



## Market Connectivity Enrichment Practices: Implications on Corporate Responsiveness among Pentecostal Faith-Based Organizations in Portharcourt, Nigeria

Boma-Orawari, Increase Ibinabo PhD<sup>1</sup>, Ginah O. Ginah Ph.D<sup>2</sup>, Akpotu, Christopher PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Management, Rivers State University

<sup>2</sup>Research Consultant

<sup>3</sup>Department of Management, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Amassoma

**\*Corresponding Author:** Boma-Orawari, Increase Ibinabo PhD, Department of Management, Rivers State University

**Abstract:** The increase in competition amongst firms in same industry requires responsive approaches for quality and prompt service delivery. The corporate responsive behaviour of firm prescribes a determinate approach to acquiring and sustaining desired market. This study therefore primarily investigates market connectivity enrichment practices and its predictive ability on corporate responsiveness among Pentecostal faith-based organization in Portharcourt, Nigeria. A sample of 73 participants, which includes General Overseers, Senior and Area Pastors, was surveyed using the structural and validated questionnaire. The data were analyzed using the regression technique. From the results, it was found that 38.6% of the variability of corporate responsiveness is explained by market connectivity enrichment. The study concluded that market connectivity enrichment correlates with corporate responsiveness therefore recommended amidst others that operators of Pentecostal faith-based organizations should recognize abinitio, the uniqueness of their sector and ensure sustained promotional fluidity and feedback that will strengthen them for quality and prompt service delivery to followers.

**Keywords:** market, enrichment, promotional fluidity, responsiveness, promptness

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There exists seeming consensus in strategic management literature on enormous attention to the market environment of firms as the crux of the multi strategic means aimed at gaining competitive advantage (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2005; Shepherd, 2009; Day, 2012; Kalyanaram, Robinson & Urban, 2015). As the competition scale of firm reinforce competitive momentum, the market space available is largely limited therefore requires firm vigilance, scrutiny, and agile actions to acquire and sustain desired share of the market. Recently, firms are showing interest in creating either inter-firm links or intra-firm relationships that integrate and reinforce their capabilities to be responsive to the market. Infact, Robinson (2016) conceptualized firm commitment to deepening primarily, a renewed approach that takes a holistic perspective at exploring an exploiting markets. Soludo (2009) had argued that market connectivity enrichment is a strategic value-added behaviour of firms during intense competition, ensuring a coordination network of relationships that fast track service delivery. The tendency of market connectivity enrichment practices to instigate functional outcomes in firm competitiveness is underscored conceptually (Randall, Morgan & Morton, 2003; Allen, 2003; Moore & Manring, 2009; Boons & Ludeke-Freund, 2013; Graafland & Smid, 2016). Market connectivity enrichment is an engaging strategic behaviour that prompt market diagnose for appropriate and satisfying responses. The practicability of market enrichment connectivity as a strategic initiative of competing firms for gaining competitive is conceptually distilled to be responsive to market trends (Shaw and Campbell, 2016). This simply suggests that firms rate of responsiveness to changing market trends can be largely predicted by the rate of involvement in market connectivity enrichment practices. While this is conceptually speculative, research has amplified the primary objective of relying on market connectivity enrichment to market positioning.

This also require an empirical position on market connectivity enrichment practice as a predictor of corporate responsiveness which indicates firm commitment quality service delivery, timely, prompt response to changes in the market environment. While market connectivity enrichment practices are targeted a contemplating the associated trends in the market, a proactive and rapid response behaviour is imperative. The Pentecostal faith-based sector has been commonly acknowledged as competitive in Nigeria. Their proliferation no doubt has engendered a high rate of competition for huge followership. This equally requires some dosage of strategic environmental appreciation to deliver quality on the revered 'spiritual products' of the sector. Therefore the need for this study which examined empirical link between market connectively enrichment practices and corporate responsiveness.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Market Connectivity Enrichment**

Market connectivity enrichment is the battery of relationship or networks of stakeholders which involves multiple actions and activities that attracts, manage and ensuring long-term sustainability of the relationship. Market connectivity enrichment according to Soludo (2009) is a strategic value-added orientation of firms in a hypa-competitive environment with the objective of systemic network coordination that engages and integrates the roles of all members towards the group goal. Gamba & Dim (2012) had viewed market enrichment in terms of external penetration that emphasizes a brand and its features to external stakeholders. The firm's ability to permeate customer's cognitive orientation on the products and services provided by the firm attracts their loyalty. Market connectivity enrichment according to Somba (2015) explores and secure customer loyalty through exploring and exploitation of opportunities deemed inherent and deploying innovative practices that are value creating and enhancing by so doing, firms gain competitive advantage the author noted. Cormor (2008); Borton& Leonard (2012) have all espoused on the characteristics of market connectivity enrichment. In other words, their discourse presents a theoretical composition on the construct, which includes market sensitivity, exploring and exploitation of market opportunities, information sharing amongst all stakeholders, value diagnosis, promotional fluidity and feedback. Market sensitivity according to the author implies vigilance on the market place events and factors responsible for charnges I the market trend; opportunity exploration and exploritation is a continuous search for customer needs, product and service desires and marking available through inventive practices. These are attained through shared information amongst all concerned in the target market. In term of promotional flexibility and feedback, it involves deploying appropriate messages that apply convey meanings to the targeted customers and at same time ensuring mechanism for feedbacks on service delivery. A coalition of these multiple strategic actions requires strict coordination for the realization of marketing objective of organizations. Market connectivity enrichment profoundly provides the means for understanding market demands and dynamics that guarantee market service orientation. The implication is that organization with connectivity enrichment orientation vigorously liaises with all component part for sustained service delivery. Interestingly, Baldum (2015) argues that market connectivity enrichment involves actions that transcends firm boundaries to developing bonded relationships and trust with customers, suppliers and communities alike which is essentially premised on integrity, credibility and authenticity. Our study contemplates market connectivity enrichment practices as those, which involve creating strategic linkages, and responsible for understanding the market place and responding accordingly in order to attain marketing objectives quality prompt and timely service delivery for enlarged market share.

### **2.2. Corporate Responsiveness**

Changing market environment has increasingly magnified the burden of competition amongst firms and this has equally drawn attention to strategic approaches that ensure appropriate response to market demands. Indeed, this scenario, which has provoked competitiveness, has generated robustly within strategic management literature the market responsive discourse. Penderson & Huniche (2000) posits that market responsiveness represent firm ability to timely serve their customers in response to changes in the market. Garret, Covin & Slevin (2009) had defined corporate responsiveness as the organizational competency that allows it to react quickly to changing market demand. It is commonly observed that with increase in global market links, firms are fast penetrating new markets with distinct products and services as opposed to the few local or indigenous products. This scenario has

radicalized the rate of competition, which requires rapid adaptive capability in both operations, administration, logistics and innovation amongst others. Corporate responsiveness is a strategic action that takes into cognizance the entire value chain of response to market. Responsiveness in this light, requires a shift from soft and mundane approaches of yesterday that were not far reaching to action that are targeted at prompt, timely and quality service delivery. They are strategic actions that are characteristically at variance with demand of less competitive and monopolistic markets. Mizui (2016) notes that corporate responsiveness prescribes a proactive approach to market impulse as it is the case for firms involved in market pioneering therefore does not condone reactionary approach that undermines prompt response to the rapid changes in the market environment. Corporate responsiveness therefore entails a bundle of actions that reminisce awareness of the trends in the market and commensurately matched to attract the gain thereof.

**2.3. Methodology**

This study is conducted using a cross-sectional survey design that affords data collection across the different surveyed groups. Using a survey instrument marked MCECR data were generated from a sample of Church General Overseers, Senior Pastors and Area Pastors of the 57 Pentecostal faith-based organizations that qualified to be in our sample. They are those with not less 3 branches in Port Harcourt. From the primary population, we had a representative sample of 73 participants. Care was taken to ensure that none of the faith-based organizations have more than 2 respondents since there is a common strategic orientation that guides action in the surveyed churches. The sample was made up of 21 General Overseers, 37 Senior Pastors and 15 Area Pastors. The survey instrument was rightly served on participants and collated within an agreed time.

**2.4. Measures**

*Market Connectivity* was obtained from Lucille & Micah (2013) 19-item scale. This scale has been pretested variously by Obediah (2016). For corporate responsiveness was measured relying on Shaw (2011) 10-item scale, which was adopted and validated in the work of Evans (2012) with a reliable alpha value of 0.88. The scale Likert scale labeled 1, Strong Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree.

**Table1.** Reliability Data

Construct	No of Items	Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Market Sensitivity	3	0.793
Opportunity Exploration and Exploitation	4	0.851
Information Sharing	5	0.771
Promotional fluidity and feedback	5	0.807
Value diagnosis	4	0.795
Corporate responsiveness	6	0.756

**Source:** Survey Data, 2021

**3. RESULTS**

The  $R^2$  value = .622 indicates that a positive and significant relationship exist between market connectivity enrichment and corporate responsiveness. The  $R^2$  value = .386 also show that up to 38.6% of the variability of the regressor (Corporate responsiveness) is explained by the regressor (market connectivity enrichment). Further, the summarized regression co-efficient points at promotional fluidity and feedback and information sharing as two component of market connectivity enrichment that impacts strongly and significantly on corporate responsiveness respectively.

**Table2.** Result of Test of Relationship between Market Connectivity Enrichment and Corporate Responsiveness

R	$R^2$	Adj $R^2$	Std Error of Estimate	f	Sig
0.622	.368	.326	.52568	56.311	0.000

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Source:** SPSS Ver. 20 Window Output

**Table3.** Regression Co-efficient on Market Connectivity Enrichment and Corporate Responsiveness

Model	Unstandadize Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta	t.	Sig
	B	Std Error			
Constant	.692	.064		52.616	.005
Market sensitivity	.541	.055	.333	4.081	.000
Opportunity exploration and exploitation	.356	.013	.404	4.126	.000
Information sharing	.488	.062	.424	6.024	.005
Promotional facility & feedback	.366	.037	.473	9.511	.000
Value diagnosis	.391	.031	.260	0.138	.000

*Dependent Variable: Corporate Responsiveness*

**Source:** SPSS Ver. 20 Window Output

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study in relation to the empirical link between market connectivity enrichment and responsiveness are essentially illuminating and leading in the expansion of the strategic management space. Interestingly, the components of market connectivity enrichment as used in this study have demonstrated capacity to ensure sustained market breakthroughs via planned and targeted market related actions for competitive advantage. The regression results are indicative of empirical relationships, which are also significant. The findings corroborate Swan, (2013) study on market orientation and innovative performance of firms. The result of the study empirically shows the link between market orientation and incremental innovative practices. Nahapiet & Goshal (2012) also showed in their study result that the different component of market connectivity enrichment correlates with marketing performance of organizations. Particularly Von Krough (2010) study examined market connectivity amongst service firm and effective service delivery. What underlined his study is the uniqueness and intangible character of service offer. Primarily market connectivity enrichment behavior create network of stakeholder relationships that enable market information generation and diagnosing market context for exploitation of opportunities thereof. The findings of the study have descriptively emphasized such practices within the Pentecostal faith-based organization. All of the market connectivity practices are fundamental to ensuring prompt timely and quality response, which indicate corporate responsiveness (Raudall, 2016). The marked ability of promotional practices in informing penetrating and securing market is underscored in extant literature (Allen, 2003; Baldum, 2015; Mizrui, 2016). this study result has strengthened these position so far. Promotional fluidity is descriptively and inferentially demonstrated from the findings. The Pentecostal faith-based organizations from the findings have harped on promotional practices as a means of responding to their markets and this is also shown in the rate of networks (branches) that exist amongst the sector participants.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS/PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has examined the empirical link between market connectivity enrichment practices and responsiveness among Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The increased proliferation of Pentecostal faith-based organization has undoubtedly instigated and heightened followership competition. The uniqueness of service notwithstanding, reaching out to target customers has attracted multiple market oriented practices that need to be explored and understand in the light of burgeoning knowledge relating to market responses. From the data generated and analyzed it was clearly established that market connectivity enrichment behavior of the studied Pentecostal faith-based organization correlates with their objective of corporate responsiveness which is aimed at responding promptly and timely to market trends. The multi component of market connectivity enrichment so far examined correlates positively and significantly with corporate responsiveness therefore the study concludes that prompt and timely service delivery of firms in highly competitive sector is predicted by market connectivity enrichment practices. While providing additional supporting evidence for earlier studies, this study has important practical implications. The findings indicate the need for creating strategic market limits to ensure prompt market response amidst heightened competition among firms in same industry. The market ensures a strategic approach to understanding the market milieu in which the sector operates and takes strategic initiatives that explores the customers' expectations and provides

same timely. The today's customer is desirous promote and quality service delivery that guarantees his continued satisfaction and in turn continued patronage. Attracting their confidence is seemingly an imposing task and this is central to competitiveness, therefore market connectivity is a considered attempt at enhancing exploration of markets through deployment of market related promotional practices that attracts and ensure prompt service delivery.

#### **SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

Considering variance in strategic choices of firms that guide their marketing practices, this study can be replicated in the orthodox faith-based organizations who do not largely share common evangelical practices with the Pentecostal faith-based organization. In order to deeper the understanding of marketing connectivity practices, this study can also be carried out in non-faith based firm, which requires renewed marketing orientation to gain competitive advantage.

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