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Leadership Change Management and Firm Innovativeness of Telecommunication Companies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between leadership change management and firm innovativeness of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. A sample of one hundred (100) respondents was drawn from a population of one hundred and thirty four (134) four telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt Nigeria, using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation. The tests were carried out at a 95% confidence interval and a 0.05 level of significance. Empirical findings revealed that leadership change management positively and significantly influences firm innovativeness of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. The result of the findings further revealed that leadership change, change in technology and change in organizational structure gave rise to product innovation, process innovation and market. The study recommends that the management of these telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt should try other leadership styles and adopt the leadership styles that will seriously improve the innovativeness of the company.

Keywords: Leadership Change Management, Firm Innovativeness, Product Innovation, Process Innovation, Market Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Innovation is widely recognized in literature as a critical enabler for firms to create value and sustain improved performance (Drucker, 2013). In order to be successful, telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt must therefore continuously search for development of new ways of conducting work through innovation as a lever to sustainable performance. Innovativeness, in its original sense, is degree to which an individual or other unit adopts a relatively new ideas earlier than the other members of a system or organization (Rogers, 1962) cited in Romer (2013). Initially the concept was used for analyzing innovation at the level of the individual which involves looking at the propensity of an individual to adopt new ideas compared to his/her peers (Jha and Krishnan, 2013). Therefore, organizational innovativeness can be viewed as engagement in innovative behaviours, which includes behaviors related to the Innovation process, that is idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization, with the aim of producing innovation (Ramamoorthy, Flood, Slantery & Sadessail 2005) in the word of (2001), innovation connected to the implementation or adoption of novel ideas can be categorized as either t echnological (change in production, services, production processes) or administration (changes in activities, social processes, structures), and either radical or incremental, depending on the extent of their influence on existing products or processes.

Although creativity is central to the whole innovation process, many authors draw a line between creativity and innovation (Amabile, Cont, Lazenby & Harron, 1996, Anderson et al, 2004, Miron, Erez & Naveh 2004, shalley & Gilson 2004). Innovation can be seen as a successful implementation of creative and something that produces economic value, whereas creativity has to do with ideas production (scott & Bruce 2004). Therefore, it can be argued that every innovation requires creativity, but creativity does not necessarily lead to innovation.

Managing change effectively requires an understanding of the variables at play, and adequate time must be allowed for implementation (Gothstill & Meryl, 2007). Workers are expected to be committed to continuous change and accomplish it without any lessening of day to day performance, meaning employee must perform well and change at the same time (Sturdy & Grey, 2003). Therefore organizations need to monitor and scan their external environments, anticipate, and adapt timely to continual change (Marquardt, 1996). In addition to the inability to recognize change, it is no longer sufficient to adjust one change to compensate another. Organizations will have to handle all the challenges of change simultaneously. These challenges of changes, at the organizational level, have elevated the importance of managing change and in particular, the managing of employees' change experiences (Brown & Harvey, 2006). Kubr (1996) stated that organizational changes can involve; products and services, technologies, systems, relationships, organizational culture, management techniques and style, strategies pursued, competences and capabilities, performances and other features of a business." Therefore, to remain in business and maintain the competitive edge in a changing environment, managing change needs to be a core competency in which managers are skilled. "This is because massive change has an impact on all facets of organizational members as it can create new dimensions of greater uncertainty (Brown & Harvey, 2006).

Although change is good but managing it is another area of concern. Meanwhile, handling change processes adequately demands thorough awareness of the issues under review, and a reasonable time limit must be given for successful application (Gothstill, 2000). Effective change requires the cooperation of both the management and workers. Thus, employees are required under this circumstance to be willing and dedicated to uninterrupted change and achieve it without impinging on expected performance target. In other words ,what this means is that employee must deliver their respective task expectation while embracing the needed change (Sturdy & Grey, 2003), more so management need to monitor and scan their external environments, anticipate, and adapt timely to continual change (Marquardt, 1996). However, the failure to recognize change does not permit or encourage bending of one change agenda to reimburse another. This study therefore examines the relationship between leadership change management and firm innovativeness of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Furthermore**,** this study will also be guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the relationship between leadership change and product innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?
ii. What is the relationship between leadership change and process innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?
iii. What is the relationship between leadership change and market innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt?

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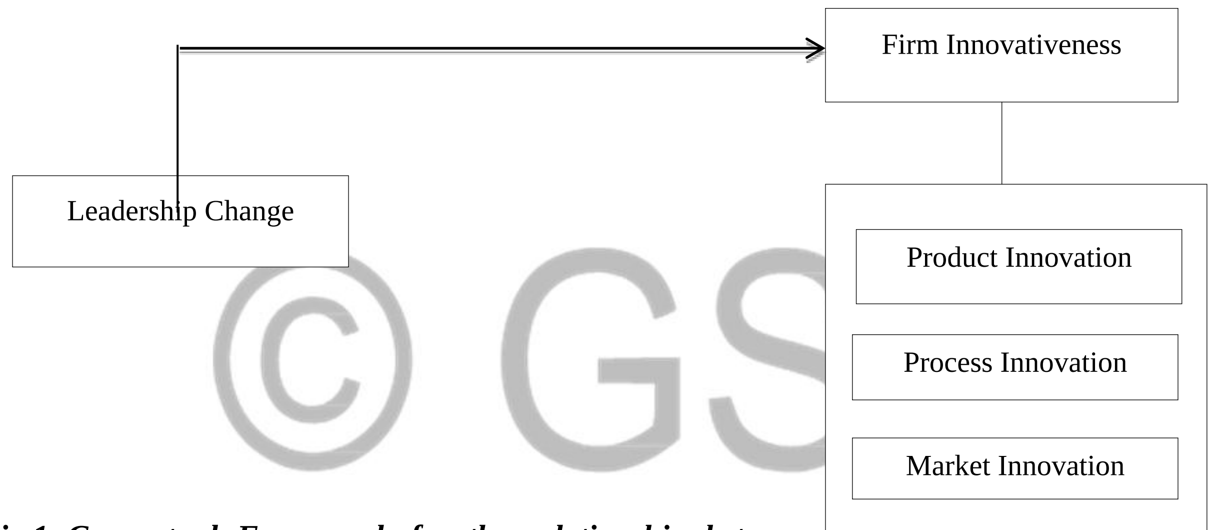

Fig.1 Conceptual Framework for the relationship between leadership change and firm innovativeness

Source: Author's Desk Research, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Resource Based Theory

The resource-based theory was developed as a complement to the industrial organization (IO) view with Gibbert (2006) and Mwachiro (2013) as some of its main proponents. With its focus on the structure conduct-performance paradigm, the IO view puts the determinants of an organization's performance outside the organization, in its industry's structure. Being positioned against this view, the resource-based theory explicitly looks for the internal sources of sustained competitive advantage (SCA) and aims to explain why firms in the same industry might differ in performance. As such, the RBV does not replace the IO view; rather it complements it (Barney, 2002; Peteraf 2003).

The resource-based theory stipulates that in strategic management the fundamental sources and drivers to firms‟ competitive advantage and superior performance are mainly associated with the attributes of their resources and capabilities, which are valuable and costly to imitate (Mullins, 1999). Building on the assumptions that strategic resources are heterogeneously distributed across firms and that these differences are stable overtime, Barney (1992) examines the link between firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. If the theory is used it is expected to enhance competitive advantage through maximum utilization of unique resources and capabilities.

The theory has strength of promoting resources uniqueness in ensuring platform for sustained competition. The critique of the theory is that the RBV lacks substantial managerial implications or operational validity (Priem & Butler, 2001). It seems to tell managers to develop and obtain valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources and develop an appropriate organization, but it is silent on how this should be done (Connor, 2002; Miller, 2003). Gibbert (2006) argues the notion of resource uniqueness – the melding of heterogeneity and immobility –denies the RBV any potential for generalization, where one cannot generalize about uniqueness.

Product Innovation

A product innovation is the introduction of a good or service that is new or significantly improved regarding its characteristics or intended uses; including significant improvements in technical specifications, components and materials, incorporated software, user friendliness or other functional characteristics (OECD Oslo Manual, 2005). Damanpour (1990) defines product innovation as the introduction of a new or significantly improved product or service that advances the range and quality of the product that is offered currently.

Product innovation is considered an obvious means of generating revenue and thus improving performance. Camison and Lopez (2010) state that product innovation not only acts as a means of improving and safeguarding quality but also for cost saving. It is further lauded for retaining and growing the competitive position of a firm, as well as retaining a strong market presence. Products that are constantly improved are particularly important for long term business growth and performance (Bayus, Erickson & Jacobson, 2003). Product innovation is prevalent among new entrants in any industry as it has been used to boost their popularity in the market in a surprising short time (Hult et al., 2004). It is used as a business strategy for any business trying to acquire a larger market share too as product innovations are believed to attract diverse customers with varied needs (Oke et al., 2007). Some enabling factors of product innovation have been identified in literature. Marketing orientation, defined as the firm's culture that creates the necessary behavior for the creation of superior value for buyers and continuous superior firm performance is said to positively affect innovation as it boosts innovation (Cano, Carrillat & Jaramillo, 2004).

Product innovation is the introduction of a good or service that is new or has significantly improved characteristics or intended uses.In SMEs, not only the R&D staff but also the owners may play a major role in acquiring and applying the new knowledge for product innovation (Migdadi, 2009). Product innovation requires appreciation of customer needs, design and production while innovation process is linked to the application of technology to improve efficiency in the development and commercialization of the product, (Alegre et al 2002). Furthermore, theories of organizational innovation argue that information imported from sources outside an organization facilitate the creation of new ideas and enhance product innovation.

Market orientation also provides critical information to firms that cope with stiff international competition. It assures business executives that the strategies they put in place will maintain or even boost their rank among other insurance firms in terms of competition. Organizational culture, defined as beliefs, ideas or values that members of an organization share in common is also seen as an enabler of product innovation. An organization that grows and maintains a culture that sees the benefit of product innovation and encourages its stakeholders, mainly its employees to develop new products is more likely to succeed (Bakar & Ahmad, 2010).

Product innovation is however not always successful, with a main inhibitor to its success being regulation (Lado & Olivares, 2001). Regulations are set by governments to protect policyholders from illegal malpractices against them by insurance companies but on some instances these very regulations limit the range of potential products offered by the firms. Consumer distrust is noted in literature too as another inhibitor to product innovation (Bhalla, 2010). This restricts innovation in that, consumers need a lot of convincing whenever a new product is released to the market.

2.5.2 Process Innovation

A process innovation is the implementation of a new or significantly improved production or delivery method, including significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software OECD (Oslo Manual, 2005). Process innovation is intended to decrease unit costs of production, to increase quality and to improve delivery of products and services (Oke et al., 2007). According to Hippel (2005) process innovation achieves quality function deployment and business processing reengineering. This type of innovation is sometimes considered complex and hard to comprehend but recent studies and exploration have made it easier to understand. When mastery is grown over time on productivity gains, there is a high likelihood that products can be developed that offer the same performance at a lower cost. Such reduction in cost may be passed on to the customer which eventually will increase sales volumes and influence performance positively (Sinkula & Baker, 2005). In the modern world of hyper competition, firms do not only focus on product innovation (Oke et al., 2007). They also explore process innovation to integrate improvements, service delivery as well as reduce cost to consumers (Danneels, 2000).

Process innovation does not take place in a casual and offhand manner, but instead, includes the pressure of day to day business, vision creation, understanding the existing process and designing a new process. Equally, process innovation is a new approach of improving the organization's performance through incremental improvements rather than radical changes (Hippel, 2005). In most cases, the process innovation perspective embraces the top-down approach as well as the employee-based models. Top-down models have always been noted to be the mainstay of breakthrough innovation. Similarly, employee participation secures the employee commitment thereby, improving their performance (Rao, 2008). At the same time, it is strategically important to point out that process innovation is an enabler of product innovation, that is, for secondary product innovation to be achieved, process innovation plays a very important role. Further according to Lager (2010), process innovation must occur within strategic context.

The process innovation vision must be closely tied to the organizational goals and objectives. A tight connection between the organizational strategy and the process vision makes process innovation a primary vehicle for strategy implementation. Strategy implementation becomes an important source of competitive differentiation, hence, making organizations that are successful at process innovation successful in the market (Danneels, 2000).

Viewing the organization from a resource-based perspective, the organization's capability is seen as critically achieving the competitive strategy. Different literature further mentions process innovation as having a direct impact on three different dimensions of performance. These dimensions include financial performance, market performance and customer performance (Agarwal et al., 2003; Barney & Clark, 2007) thereby upholding it as a significant source of competitive advantage which results to improvement in performance (Hippel, 2005).

Market Innovation

Market innovation is defined in the OECD (Oslo Manual, 2005) as the implementation of a new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing. Market innovations target at addressing customer needs better, opening up new markets, or newly positioning a firm's product on the market with the intention of increasing firm's sales (Gunday et al., 2011). Market innovations are strongly related to pricing strategies, product package design properties, product placement and promotion activities along the lines of four P"s of marketing (Kotler, 1991).Information technology is noted in literature as a key facilitator to the success of market innovation (Govindarajan & Ramamurti, 2011). In the recent years, new ways of gathering consumer information through market innovation have enabled firms to reach customers more effectively than before. The use of technology has led to the development of new ways to market, key among them the use of the internet in marketing. This has seen the rise of online shops, online advertisements and online arrangements for both product and service delivery (Rodriguez-Cano et al., 2004). Technology has led to a wider reach of customers, ensuring more sales while at the same time reducing the cost of doing business.

According to Johne (1999), market innovation deals with the market mix and market selection in order to meet a customer's buying preference. Continual market innovation needs to be done by a firm because state-of-the-art marketing tools, particularly through the internet, make it possible for firms to reach potential customers across the globe quickly. Rodriguez-Cano et al. (2004) assert that market innovation plays a crucial role in fulfilling market needs and responding to market opportunities. In this respect, any market innovation has to be directed at meeting customers' demand andsatisfaction (Rosli & Sidek, 2013).

Despite its obvious importance to business, market innovation has received inadequate attention in literature. Few articles have been written concerning market innovation yet quite a number have been written on the attributes of market innovation, including pricing strategies, product package design properties, product placement and promotional activities (Cooper & Edgett, 2009). Superior pricing strategies and promotional activities are noted in literature as key factors that drive effective market dynamics, whereas product package design properties and product placement are regarded in literature as softer but important aspects to marketing. These attributes all affect firm performance positively (Rosli & Sidek 2013; Lin et al., 2008). Intense market innovation ensures survival of businesses in an environment of fast changing market and technological advances. Management of firms therefore needs to invest in market innovation to maintain a competitive advantage against other firms (Johne, 1999). Further, an effective market innovation not only enables a firm secure new business, but also safeguards their already existing business (Lado & Olivares, 2001).

Although there are efforts by firms to put marketing innovation to proper use, there are obstacles that prevent the proper success of the strategy. One of them is lack of financial and personnel resources, as executing market innovation requires intense resources (Lin et al., 2008). Further a lack of proper knowledge and experience with market innovation especially among the newer firms in an industry as well as uncertainty about their commitment to the entire process of market innovation has led to undesired results in the enactment of this strategy (Cooper & Edgett, 2009).

Relationship between Leadership Change Management and Firm Innovativeness

Stassen (2008) presented a model to determine the effect of change management on employee performance. He took a random sample of 20 firms using regression analysis and found that when there are changes within the organization, people tend to blame organization or the top management as normally top management are the one who implement the force of changes such as stiffer competition, shifts in the new market place or new technology thus affecting employee performance.

Change in the workplace is an issue that every leader, manager, and employee has to deal with at some point in his or her career. That is why it is important to understand the impacts of change. Workers are expected to be committed to continuous change, (Bianco & John Schermerhorn, 2006) and accomplish it without any lessening of day-to-day performance, meaning employee must perform well and change at the sometime. Continuously working hard and trying to change in order to meet high expectations will bring workers stress and exhaustion. Even those who think that they are motivated enough to carry the job, can be overwhelmed and loose interest in need of pause and refreshment. They may need to take a break before being able to face uncertain future again (Bianco & Schermerhorn, 2006).

According to a meta-analysis carried out by Rouse (2010) on the impact of leadership change on employee performance, he argued that there is positive relationship between leader communication and employee performance. The study showed that when there is ineffective communication and relationship among employees and supervisors, it will generate a climate that reduces personal commitment impeding employee performance and hence organizational change and growth (Schuttler, 2010). When there is poor communication during the changes, the employees will become demoralized and less productive which this will give the employers the opportunity to increase punitive consequences for non-performance (Kirkpatrick, 1985). The causal relationship between leadership change and employee performance and found that the employees performance have been affected by the leadership change, this was examined by Walumbwa *et al.* (2008). The researchers found out that leaders who manage well risks would have direct effect of improvement of the employee's performance because the leader can manage well and lead his employees to overcome the problem effectively and efficiently.

The relationship between leadership change and employee performance state that employees with high quality relationship with their leader will practice a better job performance and satisfaction than those with low quality relationship (Davis & Holland2002). Hence, the supervisor support in the workplace is importance for the supervisor-employee relationship. It means that, if it has a high quality relationship, the employees will contribute to organizational effectiveness through the effect of those high-quality relationships.

From the foregoing point of view, we hereby hypothesized thus:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between leadership change and product innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between leadership change and process innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between leadership change and market innovation of telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through self- administered questionnaire. A sample of one hundred (100) respondents was drawn from a population of one hundred and thirty four (134) four telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt Nigeria, using the Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

In testing hypotheses one to nine, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicate levels of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient r value, we reject our alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study.

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Table 1: Correlations Matrix for Change in Leadership and Firm Innovation

			Change in Leadership	Product Innovation	Process Innovation	Market Innovation
Spearman's rho	Change in Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.840**	.672**	.570**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	89	89	89	89
	Product Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.840**	1.000	.825**	.802**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	89	89	89	89
	Process Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.672**	.825**	1.000	.916**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	89	89	89	89
	Market Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	.570**	.802**	.916**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	89	89	89	89

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

Source: Research Data 2019 and SPSS output version 23.0

Table 1 illustrates the test for the first two previously postulated bivariate hypothetical statements. The results show that for

Ho$_1$: *There is no significant relationship between change in leadership and product innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.*

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between change in leadership and product innovation. The *rho* value 0.840 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between change in leadership and product innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_2$: *There is no significant relationship between change in leadership and process innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.*

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between change in leadership and process innovation. The *rho* value 0.672 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between change in leadership and process innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

Ho$_3$: *There is no significant relationship between change in leadership and market innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.*

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between change in leadership and market innovation. The *rho* value 0.570 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p 0.000<0.05. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus,there is a significant relationship between change in leadership and market innovation in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first, second and third hypotheses sought to examine the relationship change in leadership and firm innovativeness. Hence it was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between change in leadership and firm innovativeness. These hypotheses were tested using the

Spearman rank order correlation technique. Data analysis revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between change in leadership and the measures of firm innovativeness – product innovation, process innovation and market innovation. This finding is in line with earlier findings of Davis and Holland (2002) who stated that the relationship between leadership change and employee performance state that employees with high quality relationship with their leader will practice a better job performance and satisfaction than those with low quality relationship. Also, the findings of this work is in agreement with the findings of Walumbwa et al. (2008) who posited that the causal relationship between leadership change and employee performance and found that the employees' performance have been affected by the leadership change, this was examined by. The researchers found out that leaders who manage well risks would have direct effect of improvement of the employee's performance because the leader can manage well and lead his employees to overcome the problem effectively and efficiently

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The idea which necessitated this study was to examine the relationship between leadership change and firm innovativeness in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. From the data generated and analysed, it was empirically discovered that a strong positive and significant relationship between organizational change and firm innovativeness in telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Based on results and the findings of the present study, our study revealed that change in leadership leads toan increases in firm innovativeness in the telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt. Change in technology and change in organizational structure also leads to an increase in firm innovativeness by employee.

The study recommends that the management of these telecommunication companies in Port Harcourt should try other leadership styles and adopt the leadership styles that will seriously improve the innovativeness of the company.

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