available resources that stimulate the production activities of the organization (Coady, 2009). Growth mustn't be static nor secure due to the dynamic nature of the business's environmental variables. These variables can hamper the objective and goals of the business venture and
relatively affect their existence. The level of competitiveness in today’s telecom market in Nigeria and the political settings of the country has made the outcome of business volatile. Hakkert and Kemp (2016), described the term growth as an increased business outcome proxy such as sales of product and services, profitability, market dominance and expansion in other corporate ventures. Growth can also be influenced by internal variables such as the degree of effectiveness and capability by which a firm utilizes its resources such as human (employees), raw materials, information, and intellectual capital.

The process by which information is exchanged through a corporate network with the use of information technology is known as Information Integration (IT). One of the key goals of information integration is the transmission and processing of information needed for corporate decision-making. With the reduction of inventories and shortages, Lee and Tang (2000) demonstrated how information integration will cut costs. Nevertheless, adjustments to the business process are necessary to achieve this benefit, such as vendor-managed inventory (VMI) programs, shorter lead times, smaller order quantities, and more frequent deliveries. Information integration shows two kinds of integration that move in opposite ways when taking into account data from customers, clients, and suppliers (i.e. forward and backwards respectively). The physical flows of materials from suppliers to the organization are the focus of forward integration. The coordination of information technology and information flows from the company to suppliers and other business partners, on the other hand, are the focus of backward integration.

Communication is a vital consideration in the routine management of information in the firm. There is a need to establish a structure in which information can be communicated among units, departments and individuals in the organization (Oyetunde & Oladejo, 2012). Obamiro (2017) asserts that communication in business is a core determinant for the successful dissemination and integration of information for growth and effectiveness in the firm. Communication is a practice that enables the management of the organization to communicate policies, goals and objectives to every stakeholder of the business. This will stimulate the employees to effectively put effort into meeting tasks and assignments assigned to them.

Although numerous empirical studies have taken IT and information integration into account, this use of information integration for strategic decision-making has not been completely realized. Notable outliers were Zhou and Benton's (2007) and Li, Yang, Sun, and Sohal's (2009) discussions on information integration, which used eight IT-related, information-sharing-related topics to explore the integration of both information and material. They discovered a strong correlation between improved business activity performance and a greater breadth of information integration. They were unable to determine any connection between information integration and information sharing among all levels of employees in a company organization, however, because the things were merged into a single construct. In their 2007 study, Zhou and Benton looked at how information sharing affected normal business practices, which they defined as parts of planning, production, and delivery practices. They discovered that information sharing had a major influence on service delivery procedures, company performance, and effective management of business operations. Li et al. (2009) study included IT performance and implementation (including technological capabilities and information exchange). They discovered that the installation of IT significantly impacted the integration of information and consequently affected performance. On this note, this paper will ascertain the relationship between information integration and business growth in an organization.

**Statement of the Problem**

Information is the lifeblood of any organization, irrespective of the objective and nature of business. Organizations are found vulnerable to unseen setbacks from the internal and
external business environment when there is no source of vital information for resilience. Integrating information originating from the internal and external business environment will position organizations effectively to make decisions that will ensure their operational effectiveness. Information is considered a very important resource that enables managers and employees to perform their tasks effectively, acquired and shared information is an empowering approach to support overall business growth.

Today many businesses have failed to invest in information resources to continue striving in this turbulent business environment with a high level of competition among rival establishments. Integrating information involves the use of information technologies that will allow the acquiring, storage and sharing of information to all levels of managers to make strategic decisions for growth. However, the reality is that firms might consider the investment in information acquisition as an excess investment compared to their potential profitability. However, the absence of valuable information in businesses can lead to poor routine management, communication barriers, ineffective actions and decisions, poor business growth, low client/customer retention, poor customer support systems, and business growth. On this premise, this paper is determined to investigate the empirical link between information integration and business growth among small and medium-scale enterprises in Bayelsa State considering the role of information integration and information communication practices.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between information integration and business growth?
2. What is the relationship between information communication and business growth?

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study areas follows:

1. To examine the role of information integration and communication on business growth.
2. To establish the relationship between information integration and business growth.
3. Ascertain the relationship between information communication and business growth.

**Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses will be tested in the course of the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between information integration and business growth.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between information communication and business growth.

**Review of Related Literature**

The study revolves around concepts such as information integration, information communication, and business growth, among others. As decisive as every other organizational asset, information is one. One of the essential skills in 21st-century corporate success is the capacity to rapidly and affordably locate and analyze high-quality global management data in an environment of fast business transformation. A key component of conducting business, not a by-product, is how organizations are increasingly seeing the creation and administration of information. While planning for the "next phase" of business intelligence, when analytic software draws from many data silos, avoiding Garbage In, Garbage out (GIGO) is a crucial success element. Nowadays, a company's capacity to respond to fast change both internally
and internationally rests on its information awareness. According to Mendelson's work from 2000, an organization's profitability is significantly influenced by its organizational intelligence, which is in turn stimulated by its internal knowledge sharing and information awareness. Staff members must comprehend the data that is crucial to the firm as a whole and be ready to compile the necessary data.

For the organization to exchange such information successfully and efficiently, it must be organized and have the necessary infrastructure. The right information technology is essential for enabling executives to observe the business from any angle with a worldwide conversant and change-ready viewpoint without being constrained by any massive, rigid information systems. The main components of the adaptive enterprise are the alignment of flexible and integrated information systems with adaptive well-informed decision-making and strategy.

In a related development, information exchange is crucial because it provides a means of coordinating and integrating various corporate operations or activities (Ramayah & Omar, 2010). It’s essential to manage the information flow related to the transfer of items (goods or services) to the ultimate customer to guarantee that customer expectations in the business may be met. Information exchange among company employees is essential for efficient product and service flow. With information exchange, businesses will be able to adjust successfully to shifting market demand requirements. Communication of information is important not just in the manufacturing sector but also in agricultural industries like the wine business. It was discovered that the wine sector has to increase information sharing to encourage trust among its stakeholders and guarantee the success of its marketing initiatives.

Along with facilitating the coordination of business activities, information exchange across business partners helps organizations accomplish shared objectives (Lambert 2004). The setup of the supply network and the alignment of the business partners’ goals have an impact on the degree of information sharing within the organization. Internal company communication of information is very crucial. It would be challenging for businesses to communicate information externally with their partners if they were unable to do so inside. Information may serve two purposes: it can increase organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage while also benefiting commercial entities (Li et al., 2006). Information concerning forecast, sales, and promotional efforts must be distributed not just among internal functions but also throughout the firm to maximize corporate success (Bowersox et al., 2000). Information sharing has to place a strong emphasis on the quality and quantity of the information.

Information sharing also refers to activities that include openly exchanging beneficial information across individuals, systems, or organizational units. The following questions should be addressed when sharing information: "What to share," "Whom to share," "How to share," and "When to share." If these questions are appropriately answered, sharing costs, information deficiency and company responsiveness will all be reduced. How information is used in the workplace affects a company's capacity to secure a competitive edge and assure product availability (Ramayah & Omar, 2010).

Similarly, business growth is a stage where an organization experiences not comparable and sustained increases in market reach and profit avenues. This can happen when a company increases revenue, produces more products or services, or expands its customer base. For the majority of businesses, growth is the main objective. With that in mind, business decisions are often made based on what would contribute to the company’s growth and overall success. The goal and objectives of the business are centred on growth and sustainability, irrespective of the nature, class, size and mode of operation. The growth of a business is determined by several factors such as manpower skills, capital, customers,
environment and resources. Information as one of the vital resources of any establishment can give a business a competitive edge over other rivals in the market environment. Employees as a core determinant of the growth of business do not operate in isolation, rather they function based on the available information they can access, which gives them insights and knowledge to apply to the tasks assigned to them. Business growth can be measured in the form of profitability, market share, customer acquisition etc. (Tanriverdi, 2011).

**Empirical Literature**

Several studies have been done on the impact of information collection on many sides of company performance. For example, research by Richards and Duxbery (2014) found a connection between the acquisition of knowledge and organizational contextual elements including shared vision and organizational goals. It is considered that management plays a crucial role in how contextual elements affect knowledge acquisition. The primary responsibility of management is to find fresh information from outside sources and appropriate it for the company. The relationship between organizational learning and performance was investigated in research by Argote and Spektor in 2011. According to the study, arranging, collecting, and broadcasting information to other users involves both information distribution and information broadcasting. Direct learning occurs from one's own experience, while indirect learning occurs through others. Although it is challenging to arrange and transmit silent information, doing so produces individuality, which is a foundation for competitive advantage. Technology, individual movement, templates, routines, social networks, and alliance mechanisms are used to distribute information across groups, and organizational units.

According to an experimental study by Fletcher and Prashantham (2011), information sharing is linked to successful organizational outcomes, such as high levels of productivity, efficiency, creativity, and creative behaviour. According to the report, information has to be established and shared. Organizations adjust their physical infrastructure to create open workplaces and information networks and implement systems of information-sharing rewards to encourage knowledge and information exchange.

Odo and Eke (2023) studied the empirical link between electronic commerce (e-commerce) strategy and business growth. The study focused on business growth in terms of adopting the electronic approach in business transactions and marketing of goods and services. It was a quantitative approach applying descriptive research design. The participants selected entrepreneurs and business owners in Bayelsa state. Using a questionnaire is the main instrument of data collection. The findings revealed that the use of the internet to communicate with customers, suppliers, investors, developers, and other company owners worldwide with the aid of electronic measures.

**Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts the Resource Based View (RBV) Theory as a framework for analysis. The theory has its roots in the work of Penrose (1959). He argued that the organization's resources what it owns uses and deploys are more crucial than the structure of the industry. In agreement with Penrose, Barney (2001) asserted that a firm's resources are its main source of competitive advantage. As a result, the resource-based view (RBV) is a management paradigm used to identify the strategic resources that a corporation might utilize to gain a long-term competitive advantage. The resource-based view (RBV) emphasizes that the resources an organization has built influence, the extent to which it can compete in the business environment and draws attention to businesses' internal environments which enables it for competitive advantage. In addition to a firm's overall resources, Barney (2001) said that
there are other resources, including physical capital, human capital, and organizational capital resources.

**Method and Materials**

A cross-sectional survey research design was considered appropriate for the study conducted in Bayelsa State in the Southern region of Nigeria. The State capital is Yenagoa, which is characterized as the urban city of the state. Telecommunication Agencies located in Yenagoa metropolis. Twenty-five (25) Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (telecommunication) owners/managers located within Yenagoa Metropolis formed the study participants which summed up to be 25. The primary source of data collection was adopted based on the nature of the study. Structured questionnaire was adopted as the main instrument for data collection. Cronbach alpha reliability of 0.91 ensured the consistency and reliability of the research instrument. Data collected from the study participants was collated using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and coded with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), then inferential analysis was done using Pearson Moment Correlational Coefficient was adopted to the relationship between the variables.

**Results and Discussion**

**Correlational outcome between information integration and business growth**

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

**Source:** SPSS Computation

The result in the table above, with rho = .631, shows a significant relationship between information integration and business growth. The study result conforms with the study outcome of Richards and Duxbery (2014), which revealed a positive relationship between information integration and business growth factors such as organizational goals and shared vision has been established. It is argued that contextual factors influence the integration of information with management playing a critical role. The management role is primarily in searching for new information from external sources and grafting or appropriation of this information into the organization. Furthermore, the adoption of information communication devices on the growth of SMEs is studied by Irefin et al. (2012) and it was discovered that there is a significant correlation between SMEs growth and the integration of vital information resources in the management of business. It is obvious from the previous results that the strategic implementation of information in indigenous businesses in Nigeria can yield a better competitive advantage and proactive measures for growth and productivity.
Correlational outcome relationship between information communication and business growth

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<td>Business growth</td>
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Computation

The result in the table above, with rho = .581, revealed a significant relationship between information communication and business growth. The finding is supported by the result of Argote and Spektor (2011) who revealed that information distribution and information dissemination involved organizing, capturing and actual distribution of knowledge and information to other users. Employees learn directly from their own experiences and indirectly from each other. Although it is difficult to disseminate and formalize tacit knowledge, it creates inimitability which is a basis for competitive advantage. Also, Odo and Eke (2023) revealed the use of the Internet to communicate with customers, suppliers, investors, developers, and other company owners worldwide with the aid of electronic measures. This means information communication is beneficial to all stakeholders of the business to improve swift business transactions and keep up with good business relationships.

Conclusion

Information is arguably the most important resource in an organization. Information gives directives for every management function such as strategic planning, directing, coordinating and even motivating human resources. Information supports the technical know-how of all employees in an organization. Information just like other valuable resources is not cheap it requires setting up infrastructure and information technologies to enable organizations to acquire from external and internal sources, and also communicate the acquired information with users for effective decision-making. From the inferential analysis, this paper concludes that information integration and communication correlate with business growth. This implies that information integration is bedrock for business growth irrespective of the sector or nature of business.

Recommendations

From the analysis of the data, findings, and conclusion drawn, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. Business organizations should invest in standard information technologies that support information acquisition and sharing from multiple sources within the business environment.
2. Sourcing for information is not enough to push business to the next level, the management of a business should also emphasize the management of information resources for strategic decision-making.

3. Investment in sophisticated technologies is not enough for businesses, but they should be evaluated and maintained for the long-term purpose of communication and safekeeping of information resources.

4. Customers, clients, suppliers, and partners should be encouraged to share valuable information that will keep the business abreast with market demands to ascertain the level of competition in the business market.

References


