# Customer Integration and Organizational Success of Multinational Firms in Rivers State

**Hamilton-Ibama, Edith-Onajite Lolia (PhD)**
Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

**Dr. Chituru Gibson Ogonu**
Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers, State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

***ABSTRACT***
*This study examined the relationship between customer integration and organizational success of multinational firms in Rivers State. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. A sample of one hundred and eight (108) respondents was drawn from a population of 250 managers of 10 multinational companies in Rivers State, using the The Krejcie and Morgan table. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of statistical packages for social sciences version 23.0. The study findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between customer integration and organizational success of multinational firms in Rivers State. The study recommends that the ultimate success of firms will depend on management's ability to integrate the company's intricate network of business relationships, allowing improved decision making and consequently, reducing cost and customer response time.*

***Keywords:*** *Customer Integration, Organizational Success, Customer Satisfaction, Competitive Advantage*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many organizations today are forced to increase their global market share in order to survive and sustain growth objectives. Long term competitiveness therefore depends on how well the company meets customer preferences in terms of service, cost, quality and flexibility by designing the supply chain which will be more effective and efficient than the competitors. Optimization of this equilibrium is a constant challenge for the companies which are part of the supply chain differentials and create value (Fung, 2004).

In many services, the integration of the customer is an inherent part of innovation and delivery processes. In recent years, customers have been increasingly involved in these activities, enabled by modern ICT technologies and trends, such as the ubiquitous availability of the internet. The customer is consequently becoming an active partner in the creation of value (Srivastava, Tasadduq & Fahey, 1999; Xie, Bagozzi & Troye, 2008). Case studies in open innovation, crowd sourcing, and mass customisation show the impact that customers can have on companies (Corvello & Iazzolino, 2013). Businesses, such as Dell, have built significant parts of their business model on the involvement of customers, who specify the design and configuration of the products delivered. These approaches have become known as customer integration and are defined as the active integration of the customer in the provision of goods and services and their upstream and downstream processes (Büttgen, 2009). In this role, the customer takes over tasks, which are usually performed by employees of the company. Through his actions, the customer thus influences the performance of the company.

Customer integration is inherently suitable for services, because many services could not be provided without the customer's contribution and active participation in the first place (Chervonnaya, 2003) The overall economic importance of customer integration is further increased by more and more traditionally manufacturing and goods oriented companies developing their business models and value propositions to include services (Dohmen, Kryvinska & Strauss, 2012). Customer integration approaches comprise one or more typical functions of the customer. These are known as customer roles. However, there is still a lack of a critical assessment of the use of individual customer roles by industry. It is well-recognised that customer integration has positive effects on companies (Büttgen, 2009). Other authors also report negative effects (Enkel, Kausch & Gassmann, 2005). When deciding whether to use customer integration and how to implement the approach, management has to consider the potential effects of the individual customer roles on the company's processes. This includes the consideration of both positive and negative consequences of customer integration (Büttgen, 2009).

The positive effects of customer integration mainly impact the customer relationship and the efficiency and effectiveness of the business processes. Literature highlights three main factors, which are positively affected by the integration of customers: Decreased costs (Büttgen, 2009; Xue and Harker 2002), increased customer satisfaction (Auh *et al*. 2007), and increased market shares (Herstatt and von Hippel, 1992). While the positive factors are often discussed in the literature, there is less research on potentially negative effects. However, as Enkel *et al.* (2005) stated, it is necessary for a company to identify the risks, which are introduced by customer integration to manage and minimise them as far as possible. Literature have identified three main problems that can arise in customer integration: Lack of motivation of the customer (Kurzmann and Reinecke, 2009), coordination overhead (Büttgen, 2009), and the loss of know-how (Enkel *et al*. 2005)

This study therefore examines the relationship between customer integration and organizational success of multinational firms in Rivers State. In view of this the following research questions were addressed:

- ✓ What is the relationship between customer integration and customer satisfaction of multinational firms in Rivers State?
- ✓ What is the relationship between customer integration and competitive advantage of multinational firms in Rivers State?

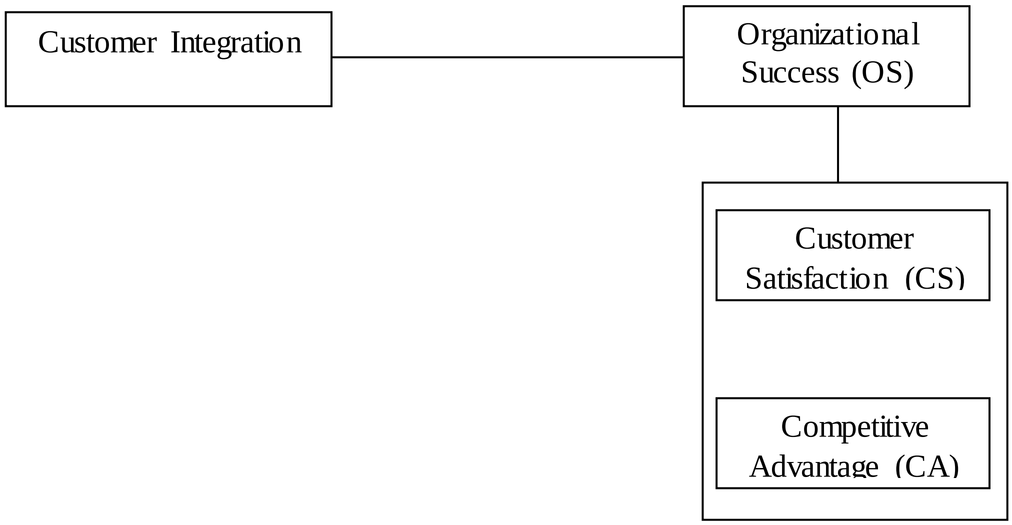



***Fig.1 Conceptual Framework for the relationship between Customer Integration and Organizational Success***

***Source: Desk Research, 2020***

## 2. LITERATURE

### Customer Integration

Lau *et al.* (2010) stated that the only individual who can make a decision and have the ability to evaluate a product is the customer, because the customer has potential purchasing power, and as such is a decision maker from a marketing point of view. Moreover, information sharing on the basis of interactions between the customers and the organization enhances customer integration. Additionally, the relationships between customers and an organization enable the organization to raise its level of competence. Another definition of customer integration according to Kim (2009) is the organizational practices of identifying, explaining, and using customers to produce specific products according to their needs and in doing so maximize their expectations and satisfaction. Lau *et al.* (2010) shed light on information sharing through customer integration between customers and the organization itself. The feedback obtained by organizations from their customers provides them with all the information associated with operations such as inventory. A solid relationship with customers will be useful to enhance supply chain programs.

Lotfi *et al.* (2013) highlighted that customer integration involved customers 'opinions being included in the production process, by making the relationship between the customer and the manufacturer much easier. Knowing clearly the organization's goals, intentions, and strategy can reduce uncertainty in the minds of customers. Nevertheless, the advantage of clarity might be outweighed by the loss of closeness and flexibility in highly formalized structure types. If design-integrative efforts are not up to date, based on customer requirements and opportunities, they are likely to create solutions that may be internally efficient yet externally unproductive. Ataseven and Nair (2017) have found that customer integration has a positive relation with financial performance. Noticeably, specific needs arising from well-functioning contacts and strategic alliances with customers may be of limited value if a business is not capable of adjusting products and process specifications to meet those needs.

**Concept of Organization Success**

Success in today's highly competitive marketplace will impose new and different demands on organizations. In many industries, a variety of highly similar products and services proliferate to the point where it is not uncommon for customers to have difficulty differentiating one from another. The road to corporate success no longer can be traversed merely with good products and clever marketing.

Why some organisations are continuously successful, whereas others that started with the same promising appearance will get into trouble or even fail completely. There are no unitary definitions for concepts like "success" and "successful organisation" in the scientific literature (Likierman, 2006) and measuring organisation´s successfulness has been a long-term challenge for both managers and researchers. There are many aspects to clarify and agree in defining the success because it is not one-dimensional construct. For example, researchers have found it difficult to separate the concept of success from performance mainly because success can be defined in terms of certain elements of performance (Simpson, Padmore & Newman, 2012). Brush and Vanderwerf (1992) refer to success as a specific aspect of performance, and Brooksbank *et al*. (2003) equate success with high performance.

Jennings and Beaver (1997) state that "success can no longer be regarded as synonymous with optimal performance" and argue that there must be "something more" to define organisational success. From this perspective, an organisation may be successful while failing to achieve the optimal level of performance in terms of growth and business development. At the same time, one of the leading management schools understands organisational success as the result of interpreting key figures (Likierman, 2006), but the problem lies in the fact that the scientific literature lacks defined key figures for the success measurement. In most literature, the organisational success is formed by measuring different financial figures from the past (Likierman, 2006; Flamholtz and Aksehirli, 2000; Maltz, Shenhar and Reilly, 2003), mostly comparing organisation´s return on assets (Likierman, 2006), profit or turnover results (Maltz, Shenhar and Reilly, 2003; Saparnis, Bersenaite and Saparniene, 2009) with competitors, ideals or the objectives set. Consequently, the attainment of these objectives becomes one of the principal criteria for success, as defined by the manager (Jennings & Beaver, 1997). Additionally, when setting a goal solely on profit and using only this for success measuring, we will guarantee the surveillance of only one party's interest (the owners), and this is not acceptable (Škerlavaj, Indihar, Škrinjar & Dimovski, 2007). In published scientific articles, it can be seen that in 1987-1993 in measuring the success of the organisation, mostly only one meter was used. Most used meters for success measurements were either organisation´s effectiveness, growth or profit figures - all three of those being the financial meters (Maltz, Shenhar & Reilly, 2003). When only financial figures are used for success measurement, it will only reflect organisations´ past, and this is an important shortcoming of that method (Maltz, Shenhar & Reilly, 2003).

Consequently, it is crucial that success measures provide organisations with tools to build their future. That entails measures that are indicative of investing in and building long-term resources, facilities, and infrastructure, as needed to adapt to the fast pace of today's changing environments (Maltz, Shenhar & Reilly, 2003). In the last couple of decades, methods for measuring the organisation´s success have made a new turn because the need for measuring the organisation's success (or the lack of it) in long term has increased (Gorenak & Košir, 2012). When evaluating the success in addition to the profit margins and other financial figures, we have to take into account the opinions and satisfaction of employees (Saparnis, Bersenaite and Saparniene, 2009; Škerlavaj, Indihar, Škrinjar and Dimovski, 2007), partners and customers (Likierman, 2006; Saparnis, Bersenaite & Saparniene, 2009). Already exists a significant amount of organisations whose goals in future are not only financial but additionally, for example, stakeholders' satisfaction indicator is used when measuring organisation´s success (Likierman, 2006). Self-fulfilment, job satisfaction and enjoyment at work for both owner and employees are important to organisation's success. In a quickly changing economic environment, it is important for the organisations to be able to think differently (Birkinshaw, 2007), to react to alterations and carry out changes (Likierman, 2006; Saparnis, Bersenaite and Saparniene, 2009) and according to this would make themselves more competitive (Saparnis, Bersenaite and Saparniene, 2009), in order to survive the tough competition and to be successful in long term. Features of organisation´s competitiveness are organisation's success, effectiveness and sustainability of development that manifest themselves in comparison with other organisations (being more economical, attractive, cunning or rapid development). When measuring organisation's success, it is important that the indicators for success should be simple, dynamic and flexible in time, express improvement and are connected with organisation's strategy, goals and purposes (Maltz, Shenhar & Reilly, 2003).

commonly believed that an organization is successful when it can achieve certain outcomes that allow it to be profitable and competitive in its own industry or marketplace. The exact nature of these outcomes depends on the organization itself, but can include such things as the realization of certain sales,

revenues, or market share levels, the attainment of certain production figures, the maintenance of certain quality standards or even the occurrence of certain safety records. Each of these outcomes is a global or composite index of how a company is doing as a whole.

It is commonly believed that an organization is successful when it can achieve certain outcomes that allow it to be profitable and competitive in its

own industry or marketplace. The exact nature of these outcomes depends on the organization itself, but can include such things as the realization of certain sales, revenues, or market share levels, the attainment of certain production figures, the maintenance of certain quality standards or even the occurrence of certain safety records. Each of these outcomes is a global or composite index of how a company is doing as a whole. Organizations are accustomed to examining their own global outcomes as a routine part of tracking corporate well being and success. Obviously, global outcomes are not the result of one or two people, or even a single department.

It is commonly believed that an organization is successful when it can achieve certain outcomes that allow it to be profitable and competitive in its own industry or marketplace. The exact nature of these outcomes depends on the organization itself, but can include such things as the realization of certain sales, revenues, or market share levels, the attainment of certain production figures, the maintenance of certain quality standards or even the occurrence of certain safety records. Each of these outcomes is a global or composite index of how a company is doing as a whole. Organizations are accustomed to examining their own global outcomes as a routine part of tracking corporate well being and success. Obviously, global outcomes are not the result of one or two people, or even a single department.

It is commonly believed that an organization is successful when it can achieve certain outcomes that allow it to be profitable and competitive in its own industry or marketplace. The exact nature of these outcomes depends on the organization itself, but can include such things as the realization of certain sales, revenues, or market share levels, the attainment of certain production figures, the maintenance of certain quality standards or even the occurrence of certain safety records. Each of these outcomes is a global or composite index of how a company is doing as a whole. Organizations are accustomed to examining their own global outcomes as a routine part of tracking corporate well being and success. Obviously, global outcomes are not the result of one or two people, or even a single department.

With the increased competition that exists in almost every industry these days, it is no longer possible for organizations to be one-dimensional, or to depend too much upon past success factors, like reputation, innovative products, low prices, clever marketing, or even an effective sales force. Today, all elements of an organization must pull together in

With the increased competition that exists in almost every industry these days, it is no longer possible for organizations to be one-dimensional, or to depend too much upon past success factors, like reputation, innovative products, low prices, clever marketing, or even an effective sales force. Today, all elements of an organization must pull together in

With the increased competition that exists in almost every industry these days, it is no longer possible for organizations to be one-dimensional, or to depend too much upon past success factors, like reputation, innovative products, low prices, clever marketing, or even an effective sales force.oday, all elements of an organization must pull together in

**Measures of Organizational Success**

Two (2) elements of organizational success were adopted as measuring tools to show how organizational success can be achieved - customer satisfaction and competitive advantage.

**Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a measure of a firm’s customer base in terms of size, quality and loyalty (Eckert, 2007). Satisfaction according to Eckert (2007), refers to the quality of the products, services, price performance ratios as well as when a company meets and exceeds the requirements of the customer. Organizations may identify customer satisfaction in terms of on time delivery as well as customer specification needs. Variables such as customer needs, having the products immediately and on hand to satisfy the customers' needs, vendor partnerships, that is; sharing of information regarding sales, sales forecast as well as amount of inventory and data integrity which assist in overall inventory management (Lee & Whang, 2001). Satisfaction is the consumer's fulfilment response. It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the products of service itself, provided or is providing a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under or over-fulfilment. Attaining a high level of customer satisfaction usually requires more than providing a high-quality product. Hendricks (1997) suggests that meeting a customer's pre-purchase expectations is an important aspect of customer satisfaction that has been described in the marketing and service operations management literature.

It has been proven by authors that an organization that consistently satisfies its customers, enjoy higher retention levels and greater profitability due to increase customer loyalty (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). For this reason every company works hard daily to win the hearts of customers by satisfying them in order that they become loyal customers to their brands in order to increase sales and profit. When customers have good perception about a brand, they will always choose to go for the brand, because consumers form their preferences relative to perceptions and attitudes about the brands competing in their minds (Larreche, 1998). Thus customers will always prefer a product or service that gives them maximum satisfaction (Hague & Islam, 20l3). Customer satisfaction is the main concern of business sectors of today.

**Competitive Advantage**

Competitiveness or else defined as a combination of various factors that results in the so-called competitive advantage becomes crucial when it comes to defining excellence, which is the main differentiating factor between business entities.

Real competitive advantage implies companies are able to satisfy customer needs more effectively than their competitors. It is achieved if and when real value is added for customers. A business must add value if it is to be successful. According to Thompson (1997) the important elements in adding value are understanding and being close to customers in particular understanding their perception of value, a commitment to quality, a high level of all-round service, and speedy reaction to competitive opportunities and threats. Competitive advantage is the leverage that a business has over its competitors. This can be gained by offering clients better and greater value, advertising products or services with lower prices or higher quality interests' consumers. Target markets recognize these unique products or services. This is the reason behind brand loyalty, or why customers prefer one particular product or service over another. In business, a competitive advantage is the attribute that allows an organization to outperform its competitors. A competitive advantage may include access to natural resources, such as high-grade ores or a low-cost power source, highly skilled labor, geographic location, high entry barriers, and access to new technology.

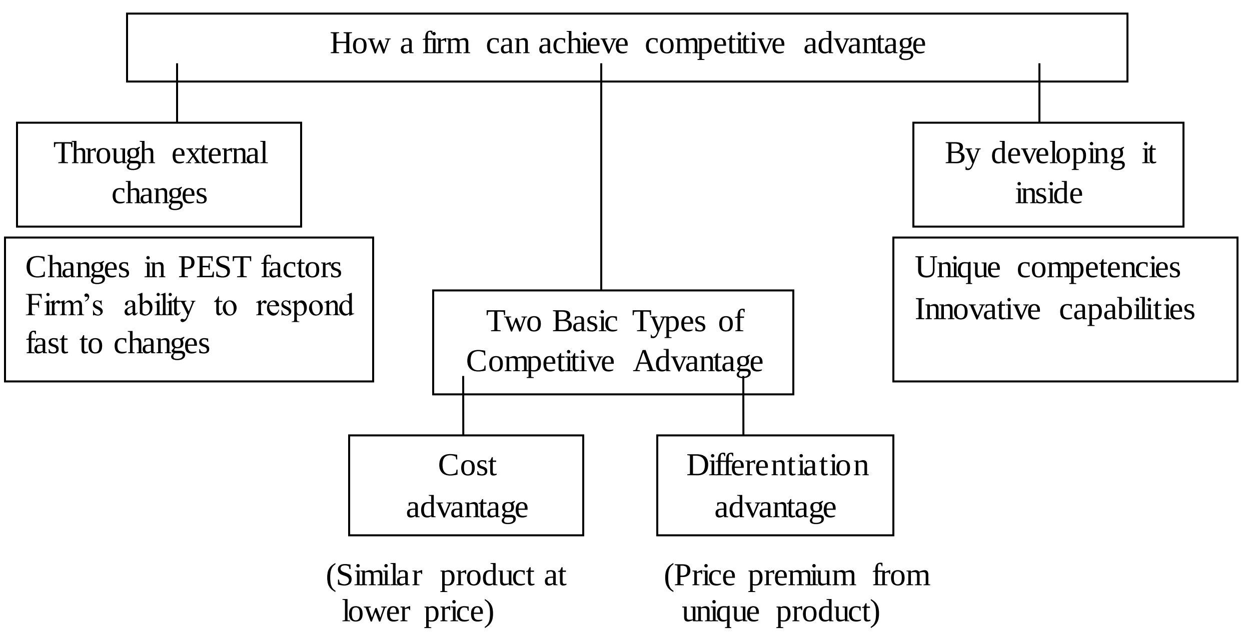
The term competitive advantage refers to the ability gained through attributes and resources to perform at a higher level than others in the same industry or market (Chacarbaghi, 1999). The study of this advantage has attracted profound research interest due to contemporary issues regarding superior performance levels of firms in today's competitive market. A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential player (Clulow, Gerstman & Barry, 2003). Value proposition is important when understanding competitive advantage. If the value proposition is effective that is, that the value proposition offers clients better and greater value, it can produce a competitive advantage in either the product or service. The value proposition can increase customer expectations and choices. Competitive advantage is based on lower production costs and/or quality of market factor differentiation between one country or industry and another in like products. Some sources of competitive advantage are: lower costs of production, quality or market factor differentiations and supplementary supply patterns.

Organizations which understand their customers can create competitive advantage and so benefit from higher prices and loyalty of customers. Higher capacity utilization can then help to reduce costs. While it is important to use all resources efficiently and properly; it is also critical to ensure that the potential value of the outputs is maximized by ensuring they fully meet the needs of the customers for whom they are intended. An organization achieves this when it sees its customers´ objectives as its own objectives and enables its customers to easily add more value or, in the case of final consumers, feel they are gaining true value for money. Essentially a competitive advantage answers the question, "Why should the customer purchase from this operation rather than the competition?" For some organisations, particularly those in markets where the products or services are less differentiated, answering this question can be difficult. A key point to understand is that an organisation that has customers has customers for a reason. Successfully growing a business is often dependent upon a strong competitive edge that gradually builds a core of loyal customers, which can be expanded over time.

However, a competitive advantage is often a single key element that gives an edge to a business beyond what the competition has or does. Mastery of that single key element often provides marketers with a distinct niche in the marketplace and may lead to the creation of a competitive advantage that serves to establish or preserve success. To be successful in this environment, a manager needs to identify those activities at which the management and the venture excel, not just activities in which they perform equally well with the competition.

Porter has identified two basic types of competitive advantage: cost and differentiation advantage. A company that is able to achieve superiority in cost or differentiation is able to offer consumers the products at lower costs or with higher degree of differentiation and most importantly, is able to compete with its rivals (Barney, 1995).

The diagram illustrates the basic competitive advantage model.



To be successful, the organization needs to be able to articulate the benefit they provide to their target market that's better than the competition. That's their competitive advantage.

**Customer Integration and Organizational Success**

Research done on Supply chain practices and their impact on customer satisfaction in pharmaceutical industry in developing countries it was observed that SC practices comprise of three pillars namely collaboration and information sharing, logistics design and IT infrastructure, and organizational culture (OC); all these impact significantly on customer satisfaction (Haque & Islam, 2013). Supply chain partners join hands together in long-term objectives and combine resources (assets, knowledge and capabilities) to deliver competitive advantage and superior performance {Cadden *et al*., 2012).

Luque, Lopez and Dey (2012) worked on supply chain integration framework using literature review and declared that information integration, coordination and resource sharing and organizational relationship linkage are three main pillars for SCI. It is not only a process or technique but it need to be inculcated in organizational culture. So, organizations need to nurture healthy culture of internal and external collaboration with supply chain partners for better performance of organization in terms of operations and business growth. Leuschner, Rogers and Charvet (2013) stated that there is positive relationship between CI and firm performance. Lee (2000) noted that supply chain integration is the secret of success in today world of intense competition.

Kaynak and Hartley (2008) study on Quality management as a part of supply chain management suggest that Supplier Quality and customer focus are the two key areas of Quality management practices within the domain of SCM. Results show that better quality management practices internally and externally within supply chain results in increased quality, financial, market and inventory management performance of the firm. Kannana and Tan (2005) worked on three areas for increasing operational performance of company; just in time, Quality management and SCM. Results showed that commitment to quality and consideration of supply chain integration results in higher operational excellence,

Yang (2004) developed a conceptual frame work to investigate the antecedents of supply chain agility on manufacturer's performance. Technical factors (IT competencies) and coordination resource sharing (Information sharing, work collaboration, trust etc) are antecedents of SC agility which lead to cost efficiency that mediates the relationship with increased performance. Mei and Zhang (2011) researched on the impact of supply chain collaboration on firm performance and found a relationship between SC collaboration and firm performance. Research on the impact of SCM practices on firm performance and organization's competitive advantage was analyzed and the research revealed significant positive impact on not only firm performance but also on gaining competitive advantage among the firms because competition in this era is not only among firms but among different supply chains (Li, Nathan, Nathan, & Rao, 2006). From the foregoing point discussion, the study thus hypothesized that:

**$H_{01}$:** There is no significant relationship between customer integration and customer satisfaction in multinational firms in Rivers State.

**$H_{02}$**: There is no significant between customer integration and competitive advantage in multinational firms in Rivers State.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey in its investigation of the variables. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. A sample of one hundred and eight (108) respondents was drawn from a population of 250 managers of 10 multinational companies in Rivers State, using the The Krejcie and Morgan table. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation with the aid of statistical packages for social sciences version 23.0.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

**Correlations Matrix between Customer Integration and Organizational Success**

| | | | Customer Integration | Customer Satisfaction | Competitive Advantage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spearman's rho | Customer Integration | Correlation Coefficient | 1.000 | .769 | .787 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | . | .065 | .344 |
| | | N | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| | Customer Satisfaction | Correlation Coefficient | .769 | 1.000 | .663** |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .065 | . | .000 |
| | | N | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| | Competitive Advantage | Correlation Coefficient | .787 | .663** | 1.000 |
| | | Sig. (2-tailed) | .344 | .000 | . |
| | | N | 120 | 120 | 120 |

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

***Source: Research Data 2020 and SPSS output version 23.0***

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

$H_{01}$: There is no significant relationship between customer integration and customer satisfaction in multinational firms in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between customer integration and customer satisfaction. The *rho* value 0.769 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p $0.000<0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation indicating a strong relationship. Thus, there is a significant relationship between customer integration and customer satisfaction in multinational firms in Rivers State.

$H_{02}$: There is no significant relationship between customer integration and competitive advantage in multinational firms in Rivers State.

The correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a significant and positive relationship between customer integration and competitive advantage. The *rho* value 0.787 indicates this relationship and it is significant at p $0.000<0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a very high correlation indicating a very strong relationship. Thus, there is a significant relationship between customer integration and competitive advantage in multinational firms in Rivers State.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study examined the relationship between customer integration and organizational success in multinational firms in Rivers State. It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between customer integration and organizational success (customer satisfaction and competitive advantage). These hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order correlation technique. The analysis revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between customer integration and the two measures of organisational success (customer satisfaction and competitive advantage).

Luque, Lopez and Dey (2012) worked on supply chain integration framework using literature review and declared that information integration, coordination and resource sharing and organizational relationship linkage are three main pillars for SCI. It is not only a process or technique but it need to be inculcated in organizational culture. Organizations need to nurture healthy culture of internal and external collaboration with supply chain partners for better performance of organization in terms of operations and business growth. Leuschner, Rogers and Charvet (2013) stated that there is positive relationship between SCI and firm performance and it encompasses information integration, operational integration and Relational integration. Lee (2000) noted supply chain integration is the secret of success in today world of intense competition.

The study finding reinforces previous studies by Kaynak and Hartley (2008). Kaynak and Hartley (2008) study on quality management as a part of supply chain management suggest that supplier quality and customer focus are the two key areas of quality management practices within the domain of SCM. Result shows that better quality management practices internally and externally results in increased quality, financial, market and inventory management performance of the firm. Kannana and Tan (2005) worked on three areas for increasing operational performance of company; just in time, Quality management and SCM. Results showed that commitment to quality and consideration of customer integration results in higher operational excellence.

Yang (2004) developed a conceptual frame work to investigate the antecedents of supply chain agility on manufacturer's performance. Technical factors (IT competencies) and coordination resource sharing (Information sharing, work collaboration, trust etc) are antecedents of SC agility which lead to cost efficiency that mediates the relationship with increased performance. Mei and Zhang (2011) carried out research on the impact of supply chain collaboration on firm performance and discovered moderating role of firm size on the relationship b/w SC collaboration and firm performance.

Research on the impact of SCM practices on firm performance and organization's competitive advantage was analyzed and the study revealed significant positive impact on not only firm performance but also on gaining competitive advantage among the firms because competition in this era is not only among firms but among different supply chains (Li, Nathan, Nathan, & Rao, 2006).

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study examined the relationship between customer integration and organizational success in multinational firms in Rivers State using customer satisfaction and competitive advantage as measures of organisational success. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between both variables. Therefore, the study concludes that customer integration significantly predicts organizational success of multinational firms in Rivers State.

The study recommends that management of the organization should note that the ultimate success of firms will depend on management's ability to integrate the company's intricate network of business relationships, allowing improved decision making and consequently, reducing cost and customer response time.

## REFERENCES

Auh, S., Bell, S. J., McLeod, C. S., Shih, E. (2007). Co-production and customer loyalty in financial services. Journal of Retailing, 83(3), 359-370

Brooksbank, R., Kirby, D., Tompson, G. & Taylor, D. (2003). Marketing as a determinant of longrun competitive success in medium-sized UK manufacturing firms. *Small Business Economics*, 20(3), 259-272.

Ataseven C, Nair A (2017) Assessment of supply chain integration and performance relationships: a meta-analytic investigation of the literature. Int J Prod Econ 185:252–265

Brush, C.G. & Vanderwerf, P.A. (1992). A comparison of methods and sources for obtaining estimates of new venture performance. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 7(2), 157-170.

Büttgen, M. (2009). *Erscheinungsformen der Kundenintegration und Ansatze eines Integrationsmanagements.* In: Stauss, B. (Ed.), Aktuelle Forschungsfragen im Dienstleis-tungsmarketing. Gabler, Wiesbaden. pp. 105-132.

Chervonnaya, O. (2003)"Customer Role and Skill Trajectories in Services," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, ( **14**:3), pp. 347- 363.

Dohmen, P., Kryvinska, N. & Strauss, C. (2012). *"S-D Logic" Business model - Backward and contemporary.* In: Snene, M. (Ed.), Exploring services science. Springer, Berlin. pp. 140-154.

Enkel, E., Kausch, C. & Gassmann, O. (2005). Managing the risk of customer integration. *European Management Journal*, 23(2), 203-213.

Flamholtz, E.G. & Aksehirli, Z. (2000). Organizational success and failure: An empirical test of a holistic model. *European Management Journal*, 18(5), 488-498.

Fung, RYK. , Chong, SPY. And Wang, Y. (2004), A Framework of Product Styling Platform Approach: styling as intangible modules. Concurr. Eng., 12 (2)

Herstatt, C. & von Hippel, E. (1992). From experience: Developing new product concepts via the lead user method: A case study in a "low-tech" field. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 9(3), 213-221.

Jennings, P.L. & Beaver, G. (1997). The performance and competitive advantage of small firms: A management perspective. *International Small Business Journal*, 15(2), 63-75.

Kim, S.W. (2009). An investigation on the direct and indirect effect of supply chain integration on firm performance. *Int. J. Production Economic*, 119, 328-346.

Kurzmann, H. & Reinecke, S. (2009). *Kundenintegration zwischen Kooperation und Delegation - Konzepte und Rel-evanz aus Managementsicht*. In: Bruhn, M., Stauss, B. (Eds.).

Likierman, A. (2006), Prove your worth, AccountancyAge, 19 January 2006, p13. www.accountancyage.com.

Lotfi, Z.; Mukhtar, M.; Sahran, S.; Zadeh, A.T. (2013) Information sharing in supply chain management. Procedia Technol, 11, 298–304.

Maltz, A.C., Shenhar, A.J. & Reilly, R.R. (2003). Beyond the balanced scorecard: Refining the search for organizational success measures. *Long Range Planning*, 36, 187-204.

Srivastava, R.K., Tasadduq, A.S. & Fahey, L. (1999). Marketing, business processes, and shareholder value: An organizationally embedded view of marketing activities and the discipline of marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 168-179.