

Strategic Alignment and Organizational Responsiveness: A Process-Orientated Perspective

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Abstract: Most enterprise structures are based either on function or division orientation, with little or no process orientation. Functionally organized organisations often find it difficult to meet customer needs seamlessly across different functions because no one "owns" the issue of how long it takes or how much it costs to fulfill customer requests, while divisionally organized companies, which are mostly oriented toward their products building and market demand for the products they are able to produce, neglect customer needs and business relationships. This study examined the influence of strategic alignment on organizational responsiveness in medium scale enterprises in the north-central zone of Nigeria. To achieve this objective, the variables were operationalized and a model specified. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Data were gathered from primary source and the study hypothesis was tested using the Multiple Regression Technique. Strategic alignment was found to have significant influence on organizational responsiveness in medium scale enterprises in North- Central Nigeria from the result of the regression analysis. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the leadership of business enterprises should adopt working systems that encourage inclusiveness and free flow of communication while encouraging employees to maintain a healthy level of autonomy in the performance of their duties.

Keywords- Strategic Alignment; Process, Structure; Design; Responsiveness

JEL Classification: M10; M15

Introduction

Despite being essential to an organization's operation, business processes have received little attention in managerial studies for a long time. This is mostly because departments within organizations are organized according to functional or product-oriented criteria (Bankole, 2011). A growing emphasis on the horizontal view of business operations and the alignment of organizational systems towards business processes as a key management paradigm has become necessary due to rising competition in terms of cost, quality, and service, as well as inefficiencies of functional hierarchies. An entrepreneur can maintain optimism even when faced with unforeseen obstacles when they have a dependable process or system in place (Ayala & Manzano, 2014). Businesses are under increasing pressure to concentrate on the management, design, and redesign of their business processes in order to better satisfy customers' growing demands about the timeliness, quality, and dependability of their offerings. The management of costs associated with processes is another factor driving the focus on business processes.

According to Hofferbeth (2017), Nigeria has difficulties creating a strong atmosphere for entrepreneurship. Hofferberth discussed a number of topics, including security concerns, uneven political climate, insufficient infrastructure, restricted access to credit facilities, and contradictory

governmental regulations. Consumers are always asking for low-cost, high-quality goods and services. At the moment, the majority of enterprise structures are either product- or function-based, with very little to no process orientation. Because no one "owns" the problem of how long it takes or how much it costs to fulfill customer requests, functionally organized organizations frequently struggle to meet customer expectations across different departments (Davenport, 1995). The same holds true for divisionally organized businesses, which are primarily focused on creating and supplying demand for their products, neglecting customer needs and their business relationships (Hernaus, 2018). Inefficiencies of these two most commonly present structures, in addition to emerging business trends, place the emphasis on a process-based organization as one of the possible solutions. This study therefore seeks to answer the question: to what extent does strategic alignment influence organization responsiveness?

Strategic Alignment

The correlation between an organization's strategy and its information system or process is known as strategic alignment (Luftman, 2000). It is the procedure by which a planned strategy is put into action and spread across the entire company. It entails coordinating the strategy with the personnel, governance, structure, and culture of the company. To maintain a "balance" or "fit" with the external

environment, strategic planning must adapt as the environment does, since it is always changing. Organizations create their core values based on an evolutionary coherence between the environment, their specific mission, and their competencies in a complex environment where the primary question is "what to do" rather than "how to do it" (Bonne, 2004). Nonetheless, the organization must support the "what to do" even if the "how to do" is not its main concern. This suggests that the organization strategy must be supported by and aligned with the business processes and information system. A company's capacity to build its procedures and plans on the goods it produces determines its long-term success. Effectiveness inside an organization requires alignment. Strategic alignment, according to Aversano, Grasso, and Tortorella (2013), is the result of the organization's IT commitment and business direction working together, and it is thought to increase business success. It is still true that a key component of organizational business performance is strategic alignment (Aversano et al., 2013; Kwanroengjai et al., 2014; Gerow, Grover, Thatcher, & Roth, 2014). An organization that is well-aligned has a shared understanding of its objectives and strategies. As a result, the organization's components, people, and roles all work toward the same goal (Fonvielle & Carr 2001). In addition to setting itself apart from the competition through a distinctive or superior strategy, a business may also stand out from the crowd by ensuring that the strategy is implemented throughout the entire organization.

Four elements are necessary for strategic business alignment, according to Henderson & Venkatraman's (1993) Strategic Alignment Model (SAM): business strategy, information technology (IT) strategy, organizational infrastructure and processes, and IT infrastructure and procedures. They proposed that strategy entails both strategy formulation and strategy implementation, and that management's ability to strike a strategic balance between an organization's market position and the development of its support structures for business execution determines a company's performance. It is crucial to remember that strategic fit is a dynamic process that involves constant adaptation and change across a variety of dimensions, including structural, social, cultural, and strategic (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1993). It is neither an event nor a static, one-dimensional component or process. Work units transform from functional departments to process teams, simple tasks become multi-dimensional work, people's roles change from controlled to empowered, performance measures and compensation shift from activity to results, advancement criteria change from performance to ability, values change from protective to productive, managers become coaches instead of supervisors, the organizational structure becomes flat instead of hierarchical, and executives become leaders instead of scorekeepers, to facilitate strategic alignment. (McCormack & Johnson, 2001). According to Labovitz & Rosansky (1997), alignment depends on the vertical and horizontal planes. The organization, its competencies, its personnel and resource availability, and its

strategy are all included in the vertical axis. The organization's methods for producing what, on the other hand, make up the horizontal axis.

The integration of all competencies and resources around a single objective is made possible by alignment, which denotes a shared direction and purpose. The term "vertical alignment" refers to the movement of an organization's purpose and vision together with particular strategic objectives down the organizational structure. Thus, each department's performance plan needs to be adapted from the corporate strategy. Harmonizing strategic goals and performance metrics across several company units describes horizontal alignment. For the business management to have enough information to use as a foundation for making strategic decisions, they must be comparable. Alignment is a critical component of organizational effectiveness, according to Fonvielle and Carr (2001), who also created a six-step process for achieving strategic alignment- a clear statement of the organization's primary strategic drivers and areas of concentration for success; the establishment of crucial strategic goals; the creation of performance metrics for each of these goals; communication to ensure sure that all parties are aware of the measurements and how they relate to the strategic goals; linkage of each measure to a formal feedback and recognition system and dissemination of results; and formally reviewing the performance of the goals and implement corrective actions. Applications of information systems in business settings have the potential to boost an organization's performance through increased productivity, innovation, or the capacity to scan the business environment for opportunities and threats (Sugiharto, Sulistiowati, Nofiyanti, 2016). However, a number of factors have been found to be silent barriers to successfully implementing a strategy in any organization, including unclear strategies with conflicting priorities, ineffective top management, inappropriate leadership styles-too top-down or too laissez-faire-poor coordination between the various business divisions and functions, a lack of leadership skills, and poor vertical communication (Beer et al., 2005). When a strategy's execution goes wrong, it is referred to as misalignment.. When people are not in alignment, they find themselves working toward opposing objectives. At that point, the organization's needs are subordinated to individual or functional goals, and the activities lose their effectiveness. Fonvielle and Carr (2001) state that there are various ways to indicate this state: People who have different aims or who agree on goals but disagree on how to achieve them; rival groups within the organization that impede commitment to common goals; members of the group who are not persuaded of the necessity of suggested action; and individuals who are unaware of the organization's objectives. When people are not in alignment, they work toward conflicting objectives, activities lose their effectiveness, and the demands of the organization are predominated by functional or individual objectives, employee morale and output decline, and the company is more open to attack from rivals and other forces.

Organization Responsiveness

Customer responsiveness is defined by Kumar & Singh (2017) as a company's capacity to react quickly to the demands and desires of its clients as well as to shifting market conditions. Customer responsiveness, according to Alireza, Anahita, Somayeh, Arian, and Amin (2011), is meeting customers' rightful demands when they're due. Pehrsson (2014) described it as an organization's involvement of its clients in decision-making processes related to value-added activities including problem-solving, relationship-building, and service customization. According to Grandey, Goldberg, and Pugh (2011), responsiveness—which refers to an employee's obligation to swiftly answer to customers' requirements and requests—is a key component of service excellence. In fact, a company's capacity to adequately address the wants of its clients is among the key factors influencing its performance in cutthroat marketplaces (Jayachandran, Hewett & Kaufman, 2004). Quickly attending to client needs can have a good impact and establish the company as a pioneer in the industry, which will improve the company's performance. A firm gains a differentiation-based competitive advantage and ultimately improve performance by outperforming its competitors in understanding, identifying, and satisfying the evolving needs of its customers. This is necessary to achieve superior customer responsiveness (Alireza et al., 2011).

The Process Orientation of Strategic Alignment

Business process orientation is a philosophy that makes it easier for resources and information to flow both vertically and horizontally, which is essential for achieving corporate goals. It looks at organizations from the perspective of their clients. According to research, process orientation can improve both short- and long-term performance by decreasing inter-functional conflict and enhancing interdepartmental connectivity and integration (Willaert, Van den Bergh, Willems, & Deschoolmeester, 2011). It centers on the actions that provide value within or between businesses; in other words, it is focused on the activities that are a part of business processes. The increased integration and coordination of several organizational functions into a cohesive, interconnected unit is a hallmark of process orientation. This allows for the consideration of the responsibilities played by each individual activity as well as its overall impact on the organization (Kaniški & Vineck, 2018). Process orientation makes organizational structures and business processes more easily coordinated and provides a horizontal viewpoint on company activity.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the Nadler and Tushman (1988) model, alignment theory seeks to address the necessity of coherence across an organization's cultural, structural, and strategic components. The fundamental tenet of the concept is that each element or

component must be directed and organized in a way that complements the others in order to achieve effectiveness (Nadler and Tushman, 1988). There appears to be reciprocal influence between the components of an organization based on their interactions. Therefore, in order to maximize outcomes, they must be adjusted. One of the main issues facing organizational design scholars is still making the necessary connections and alignments between the components of the organization (Kristof, 1996). Semler (1997) examined the significance of this link by expanding on the basic model developed by Nadler and Tushman to analyse the importance of this relationship. The strategic, structural, and cultural elements must agree rather than clash in order for there to be a strong alignment (Merron, 1994).

Two categories of organizational alignment were identified by Kathuria et al. (2007): vertical and horizontal (lateral). Vertical alignment focuses on how various departments relate their functional goals to that of the organization or business unit, emphasizing alignment within each function. This kind of alignment places a strong emphasis on the duties and responsibilities of various teams, departments, and work groups. It also closely connects various structural components to the organization's business operations. In order to improve employee performance, it emphasizes how crucial it is for human resource policy to achieve internal coherence and consistency (Gratton & Truss, 2003). Both intra- and cross-functional integration are referred to as horizontal alignment. According to Middleton and Harper (2004), alignment is essential since it permits businesses to respond to the external environment and so perform effectively.

More dynamic understandings have been argued for by contemporary conceptualizations, implying that different sources of alignment must be simultaneously focused on. As to Alagaraja et al. (2015), strategic perspectives on alignment highlight the importance of attending to customer needs and other external environment requirements. Symmetry in organizational structure and design, which permits process optimization through cross-functional behavior, has been highlighted by relational viewpoints (Weiser, 2000). According to Schneider et al. (2003), goals and objectives at various organizational levels must be fit, achieve congruence, consistency, alignment, and match objectives at multiple levels in the organisation.

Empirical Review

Ghonim, Khashaba, Al-Najaar, & Khashan (2020) investigated the impact of strategic alignment on decision effectiveness. Using a self-administered questionnaire, primary data were gathered from 383 employees of the Directorate of Health Affairs in the Egyptian governorate of Dakahlia. The gathered data was analyzed using the PLS-SEM methodology. The findings showed that responsive decision effectiveness and its dimensions are highly and favorably impacted by strategic alignment, highlighting the significance of taking into account all four strategic alignment

dimensions in an integrated model to maximize the impact on decision effectiveness.

Sardana, Terziovski, and Gupta (2016) investigated the impact of manufacturing operations' functionality, strategic alignment, and responsiveness to market requirement for customization on firm performance using a sample based on the Indian manufacturing industry and the dynamic capacities theory. Confirmatory factor analysis was utilized in a multivariate regression approach. Results showed that the single most important factor influencing a firm's performance is its operations' strategic alignment with its goals. It was also discovered that a key factor in the success of the company was the operations' capacity to adapt to the demand for customization in the market. It was discovered that plant technological competency is favorably and significantly correlated with firm success and is necessary to effectively respond to the market's requirement for customization.

Yang, Lien, McLean, and Kuo (2010) tested an integrative model of dynamic capability on process alignment, organizational learning culture, and dynamic capability using survey data from a Taiwanese high-tech firm. The study's findings showed that while organizational learning culture had a major impact on performance, dynamic capability acted as a mediating factor. The study offered proof in favor of the premise that process alignment, through dynamic capacities, improves performance both directly and indirectly.

While a review of existing literature reveals strategic alignment to have been examined against decision effectiveness, market need for customization, and organizational learning culture; this research examines strategic alignment against organizational responsiveness, using coordination, shared purpose, and resource integration as indices, in the medium scale sector in Nigeria.

Research Method

This quantitative study used a descriptive survey research strategy, which is appropriate for gathering and analyzing data in order to understand an existing phenomenon. In North-Central Nigeria, the medium-sized businesses made up the study population. As to the collaborative study conducted in 2013 by SMEDAN and the National Bureau of Statistics, there are 243 medium-sized manufacturing enterprises located in the six (6) states of the north-central zone of Nigeria and the federal capital territory. The details are outlined below:

Table 1: Population of the Study

States	Enterprises
Nasarawa	18
Niger	47
FCT	75
Kogi	16

Kwara	18
Benue	28
Plateau	41
Total	243

Source: SMEDAN and National Bureau of Statistics Survey, 2021

Validity of the Instrument

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KM0) measure of sampling adequacy was adopted for a post-field test conducted to examine the strength of the partial correlation between variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy values were 0.544, 0.601, 0.731, and 0.710.

Reliability of the Instrument

This study adopted the use of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for reliability test at 5% level of significance.

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Organisation	4	0.79
Responsiveness		
Coordination	3	0.73
Shared purpose	4	0.69
Resource integration	3	0.85

The result of the reliability test indicates that the instrument measured the characteristics and behaviour within the test at alpha values of 0.79, 0.73, 0.69, and 0.85.

Method of Data Analysis

The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression analysis to measure extent of effect. The tool was also considered suitable as it did not measure the extent of effect in isolation from the determination of the correlation and fitness of model variables. A multiple regression model was specified, and the equation logged to allow for direct estimation and interpretation of coefficients.

$$Y = a_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \mu$$

Where:

Y= Customer Responsiveness

x1= Coordination

x2= Shared Purpose

x3= Resource Integration

μ = the error term

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data Presentation

Table 2: Return Rate of the Respondents

Questionnaire Administered	Copies	Questionnaire Copies Returned	Questionnaire Copies not Returned	Questionnaire Copies Returned
243		3		240

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Data Analysis

The mean and standard deviation of the model variables were computed.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Y	240	1.00	5.00	4.1583	.99367
x1	240	1.00	5.00	4.0958	1.06837
x2	240	1.00	5.00	3.7167	1.26876
x3	240	1.00	5.00	2.6417	1.32751
Valid N (listwise)	240				

Source: SPSS version 20.00

Test of Hypothesis

Decision Rule: Do not accept the null hypothesis if p-value < 0.05; if otherwise, accept the null.

Regression Result

H₁: Strategic alignment has significant influence on organizational responsiveness in the enterprises under study.

Organization Responsiveness Equation

Dependent Variable: Organization Responsiveness

Method: Ordinary Least Square

Table 4: Results of Organizational Responsiveness Equation

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	.449	.071	6.347	.000
Coordination	.948	.035	26.765	.000
Shared Purpose	-.052	.034	-1.512	.132
Resource Integration	.007	.023	.284	.777

Sources: Extract from SPSS Ver. 20

Adjusted R² = 0.935

Prob (F-Statistic) = 0.000

Result Summary

The model examined the extent to which strategic alignment influences organizational responsiveness in medium scale enterprises in North-Central Nigeria. The regression analysis

result revealed the model to be fit for the study as the f-statistics is significant at 0.000 level of significance. While, shared purpose and resource integration were found to be statistically insignificant with P-values greater than 5%, coordination was found to be statistically significant with P-value less than 5%. While coordination and resource integration are shown to have positive influence on organizational responsiveness, shared purpose is indicated as having a negative influence on organizational responsiveness. The Adjusted R-squared (R²) value of 0.93 indicates that 93% variation in the dependent variable can be explained by variation in the independent variables while 7% can be explained by other factors not captured in the regression model but captured as the error term. The result indicates that the independent variables capturing strategic alignment put together, have significant influence on the dependent variable- organizational responsiveness. Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis that strategic alignment has significant influence on organizational responsiveness in medium scale firms in North- Central Nigeria.

Findings

The hypothesis regresses organizational responsiveness on coordination, shared purpose, and resource integration. The result of the analysis indicates that strategic alignment has significant influence on organizational responsiveness in medium scale enterprises in North- Central Nigeria. This is consistent with the view of Ghonim, Khashaba, Al-Najaar, & Khashan (2020) which revealed that strategic alignment significantly and positively affects responsive decision effectiveness and its dimensions, emphasizing the importance of considering all four dimensions of strategic alignment in an integrated model to achieve the greatest impact on the responsive decision effectiveness. It is also inconsistent with the position of Sardana, Terziovski, & Gupta (2016) that operations' strategic alignment to the firm's objectives is the single most key contributor to firm performance with regards to operations' capability to respond to market need. This finding supports the view of Hung, Yang, Lien, McLean, & Kuo (2010) which posit that process alignment influences performance directly and indirectly through dynamic capabilities.

Conclusion

strategic alignment has significant influence on organizational responsiveness. There is need for every member to be in tune with the goals of the organization at every point in time and be committed to working towards them. The ability of firm employees to connect to the common goal and ensure consistent employee relatedness with the firm's common goal highly relies on presence of effective communication. The coordination of individual efforts produce a unification the efforts of human resources across units of the organisation.

Recommendations

The management should adopt working systems that encourage inclusiveness and free flow of communication to enable every member of the organization to be fully invested. This can be ensured by encouraging verbal and written contributions by employees of their opinions. Employees should be allowed a healthy level of autonomy in the performance of their duties. This will boost their feeling of self-inclusion and facilitate alignment.

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