BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF BREWERY FIRMS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
This study examined the relationship between the blue ocean strategy and the competitive advantage of breweries in South East Nigeria. Two objectives and hypotheses were formulated. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study population comprises 3467 staff of five (5) Breweries in South East Nigeria excluding clerical workers. The sample size of 358 was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the research hypotheses. It was revealed from the findings that there exists a positive significant relationship between cost-focus strategy and the corporate image of breweries in South East Nigeria, and between making the competition irrelevant and cost leadership of breweries in South East Nigeria. The study concluded that a positive relationship exists between the blue ocean strategy and the competitive advantage of the breweries in South East Nigeria.
KEYWORDS: *Blue Ocean Strategy, Competitive Advantage, Cost-Focus Strategy, Corporate Image, Making Competition Irrelevant and Cost Leadership*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of blue ocean strategy was in first introduced into the business landscape by Kim and Mauborgne in 2005 after fifteen years of research and after analyzing one hundred and fifty comprehensive strategic movements of 30 industries, reached a strategy they called the Blue Ocean Strategy, where they introduced different methods and techniques in how to use the Blue Ocean strategy to create a new demand in new markets and to stop efforts aimed at beating competition. They also stated that the Blue Ocean Strategy mainly involves rebuilding the boundaries of the market, and they stressed that companies that use the Blue Ocean Strategy focus on creating new growth and new value by addressing the problems of the product instead of improving the product itself (Rawabdehet, 2012).

The term of blue ocean is one of the modern terms in the field of business management in general and marketing management in particular, the name blue ocean strategy is adapted from the crystal-clear blue water, which is not dented bloody red water (also known as red ocean strategy), this water collectively forms the blue ocean. It is on those characteristics of clear blue water, that the philosophy quoted its name, and it entered the business world and has become one of the philosophies which is adopted by the organizations in their work under the name the Blue Ocean philosophy. Blue Ocean strategy is required by organizations to find or invade new markets that were not known previously for them and their competitors, in order to create a demand for their products and to find new investment opportunities in pursuit of sustainability, growth and to capture a potential target market with the aim of gaining competitive advantage over their competitors in the industry. This means that the organizations will create something different from others and produce something not produce previously; as well as their dramatically adaptation with the common core values for customers to form a new set of values without having any little competition (Kima, Yang & Kim,2007).

Traditionally, firms compete to capture the largest market share by focusing on differentiation, cost leadership, or focus (Porter, 1985). Blue Ocean rejects the fundamental tenet of conventional strategy: that a trade-off exists between value and cost. A rejection of the trade-off between low cost and differentiation implies a fundamental change in strategic mindset. In breweries' structural conditions are given, and firms are forced to compete. This theory is based on an intellectual worldview that academicians call the structural view or environmental determinism. According to this view, companies and managers are primarily at the mercy of economic forces greater than themselves. Blue ocean strategies, by contrast, are based on a worldview in which the actions and beliefs of industry players can reconstruct market boundaries and industries.

The birth of the blue ocean dates back to a landmark achievement made by a Canadian firm in the circus industry named Cirque du Soleil. Cirque du Soleil's development of the blue ocean strategy followed demands for alternative forms of entertainment-ranging from various kinds of urban live entertainment to sporting events to home entertainment-cast. Chan-Kim and Mauborgne (2005) reveal that children's demand for play stations rather than a visit to the traveling circus resulted in Cirque du Soleil's steady decline in audiences. However, declining revenue and profits brought about Cirque du Soleil's remarkable achievement. The growth was impressive because it was achieved in a declining industry. Another compelling aspect of Cirque du Soleil's success is that it did not win by taking customers from the already shrinking circus industry, which historically catered to children. It did not compete with Ringling Bros, and Barnum & Bailey. Instead, it created uncontested new market space that made the competition irrelevant. It appealed to a new group of customers and corporate clients prepared to pay a price several times as great as a traditional circus for an unprecedented entertainment experience. The implication of these is that by using the Blue Ocean Strategy, each company can find unique ways to discover new market space. It is also important to note that all companies have in common the need to focus on noncustomers and be aware that most blue markets are often created within the existing red oceans (Kabukin, 2014). In the words of Chan-Kim and Renée-Mauborgne (1997), Blue Ocean is about creating new farmland and not dividing the existing ones. It utilizes disruptive innovation to create a new market. A disruptive innovation is an innovation that creates a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network, displacing established market leaders and alliances that organizations can apply to create new market spaces and make the competition irrelevant.

Brewery firms in south east today are confronted with varying challenges ranging from the need to cut cost of production in production of high-quality products, gain a good corporate image in the industry and to increase their market share. The level of competition in the brewing industry has continue to experienced unprecedented increase, which seemly force most firms in the industry to indulge in fierce competition and mounting high pressure on the sales personnel all in effort to create a new set of customers and take hold of large market share. Most of all these firms have not been able to come up with other strategies to make their competitors irrelevance in the industry or a strategy to assists these firms in targeting specific niches in the industry. Thes challenges when adequately met have the tendency to give them edge over the rivals in the industry. Giving the increasing need for firms to adopt new strategies such as blue ocean strategy in doing business, scholars like Mohammad and Tareq (2018), Jen-te, (2012), Ehsan, (2013), Andrew, Andre van and Roy, (2009), Al Attar, (2010), Abdulraheem, (2016), Zhao and Jinwei, (2010), Sushil, (2006), Rawabdeh, (2012), Rauf, (2010) and Odila, (2014) have all conducted a study on the role and importance of blue ocean strategy in business organizations, there is still scarcity of research on the relationship between cost-focus strategy and corporate image, and making the competition irrelevant and cost leadership in the Nigerian brewery industry. It therefore of paramount importance to examine the relationship between these strategy in brewery firms in South-East Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the nature of relationship between blue ocean strategy and competitive advantage of brewery firms in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to

1. Ascertain the nexus between cost-focus strategy and the corporate image of breweries in South East Nigeria.
2. Determine the degree of relationship between making the competition irrelevant and cost leadership of breweries in South East Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Blue Ocean Strategy

Hamoody and Hussein (2020) further said that Blue Ocean is a strategy that exemplifies an unrivaled market environment free from competitive struggle. In this market, the authors posited that the organization can position itself in a superior market position with superior offerings. Alam and Islam (2017) analyze the Blue Ocean Strategy as a concept that allows organizations to think and innovate in their business to help develop financial and economic sectors and create sustainable profit. The Blue Ocean Strategy offers consumers a framework to establish undisputed market space and change concentration from the current competition to creating innovative value and demand.

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Furthermore, Shafiq, Tasmin, Takala, Qureshi, and Rashid (2018) state that competition becomes irrelevant with the Blue Ocean strategy, not just as warfare with other organizations' markets or industries. The Blue Ocean creates an undisputed market space through value innovation. Rezeki, Sentanu, Sanawiri, Shankar, and Nguyen (2019) mention that the Blue Ocean Strategy hints at a business opportunity as an item with no challenge or less challenge. Rahman and Choudhury (2019) noted that the Blue Ocean Strategy is a theory that allows one to think and innovate for future business. Also, it helps a company get backing from financial and economic segments. Blue ocean strategy deals with the problem of success because the organizational model "makes competition insignificant. Shafiq, Tasmin, Qureshi, and Takala (2019) analyze the Blue Ocean Strategy as a coherent strategic model for constructing new markets and industries, where demand is created rather than fought, and competition becomes unimportant. The Blue Ocean Strategy has five shapes: creating a new undisputed market space; competition does not matter when making a new demand; differentiation and cost achievement breakthrough; and value price compromise.

Cost Focus Strategy

Focus is another of Porter's generic strategies that centers on precisely targeted customers or market sections. According to Islami, Mustafa, and Topuzovs (2020), a firm's focus strategy involves concentrating on a specified geographical market, line of product, or specific consumers. It makes the business efficiently serve a specific customer or market segment (Jamal, Jacob, Bartikowski, & Slater, 2021). This view is supported by Akintokunbo (2018), who reported that focus strategy exploits market development or penetration to meet the needs of secluded geographic areas. Porter's (1980) focus strategy assists firms in targeting specific niches in the industry like a group of buyers, a limited section of a specified line of a product, a regional or geographic market, or a focus market having different and unique options (Kitheka & Bett, 2019). This can be achieved through meeting customer needs such as distinct financing, inventory, or resolving service issues. This strategy concentrates on a specific target or market segment (Ali & Anwar, 2021). once the differentiation strategy or the cost leadership strategy fails, an organization can adopt a focus strategy (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Also, this strategy can be implemented for time-limited products or services.

The focus strategy targets specific segments of the market by differentiating customer need to serve them at their best affordable prices. A focus strategy enables a company to maximize its unique, distinctive capability to gain new market share (Kuratko, Hornsby, & Hayton, 2015). The generic focus strategy focuses on choosing an industry's narrow competitive scope. The focuser selects a segment or group of segments in the industry and tailors its strategy to serve them to the exclusion of others. According to Kogo (2013), focus strategy has two variants: In cost focus, a firm seeks a cost advantage in its target segment, while in differentiation focus; it seeks differentiation in its target segment. Both variants of the focus strategy rest on differences between a focuser's target segment and other segments in the industry.

Make The Competition Irrelevant

Blue ocean strategy explains the success factors for organization patterns by "making the competition irrelevant." When planning a strategy, competition between organizations must be avoided. Suppose the competitors are involved in the head-to-head competition. In that case, the organization should consider innovation as an alternative solution because hyper-competition may result in a decrease in profits as a result of competition costs. BOS stresses the value of innovation. It focuses on brand development as described (Vinayan, Jayashree, & Marthandan, 2012). Studies about BOS have attracted researchers' interest worldwide (Rebon, Ocariz, Gerrikagoitia, & Alzua-Sorzabal. 2015). The idea that an organization 'should efficiently use resources and minimize the competition to get profits' is one of the reasons to consider BOS. It can be applied across firms or sectors. It is not limited to just one company. In today's environment, most firms operate under intense competition and try to do everything to gain market share. This situation usually occurs when the business operates in a saturated market, the 'Red Ocean.' When there is limited room for growth, businesses seek avenues to find a new business where they can enjoy an uncontested market share.

Blue Ocean exists when there is potential for higher profits. The strategy aims to capture new demand and to make competition irrelevant by introducing a product with superior features. It helps the company make huge profits as the product can be priced steeply because of its unique features. The strategy is not about operational effectiveness or trying to be better, faster, or cheaper than a competitor. This is simply being more efficient than competitors. Nor is it a strategy about benchmarking or trying to do the same things competitors does, but it is a strategy for doing things better than others. In Blue Ocean, competition is irrelevant because the game's rules are waiting to be set. The organizations caught in the red ocean follow a conventional approach, racing to beat the competition by building a defensible position within the existing industry order. Surprisingly, the creators of Blue Ocean did not use the competition as their benchmark. Instead of beating the competition, they focus on making it irrelevant

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by creating a leap in value for buyers and, thus, their organizations, opening up new and uncontested market space. When it comes to Red Ocean Strategies, the point is not that these strategies are wrong but that they are the ones everyone uses. None can stand out unless they find a strategy that gives them a wide-open blue ocean ahead (Moon, 2014).

Competitive Advantage

Purba (2019) stated that competitive advantage is a company that has several positions where competitors cannot imitate the company's strategy so that the company gets sustainable benefits, while Elrefae and Nuseir (2022) went further to say that competitive advantage depends on how an organization defensively acts in front of its rivals. It is the strategy the company implements to create or provide more value to its consumers than other competitors (Wira & Yasa, 2018). Maintaining this competitive advantage, value, and quality is essential for the company to survive among the increasing number of competitors (Mahardika & Wayansantika, 2021). A company that can maintain its competitive advantage and has its own characteristics among its peers will add value for consumers and increase its sales level. Competitive advantage is an advantage over competitors that offer lower value or provide more significant benefits because of a higher price (Sukawati, Widiarta, Santika, & Jatra, 2020). Competitive advantage is obtained when an organization develops or acquires a set of attributes that allow it to outperform its competitors (Wang, 2014). To gain a competitive advantage, firms need to focus on reducing production costs and still meet customer needs; also, if the company has something its competitors do not have, does something better than other enterprises, or can do something others cannot do (Wolak-Tuzimek & Duda, 2021).

The ability to create and maintain a competitive advantage in areas determined by internal and external conditions is required to compete effectively in the market (Negulescu, 2019). These conditions include political, economic, social, ecological, and technological environments. The internal sources of competitive advantage comprise inherent characteristics of strength, radical innovation, knowledge management, economies of scale, human resources, and organizational culture. Competitive advantage can also come from various company activities such as designing, producing, mark eting, delivering, and supporting its products. According to Armstrong and Kotler (2012), several ways to gain competitive advantage are establishing the correct position, obtaining a corporate image, gaining new market share, maximizing sales, and creating effective business performance.

Corporate Image

The image concept emerged from myriads of disciplines, such as marketing and public relations; environment and management are also collectively intertwined. Image is the derivation of the word 'icon,' which means the mental recreation of the visualized face of any given entity. It refers to impressions on a person, enterprise, product, or situation created in one's mind to help the person remember and recognize the entity. Image has the character of guiding individuals' purchase behaviors; on a broader scale, it can be defined by employing adjectives such as positive, negative, and average. In everyday life, the image refers to positive or negative perceptions created consciously or unconsciously about people, enterprises, cities, or countries (Akdu, 2017). Image is recognized as stakeholder perceptions based on an enterprise's short-term impressions, whereas corporate image refers to the specifications of manufactured products or services. It entails achievements and impacts that a company has attained since its establishment. "Corporate image" refers to all the behavioral, linguistic, and visual components that make up a corporation (Okoisama, Eke, & Anyanwu, 2017).

Corporate image is the picture emerging in the mind of the target mass that many firms intend to reach. It is the accumulation of all judgments that exist in target customers' minds regarding the attributes associated with a given enterprise. According to Okoisama et al. (2017), corporate image is a collection of different stakeholders' perceptions about the organization. It is an overarching perception created from the direct or indirect outcomes of several official or informal signals coming from the organization. Consumers' reactions to a company's whole offering are called the corporate image. It is also called the public's beliefs, ideas, and perceptions about a business. In addition, corporate image is a compilation of all analyses related to how enterprises are recognized and perceived by the audience.

Abdulmalik and Ishola (2020) state that corporate image is a function of accumulating a person's consumption and purchasing experiences over time. It has two main components: functional and emotional. The functional part of a business's image is tied to the quantifiable qualities of its goods and services. At the same time, the emotional aspect is linked to the psychological side, representing how people feel and see the firm (Kotler & Keller, 2015). These analyses comprise the entire corporate image (Cetin & Tekiner, 2015). Corporate image refers to how a business or organization, its operations, and its goods or services are viewed by its various people. It concerns how firms are viewed by the general public and the image that business projects. Organizations' most valuable audiences are their employees, frequently referred to in marketing as the company's internal clients (Okwuraiwe, Ezenwaka, Mojekeh & Okorie, 2018). Information and assumptions regarding the company's employee, employer, customer, community, supplier, and corporate citizen roles are included in its corporate image (Adeniji, Osibanjo, Abiodun, & Oni-Ojo, 2015).

Cost Leadership

Porter (1985) proposes a cost leadership strategy as a successful way to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by reducing and controlling costs. It is a strategy to produce per-unit costs of a product at a low price compared with goods offered in the market (Amalia, 2015). Cost leadership strategy is brought forward as a cost advantage that reflects the sale of services and goods at a lower price than rivals regarding production and design (Bounds, Mbombo, & Rossouw, 2018). Cost leadership is among the dominant strategies in strategic management (Atikiya, Mukulu, Kihoro, & Waiganjo, 2015). It is known for its practical significance in managing costs to achieve superior performance. Hilman and Kaliappen (2014) operationalized cost leadership strategy through operational efficiency, economies of scope, reduction of transaction costs, and improvement of business processes, while Nyauncho and Nyamweya (2015) operationalized the variable through efficiency, mass production, high volume sales, control over the supply cycle and operational excellence. It is the most crucial possession that manufacturing firms adopt (Echwa & Murigi, 2019).

Cost leadership is the strategy that focuses on producing standardized products at a meager unit cost for consumers. Companies with many competitors and a broad target market implement it. It emphasizes companies whose consumers are price-sensitive. Cost leadership has two types. The first type is the low-cost strategy. It is a strategy in which a company attempts to gain a competitive advantage by reducing costs below that of its competitor (Griffin, 2005). The second type is cost leadership, which is the best value that gives products or services to a broad market but at the best price. Cost leadership strategy should not be considered an inferior product, but a product that has the same qualities as competitors at an appropriate price (Pulaj, 2014). A cost leadership strategy is viewed as the mechanism of establishing a competitive advantage by having the lowest cost of operation in the industry in comparison to the competitors, especially in a market where the price is an essential factor. Successful implementation of a cost leadership strategy creates barriers against competitors by charging lower prices, in which price-sensitive customers will choose products with the lowest price, gaining a more significant market share and pushing out competitors (Mahfod, Al-Haddad, & Upadhyaya, 2017). Cost leadership strategies have given the manufacturing industry a competitive edge over its rivals in winning the market in competitive business environments (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2019) without compromising product quality (Josiah & Nyagara, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the theory of structuralism and Reconstructionist theory because it sheds more light on and provides a deeper understanding of the dependent and independent variables of the study. The blue ocean strategy, which advocates the Reconstructionist view, seeks to shape the environment and is based on the presumption that it is possible and preferable in the right circumstances for companies to "reverse the structure-strategy sequence" and reshape their operating environment in a way that is most favorable to them. The competitive advantage structuralist view assumes that the operating environment is given and that the structure of the environment confronting the company determines the strategy that the company must follow; in their words, "structure shapes strategy." However, a critical difference between those strategies is that companies following the structuralist approach choose to compete based on either differentiation or low cost, while companies following the reconstructionist approach will pursue both differentiation and low cost at the same time.

Empirical Review

Miano (2017) investigated the Implementation of the Blue Ocean Strategy in Commercial Banks in Kenya. The study was a cross-sectional survey of commercial banks in Kenya. The population of this study was 43 commercial banks currently registered by the Central Bank of Kenya as of 30th June 2013, and all were targeted, from which 25 banks finally participated. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean, and standard deviation). The study found that the factors that should be reduced well below the banking industry's standard were time taken on queues, operating costs, overheads, and indirect costs.

Asogwa, ike, Adeleke, and Ekoja (2017) investigated the Impact of the Blue Ocean Strategy on the Value Innovation of Selected Firms in the FMCG and Telecommunications Sectors in Southwest Nigeria. A survey design was used. The non-probability convenience sampling was adopted to determine a sample size of 197 out of a total population of 402. Correlation analysis was used to analysed the data. Findings show that the Blue Ocean strategy has a significant positive relationship with the firm's value innovation, and new-demand creation strategy positively impacts the company regarding revenue and profit growth potentials.

Samsul and Mohammad (2017) studied the Impact of the Blue Ocean Strategy on Organizational Performance: A literature review toward implementation logic. University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh). This study is based on the pros and cons of the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), which offers users a framework for creating uncontested market space and diverts the views from the current competition to create innovative value and demand. The result found that BOS positively affects the organization's performance if applied in organizations. It is recommended that the organization do an in-depth analysis of BOS before implementation to see its suitability, considering the company size, industry condition, and adaptability.

Mohammad and Naye (2017) examined the Effect of the Blue Ocean Strategy on Increasing competitive Advantage in Commercial Banks (Irbid District) by requesting the opinions of a sample from three management levels within commercial banks; 135 questionnaires were randomly distributed to managers in these three levels, the returned suitable questionnaires were 122. The results were analysed using the mean and standard deviation in addition to Descriptive Statistics and the simple regression coefficient analysis. Results showed a strong, significant, and positive influence between (creating new value, reducing cost, and raising facilitating actions) and competitive advantage, and there is not a significant influence between eliminating business factors and competitive advantage.

Mohammad and Tareq (2018) studied the impact of applying the Blue Ocean Strategy to achieve a Competitive Advantage: A Field Study Conducted in Jordanian Telecommunication Companies. The sample consists of 100 administrators. The study used descriptive statistical methods as well as linear regression analysis. Findings show that the elimination process, reduction process, increasing process, and innovation process significantly affect the achievement of competitive advantage.

Okechukwu, Ekwochi, and Eze (2018) examined the Effect of the blue ocean strategy application on the market share in Nigerian telecommunication Firms and identified the impact of the blue ocean strategy on customer satisfaction in the Nigerian telecommunication industry in Southeast Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive research design. Data was obtained from 225 through the use of a questionnaire. The hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression with a statistical package for social sciences (IBM, SPSS version 23). Findings revealed that the blue ocean strategy positively affects market share and customer satisfaction in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study employed descriptive survey design.

Population of the Study: The population for this work includes 3,467 staff of five (5) Breweries in Southeast, excluding clerical workers: Nigeria Breweries PLC (Ama) Night Mile, Enugu State. Nigeria Breweries PLC Aba, Abia State. Nigeria Breweries PLC (Consolidated) Awo Omamma, Imo State, International Breweries, (Sammiller) Onitsha, Anambra state and Golden Guinea Breweries Umuahia Abia state.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique: Taro Yamane formula was applied to determine a sample size of 358 which was used for the study.

Method of Data Collection: Bowley's proportional allocation formula was used to determine the proportion of the questionnaire administered to the study's breweries. The number of questionnaire administered to each of firms are: Nigeria Breweries, Night Mile, Enugu Stat 85, Nigeria Breweries PLC Aba, 66, Nigeria Breweries PLC (Consolidated) Awo Omamma, Imo State, 56, International Breweries, (Sammiller) Onitsha, Anambra state, 81 and Golden guinea Breweries Umuahia Abia state 70.

Validity of the Instrument: Face and content validity were employed to test whether the instrument could measure what it was supposed to do.

Reliability of the Instrument: The study adopted Cronbach's alpha reliability technique, and the result was 0.860, which is above the 0.696 benchmark of acceptance of an instrument as reliable as asserted by Suwannoppharat and Kaewa-ard (2015).

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Method of Data Analysis: Research questions were answered using descriptive statistics. In contrast, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient with SPSS version 22 was used to test the five research hypotheses at $p<0.05$ significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Presentation

Table 4.1 Returned and Unreturned Questionnaire for the Selected Breweries in South East, Nigeria

Analysis of Returned and Unreturned Questionnaire for the Selected Breweries in South East, Nigeria

Returned (Valid)	334	93.3%
Unreturned	24	6.7%
Total questionnaires administered	358	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4.1 reveals that out of the 358 copies of the questionnaire administered to the selected Breweries firms in southeast Nigeria, 334 copies of the questionnaire, signifying 93.3% were returned valid, and 24 copies of questionnaires, signifying 6.7% were not returned. This justifies using only 334 copies of the questionnaire out of the 358 administered to the selected brewery firms in southeast Nigeria for data analysis.

Test of Hypothesis

Test of Hypothesis One

H_O: There is no significant relationship between cost focus strategy and corporate image in breweries of South East Nigeria.

Correlations

		Cost focus strategy	corporate Image
Cost focus strategy	Pearson Correlation	1	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	334	334
corporate Image	Pearson Correlation	.832**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	334	334

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.2 Shows the result of the correlation analysis and test of hypothesis between cost focus strategy and corporate image of brewery in South East Nigeria. The result revealed that a strong positive relationship exists between cost focus strategy and the corporate image of the brewery in South East Nigeria with a correlation coefficient of 0.832. The result reveals that the relationship observed between cost focus strategy and the corporate image of the brewery in Southeast East Nigeria is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 (p-value < .05); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. It is therefore stated that there is a significant relationship between cost focus strategy and the corporate image of the brewery in South East Nigeria.

Test of hypothesis Two

H_O: There is no significant relationship between making the competition irrelevant and cost leadership of breweries in South East Nigeria.

Correlations

		Make competition irrelevant	Cost leadership Strategy
Make competition irrelevant	Pearson Correlation	1	.692**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	334	334
Cost leadership Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.692**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	334	334

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3 shows the result of the correlation analysis and test of the hypothesis between making the competition irrelevant and the cost leadership strategy of the brewery in South East Nigeria. The result revealed a strong positive relationship between making completion irrelevant and the cost leadership strategy of the brewery in

South East Nigeria, with a correlation coefficient of 0.692. The result reveals that the relationship observed between making competition irrelevant and the cost leadership strategy of the breweries in South East Nigeria is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 (p-value < .05), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. It is therefore stated that there is a significant relationship between making competition irrelevant and the cost leadership strategy of the breweries in South East Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result obtained from the test of hypothesis one shows that there is a significant positive relationship between cost focus strategy and the corporate image of brewery in South East Nigeria. This finding implies that a change in cost-focus strategy impacts the corporate image. A positive relationship means that an increase in cost-focus strategy by the brewery will lead to a resultant increase in corporate image. This is shown from the result obtained in the study; thus, when breweries concentrate on a specified geographical market, line of a product, or specific consumers. It makes them serve a specific customer or market segment efficiently, and this can be achieved through meeting customer needs such as distinct financing, inventory, or resolving service issues. When this is done well, it will help create a positive impact on the consumers and stakeholders. This result aligns with findings of previous studies such as Tabugbo and Audu (2023), which examined the impact of Blue Ocean Strategy on the Non-financial Performance of BN Ceramics Company and found that there exists positive significant relationships between uncontested market space strategy and customer satisfaction and between cost focus strategy and customer loyalty. The study recommends that BN Ceramics vigorously pursue uncontested market space and price focus strategies to sustain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Obola, Kwendo, and Otuya (2021) examined the Influence of Competitive Strategies on Customer Loyalty. The study sought to determine if and how cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies influence customer loyalty in Kenya Commercial Bank South Sudan (KCBSS). The study found that competitive strategies influenced customer loyalty, and the most dominant competitive strategy was focus strategy. They concluded that the three generic strategies influence customer loyalty. They recommended that the management of KCBSS should improve these competitive strategies if they wish to improve customer loyalty levels.

The result obtained from the test of hypothesis two shows a significant positive relationship between making the competition irrelevant and the cost leadership strategy of the breweries in South East Nigeria. This finding implies that a change in competition impacts cost leadership strategy. A positive relationship means that an increase in the brewery's making the competition irrelevant will lead to an increase in cost leadership strategy. This is shown from the result obtained in the study; thus, when breweries aim to do things better than others, capture new demand, and make competition irrelevant by introducing a product with superior features? It will help the Company to make huge profits as the product can be priced precipitously because of its unique features. The brewery should not only aim to outplay their competition but completely ignore them by searching and entering new and uncontested markets. What is required of them is to find out what customers seek when they buy a product or service and then define a total solution by producing or distributing goods and services at a lower cost than competitors within the industry. This result aligns with the findings of previous studies, such as Muhammad Shafiq (2019), which examined blue ocean strategy and innovation performance mediated by innovation strategies. The impact of all five constructs of BOS Creating New Uncontested Market Space, making the competition irrelevant, creating and capturing new demand, achieving differentiation and cost, and breaking value-cost trade-off was identified with innovation performance. findings show that three BOS constructs are significant and positively related to Innovation Performance also Shafiq, Rosmaini, Imran and Takala (2019) went further to examined A New Framework of Blue Ocean Strategy for Innovation Performance In Manufacturing Sector Malaysian and finds out that, three of the BOS constructs creating new uncontested market space, making competition irrelevant and creating new demand significantly and positively impact innovation performance. The researcher proposes a newly updated framework for BOS, which is better for innovation performance.

CONCLUSION

Based on the hypotheses testing, findings, and discussions of results, the study concludes that a positive relationship exists between blue ocean strategy and the competitive advantage of a brewery in South East Nigeria. The findings from the study show that the blue ocean strategies of the breweries, as measured by cost focus strategy and make competition irrelevant has an impact on competitive advantage as captured by corporate image and cost leadership strategy. Hence, the study concludes that when breweries focus on serving new customers to create a new demand rather than competing with existing markets by providing cheaper or better product versions. This will make the business more competitive, gain market share, and create sustainable profit to sustain the Company in economic crises.

Implications of Findings

The findings from this study have the following implications:

1. Breweries should reconstruct their market boundaries by exploring noncustomers instead of looking for existing ones.
2. Breweries should refrain from competing in existing markets and focus more on improving the pain point of their customers.

Recommendations

1. They should concentrate more on reconstructing their market boundaries by exploring more noncustomers.
2. Brewery managers should explore opportunities in the market space by engaging more in market creation for future businesses.

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