

ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable competitive advantage of Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. The population for this study is 337 registered Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. The study adopted the simple random sampling technique to select one (1) respondent per school and generated 337 respondents. A 5-point likert-scaled questionnaire was administered to respondents composed of schools proprietors or managers, of which 296 copies of the questionnaire were returned, realizing 87.8 percent response rate. The analysis was made up of descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 22 providing aid. The inferential statistics absorbed three parametric inferential tests- Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient (PPMC), One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Simple Regression Analysis. It was found that the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness) studied have moderate, positive and significant influence on competitive advantage at 0.05 significant level. The study therefore, concludes that,

entrepreneurial orientation positively and significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria and recommends that management and individuals in school business should take pro-active measures to invest in opportunities that usher in innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness to improve sustainable competitive advantage in their operations in order to survive in the contemporary competitive business environment.

Keywords: Aggressiveness competitiveness, Entrepreneurial orientation, Innovativeness, Sustainable competitive advantage

Introduction

The modern-day business milieu demands that firms become entrepreneurial oriented if they must create an inimitable and specialized continued existence to preserve existing customers or get new ones (Erci, 2011); with a vision to increase market share and have an edge over their rivals (Miller & Friesen, 1983). To achieve this, firms set up routes and course of actions to secure a comfortable share of the

market to attract sustainable competitive advantage. It is clear as crystal that the achievement and safeguarding of sustainable competitive advantage in the contemporary business landscape requires consistent and constant fine-tuning of innovative practices, get on unavoidable risks and proactively making the most of opportunities embedded in the environment that attracts continuous survival in business. This is imperative because firms need to achieve superior performance over rival organizations in the marketplace with a well packaged entrepreneurial orientation programs to sustain competitive edge in their respective industries.

Competitiveness as a concept, entails achieving superior performance over rival organizations. For business organizations, it involves having the talent to categorize customers' by creating offers that satisfy them. In this regard, competitiveness is prime to the success of an organization. Nevertheless, realizing competitiveness has become more difficult than ever for firms due to the proliferation of products that are different only in brand names and an increasingly demanding customer patronage (Ateke & Akani, 2018). As a result, a firm must create superior value, attain excellence in business processes, positively modify customers' perception, convey employee's satisfaction by creating a favorable working environment, improve product offering and social responsibility activities; all of which add to the competitiveness of the firm. However, this is possible if the organization adopts an entrepreneurial orientation.

Some erudite investigations on entrepreneurial orientation include those of Akani, Wami and Ikegwuru (2020) who examined entrepreneurial orientation and marketing performance of SMEs in Rivers State of Nigeria, they discovered that, entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant relationship with marketing performance at 0.05 significant level. Kenigheni and Ikegwuru (2020) who investigated entrepreneurial orientation and unemployment reduction in Nigeria revealed that entrepreneurial orientation significantly contribute to unemployment reduction in Nigeria. Zhai *et al.* (2018) examined the

relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, absorptive capacity, environmental dynamism as well as corporate technological innovation performance and revealed that the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and innovation performance is significantly positive. Izagah and Ikegwuru (2016) studied strategic entrepreneurial orientation and market share of taxi cab operators in Rivers State, and found that the elements of strategic entrepreneurial orientation positively and significantly relate with market share of taxi cab operators in Rivers State. Azlin, Amran, Afiza and Zahariah (2014) determined the impact of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and business performance and disclosed that innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness significantly influenced business performance, while Autonomy illustrated no significance with business performance.

Prior researches on entrepreneurial orientation do not provide adequate knowledge for proprietors in the Nigerian private schools context on how entrepreneurial orientation affects a firm's sustainable competitive advantage. This is because among these studies, it has been observed that they did not utilize sustainable competitive advantage as dependent variable in their study, therefore creating a gap; hence, this study evaluated the influence of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) on sustainable competitive (SCA) of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Private secondary schools in Rivers State do not all achieve the desired level of sustainable competitive advantage due to their unending scout for new students, compelling need to replace students lost to rivals, infidelity on the part of parents who move their children/wards from one school to the other in search of quality education at affordable price. This is a worrisome phenomenon because these constraining factors certainly will aggravate the non-performance of private secondary schools and inhibit attainment of sustainable competitive advantage in their operations. Besides, previous studies with respect to entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable

competitive advantage that are channeled to investigations on private secondary schools in Rivers State are scarce. Given the right conditions, private secondary schools ought to enjoy high level of students' enrollment, enduring database of students' enrollment, better understanding with parents/guardians, resulting from better policies, programmes and practices that connect entrepreneurial orientation to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

This study therefore, asserts that, understanding the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable competitive advantage is very imperative in addressing the issue of sustainable competitive advantage in private secondary schools. Hence, this study seeks to examine the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable competitive advantage with a view to providing better understanding of how entrepreneurial orientation might improve sustainable competitive advantage in private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does innovativeness relate with sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary school in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does competitive aggressiveness relate with sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: Innovativeness does not significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho₂: Competitive aggressiveness does not significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to new market entry (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Wang, 2008). Entrepreneurial orientation is the strategic approaches in decision making process as well

as means of explaining firm performance (Green, Covin, & Slevin, 2008; Huang & Wang, 2011). Entrepreneurial orientation is the autonomy, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and risk-taking ability (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Entrepreneurial orientation may be viewed as the entrepreneurial strategy making processes that key decision makers employ to endorse their companies' managerial purpose, uphold its vision, and generate competitive advantage(s) Akani, Wami and Ikegwuru (2020).

Innovativeness

On innovativeness, Schumpeter (2002:299) noted that the "purest type of entrepreneur genius" is "the entrepreneur who confines himself most strictly to the characteristic entrepreneurial function, the carrying out of new combinations", in a word: innovation. According to Lumpkin and Dess (1996:142) innovativeness mirrors the aptness for an enterprise "to engage in and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation, and creative processes that may result in new products, services, or technological processes". Lumpkin and Dess (1996) describe innovation as a consequential means of tracing opportunities and so is a significant constituent of an entrepreneurial orientation. Lumpkin and Dess (1996:143) provided a good reason for the use of innovativeness as a dimension of an entrepreneurial orientation since it "reflects an important means by which firms pursue new opportunities"

Competitive Aggressiveness

Competitiveness derives from a Latin word, "Competer", which connotes an attachment in a business competition for market. (Ambastha & Momaya, 2003). Competitiveness is multidimensional in nature (Ogueze, Edwinah & Olori, 2017), and it is the involvement of competitor organization for the identical product, market share, industry and placement of other business. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) defined competitiveness as how firms relate to their rivals, that is, how they respond to developments and requirements that previously subsist in the marketplace or environment. Barney (2001) alludes to competitiveness as the

individual, company or state that is caught up in entrepreneurial activity.

Lumpkin and Dess (1996:139) proposed that competitive aggressiveness “refers to a firm’s propensity to directly and intensely challenge its competitors to achieve entry or improve position”: to attain competitive perimeter over other competitors in the industry. Competitive aggression as a surrogate of an entrepreneurial orientation that relates to “the type of intensity and head-to-head posturing that new competitors frequently require to contend with existing rivals” Covin and Covin (1990) professed competitive aggressiveness of an enterprise to be imaged in an endeavour to overshadow rivals by proactive and innovative measures; by introducing initiatives that competitors then act in response to; by being the first to introduce new modus operandi or products; and by indicating an colossal competitive bearing. Clearly seen, competitive aggressiveness is differentiated by a confrontational mind-set or antagonistic rejoinder.

Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Sustainable competitive advantage meets the competitive objectives of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own competitive objectives. The concept of competitive objectives goes further than merely rivalry intentions. It includes values, relationships, freedom to sense, act, and participate, all summing up to sustainable competitive practices in the business landscape that projects the enduring posture of the concerned company. Sustainable competitive advantage recognizes that growth must be both all-encompassing and environmentally resonate to trim down poor quality performance and build sound and enduring competitive edge for today’s companies and to continue to meet the needs of future generations. It is proficient with resources and cautiously planned to transport instantaneous and long-standing and future benefits for people, the planet, and prosperity.

Competitive advantage is the fitness of a company to put together a surefire position better than its competitors (Li *et al.* (2006). This can be attained if the firm’s value/cost gap

is finer to that of her competitors. Tracey *et al.* (1999) affirms that competitive advantage denotes the matchless qualifications that situate a firm spaced out from its competitors, as a result endows them with a solid presence in the marketplace. Competitive advantage is a product of decisive management resolutions (Tracey *et al.*, 1999). Sustainable competitive advantage imposes that companies establish grounds that make copying tough all the way through continual assumption to reinforce the potency, making this a long-term returning progression. A firm has sustainable competitive advantage when it is putting into practice a value generating plan not in lie with the operation by any existing or soon-to-be competitors, and when these other companies are powerless to copy the advantages of this approach which endures for all times. A sustainable competitive advantage becomes visible as an indispensable dynamic force in the discernment of goods and services value, which should be estimated as essentials of sustainable competitive advantage. As a result of the significance of sustainable competitive advantage to the venerable success of firms, the easily reached literature takes in hand its substance as well as its foundations, and the varied types of strategies that may assist companies realize sustainable competitive advantage (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

Empirical Review

Akani, Wami and Ikegwuru (2020) investigated the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on marketing performance of SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria with a population of 377 registered SMEs in Rivers State. The regression analysis technique was used to realize the influence of entrepreneurial orientation on marketing performance, while the hierarchical regression technique was engaged to test the moderating role of market orientation on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and marketing performance. The result depicts that, entrepreneurial orientation has a positive and significant relationship with marketing performance at 0.05 significant level.

Ikegwuru and Harcourt (2020) studied the effect of entrepreneurial responsive strategies on SMEs survival in COVID-19 pandemic era

in Rivers State, Nigeria using a population of 377 registered SMEs in Rivers State. Data for the study was collected using structured questionnaire and data analyzed with the regression analysis technique. The results indicate that, innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking significantly influenced SMEs survival in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Kenigheni and Ikegwuru (2020) analyzed the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on unemployment reduction in Nigeria by means of a survey design. The stratified random sampling technique was engaged to select 200 entrepreneurs from four known Local Government areas in Rivers State. The ordinary least square (OLS) method was employed to assess the association between entrepreneurial orientation and unemployment reduction in Nigeria and the findings divulge that entrepreneurial orientation significantly predicts unemployment reduction in Nigeria.

Ogueze, Edwinah and Olori (2017) explored entrepreneurial orientation and organizational competitiveness of hotel in Port Harcourt using the dimensions of proactiveness, innovativeness, risk-taking and customer value, shareholder value were correlated and organizational culture was the moderating variable. The quasi-experimental research design anchored on cross sectional survey was espoused. The spearman rank order correlation technique was adopted to test hypotheses and the findings illustrate that a positive and

significant relationship exist between the dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation and metrics of organizational competitiveness

Liu, Hou, Yang and Ding (2011) considered entrepreneurial orientation, organizational capability, and competitive advantage in emerging economies by means of a cross-sectional sample of 119 Chinese firms. The results proved that the higher the level of market and guanxi capabilities, the stronger the positive association between entrepreneurial orientation and firm's competitive advantage; also, the relative moderating effects of market and guanxi capabilities are dissimilar in the state owned enterprises (SOEs) and non-SOEs owing to the distinctive institutional environments they face.

Thongvanh, Sasiwemon and Meta (2014) researched on the effects of entrepreneurial orientation and competitive advantage on SMEs' growth using a structural equation modeling method. The study evaluated factors affecting SMEs' growth and built up the structural equation modeling (SEM) of SMEs' growth. The study used a 5 scaled Likert type rating questionnaire and a sample of 331 entrepreneurs in Lao, People Democratic Republic (PDR) of China. It was revealed that entrepreneurial orientation has positive effect on competitive advantage. Similarly, the factors of competitive advantages and entrepreneurial orientation have positive effects on SME's growth with statistical significance.

Based on the review above, the following operational framework was designed:

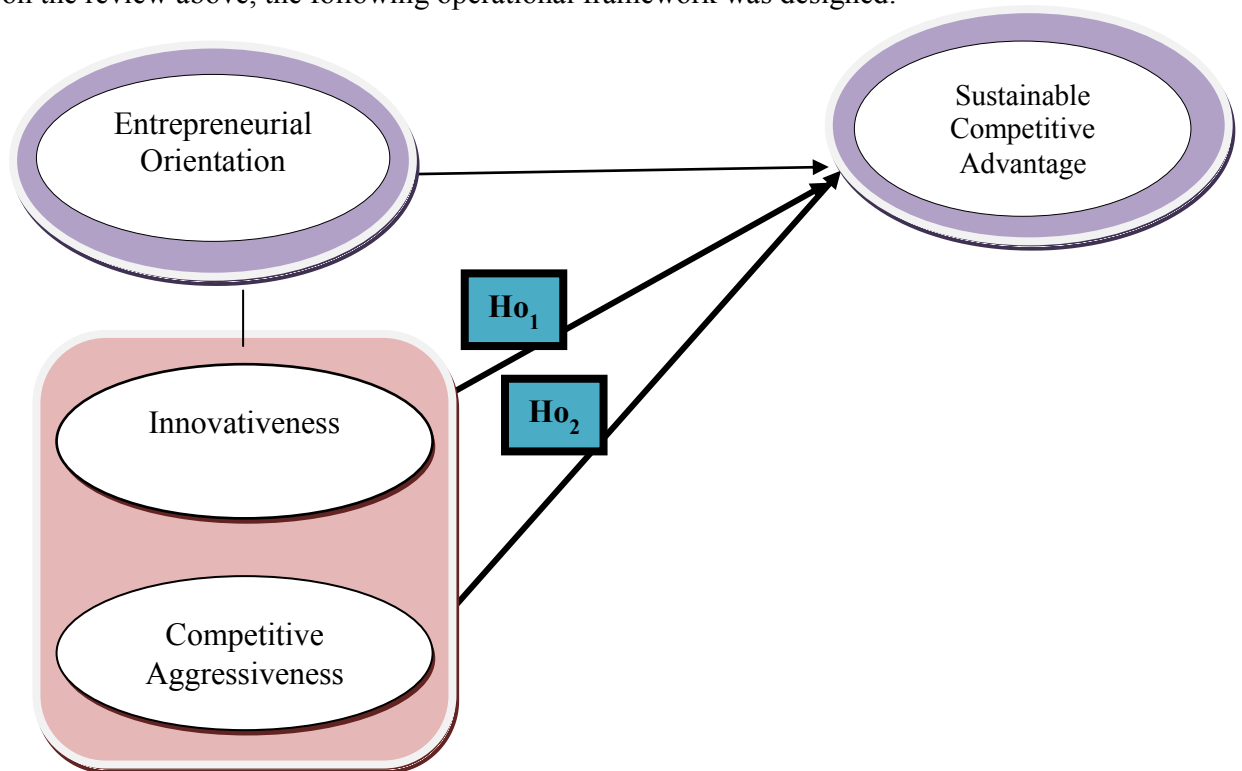


Figure 1: Operational Framework of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

Sources: Lumpkin & Dess (1996)

Methodology

The total population of the private secondary school consists of two thousand and seventy-four (2074) private secondary schools whose genuine list was obtained from the business unit of the Commercial Department of the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Port-Harcourt as at August 2020. The sample size for this study was therefore, acquired from the guideline developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) on the determination of sample size from a given population. The guideline for a population under 2200 is 337. The study relied on a sample size of three hundred and thirty-seven (337). The study adopted cross-sectional study of all private secondary schools in Rivers State, and the simple random sampling procedure was then adopted to select one (1) respondent per school to generate 337 respondents. A 5-point likert-scaled questionnaire was administered to respondents composed of schools proprietors or managers, of which 296 copies of the questionnaire were returned, realizing 87.8 percent response rate

The analysis was made up of descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 22 providing aid. The inferential statistics absorbed three parametric inferential tests- Pearson’s Product Moment Coefficient (PPMC), One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Simple Regression Analysis. The PPMC was used to test the relationship between the variables, ANOVA was employed to test the differences in means of responses on the variables, while by means of the simple regressions, the study tested the effect of the elements of entrepreneurial orientation on sustainable competitive advantage.

Model Specification

This segment stipulates the following model that directed the study:

$$SCA = f(EI) \text{ -----1}$$

Where

SCA = Sustainable Competitive Advantage

EO= Entrepreneurial Orientation

Therefore,

$$SCA = f(EO)$$

The above equation is trans- customized into econometric form by adding constant term (β) and error term (E) in the model below:

$$SCA = f(EO)$$

$$SCA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EO + e \text{-----} 1$$

$$SCA = \beta_0 + \beta EO + e \text{-----} 2$$

Mathematical form of the model is:

$$SCA = \beta_0 + \beta EO$$

Where:

SCA = Sustainable Competitive Advantage

EO = Entrepreneurial Orientation

SCA = Sustainable Competitive Advantage

β_0 = Intercept

β_1 = Coefficient of the predictor variable

e = error term.

Univariate Analysis

The researchers sought to ascertain the relationship of the component of entrepreneurial orientation and sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) technique was adopted for this purpose.

Ho₁: Innovativeness does not significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis showing the direction and strength of the relationship between innovativeness and sustainable competitive advantage

Correlations

Innovativeness Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Innovativeness	1	.483	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0000	
	N	296	296
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	Pearson's correlation	.483	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0000	
	N	296	296

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

As can be seen from Table 1, innovativeness has a moderate and positive relationship with sustainable competitive advantage. The sign of the correlation coefficient is positive indicating that when customer integration increases, the focal schools also experience a corresponding response in her sustainable competitive advantage activities. The significant/probability value (PV) = 0.000 < 0.05, therefore the researchers conclude that a moderate,

significant and positive relationship exists between innovativeness and sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho₂: Competitive aggressiveness does not significantly influence sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis showing the direction and strength of the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and sustainable competitive advantage

Correlations			
Competitive Aggressiveness	Sustainable Competitive Advantage		
Competitive Aggressiveness	1	.497	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0000	
	N	296	296
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	Pearson's correlation	.497	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.0000	
	N	296	296

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

As can be seen from Table 2, competitive aggressiveness has a moderate and positive relationship with sustainable competitive advantage. The sign of the correlation coefficient is positive indicating that when competitive aggressiveness increases, the focal schools also experience a corresponding response in her sustainable competitive advantage activities. The significant/probability value (PV) = 0.000 < 0.05, therefore the researchers conclude that a moderate,

significant and positive relationship exists between competitive aggressiveness and sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State.

Multivariate Analysis

The multiple regression analysis technique was further used to verify the stated hypotheses, and the results are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3: Influence of Innovativeness on Sustainable Competitive Advantage (n=296).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.483	.326	.323	.06496

ANOVA ^b						
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Between Groups	.0496	1	.0496	14.547	.0000	
Within Groups	.0367	295	.038			
Total	.0863	296				

A

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized		Coefficient Beta	Standardized	
	B	Std. error		T	Sig.
1 Constant	2.679	1787		7.757	.000
Within Groups	.895	.367	.483	3.869	

Source: SPSS Window Output, Version 22.0 (based on 2021 field survey data).

Decision: Since for hypothesis one, the significant .000 is less than 0.05, there is a significant effect of innovativeness on sustainable competitive advantage. The regression helps us to conclude with the R (coefficient of correlation) that there is 48.3%

direct relationship between innovativeness and sustainable competitive advantage. R-squared value of 32.6% shows that innovativeness can affect sustainable competitive advantage.

The ANOVA Table explains the fitness of the model as shown by. The F-ratio in the model is 14.547, which is very significant at $p < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant evidence to extrapolate that innovativeness is linearly related to sustainable competitive advantage. This proposes that the model is measured to be fit and that innovativeness has some influence on sustainable competitive advantage.

There is also a standardized coefficient of .483 which is perfect as well as corresponding P value (sig.) of 000 which is less than alpha (0.05). Therefore, we conclude that innovativeness significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Table 4: Influence of Competitive Aggressiveness on Sustainable Competitive Advantage (n=296).

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.497	.397	.353	.50848

ANOVA^b

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	77.775	1	77.775	443.579	.0000
Within Groups	47,780	295	.497		
Total	125.555	296			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized		Coefficient		Standardized	Coefficient
	B	Std. error	Beta	T		
1 Constant	.8534	.43634		3.387		.000
Within Groups	.7623		.497			

Source: SPSS Window Output, Version 22.0 (based on 2021 field survey data).

Decision: Since for hypothesis two, the significant .000 is less than 0.05, there is a significant effect of competitive aggressiveness on sustainable competitive advantage. The regression helps us to conclude with the R (coefficient of correlation) that there is 49.7% direct relationship between competitive aggressiveness and sustainable competitive advantage. R-squared value of 39.7% shows that competitive aggressiveness can affect sustainable competitive advantage.

The ANOVA Table explains the fitness of the model as shown by. The F-ratio in the model is 443,975, which is very significant at $p < 0.05$. This implies that there is significant evidence to extrapolate that competitive aggressiveness is linearly related to sustainable competitive advantage. This proposes that the model is measured to be fit and that competitive aggressiveness has some influence on sustainable competitive advantage.

There is also a standardized coefficient of .589 which is perfect as well as corresponding P value (sig.) of 000 which is less than alpha (0.05). Therefore, we conclude that competitive aggressiveness significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria.

Discussions of Findings

The statistical tests of hypotheses portrays that the elements of entrepreneurial orientation (innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness) have moderate impact on sustainable competitive advantage. The fact that both innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness had moderate effects on sustainable advantage implies that private secondary schools are mostly affected by price-quality inclination more than trying to be innovative and competitive aggressively oriented. This could mean that they are more

concerned with the quality and price of the brand they project, and price-quality involvement has been significant in their unending scout for new students, compelling need to replace students lost to rivals, disloyalty on the part of parents who move their children/wards from one school to the other in search of quality/price oriented educational service they can handle. This could further mean that in the minds of parents and guardians whose children/wards consume educational services, quality is a detached concept and that they may not associate it with the price of the service offered. This assertion is also even with the results described in Table 3 and 4 of the study, which showed that the coefficient of determination presented 32.6% and 39.7% for the influence of innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness on sustainable competitive advantage respectively. On the other hand, the outcome of the study implies that the mere existence of entrepreneurial orientation is enough to form encouraging attitude towards private secondary schools patronage, as the positive signs of influence desirably denote that it can sensibly predict positive impact on sustainable competitive advantage. The study's result is in line and substantiates Thongvanh *et al.* (2014) findings which disclosed that, entrepreneurial orientation has positive effect on competitive advantages.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of entrepreneurial orientation dimension on sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State. The entrepreneurial orientation dimension includes innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness. These factors have also been investigated in earlier scholarly studies. The results of our analysis in this study show that innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness have moderate, positive, influence on sustainable competitive advantage. The study therefore, concludes that entrepreneurial orientation significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage of private secondary schools in Rivers State of Nigeria, and recommends that management and individuals in school business should take proactive measures to invest in opportunities that usher in innovativeness and competitive

aggressiveness to improve sustainable competitive advantage in their operations. Innovative mindset should be developed and competitive aggressiveness should be seen as the conduit where customer values are fulfilled and private schools gain sustainable competitive advantage.

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