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Analysis of Competitive Advantage and Its Relevance to SME Sustainability: A Case of Nigerian Manufacturing Industry

Belema Stephanie OGULU[1], Mercy Ejovwokeoghene OGBARI[2], Busola E KEHINDE[3]
[1,2,3]Department of Business Management, College of Business and Social Sciences, Covenant University Ota, Nigeria

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Corresponding Author:
Mercy Ejovwokeoghene Ogbari
Email:
mercy.ogbari@covenantuniversity.edu.ng

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Abstract:
Purpose:
The study examined competitive advantage and its relevance to SME sustainability using selected manufacturing companies in Lagos, Nigeria. The study's objectives were to determine the impact of innovation on product quality sales volume, among others of SMEs. The study was developed around resource and market-based theories.
Methodology:
The survey descriptive research design was adopted, and data were obtained from questionnaires filled out by respondents from the selected manufacturing firms. Multiple Regression was adopted to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. The study revealed a positive effect between the selected variables.
Findings:
Based on the findings, it was recommended that employees be motivated to use personal skills and abilities in executing daily activities, encourage creative thinking, and generate new and innovative techniques to boost the quick achievement of organizational growth.
Implication:
This study was conducted to determine the relevance of competitive advantage to business sustainability. It was discovered that competitive advantage has relevance to the sustainability of businesses, innovation increases sales volume, product quality influences market share, and product price positively affects the returns on investment of the business.

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INTRODUCTION

Businesses in different parts of the world aim to survive and grow. In every economy, all businesses, from SMEs to conglomerates, thrive in the same competitive environment and need help to gain a significant market share and grow even during stiff competition. Creative procedures and powerful strategies must be adopted for any business to increase and advance in an economy. There must also be factors that differentiate their product from competitors to achieve success. Capitalizing upon these factors gives the business the competitive advantage needed to survive even in its competitive environment. Every business has corporate, logical, and social resources that combine to give a firm competence, such as production, promotion and distribution, and customer service. These capabilities give the business a competitive advantage over competitors.

Competitive advantage has significantly contributed to the success of SMEs in several countries. The U.S., Japan, and Germany are the world's leading industries. It is because of the number of successful SMEs in each country that employ innovative techniques, thereby giving them competitive edges over the SMEs in other countries. Although competitive advantage is not the only reason these SMEs are successful, it strongly contributes to this success.

The importance of SMEs to an economy cannot be overstated. SMEs provide employment opportunities that reduce the unemployment rate, increasing the overall gross domestic product of the economy. SMEs employ 86.7% of Nigeria's private sector workforce (Kadiri, 2012). In addition to this, they also drive the level of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, equitable distribution of income, welfare, income per capita, and the standard of living of the citizenry (Aremu & Adeyemi, 2011). SMEs also reduce the rate of poverty and increase

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product and technology innovation (Dangelico, 2013; Nelson, 1993). It has become essential for companies and organizations to gain a competitive edge because markets have become highly competitive and turbulent as market conditions constantly change. Market conditions move from simple to complex, stable to dynamic, and tamed to hostile (Akter et al., 2013; Neu & Brown, 2005). This study reflects the relationship between SMEs, competitive advantage, and sustainability.

After formulating a business, the manager aims to achieve maximum growth. However, apart from the growth of a business, sustainability is a critical element in the success of any business – financial sustainability, product quality sustainability, production sustainability, and customer satisfaction.

Several factors determine the extent to which a company can attain an appropriate level of competitive advantage; some of these factors include the managerial skills of the decision-makers, employee satisfaction, and environmental scanning. When these factors are well-considered and capitalized upon, they bring about business growth and the achievement of competitive advantage.

The Concept of Competitive Advantage. Competitive conditions in markets have changed in the last decades, which has led to companies needing to adapt to new requirements imposed on them either by consumers or competition (Porter, 1985; Galbreath, 2002). Competition is affected by market changes and the requirements for companies to stay competitive in these markets (Galbreath, 2002; Tidd et al., 2005).

Competitive advantage refers to the supremacy an organization gains when it can make available the same value as its competitors but at a reduced price or charge higher prices by providing value through differentiation. Competitive advantage results from matching fundamental competencies to opportunities (Porter, 1985). It is an advantage that a firm has over its competitors, allowing it to spawn more excellent sales and retain more customers than its competition.

Michael Porter expanded upon the concept and study of competitive advantage in the 1980s. He proposed the types of competitive advantage and generic competitive strategies. Michael Porter published a book called "Competitive Advantage" in 1985. In his book, he argued that competitive advantage is a function of either providing equivalent buyer value more competently than competitors, i.e., low cost, or carrying out activities at a similar cost but in exceptional methods that generate more buyer value than competitors and, therefore, command a more fantastic price, i.e., differentiation. Furthermore, Porter (1985) argues that competitive advantage stems from a firm's many discrete activities in designing, producing, marketing, delivering, and supporting its product. These activities can contribute to a firm's relative cost position and create a basis for differentiation. Because growth and survival are the primary focus of most businesses trying to make a profit even in the ever-dynamic and competitive marketplace, competitive advantage is crucial to achieving organizational goals and objectives. Different companies have different creative strategies they employ in order to gain a competitive advantage.

In 1985, Michael propounded the theory of the industry structure and the five forces for achieving competitive advantage. He promoted industry structure and positioning as the basis for competitive advantage models. The five forces highlighted by Porter define the rules of competition in any industry. These forces include the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of the buyer, the bargaining power of the supplier, the threat of substitutes, and the intensity of rivalry (Porter, 1985). Competitive strategy enhances the ability of firms to cope with the dynamic rules affecting the firm's behavior in the direction of the five forces that determine industry profitability and cease most opportunities, knowing that some industries may be more profitable than others. Understanding that the most critical factor when determining profitability is how much value a firm can create for the buyers and how much of this value will be captured in return (Ogbari et al., 2018).

Generic Competitive Strategies. Michael Porter (1985) proposed four generic competitive strategies: cost leadership, Differentiation leadership theory, Focus strategy, and Value creation.

Cost Leadership Strategy. Cost leadership is the first competitive advantage businesses often attempt to gain. Cost leadership transpires when a business can offer its competitors the same quality good or service but at a relatively lower price. A company can achieve this by decreasing its overall production cost or properly exploiting its scarce resources, thus reducing the price of its product without probing losses. Other factors, such as proprietary technology, can also factor into this advantage. Cost leadership may be classified as an offensive strategy in which businesses attempt to drive competitors out of the market by consistently using price strategies designed to win over customers (Elkington, 1994; Healy, 2014). With the cost leadership theory, the objective is to become the lowest-cost producer in the industry; this is achieved by producing on a large scale, enabling the business to exploit the economies of scale. This strategy is usually associated with large-scale businesses offering "standard" products

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with relatively little differentiation that are readily acceptable to most customers. In order to achieve cost leadership, a company often implements several strategies, such as maintaining high levels of productivity, maximizing capacity utilization, leveraging bargaining power to secure the lowest input costs, deploying lean production methods, utilizing technology effectively in the production process, and accessing the most efficient distribution channels available (Jim, 2014; Kristisis et al., 2012).

Differentiation Leadership Strategy. Differentiation leadership strategy involves the selection of one or more criteria used by buyers in a market and then positioning the business uniquely to meet those criteria. This strategy targets larger markets and aims to achieve a competitive advantage across an industry. Differentiation leadership strategy is usually associated with charging a premium price for products, often to reflect the higher production costs and extra value-added features provided for the consumer. Differentiation is about charging a premium price that covers the additional production costs and gives customers clear reasons to prefer the product over other less differentiated products. The business is likely to do or make use of many of the following in order to attain differentiated leadership: superior product quality (benefits, features, longevity, and dependability), Branding (strong consumer demand and awareness; brand loyalty), industry-wide distribution across all major channels (i.e., the brand or product is a must for shops to stock), Consistent promotional assistance, which is frequently dominated by sponsorship, advertising (Billingsley, 2013; Jim, 2014). Differentiation strategy has been successfully implemented across the globe. Some examples include by Brand: Harley Davidson and Mercedes Benz; Differentiation by Design: Titan watches with gold studded gems, diamonds, and precious metals; Differentiation by Positioning: Domino's Pizza "30 minutes delivery". Differentiation by Technology: Apple computers and differentiation by innovation: 3M

Differentiation Focus Strategy. In the differentiation focus strategy, a business aims to differentiate within only one or a few target market segments. Having a particular customer needs segment means opportunities to provide products different from competitors who may be targeting a broader group of customers. Any business adopting this strategy is responsible for ensuring that customers have different needs and wants – in other words, there is a valid basis for differentiation – and that existing competitor products are not meeting those needs and wants.

Differentiation focus is the standard niche marketing strategy. Many small businesses can launch themselves in a niche market using this strategy, reaching higher prices than un-differentiated products through professional knowledge or other ways to increase customer value (Porter, 1985).

These generic strategies are not necessarily compatible with one another. If a firm attempts to achieve an advantage using all of these generic strategies, it may only achieve some of them. For this reason, Michael Porter argued that to be successful over a long period. A firm must select only one of these four generic strategies. Otherwise, the firm will be "stuck in the middle" and not achieve a competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). He also argued that firms that can succeed at using multiple strategies do so by creating separate business units for each strategy. By so doing, a corporation is less likely to become "stuck in the middle."

Value Creation. A firm creates value by performing a series of activities that Porter identified as the value chain. In addition to the firm's value-creating activities, the firm operates in a value system of vertical activities, including upstream suppliers and downstream channel members. To achieve a competitive advantage, the firm must perform one or more value-creating activities to create more overall value than close competitors. Superior value is created through lower costs or superior benefits to the consumer (Porter, 1985). A firm can achieve a competitive advantage only if it can create more economic value than its competitors. The ability of a firm to create value will be affected by Changes in market demand, changes in technology, and Threats from other firms within the industry and other industries. Porter (1985) came up with the value chain. This value chain represents the firm as a set of value-creating activities. These activities include production, marketing, human resources, management, Finance, and more. These must be expressed through adequate innovative levels for continuous effect and patronage. It is because these activities may arise from a combination of already existing technologies and their application in a new context relating to products or services, new production processes, new marketing techniques, and new organizational or managerial structures (Isiavwe et al., 2015; Ogbari et al., 2016; Olokundun et al., 2018).

The Importance of a Sustainable Competitive Advantage. The realization of competitive advantage is only sometimes permanent. An organization is said to have a sustainable competitive advantage when it is impossible for its competitors to duplicate the advantage of the firm's strategy. A company's standard strategy must satisfy these four requirements to obtain a long-term competitive advantage: It must first be helpful, meaning

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it must add value for the buyer, then uncommon, displaying outstanding qualities that are difficult to come by. Also, it must be inimitable, whereby competitors could only copy it cheaply and ultimately. Likewise, it is non-substitutable, where consumers cannot or will not substitute another product or attribute for the one providing the firm with a competitive advantage (Waggoner, 2014; Omwoyo, 2016; Ogbari et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework. This study centers on the resource-based and market-based view theories discussed below.

The Resource-Based View. The resource-based view theory perceives a business as an extensive collection of resources that could be considered a given firm's strength or weakness (Wernerfelt, 1984). According to Wernerfelt, some examples of these resources are brand name, internal technological know-how, employment of skilled personnel, trade contact, machinery, efficient procedures, and capital. The resource-based view theory highlights the importance of a business as the most critical unit of analysis (Spanos & Lioukas, 2001). Hence, RBV emphasized that businesses must analyze their internal resources rather than their external environment.

In the firm's resource-based view (RBV), a firm's performance is affected by firm-specific resources and capabilities. The central focus of RBV is on capabilities controlled by a firm that underlines persistent performance differences among firms (Peteraf & Barney, 2003). An organization's resource includes its assets and strengths, such as information or organizational practices managed by a firm. It allows it to direct and devise strategies to improve its overall organizational productivity. Resources are believed to be the supreme source for creating and sustaining competitive advantage if they meet the standards of retaining value. The resource must exploit opportunities or nullify threats from competitors. The resource must also be exceptional among the firms' competitors and imperfectly imitable given that it is resistant to duplication. Also, the resource must not have alternatives or replacements (Barney, 1991). The theory outlines two assumptions: firm resource heterogeneity, which deals with the systematic differences within an industry concerning the resources they control (Barney, 1991), and resource immobility, which holds that resources are relatively stable across firms such that heterogeneity can endure (Barney, 1991).

Barney's (1991) contributions contributed to the extension of the RBV theory, which included the concept of sustainability in the strategic management of businesses. Amit and Schoemaker (1993) suggested that resources should meet the following eight criteria: limited substitutability, complementarity, durability, scarcity, inimitability, appropriability, and overlap with strategy industry factors. However, Grant (1991) stated that transparency, transferability, transparency, and replicability are the four major features of resources that regulate the sustainability of competitive advantage in businesses. Thus, Barney (1991) categorized a business 'resources into three aspects: Human capital resources – training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationships, and insight of managers and employees in a firm; physical capital resources – plant and equipment, geographic location, and access to raw materials and Organisational capital resources – formal and informal planning, controlling and coordinating systems and informal relations. Though the resource-based view (RBV) has materialized as one of the essential theories of strategic management, it is said that it has disregarded the role of entrepreneurial policies and entrepreneurial skills as one of the vital sources of a firm's competitive advantage. The RBV proposes that the resources controlled by a firm are the principal determinants of its performance, which may add to the viable competitive advantage of the firm (Hofer & Schendel, 1978; Wernerfelt, 1984).

The Market-Based View. The market-based view is in complete contrast with the RBV. The MBV describes a firm's performance through the external industry structure and the strategic bearing of competitors within the industry (Bea, 2005). Its first basic theory is that strategically relevant sources are distributed homogenously among firms within an industry (Barney, 1991). The second theory refers to the mobility of resources, which in the MBV are highly mobile (Barney, 1991). According to this "outside-in" perspective (Bea, 2005), the performance of a firm and its competitive advantage can be fundamentally credited to the structure of its industry (Makhija & Stewart, 2002).

The market-based view of the firm originated from the industrial organization (I.O.) economy, which analyses the structure of industries, the effects of concentration on competition, and the limitations between firms and markets, among other factors (Barry, 1989). According to I.O. economics, the Structure-Conduct-Performance (SCP) paradigm became popular from the 1940s to the 1960s as a means for the analysis of the relationship between the structure of an industry, the industry conduct, and the resulting industry performance (Barney, 2007). The U.S. government initially adopted the SCP paradigm to fund the design of antitrust policy, and it quickly became a standard tool for analysis in industries. The model relates performance to industry structure and regulates the

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actions and strategies of contending firms (Triole, 1999). According to this perspective, the SCP model explains performance differences between firms through the structure of their industries, an external feature of the firm itself (Bea, 2005).

Grounded on the models of the IO, Porter established the market-based view. Porter contended that the MBV causes competitive advantage to increase due to superior placement against other companies in an industry. Porter also suggested five external forces to measure when creating strategic decisions. These forces include the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of the buyers and suppliers, the threat of substitute products, and the degree of rivalry amongst existing competitors. To accomplish these forces, Porter suggested schemes such as extending barriers to entry, increasing switching costs to buyers, and eradicating switching costs concerning suppliers. Porter also connected these strategies to the evolutionary stages of industry development. To improve a competitive strategy, an organization must examine the foundation of these five forces. Thus, on the one hand, it accrues knowledge regarding its grave strengths and weaknesses in dealing with the industry structure; on the other hand, the structural examination discloses opportunities and threats arising from trends within the industry.

METHODS

The study's role in the Positivism philosophy is limited to data collection and objective analysis, which is the application of established models to construct hypotheses to be verified during the qualitative research expected in positivism (Ormston et al., 2014). The quantitative study adopted a descriptive design using the research questionnaire as the primary instrument (Mohajan, 2020). Descriptive research is a type of quantitative study that gathers measurable data for the analytical evaluation of sample demography. The sampling technique adopted was both purposive and simple random sampling based on the geographical location of the selected firms and the principle of randomization (Cr, 2020). Data were obtained from three selected Manufacturing firms in Lagos and the Ogun States, and 294 copies of questionnaires were administered to the Management Staff of the firms. 266 copies were returned, of which 264 were finally found useful. Both content and construct validity were engaged to certify the instrument's validity. The Cronbach alpha reliability was used to test the instrument. It was ascertained with a score of .858, as depicted in Fig. 1. Regression analysis (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses with SPSS version 25, and results were presented accordingly.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed mediating relationship between competitive advantage, SME sustainability, and innovation is tested with Regression analysis (ANOVA) using SPSS version 20, and the outcome is outplayed below.

Result from Frequency Tables.

Table 1. Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	155	58.3	58.7
	Female	109	41.0	41.3
	Total	264	99.2	100.0
Missing	System	2	.8	
Total		266	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

The above table shows that (155) 58.3% of the respondents are male, and (109) 41.0% are female. It implies that the majority of the respondents are male.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of items

Items	SA	A	U	D	SD

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Adequate machinery is being used in the production process	85 (32.0)	128 (48.1)	37 (13.9)	10 (3.8)	6 (2.3)
Adequate information is readily available when needed in this organization	86 (32.31)	128 (48.1)	38 (14.3)	11 (4.1)	3 (1.2
Superior raw materials are used in the production of our goods	75 (28.2)	129 (48.5)	48 (18.0)	8 (3.0)	6 (2.3)
Innovative strategies are adopted in customer relationship management	89 (33.5)	134 (50.4)	29 (10.9)	10 (3.8)	4 (1.6)
The organization takes creative measures to ensure value creation	95 (55.3)	127 (47.0)	34 (12.8)	8 (3.0)	5 (1.9)

From the table above, it shows that (85) 32.0% of the respondents strongly agree, (128) 48.1% of the respondents agree, (37) 13.9% of the respondents were undecided, (10) 3.8% of the respondents disagree and (6) 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagree. It implies that most respondents agreed that adequate machinery is used in the product.

From the table above, it shows that (86) 32.3% of the respondents strongly agree, (128) 48.1% of respondents agree, (38) 14.3% of the respondents were undecided, (11) 4.1% of respondents disagree, and (1) .4% of the respondents strongly disagree. It implies that most respondents agreed that adequate information is readily available when needed in their organization.

Ion process in their organization.

From the table above, it also shows that (75) 28.2% of the respondents strongly agree, (129) 48.5% of the respondents agree, (48) 18.0% of the respondents were undecided, (8) 3.0% of the respondents disagree and (6) 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagree. It implies that most respondents agreed that superior raw materials are used to produce goods in their organization.

From the table above, it shows that (89) 33.5% of the respondents strongly agree, (134) 50.4% of the respondents agree, (29) 10.9% of the respondents were undecided, (10) 3.8% of the respondents disagree, and (4) 1.6% of the respondents strongly disagree. It implies that most respondents agreed that innovative strategies are adopted in customer relationships in their organization.

Furthermore, the table shows that (94) 35.3% of the respondents strongly agree, (125) 47.0% of the respondents agree, (34) 12.8% of the respondents are undecided, (8) 3.0% of the respondents disagree, and (5) 1.9% of the respondents strongly disagree. It implies that most respondents agreed that their organization takes creative measures to ensure value creation.

Testing the Hypothesis. Regression analysis (ANOVA) tests the hypotheses about the relationship between competitive advantage and SME sustainability. As presented in Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported in the base model when all the paths of innovation, sales volume, customer satisfaction, environmental scanning, market share, product quality, return on investment and product price are statistically significant (all p-values < 0.001).

Hypothesis 1

Table 3. ANOVA Showing Impact of Innovation on Sales Volume

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	4.566	1	4.566	10.372	.001[b]
1	Residual	115.327	262	.440		
	Total	119.892	263			

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Source: Field Survey, 2016.

a. Dependent Variable: sales volume

b. Predictors: (Constant), Innovation

The ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis to determine if it is statistically significant. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant (F (1, 262) = 10.372, p = 0.001), and hence the null hypothesis should be rejected because it is less than 0.05 significance level. Based on the analysis above, for which all calculated values are below the critical values, the null hypothesis H01, Innovation has no relevant impact on sales volume, is therefore rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis Ha1: Innovation has a relevant impact on sales volume is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

Table 4. ANOVA Showing Influence of Product Quality on Market Share[s]

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	13.878	1	13.878	40.952	.000[b]
1	Residual	88.787	262	.339		
	Total	102.665	263			

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

a. Dependent Variable: market share

b. Predictors: (Constant), product quality

The ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis to determine if it is statistically significant. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant (F (1, 262) = 13.878, p = 0.000), and hence the null hypothesis should be rejected because it is less than 0.05 significance level. Based on the analysis above, for which all calculated values are below the critical values, the null hypothesis H01, product quality does not influence market share, is therefore rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis Ha1: product quality influences sales market share is accepted.

Hypothesis 3

Table 5. ANOVA of Environmental Scanning and Customer Satisfaction

	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	1.399	1	1.399	3.696	.048[b]
1	Residual	99.160	262	.378		
	Total	100.559	263			

Source: Field survey, 2016.

a. Dependent Variable: customer satisfaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), environmental scanning

The ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis to determine if it is statistically significant. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant (F (1, 262) = 1.399, p = 0.048), and hence the null hypothesis should be rejected because it is less than 0.05 significance level. Based on the analysis above, for which all calculated values are below the critical values, the null hypothesis H01, environmental scanning does not influence customer satisfaction, is therefore rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis Ha1, environmental scanning influences customer satisfaction, is accepted.

Hypothesis 4

Table 6. ANOVA[a]

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	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.956	1	2.956	9.263	.003b
	Residual	83.610	262	.319		
	Total	86.566	263			

Source: Field Survey, 2016

a. Dependent Variable: returns on investment

b. Predictors: (Constant), product price

The ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis to determine if it is statistically significant. From the results, the model in this table is statistically significant ($F(1, 262) = 9.263$, $p = 0.003$), and hence, the null hypothesis should be rejected because it is less than 0.05 significance level. Based on the analysis above, for which all calculated values are below the critical values, the null hypothesis H01, product price does not influence return on investment, is therefore rejected. In contrast, the alternative hypothesis Ha1: product price influences return on investment is accepted.

This above result implies that if the selected manufacturing firms are aware of the various indicators of competitive advantage (innovation, product quality, environmental scanning, and product price) and evaluate the business position in the market, it will enhance SME sustainability (sales volume, market share, customer satisfaction and return on investment) The ability of the SMEs to set realistic and achievable goals for their businesses in providing products and services that will meet customers' needs and will also position the SMEs to grow their customers base which will invariably create positive sustainability.

This finding validates the submission of Ates and Bititci (2011). They posited that competitive advantage is a critical organizational characteristic for long-term success in the current complex environment. Simultaneously, delivering products of high quality through product development is required for firms to become more sustainable. It shows that if SMEs account for a more significant percentage of global output and an increasing mandate to build sustainable SMEs, instilling, developing, and implementing change competencies is critical to achieving sustainability (Saunila & Ukko, 2014). It will help SMEs to manage competitive advantage, which is essential to their sustainability. The findings also align with a similar discovery of Ramdani, Binsaif, Boukrami, and Guermat (2020). The authors noticed that some of the challenges SMEs face in Nigeria are traceable to economic recession and unstable market environment. It usually influences SMEs to conduct an environmental scan in response to the business environment's challenges to produce products and give them at the best price to increase customer satisfaction, thereby increasing sales volume. This study indicates that competitive advantage constantly improves sustainability in SMEs.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine the relevance of competitive advantage to business sustainability. It was discovered that competitive advantage has relevance to the sustainability of businesses, innovation increases sales volume, product quality influences market share, and product price positively affects the returns on investment of the business. Therefore, businesses should encourage the concept of competitive advantage as it improves sales volume, market share, customer satisfaction, and return on investments. Also, businesses are encouraged to include innovation in several aspects of their business activities, including technology, product, process, market, and service. The study also discovered a relationship between product quality and market share, environmental scanning and customer satisfaction, innovation and sales volume, and product price on return on investment. It implies a relevant relationship between the factors of competitive advantage and business sustainability.

Recommendation. Based on the findings from this research, the following recommendations are made. Having discovered that Competitive advantage has relevance to business sustainability. Therefore, businesses should encourage their staff to use their skills and abilities in daily activities and encourage creative thinking, generating new ideas and tactics to boost organizational growth. Businesses should adopt innovative concepts that will help increase sales volume and profits, boosting the degree of growth and sustainability of the business. More so, investment in product quality measures like acquiring adequate machinery and superior raw materials to

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produce their goods and services and the support of quality control and maintenance programs to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty. In the same vein, they should evaluate the demand for their products, the purchasing capability of the customers, and the price of their products to increase their net profit at the end of the year and their return on investment. Finally, the ability of SMEs to combine the three competitive strategies to gain a larger market share and increase customer satisfaction and sales volume is of great importance. It must be thoughtfully guided for continuous existence.

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