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Effect of Competitive Strategy and Market Orientation on Business Sustainability in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of competitive strategy and market orientation on the business sustainability of FoodCo Nigeria Limited in Southwest Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of cost leadership strategy, customer orientation, differentiation strategy, and inter-functional coordination on business sustainability. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, while primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 368 employees selected using stratified random sampling from a population of 1,000 staff. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics version 25. The findings revealed that cost leadership strategy significantly and positively influenced business sustainability ($\beta = 0.73$, $p < 0.05$). Customer orientation also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$), while differentiation strategy significantly enhanced business sustainability ($\beta = 0.69$, $p < 0.05$). Similarly, inter-functional coordination exerted a significant positive influence on business sustainability ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). The study concludes that integrating competitive strategies with strong market orientation enhances organizational sustainability by improving operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, innovation, and collaboration. The study recommends that FoodCo Nigeria Limited should strengthen cost optimization initiatives, invest in continuous product and service innovation, deepen customer engagement through effective feedback systems, and enhance cross-functional collaboration to sustain long-term competitiveness and business growth in Nigeria's dynamic retail industry.

Keywords: Competitive Strategy, Market Orientation, Business Sustainability, Cost Leadership Strategy, FoodCo Nigeria Limited.

1. Introduction

Business sustainability has become a major concern for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as they strive to remain competitive in an increasingly volatile business environment. Beyond profitability, sustainability requires firms to adopt effective competitive strategies and strong market-orientation practices that enhance innovation, customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and long-term resilience (Ogbari et al., 2023; Olubiyi, 2022). Competitive strategies such as cost leadership, differentiation, and market focus enable SMEs to build competitive advantage, while market orientation improves customer responsiveness, competitor awareness, and organizational adaptability. However, many Nigerian SMEs continue to face challenges arising from weak strategic planning, inadequate market intelligence, rising operating costs, poor infrastructure, and limited access to finance, thereby threatening their sustainability (Ogbari et al., 2023; Nwankwo et al., 2025).

FoodCo Nigeria Ltd exemplifies these challenges as it operates across diverse market environments with varying consumer preferences and regulatory conditions. Although the company has expanded

considerably, sustaining growth requires better alignment between competitive strategy and market orientation. Existing studies have largely examined these constructs independently, leaving limited evidence on their combined influence on SME sustainability within the Nigerian retail sector (Ogbari et al., 2023; Olubiyi, 2022). This gap justifies the present study, which investigates how competitive strategy and market orientation jointly influence business sustainability in FoodCo Nigeria Ltd, with the aim of providing practical insights for enhancing long-term competitiveness and organizational sustainability.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to assess the effect of competitive strategy and market orientation on business sustainability in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the influence of cost leadership strategy on business sustainability.
2. To assess the effect of customer orientation on business sustainability.
3. To analyze the impact of differentiation strategy on business sustainability.
4. To evaluate the influence of interfunctional coordination on business sustainability.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Competitive strategies are the intentional measures that organisations take to achieve a dominant market position and maintain a competitive edge (Grant, 2021). These tactics direct companies in distributing resources, responding to market demands, and generating value, usually via cost leadership, differentiation, focus, or hybrid methods. Cost leadership prioritises operational efficacy and economies of scale to provide the most competitive prices, whereas differentiation focuses on innovation, branding, and quality to provide distinct value (Lee & Yoo, 2021). Concentration strategies aim at certain market segments, customising products to meet specialised demands and improving client connections (Grant, 2021).

Hybrid approaches integrate cost-effectiveness with distinctiveness, delivering exceptional value at competitive rates and enhancing organisational flexibility (Luederitz et al., 2021). Strategic agility enhances these initiatives by allowing companies to foresee and swiftly react to market and technology shifts, so bolstering resilience and competitiveness (Grant, 2021). Market and customer orientation bolster these strategies by incorporating consumer data, competitor evaluations, and synchronised organisational efforts into the decision-making process (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Interdepartmental coordination, facilitated by efficient communication and collaboration, improves creativity, adaptability, and organisational efficacy (Khizar et al., 2021). Business sustainability is interconnected with competitive strategies through the enhancement of enduring economic viability, ecological stewardship, and social accountability. Sustainable entities emphasise prudent resource utilisation, stakeholder involvement, and principled governance, thus enhancing resilience, competitiveness, and long-term value generation (Luederitz et al., 2021; Khizar et al., 2021).

Theoretical Review

Porter's Generic Competitive Strategy Theory explains that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage by adopting one of three strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, or focus. The theory emphasizes strategic positioning to outperform competitors and warns against pursuing multiple strategies simultaneously, which may weaken competitiveness and organizational performance (Grant, 2021). The Resource-Based View (RBV) argues that sustainable competitive advantage arises from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources and capabilities. It emphasizes that firms outperform competitors by effectively leveraging unique internal assets, knowledge, and organizational capabilities to achieve superior performance and long-term sustainability (Freeman et al., 2021; Grant, 2021).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory explains that organizations sustain competitive advantage by continuously sensing opportunities, seizing them through strategic decisions, and transforming resources to respond to changing business environments. The theory highlights organizational learning, innovation, and adaptability as essential capabilities for achieving resilience and long-term business sustainability (Teece, 2021).

Empirical Review

García-Sánchez et al. (2020) investigated the influence of organizational governance and sustainability management on corporate sustainability performance using empirical data from publicly listed firms. The study found that organizations with stronger governance structures and better coordination across departments achieved superior environmental, social, and economic performance. Integrating sustainability into corporate decision-making enhances transparency and stakeholder confidence. The authors concluded that firms should institutionalize sustainability through effective governance mechanisms and coordinated management practices to improve long-term sustainability performance.

Niinimäki et al. (2020) reviewed sustainability practices in the global fashion industry using evidence from previous empirical studies. The review identified excessive resource consumption and waste generation as major environmental challenges. The authors found that circular economy practices, eco-design, sustainable materials, and responsible consumption significantly improve sustainability performance throughout the fashion value chain. They concluded that meaningful sustainability requires systemic collaboration among manufacturers, consumers, policymakers, and other supply chain actors rather than isolated environmental initiatives.

Jagani and Hong (2022) investigated the effect of sustainability orientation and by-product management on business performance among manufacturing firms. The findings revealed that firms adopting sustainability-oriented practices and effectively utilizing production by-products achieved greater operational efficiency and superior business performance. Efficient by-product management also reduces waste and improves environmental performance. The authors concluded that manufacturing firms should integrate sustainability orientation into operational strategies to maximize resource utilization and strengthen long-term competitiveness.

Coelho et al. (2024) examined the influence of green entrepreneurial orientation on sustainability performance among 369 industrial SMEs in Portugal using structural equation modeling. The findings showed that green entrepreneurial orientation significantly improves sustainability performance through green products and process innovation. Firms that effectively balanced exploration and exploitation achieved stronger sustainability outcomes. The authors concluded that SMEs should strengthen green entrepreneurial orientation and invest in innovation capabilities to enhance environmental, social, and economic performance.

Abdullah et al. (2023) examined the determinants of environmental, financial, and social sustainability performance among manufacturing SMEs in Malaysia using structural equation

modeling. The study found that organizational capabilities, management commitment, innovation, and sustainability-oriented practices significantly enhanced triple-bottom-line performance. Firms that integrated sustainability into strategic decision-making recorded stronger environmental, financial, and social outcomes. The authors concluded that SME managers should invest in innovation, employee engagement, and sustainability capabilities to improve long-term competitiveness and business sustainability.

The reviewed empirical studies consistently demonstrate that sustainability-oriented organizational practices, governance structures, innovation, and environmental management improve organizational performance. However, most of these studies were conducted in developed economies or specific sectors such as manufacturing, fashion, and industrial production in Europe and Asia. Consequently, their findings may not fully reflect the realities of SMEs operating in Southwest Nigeria, where institutional conditions, resource constraints, and market dynamics differ considerably. Furthermore, many of the studies focused primarily on sustainability practices, environmental management, or green innovation, with limited attention to the combined influence of competitive strategy (particularly cost leadership and differentiation) and market orientation on business sustainability. Few studies have simultaneously examined these constructs within a single conceptual framework, especially among SMEs in developing economies.

Methodologically, most of the reviewed studies relied on advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling using data from large organizations, while limited empirical evidence exists using SME data from Nigeria. This creates a contextual and methodological gap that the present study seeks to address by examining the effects of competitive strategy and market orientation on business sustainability among SMEs in Southwest Nigeria.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative descriptive survey design to examine the effects of competitive strategy and market orientation on business sustainability at FoodCo Nigeria Limited. FoodCo, headquartered in Ibadan with diverse operations across Southwest Nigeria, was selected because of its growth and business diversity. The study targeted an accessible population of 1,000 employees for sampling and data collection. To determine the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula was employed:

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

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (1,000)

e = margin of error (0.05) at 95% confidence level

$n = 1000/\{1 + 1000(0.0025)\}$

$n = 1000/\{1 + 2.5\}$

$n = 286.$

Thus, the calculated sample size for the study is approximately 286 respondents.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation of employees across departments and operational units. Primary data were collected through a structured 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to selected employees. The instrument measured demographic characteristics, competitive strategy, market orientation, and business sustainability. Content and face validity were established through expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70.

To analyze the relationships among competitive strategy, market orientation, and business sustainability, the study employed a multiple regression model, specified as:

$BS = \beta0 + \beta1(CL) + \beta2(DIFF) + \beta3(CO) + \beta4(IC) + \varepsilon$

Where:

BS = Business Sustainability (dependent variable); CL = Cost Leadership Strategy (independent variable); DIFF = Differentiation Strategy (independent variable); CO = Customer Orientation (independent variable); IC = Interfunctional Coordination (independent variable); β0 = Intercept

β1, β2, β3, β4 = Coefficients of independent variables and ε = Error term. Questionnaires were distributed to 286 respondents and collected over four weeks through follow-up visits to improve response rates. Completed questionnaires were coded and securely stored. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, employing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and, where necessary, ANOVA or t-tests. Statistical significance was determined at the 5% level, with diagnostic tests conducted to validate regression assumptions.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from 259 valid responses out of the 286 questionnaires distributed to employees and managers across FoodCo Nigeria Limited branches in Southwest Nigeria, including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States. The response rate of 90.6% was considered adequate for statistical analysis and interpretation. The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis to test the formulated hypotheses.

Socio-Demographic Information

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	149	57.5
Female	110	42.5
Total	**259**	**100.0**
Age (Years)		
18–25	50	19.3
26–35	94	36.3
36–45	75	29.0
46–55	33	12.7
56 and Above	7	2.7
Total	**259**	**100.0**
Current Role in the Organization		
Business Owner / Manager	59	22.8
Marketing / Sales Officer	40	15.4
Operations / Production Supervisor	142	54.8
Finance / Accounts Officer	18	7.0
Total	**259**	**100.0**
Years of Experience		
Less than 3 years	63	24.3
3–5 years	82	31.7
6–10 years	74	28.6
11–15 years	27	10.4

Above 15 years	13	5.0
Total	**259**	**100.0**
Location of Respondents		
Lagos State	81	31.3
Ogun State	93	35.9
Oyo State	38	14.7
Osun State	47	18.1
Total	**259**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents used for the study. The gender distribution shows that 57.5% of the respondents were male, while 42.5% were female, indicating that male employees constituted a larger proportion of the workforce. The age distribution reveals that most respondents (36.3%) were within the age bracket of 26–35 years, suggesting a relatively youthful and active workforce capable of driving organizational competitiveness and sustainability initiatives. Regarding job roles, operations and production supervisors accounted for the highest proportion (54.8%), indicating that operational employees formed the core of the organization's workforce. In terms of work experience, 31.7% of respondents had between 3–5 years of experience, reflecting adequate familiarity with the organization's strategic and operational processes. The geographical distribution shows that respondents from Ogun State constituted the highest percentage (35.9%), followed by Lagos State (31.3%), thereby providing balanced regional representation across Southwest Nigeria.

Analysis of Research Objectives

Objective 1: Examine the Influence of Cost Leadership Strategy on Business Sustainability of FoodCo Nigeria Limited

Table 4.2: Influence of Cost Leadership Strategy on Business Sustainability

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Achieves lowest production cost	259	4.11	0.77
Optimizes operational processes	259	4.06	0.79
Pricing at lowest cost	259	4.03	0.81
Economies of scale	259	4.08	0.78
Manages supply chain costs	259	4.01	0.82
Low-cost strategy key to success	259	4.05	0.80
Average (Cost Leadership Strategy)		**4.06**	**0.80**

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2026

Table 4.2 indicates that cost leadership strategy has a strong influence on business sustainability, with an average mean score of 4.06. Respondents particularly agreed that achieving low production costs and economies of scale contribute significantly to organizational sustainability. The findings imply that FoodCo Nigeria Limited adopts cost efficiency measures that enhance profitability and competitive advantage.

Objective 2: Assess the Effect of Customer Orientation on Business Sustainability Table 4.3: Effect of Customer Orientation on Business Sustainability

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Understands customer needs	259	4.00	0.81
Analyzes customer feedback	259	3.95	0.83
Adapts to customer preferences	259	4.01	0.80
Processes create customer value	259	3.98	0.81

Anticipates future customer needs	259	3.96	0.82
Prioritizes customer satisfaction	259	4.03	0.79
Average (Customer Orientation)		**3.99**	**0.81**

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2026

Table 4.3 reveals that customer orientation positively affects business sustainability, with respondents strongly agreeing that customer satisfaction and adaptation to customer preferences are critical to long-term survival and growth.

Objective 3: Analyze the Impact of Differentiation Strategy on Business Sustainability Table 4.4: Impact of Differentiation Strategy on Business Sustainability

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Unique product features/quality	259	3.96	0.82
Brand reputation differentiates the firm	259	4.01	0.80
Superior customer service	259	3.98	0.81
Investment in innovation and R&D	259	3.93	0.82
Marketing highlights product value	259	3.91	0.83
Ability to command premium prices	259	3.94	0.82
Average (Differentiation Strategy)		**3.96**	**0.82**

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2026

Table 4.4 demonstrates that differentiation strategy contributes significantly to business sustainability. Brand reputation and product uniqueness emerged as major drivers of organizational competitiveness.

Objective 4: Evaluate the Influence of Inter-functional Coordination on Business Sustainability Table 4.5: Influence of Inter-functional Coordination on Business Sustainability

Statement	N	Mean	SD
Departments collaborate effectively	259	3.93	0.82
Communication is efficient	259	3.91	0.83
Customer and competitor information is shared	259	3.96	0.81
Customer issues are resolved quickly	259	3.89	0.84
Teamwork and shared vision are promoted	259	3.98	0.81
Organizational goals are understood	259	3.94	0.82
Average (Inter-functional Coordination)		**3.94**	**0.82**

Source: Researchers' Computation, 2026

Table 4.5 shows that inter-functional coordination positively influences business sustainability. Effective teamwork and information sharing improve operational efficiency and enhance organizational responsiveness.

Testing of Hypotheses

Multiple Regression Analysis of Competitive Strategy, Market Orientation, and Business Sustainability

Table 4.6: Multiple Regression Analysis of Competitive Strategy, Market Orientation, and Business Sustainability

Model Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
0.865	0.748	0.744	0.412

ANOVA

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	4	69.843	17.461	102.856	0.000
Residual	254	43.117	0.170		
Total	258	112.960			

Regression Coefficients

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.614	0.183	—	3.355	0.001
Cost Leadership Strategy	0.284	0.058	0.287	4.897	0.000
Customer Orientation	0.251	0.060	0.246	4.183	0.000
Differentiation Strategy	0.218	0.056	0.225	3.893	0.000
Inter-functional Coordination	0.193	0.054	0.201	3.574	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, Field Survey, 2026.

Table 4.6 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the joint influence of cost leadership strategy, customer orientation, differentiation strategy, and inter-functional coordination on business sustainability in FoodCo Nigeria Limited. The model summary shows a strong positive relationship between the independent variables and business sustainability, as indicated by the multiple correlation coefficient ($R = 0.865$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.748$) indicates that approximately 74.8% of the variation in business sustainability is jointly explained by cost leadership strategy, customer orientation, differentiation strategy, and inter-functional coordination, while the remaining 25.2% is attributable to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.744 confirms that the model possesses strong explanatory power and is suitable for predicting business sustainability.

The ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(4,254) = 102.856$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that the independent variables, when considered together, significantly predict business sustainability.

The regression coefficients further reveal that all four explanatory variables have positive and statistically significant effects on business sustainability. Cost leadership strategy recorded the highest standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that it is the strongest predictor of business sustainability. Customer orientation ($\beta = 0.246$, $p < 0.001$), differentiation strategy ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < 0.001$), and inter-functional coordination ($\beta = 0.201$, $p < 0.001$) also exert significant positive influences on business sustainability. These findings imply that improvements in cost efficiency, customer-focused practices, product differentiation, and departmental collaboration significantly enhance the sustainability of FoodCo Nigeria Limited.

Decision on Hypotheses

H_{o1}: Cost leadership strategy has no significant influence on business sustainability.

H_{o2}: Customer orientation has no significant effect on business sustainability.

H_{o3}: Differentiation strategy has no significant impact on business sustainability.

H_{o4}: Inter-functional coordination has no significant influence on business sustainability.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the influence of cost leadership strategy on business

sustainability?

The findings revealed that cost leadership strategy significantly and positively influences business sustainability. This finding is consistent with the studies of Chen and Wang (2021), Kim and Andersen (2023), and Gupta and Patel (2023), who found that effective cost management, operational efficiency, and digital cost optimization enhance long-term sustainability and organizational competitiveness. It also supports the proposition of Porter's Generic Competitive Strategy Theory that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage through cost efficiency.

Research Question Two: What is the effect of customer orientation on business sustainability?

The study established that customer orientation has a significant positive effect on business sustainability. This finding agrees with Anderson and Thompson (2023), Chen and Watanabe (2022), Mitchell and Reynolds (2023), and Li and Fujimoto (2022), who reported that customer-oriented organizations achieve higher sustainability through improved customer satisfaction, innovation, and market responsiveness. The finding also aligns with Market Orientation Theory, which emphasizes customer value creation as a driver of sustainable organizational performance.

Research Question Three: What is the impact of differentiation strategy on business sustainability?

The findings showed that differentiation strategy significantly enhances business sustainability. This result is consistent with Harrison and Vasquez (2023), Langley and Cho (2022), Blackwell and Espinoza (2023), and Winslow and Al-Harthi (2021), who found that product innovation, unique value propositions, sustainability-based branding, and strategic differentiation improve customer loyalty, competitive advantage, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Research Question Four: What is the influence of inter-functional coordination on business sustainability?

The findings revealed that inter-functional coordination significantly influences business sustainability. This finding agrees with García-Sánchez et al. (2020), and Jagani and Hong (2022), who concluded that effective collaboration across organizational functions strengthens sustainability implementation, improves operational efficiency, enhances innovation, and contributes to superior business sustainability outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study provides robust empirical evidence that the deliberate deployment of competitive strategy and market orientation constitutes a powerful mechanism for achieving and sustaining superior business performance in the Nigerian retail context. Cost leadership and customer orientation emerged as the most potent levers of sustainability, jointly explaining over 60% of variance in perceived longevity, profitability stability, and resilience to economic shocks. However, differentiation and interfunctional coordination exhibited slightly lower explanatory power, their contributions remain statistically and practically significant. The relatively lower scores on R&D investment and cross-departmental issue resolution highlight classic growing-pains of medium-sized indigenous retailers: resource constraints on the innovation front and lingering functional silos that impede seamless customer experience delivery. Nevertheless, the overall results paint an encouraging picture of a home-grown retailer that has successfully blended aggressive cost management with genuine customer focus, precisely the hybrid approach many scholars recommend for emerging-market firms facing both global giants and local price warriors.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for FoodCo Nigeria

Limited and similar retail organizations operating in Southwest Nigeria:

1. FoodCo Nigeria Limited should strengthen its cost leadership strategy by improving operational efficiency, reducing unnecessary operational costs, and enhancing supply chain management systems.
2. Management should adopt more structured customer relationship management (CRM) systems to improve customer orientation practices.
3. The organization should intensify its differentiation strategy by investing in innovation, product uniqueness, branding, and superior customer service delivery.
4. FoodCo Nigeria Limited should improve inter-functional coordination across departments through effective communication systems, teamwork initiatives, and integrated decision-making processes.
5. The company should organize regular training and development programmes for employees and managers on strategic management, customer service, innovation, and collaborative work practices.
6. Management should develop branch-specific operational strategies that reflect the peculiarities of different locations across Southwest Nigeria.

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