



## Innovative Management and Sustainable Competitive Advantage of Fast-Food Restaurants in Bayelsa State

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### Abstract

*For any organisation, especially a fast-food restaurant, to remain a formidable competitor in the industry, the organisation must be able to sustain a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is the edge an organisation has over its competitors through outstanding performance in terms of products and services offered to the market. The research investigated the impact of innovative management on the sustainable competitive advantage of fast-food restaurants in Bayelsa State. Utilising a cross-sectional design, a structured questionnaire was administered to all sixty (60) employees of nine (9) purposively selected out of forty-eight (48) fast food restaurants in Bayelsa State. Spearman rank correlation coefficient analysis were employed to analyse the data. The findings indicated that innovation culture ( $r = 0.369$ ) and employee creativity ( $r = 0.542$ ) exhibited a significant positive correlation with sustainable competitive advantage. The research thus concluded that innovative management exhibited a substantial positive correlation with sustained competitive advantage. It was thus recommended that fast-food establishments should establish a secure and inclusive atmosphere in which all employees' creative ideas and corresponding actions are recognized and appreciated.*

**Keywords:** innovative management. Sustainable competitive advantage, innovative culture, employee creativity, fast-food restaurant

### 1.0 Introduction

A firm is said to enjoy a competitive advantage when it can achieve superior performance relative to industry rivals through value creation, differentiation, or cost leadership. Sustainable competitive advantage refers to a firm's ability to maintain its competitive edge in the long term despite market shifts. It entails aligning innovation with strategic agility and ensuring that resources evolve to cope with the emerging demands.

In today's increasingly competitive business landscape, companies are adopting more aggressive and fluid strategies to identify techniques that ensure profitability. In the current volatile and competitive business landscape, firms face significant challenges in meeting the escalating demands of the market and customers, navigating complex

regulations, and addressing technological obsolescence. The fast-food industry in Bayelsa State, situated in the oil rich Niger Delta, Nigeria has progressed alongside urbanization and changing consumers' lifestyle which necessitate constant turnaround strategies for any firm in the industry to retain its market posture. The notion of innovation is increasingly vital for maintaining growth and performance. Innovation results from rigorous multi-functional coordination (Fahad and Khairul, 2020). This orchestration entails coordinating teams and assigning responsibilities, authorities, and roles to participate in the innovation challenge.

Madjar et al (2021) contend that to attain and maintain competitive advantage and enhance organisational performance, managers must analyse the factors influencing the execution of competitive strategies. An organisation must align its structure with its strategies, provide strategic leadership, develop a corporate culture, and manage the implementation of the strategies. In this modern age, innovation management has become a crucial element of economic and industrial development policies in various countries. Fahad and Khairul (2020) asserted that innovation management constitutes a methodical process adopted by companies to enhance their prevailing services, products, techniques, and approaches to marketing, as well as to develop fresh ones. Innovation management practice is key in promoting innovation aimed at ensuring business growth and survival via the development of an innovative culture within organisations. Innovation management assists companies in attaining a persistent competitive advantage, especially when it becomes systemic and radical (Martinez-Caro et al., 2022). Through innovation management, a competitive advantage is created for the company via the creation of novel goods, procedures, and offerings. Innovation plays a vital part in the transformation of ideas into reality.

Innovativeness is a fundamental instrument in growth tactics for entering new markets, expanding current market share, and granting the organisation a competitive advantage (Hirst et al., 2019). Driven by increasing competition in global markets, companies have recognised the importance of innovation, as swiftly evolving technologies and intense global rivalry rapidly diminish the value of current goods and services. Consequently, innovations are integral to corporate strategies for various reasons, including the enhancement of production processes, the cultivation of favourable customer perception, improved market performance, and the attainment of sustainable competitive advantage (Hitt et al., 2018).

There has been limited attention to the potential impact of dimensions such as innovation culture and employee creativity of innovative management strategies on sustaining competitive advantage. This study investigates the impact of innovative management on sustaining the competitive advantage of fast-food restaurants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Many organisations, particularly in fast-food restaurants, aim to foster a climate of innovation that empowers employees to take risks, leading to product advancements. The fast-food firms in Bayelsa State were established to serve students, families, working women, institutional clients, and oil and gas companies in the area with outdoor catering. In the past, these organisations were successfully serving their markets and generating high profits for their owners. The majority of Bayelsa State's fast-food businesses have

recently had poor results and been forced to close as a result of dropping sales and declining profit margins. Sales turnover in the fast-food industry is typically low, the players are facing declining customer patronage. What ought to be the underlying causes of these issues? Several scholars, such as (Yongan et al, 2019; Laban and Deya, 2019; Birkinshaw et al., 2020; Damanpour and Aravind, 2022; Hitt, 2022; Singh et al, 2023; and Teece, 2023), have researched innovative management and sustainable competitive advantage within and outside Nigeria. However, out of the studies carried out, few focused on fast food industry in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Although the findings of these studies were deemed conclusive, none of the research integrated and combined the two measures of innovative management in the current study (innovation culture and employee creativity) at a go. This underscores the need for additional research on the impacts of innovative management and sustainable competitive of fast-food restaurants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Furthermore, this study's distinctiveness is also in its geographical scope, as the researcher aspires to cover fast food restaurants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The researcher considers it necessary to investigate the potential effects of innovative management to address the identified gaps in sustainable competitive advantage in fast food restaurants in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The above-identified gaps led to the following specific objectives of the study:

- i. To assess the impacts of innovation culture on sustainable competitive advantage.
- ii. To determine the effects of employee creativity on sustainable competitive advantage

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 Innovative Management**

Innovative management involves overseeing the activities necessary for the introduction of new concepts. This encompasses the generation of ideas, their development, prioritisation, implementation, and practical application, such as the introduction of new products or the implementation of fresh internal procedures (Mile, 2019). Innovation management is the structured approach to the creation and execution of novel concepts to enhance business development. Innovation management exhibits a disconnect between scientific advancements and organisational development, primarily due to deficiencies in innovation strategy (Martinez-Caro et al., 2022). An effective innovation strategy enables the organisation to align its structure with its distinct competitive requirements. Corporate senior leaders must develop sustainable long-term growth strategies rather than focusing solely on short-term technologies. Therefore, it is essential to plan for the next decade, rather than just the immediate one to two years. The neglect of prioritising innovation in favour of short-term profits can adversely affect capital markets.

Modern-era managers face pressures to establish innovation-induced organisations to remain competitive against low-cost nations. Innovation management is a comprehensive initiative that integrates various resources and capabilities within a firm to meet the needs of existing customers by emphasising the core aspects of the organisation, while also

attracting new customers by targeting emerging opportunities (Asaolu and Ogunleye, 2023). Mainstream activities enhance organisational functioning through process innovation, aimed at reducing costs by eliminating waste, defects, and errors while ensuring timely and complete delivery of products and services to customers. The following dimensions of innovative management are worth noting.

### **i. Innovation Culture**

Successful innovation management requires the company to foster a culture that prioritises innovation and ensures employees are appreciated. This will motivate employees to produce high-quality ideas in exchange. Structures facilitate the effective utilisation of capabilities, while culture helps the organisation to develop the capabilities associated with its personnel. A pro-innovation culture significantly enhances a company's ability to attract and retain suitable employees. An appropriate pro-innovation culture fosters desirable behaviours while deterring undesirable ones. The rapid accumulation of impacts indicates that culture significantly influences a company's innovativeness. An innovation strategy must determine whether product enhancement, breakthrough innovation, or disruptive products are the most effective solutions (Zhou and Shalley, 2019). Many innovation strategies are unsuccessful in this domain, resulting in low rates of innovation success.

Innovation culture refers to the organisational environment established by management to promote unconventional thinking and its practical implementation. Organisations that foster a culture of innovation typically assert that innovation is not limited to top leadership but can originate from any employee within the company. Companies operating in rapidly changing markets value innovation cultures, as maintaining the status quo is insufficient for effective competition; therefore, an innovation culture is essential for success. Shuck et al. (2022) Innovation cultures often assess employees using metrics like value creation and sustainable competitive advantage, rather than conventional metrics such as revenue generation and timely delivery. Organisations that promote innovative thinking also facilitate discovery and seek methods to incentivise the time dedicated to research necessary for generating new ideas and products.

An innovative culture enhances firm performance and facilitates the development of fresh offerings, necessitating creativity, open communication, and teamwork, which are essential components for effective collaboration and innovation, and strong employee relationships. Additionally, SMES may utilise an innovation culture as a strategic instrument to enhance performance and support the creation of new products (Padilha and Gomesi, 2020) posited that only those companies with strong innovation capabilities can make important contributions to their company's competitiveness.

### **ii. Employee Creativity**

Certainly, the occurrence of creativity within firms can significantly shape workers' creativity directly or indirectly through numerous techniques (Volberda et al., 2020). Specifically, Previous research in the realm of social psychology of creativity indicates that particular circumstances may exert an indirect influence on creativity by affecting particular elements relevant to the creative process. Research should specifically examine how context-specific components interact with personal components to effectively

explain workers' creative performance (Sharifirad and Ataei, 2021). Scholars are expected to investigate the mechanisms through which context influences ingenuity and the relationships between individual and situational variables in this framework (Singh et al., 2023).

Employees represent a critical asset for organisational innovation; therefore, recent scholarly work indicates that human resource management can enhance creativity (Zahra et al., 2022). A segment of research examines the personal characteristics that may enhance employee creativity (Martinez-Caro et al., 2022), including innovative disposition, cognitive approach, and favourable or unfavourable impact (Fahad and Khairul, 2020). Supportive personal determinants may influence the extent to which employees recognise issues and pursue new knowledge in the pursuit of innovative concepts and resolutions. The majority of research notably embraces a psychological paradigm (Gong et al., 2021). Researchers recognise that individual psychological traits foster internal motivation, which enhances employees' creative engagement, including innate drive and sense of self-worth. Moreover, individuals' psychological characteristics are shaped by the organisational context (Amabile and Pillemer, 2019), underscoring the theoretical importance of investigating how organisational drivers may impact employees' psychological capital about creativity.

Research on creativity predominantly emphasises the role of contextualised predictors in enhancing or diminishing the influence of individual psychological factors on creativity (Zahra et al., 2022). This research suggests that leadership issues and job characteristics, as significant contextual factors, positively mediate the relationship between a person and innovation (Martinez-Caro et al., 2022). The main cause is that leaders and jobs with benefits that foster ingenuity correspond with employees' creative personal characteristics, potentially enhancing the probability that employees utilise their creativity and strengths for innovative accomplishments. This postulation aligns with trait theory (Madjar et al., 2021), which posits that a robust alignment between context and individual traits can enhance their prospective advantages for innovative results (Zahra et al., 2022). Supervisor behaviours and task characteristics that promote creativity are fundamental to the context's strength, potentially enhancing the psychological attributes linked to creativity.

Creativity is a crucial component of organisational life in contemporary settings, as the rapid changes in the global landscape have significantly impacted the operational environment.

### **2.1.2 Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

Sustainable competitive advantages refer to business resources, capabilities, or characteristics that are difficult to surpass or replicate, thereby offering a favourable or preeminent permanent posture relative to competitors. A firm possesses a sustainable competitive advantage once it attains distinct posture or attributes that differentiate the from rivals, rendering it exceptional in a particular industry. Sustainable competitive advantages are defined as those favourable competitive advantages that endure over an extended period. In the current competitive landscape, possessing a sustainable competitive advantage is essential for maintenance. The advantage can be assessed by



comparing the company's profits to those of its competitors in the market, with the expectation that the former should exceed the latter. Competition can be ascribed to innovations in business, technological advancements, and shifts in customer demand (Rego et al., 2020).

New routines, green products, and opportunities to satisfy customers and other stakeholders of the firm are needed to establish or enhance sustainable competitive advantage (Sharifirad and Ataei, 2021).

### **2.1.3 Overview of Fast-food Restaurants in Bayelsa State**

Mr Bigg's was Nigeria's first fast-food restaurant, opening its doors in 1986. Although UAC brought the idea of fast food to Nigeria about 35 years ago, Mr. Bigg's is recognised as the nation's first real fast-food restaurant. Since then, the fast-food sector in Nigeria and, consequently, in Bayelsa State has experienced tremendous expansion, with a large number of operators joining the market. In Bayelsa State, Nigeria, fast-food establishments provide a variety of quick-serve options with an emphasis on affordability and convenience. In addition to regional specialities like Jollof rice and other Nigerian cuisine, they frequently serve well-known items like burgers, fries, and chicken. Some establishments also accommodate local tastes and preferences, even though the emphasis is on speed and ease.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Out of numerous related theories relevant to this study, the current researcher's wisdom and the emphasis this theory places on competitive advantage underpin the study. Initially, the Resource-Based View (RBV) focused on identifying resource attributes that competitors cannot replicate. The two main tenets of the Resource-Based View (RBV) are resource heterogeneity, which holds that businesses have unique collections of resources, and resource immobility, which holds that these resources are hard to replicate or transfer, allowing for long-term competitive advantage.

For a resource to confer a sustained competitive advantage, it must possess four qualities as outlined by the Resource-Based View (RBV): it should be heterogeneous and categorised as valuable, inimitable, rare, and non-substitutable.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) has been criticised for its narrow focus, potential tautology, static nature, inability to adequately explain how resources generate strategic value or how dynamic capabilities are developed, and failure to take into account outside influences.

Despite the criticisms, the Resource-Based View is significantly related to this study in the sense that it emphasises long-term competitive advantage. The long-term competitive advantage will ensure continuous productivity in the context of the fast-food industry in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

Yongan et al. (2019) investigated the influence of management innovation and innovation in technology on the performance of organisations. The research employed structural equation modelling to analyse the collected data. The population of respondents is 344

CEOs in Pakistan and senior executives. The findings indicated that employee creativity, technology and managerial innovations positively impact the sustainability and performance of organisations.

Martinez-Caro et al (2022) investigate the interplay between social and performance management contexts in enhancing organisational innovation performance. The research involved a survey of 301 employees in Chinese firms. The data analysis results indicate that employee creativity, psychological safety, collectivism, and power distance influence innovation performance, with their effects fully mediated by the social context and performance management context.

Almrshed et al. (2023) in a study on how continuous competitive advantage was impacted by innovation culture in modern organisations, focused on 245 manufacturing-related SMES in Nigeria. Quantitative data was collected. Using structural equation modelling. The findings show that consumer preferences would not directly affect product quality, but that introducing advanced technology moderates the relationship between consumer preferences and market superiority. Product excellence and the corporate business model were significantly and positively correlated.

Dingqing et al (2024) in their study using panel data from 2012 to 2022, concentrated on the research focusing on Companies listed on the A-share market within China's 5 primary towns and cities. This research examines the influence of digital technology applications and innovation culture on competitive advantage. Diverse econometric methodologies are utilised, encompassing the two-stage least squares regression model, fixed effects model, and mediation impacts analysis. This study's findings from studies suggest that the rate of business growth significantly improves with the application of digital and innovation culture.

Based on the statement of problem and gaps in the literature, it is, therefore, the interest of the current researcher to examine innovative management and sustainable competitive advantage. This resulted in the formulation of the subsequent hypotheses:

H<sub>01</sub>: Innovation culture has no significant effect on sustainable competitive advantage

H<sub>02</sub>: Employee creativity has no significant influence on sustainable competitive advantage

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework



Source: Adapted from Uzokurt and Sen's (2018) & Zhou and Shalley (2019)

### 3.0 Methodology

The current study employed a cross-sectional design. Information from the Bayelsa State Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Investment indicated that there are 48 registered fast-food restaurants in the state. For proximity's sake and the difficulty in navigating the terrain, the study purposively used a sample of nine (9) out of the 48 restaurants. A structured questionnaire was administered on all the sixty (60) employees of the sampled restaurants.

The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was adapted from Uzokurt and Sen's (2018): Mohammad's (2018): Zhou and Shalley (2019) innovation management questionnaire. The data obtained from the field were analysed with Spearman rank correlation coefficient analysis.

### 4.0 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Hypothesis Testing

(i) **H<sub>01</sub>**: Innovation culture has no significant effect on sustainable competitive advantage

**Table 1: Spearman Correlation between innovation culture and sustainable competitive advantage**

Correlations			Innovation culture	Sustainable competitive advantage
Spearman's rho	Innovation culture	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.369**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007
		N	52	52
	Continuous competitive advantage	Correlation Coefficient	.369**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.
		N	52	52

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

Table 1 shows that innovation culture had a significant positive relationship with sustainable competitive advantage ( $r = 0.369$ ). The value of the significance of 0.007 ( $p < 0.01$ ) revealed a positive relationship.

(ii) **H<sub>02</sub>**: Employee creativity has no significant influence on sustainable competitive advantage



**Table 2: Spearman Correlation between employee creativity and sustainable competitive advantage**

Correlations			Employee creativity	Continuous competitive advantage
Spearman's rho	Employee creativity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.542**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	52	52
	Continuous competitive advantage	Correlation Coefficient	.542**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	52	52

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

Table 2 showed that employee creativity had a strong positive and significant relationship with continuous competitive advantage ( $r = 0.542$ ). The value of the significance, 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ), revealed a significant relationship.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

The results are discussed in this subsection.

### 4.2.1 Innovation culture and continuous competitive advantage

In the context of fast food in Bayelsa State, it was discovered that there was a positive and significant correlation between innovation culture and sustainable competitive advantage. This conclusion is strongly corroborated by the empirical research of Almrshed et al (2023), study conducted on how continuous competitive advantage was impacted by innovation culture in modern organizations, focused on 245 manufacturing-related SMEs in Nigeria, which posited that only those companies with strong innovation capabilities can make important contributions to their company's competitiveness. The current study also agrees with the study carried out by Dingqing et al (2024), which used panel data from 2012 to 2022, focused on companies listed on the A-share market within China's 5 primary towns and cities. The findings from the study suggest that the rate of business growth significantly improves with the application of digital and innovative culture.

The current study indicated that innovative culture in the context of fast-food restaurants in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, fosters creativity and risk-taking among employees, facilitating the development of innovative ideas and prospects essential for innovation. It is obvious from the findings that any fast food that embraces an innovation culture, which is a

response to the customers' centred needs, will have an edge over the competing firms in the industry. This will metamorphose into a sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **4.2.2 Employee creativity and continuous competitive advantage**

The findings indicated that employee creativity possesses a strong positive and significant relationship with continuous competitive advantage. This finding aligns with Yongan et al. (2019), who investigated the influence of management innovation and innovation in technology on the performance of organisations. The research employed structural equation modelling to analyse the collected data. The population of respondents is 344 CEOs in Pakistan and senior executives. The findings indicated that employee creativity, technology and managerial innovations positively impact the sustainability and performance of organisations. It also aligns with Martinez-Caro et al (2022), who investigate the interplay between social and performance management contexts in enhancing organisational innovation performance. The research involved a survey of 301 employees in Chinese firms. The data analysis results indicate that employee creativity, amongst others, influences competitiveness. Also, it can be deduced from the findings that the eateries that possess creative employees are better placed for lasting competitiveness in the fast-food restaurant industrial context.

### **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This section outlines the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

The research concluded that innovative management has a significant and positive relationship with sustainable competitive advantage. Fast-food restaurants with a strong innovation culture tend to attract creative and forward-thinking talent, which will in turn ensure the competitive sustainability of the restaurants. A diverse and innovative workforce can generate fresh ideas and drive ongoing innovation, enhancing the company's competitive edge. Employees' creativity is often more adaptable to change, which is essential in rapidly evolving industries. Restaurants can embrace new technologies and market shifts, helping the company maintain its competitive edge. Employee creativity can foster a culture of collaboration, where team members share and build on each other's ideas. Collaborative efforts can lead to more significant innovations that contribute to a sustainable competitive advantage.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

In line with the findings and the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Fast-food restaurants should encourage an innovative culture which entails all employees, regardless of their role, to contribute ideas and suggestions. Create a safe and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and heard. Fast-food restaurants should welcome employee creativity and give employees the autonomy to make decisions and implement their creative ideas within established guidelines.

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