

Managerial Resilience And Sustainable Competitive Advantage Of Food And Beverages Firms In Edo State, Nigeria

Lilian Ngozi Atughara¹ and B. Chima Onuoha²

1. Doctoral Student, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt.
2. Professor of Management, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt

ABSTRACT: *This study examines the relationship between managerial resilience and sustainable competitive advantage among food and beverage firms in Edo State. Managerial resilience is conceptualized through adaptability and proactive decision-making, while sustainable competitive advantage is measured via product differentiation and customer loyalty. A cross sectional research design was adopted. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires. The population comprises of 208 manager and supervisors from 20 food and beverage firms in Edo State. A sample of 32 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan 1970 table. The data were analysed using Spearman's rho correlation through SPSS v25. Results revealed a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between adaptability and both product differentiation and customer loyalty. Similarly, proactive decision-making showed significant positive correlations with product differentiation and customer loyalty. These findings suggest that resilient managerial behaviour is a critical enabler of sustained market performance. The study concludes that investing in leadership development and resilience-building strategies is essential for enhancing strategic outcomes in the Nigerian food and beverage sector. The study recommends that the food and beverage firms should enhance competitive advantage by developing adaptive and proactive managerial capabilities, personalizing customer engagement, leveraging data-driven innovation, and fostering trust through consistent, responsive service delivery.*

Keywords: Managerial Resilience, Adaptability, Proactive Decision-Making, Customer Loyalty.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) is a company's capacity to maintain superior performance and outperform competitors over time by utilizing unique resources, talents, or tactics that are difficult to replicate or substitute. In the highly competitive and frequently changing food and beverage (F&B) market, SCA is critical to long-term survival and profitability. Product innovation, consumer loyalty, supply chain efficiency, and brand strength are all important factors in developing this competitive edge. Unlike short-term performance boosts, SCA assures long-term relevance and adaptation in uncertain markets, particularly in emerging economies where economic insecurity and evolving consumer behaviors frequently disrupt commercial activities. According to Asikhia, Nwankwere, and Adebola (2021), F&B companies that use innovation and strategic flexibility report much higher sales growth and market positioning, demonstrating that ongoing innovation is a critical driver of long-term competitiveness.

Sustainable competitive advantage plays a vital role in the long-term success of food and beverage firms, particularly in highly dynamic and consumer-driven markets. Maintaining a strategic advantage is critical in Nigeria, where businesses must deal with changing consumer demands, supply chain limits, and fiscal constraints. Enterprises with excellent product innovation capabilities and strategic flexibility saw significant increases in sales and market performance, according to a recent study by Asikhia, et al., (2021) of food and beverage enterprises in Lagos State. Their findings revealed a substantial positive link between strategic adaptability and competitive advantage ($r = 0.769$) and between innovation and firm success ($r = 0.790$). This shows that the ability to react fast and offer distinctive products is critical for survival in unpredictable marketplaces.

In a study of enterprises in Rivers State, Nigeria, Gborogbosi and Onuoha (2024) discovered that dynamic capacities including continuous learning, environmental scanning, and strategic renewal greatly improved firms' ability to maintain a competitive edge over time. Similarly, Obukor et al. (2024) showed that efficient use of business intelligence and data-driven decision-making gave companies like Nestlé and Cadbury an advantage in consumer response and operational agility. These data demonstrate that SCA is a dynamic process that requires ongoing innovation, flexibility, and strategic foresight. In a saturated and cost-sensitive industry like F&B, the capacity to establish and maintain SCA has become a distinguishing feature of market leaders.

Furthermore, retaining a competitive advantage needs ongoing strategic planning and market reaction. In their examination of the food, beverage, and tobacco industries in Rivers State, Gborogbosi and Onuoha (2024) revealed a significant association between strategic competitiveness and dynamic capacities such as environmental sensing, resource reallocation, and ongoing reinvention. Their findings revealed that organizations that can proactively adapt their strategy in response to external restrictions are more likely to maintain their relevance and market leadership over time. The survey included 76 responders from 19 different businesses. This underlines the importance of continuous innovation and change in order to sustain market share and customer loyalty.

The implementation of business information systems has also enabled improved competitive positioning. Obukor et.al., (2024) conducted study on Nestlé and Cadbury operations in South-South Nigeria and found that organizations who engage in warehousing, good data administration, and data quality have a significant competitive advantage. According to their sample of 354 employees, these technical talents enable organizations to remain flexible in a rapidly changing business environment, make well-informed judgments, and develop products to satisfy market demands. This means that having access to timely and reliable information aids strategic decision-making, resulting in long-term benefits in addition to streamlining operations.

To stand out in the congested food and beverage market, inventive marketing strategies are becoming increasingly necessary, in addition to internal resources. According to an analysis of six beverage firms in South-East Nigeria by Igemohia and Onobrakpeya (2025), guerrilla marketing, particularly brand storytelling, had the highest impact on sustained competitive advantage when compared to other tactics such as ambient and ambush marketing. They discovered the significance of emotionally charged narratives in creating brand identification and consumer loyalty after analysing 234 staff responses. These inventive and cost-effective ways enable firms to engage with consumers more deeply when traditional advertising loses efficacy, so improving their market positions and assuring their continued relevance.

The food and beverage (F&B) sector is a critical component of the national and worldwide economies, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment, and food security. However, it operates in an environment that is growing increasingly unstable due to supply chain disruptions, market fluctuations, technology improvements, and unstable legislation, particularly in emerging countries such as Nigeria. Organizational success in such a dynamic environment today depends not only on strategic planning, but also on leaders who can navigate uncertainty with agility and foresight (Igudia, 2023). As a result, the concept of management resilience has gained traction, highlighting the importance of responsive, adaptive, and proactive leadership (Baba & Nwuche, 2021). In this context, managerial resilience refers to the ability of firm executives to anticipate problems, recover from failures, and change strategies for long-term success.

Managerial resilience encompasses adaptability, proactive decision-making, emotional stability, and the ability to rally resources in the face of adversity. Resilient managers are critical for managing operational complexity in Nigeria's food and beverage industry, where inflation, exchange rate instability, and infrastructure deficits frequently threaten business continuity. According to Amadi and Thom-Otuya (2025), organizations with resilient CEOs are better able to change their plans, keep employees happy, and reduce downtime during a crisis. To prosper in the face of uncertainty, these leaders usually encourage organizational learning and innovation (Onumah & Osuoka, 2021). As a result, managerial resilience is a competitive advantage that enables firms to adapt and realign in quickly changing environments, rather than just a coping mechanism.

Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) refers to a company's capacity to continually outperform competitors by leveraging unique resources, talents, or strategic positioning. This advantage is typically achieved in the F&B industry through uniqueness, inventiveness, strong client relationships, and consistent quality. However, maintaining such a competitive advantage in volatile markets needs ongoing adaptation, a skill that is inextricably related to managerial resilience. According to Olaleye et al. (2023), organizations with resilient leadership are more likely to invest in innovation and adapt to market changes, thereby increasing their position in the long run. Managers with high resilience are more equipped to develop and use the dynamic capability to sense, seize, and transform—the core principles of SCA.

Business owners and policymakers seeking to build competitive and crisis-resistant enterprises in emerging economies may benefit from understanding how resilience influences strategic outcomes (Igudia, 2023); Amadi and Thom-Otuya 2025). Despite the concept's rising acceptability in worldwide discourse, there is still a lack of empirical study on the influence of management resilience on long-term competitive advantage in Nigeria's food and beverage industry. Because of market volatility, legal changes, and rising operational costs, organizations in this industry must strengthen their internal resilience to shocks in order to remain relevant. This research is critical for better understanding how resilient management practices affect business strategy, innovation, and long-term performance sustainability.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Poor sustainable competitive advantage continues to be a major concern for Edo State's food and beverage industries. Ndubuisi-Okolo, Anekwe, et al., (2022) research in Enugu found that many F&B enterprises fail to adapt to environmental adjustments due to weak strategic direction, resulting in decreased market share and restricted innovation. Similarly, Iyadi and Itimi (2023) discovered that even established enterprises such as Nigerian Bottling Company and Guinness Nigeria in Benin City frequently lack effective differentiation and market focus strategies, resulting in stagnating growth and lower client retention. These findings highlight local enterprises' continuous incapacity to create sustainable advantages against expanding regional and global competitors.

When businesses lack a lasting competitive advantage, they frequently experience negative consequences. Ndubuisi-Okolo et al. (2022) suggest that investing in R&D, marketing, and process improvements may lead to restricted returns, reducing profitability and investor trust. Furthermore, poor competitive positioning exposes businesses to competing brands that focus on quality, innovation, and customer experience, resulting in a downward spiral in revenue. According to Iyadi and Itimi's (2023) research, there is a substantial positive correlation between differentiation strategy and product sustainability ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .05$). Without a clear strategic emphasis, enterprises risk losing relevance in a competitive marketplace.

Furthermore, the implications apply to organizational resilience and market survival. F&B enterprises lacking SCA frequently exhibit insufficient strategic flexibility and technology capabilities, as demonstrated by Olomi and Akintokunbo (2022) in Rivers State, resulting in poor response to disturbances such as inflation, supplier delays, and policy adjustments. Over time, these vulnerabilities can lead to decreased operational efficiency, decreased brand loyalty, and eventual market exit. In an already fragmented and cost-sensitive sector, the failure to maintain a competitive advantage jeopardizes not only business continuity but also Edo State's overall economic stability.

Despite many interventions, including Total Quality Management (Ukpeibo et al., 2022; Igudia, 2023; Amadi & Thom-Otuya, 2025), lean-sigma techniques (Obodoagu, 2025), and enhanced strategic direction, the issue remains. Many F&B businesses in Edo State continue to underperform due to inconsistencies in execution, a lack of managerial capacity, or a failure to incorporate reforms into organizational culture. Prior attempts have had minimal impact, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive and leadership-driven approach. To close this gap, this study advocates using managerial resilience—a leadership capability that includes adaptability, proactive decision-making, and resourcefulness—as a catalyst for establishing a sustained competitive advantage. This study examines how resilient management practices may sustain innovation, operational agility, and market distinctiveness, based on evidence that resilient leaders drive dynamic capacities and strategic renewal. By investigating this understudied but crucial link, the study hopes to give a theoretical and practical roadmap for Edo State's food and beverage industries to achieve long-term competitive positioning.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between managerial resilience and sustainable competitive advantage of food and beverages firms in Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Examine the relationship between adaptability and product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State
- ii. Determine the relationship between adaptability and customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State
- iii. Investigate the relationship between proactive decision making and product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State.
- iv. Ascertain the relationship between proactive decision making and customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were given in the study;

- i. What is the nature of the relationship between adaptability and product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State?
- ii. How does adaptability relate to customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State?
- iii. How does proactive decision making relate to product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State?
- iv. What is the relationship between proactive decision making and customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following research hypotheses were stated and tested in this study;

- Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between adaptability and product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State
- Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between adaptability and customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between proactive decision making and product differentiation of the food and beverages firms in Edo State
- Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between proactive decision making and customer loyalty of the food and beverages firms in Edo State.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: A conceptual model showing the relationship between Managerial resilience and Sustainable competitive advantage

Source: Adapted from Teece, Pisano, & Shuen (1997); Amadi & Thom-Otuya (2025); Igudia (2023).

MANAGERIAL RESILIENCE

Managerial resilience refers to an organization's leaders' ability to adapt to and recover from crises while maintaining consistent performance. It necessitates proactive planning, adaptable behavior, and the ability to handle turbulence. Ihab and Salman (2015) found that innovation and strategic foresight had a significant impact on organizational resilience in Nigerian food and beverage manufacturing enterprises. Similarly, resilient managers promote organizational learning and flexibility, which helps organizations adjust to change, according to Mafabi, et al. (2012). More recently, Onumah and Osuoka (2021) presented empirical evidence that resilience allows organizations to remain competitive by adapting internal procedures to external changes, particularly in turbulent Nigerian markets. These studies show that managerial resilience is a proactive strategy that supports long-term sustainability and growth, not just a defensive tactic.

Adaptability

A significant component of managerial resilience is adaptability, which is a leader's ability to quickly shift course in response to changing supply disruptions, regulatory frameworks, or market dynamics. Adaptability enables management in Nigerian food and beverage industries to rearrange their operations, such as sourcing alternative inputs when supplies are scarce or modifying product lines to meet consumer preferences. Starr et al. (2004) define adaptability as an organization's ability to adjust its operations, processes, and strategy in response to interruptions. Ihab and Salman (2014) agree, emphasizing that resilience stems from the ability to adapt when faced with challenges. Furthermore, adaptation reduces organizational vulnerability by easing transitions to less vulnerable situations, according to Luers et al. (2003). As a result, management flexibility promotes resilience by ensuring business continuity and nurturing a strong competitive position.

Proactive Decision Making

Making proactive judgments demonstrates that managers have the insight to anticipate future challenges and implement policies before a crisis occurs, such as supply chain disruptions, regulatory changes, or shifting consumer preferences. This dimension is an excellent illustration of dynamic capacities, in which leadership uses strategic foresight to transform potential threats into sources of resilience. According to Teece (2018), firms that actively perceive and capitalize on opportunities in their surroundings have dynamic capabilities. This is reinforced by Lengnick Hall et al. (2021), who define resilience as an organizational attribute that is proactive rather than reactive. As a result, managers' proactive decision-making increases long-term competitive advantage by building resilience through early identification, strategic buffer development, and structural flexibility.

SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Sustainable competitive advantage refers to a company's capacity to maintain better market positioning over time using distinct resources, talents, and strategic initiatives. Innovation and strategic differentiation have proven effective in generating long-term competitive advantages in Nigeria's food and beverage business. Abubakar and Isa Mohammad (2019) found that varied product lines had a significant impact on market leadership and firm performance. Furthermore, Igemohia and Onobrakpeya (2025)

demonstrated that guerrilla marketing strategies such as brand storytelling greatly increased the competitive advantage of beverage companies in South-East Nigeria. Furthermore, Iyadi and Itimi (2023) found that companies in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector that exploited segmentation and product quality were more likely to preserve consumer preference and loyalty. According to these findings, acquiring and maintaining a competitive advantage in volatile market environments necessitates ongoing innovation, differentiated brand positioning, and customer-focused strategies.

Product Differentiation

Product differentiation is the process of developing distinctive characteristics that boost a brand's exclusivity in a competitive market, such as new flavours, healthier formulations, or environmentally friendly packaging. This strategy promotes brand positioning and the concept of superior quality in Nigeria's food and beverage industry. Dirisu et al., (2013) confirm that Unilever Nigeria gained competitive success through differentiation. Olusegun, Oyebamiji, and Oke (2021) further demonstrate that in Nigerian consumer markets, product positioning, image, and innovation have a significant impact on brand loyalty. Ndubueze (2024) also discovered that continuous product innovation as a form of differentiation has a significant impact on fast food consumption in Abia State. When considered together, these findings demonstrate how crucial differentiation is in preserving a competitive advantage.

Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty, as evidenced by repeat business and positive emotional attachment, is an important component of long-term competitive advantage. According to studies, differentiating tactics in Nigeria increase consumer loyalty, which improves long-term profitability. Olusegun et al. (2021) discovered a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.875$) between brand loyalty and differentiation. In Lagos, customer experience and distinctive qualities were substantially associated, indicating an increase in loyalty. Yakubu, et al. (2019) demonstrated the link between product distinctiveness, consumer trust, and loyalty by examining how price and product strategies improved loyalty at Hi Malt and 7Up Bottling in larger markets. As a result, loyalty increases recurrent revenue and market resilience while also reflecting competitive advantage.

THE DYNAMIC CAPABILITIES THEORY

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory provides a sound theoretical foundation for understanding how managerial resilience contributes to achieving and maintaining competitive advantage, particularly in volatile industries such as food and beverage. This theory states that a company's ability to integrate, grow, and rearrange internal and external competences in response to rapidly changing conditions impacts its long-term competitiveness. These dynamic skills are strongly related to managerial resilience, which is characterized by adaptability, proactive decision-making, and resourcefulness. This enables firms to identify threats, seize opportunities, and modify operations accordingly. In Nigeria's food and beverage industry, where supply chain disruptions, inflation, and market volatility are common, resilient managers who cultivate dynamic capabilities can strategically reposition their companies, launch new products, and retain client loyalty—all of which are critical for long-term competitive advantage.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Amadi and Thom Otuya (2025) conducted an empirical study to assess the relationship between business survival and entrepreneurial resilience among food and beverage manufacturing SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research focused on the three dimensions of resilience—optimism, resourcefulness, and adaptive capability—and how they influence profitability and market share. The researchers conducted a census, and the population included all 139 of the state's registered food and beverage SMEs. The study used a correlational survey approach and Pearson's correlation coefficient in SPSS 27 to analyse data and found a statistically significant positive link between each resilience component and firm survival indicators ($p < .05$). According to these findings, in Nigeria's competitive food and beverage market, SMEs' long-term viability and performance are significantly improved by entrepreneurial resilience.

Igudia (2023) evaluated the impact of supply chain innovation on risk management resilience in bottling firms in Benin City, Edo State. The survey, which comprised 212 respondents (96 from 7UP and 116 from NBC), focused on employees from two major companies: Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC) and 7UP Bottling Company. The study used correlation analysis and descriptive statistics to look at the relationship between organizational resilience and supply-chain methods. According to study, supply-chain innovation and risk-management resilience are substantially positively associated. This shows that organizations that use innovative distribution, procurement, and logistics strategies are better able to deal with unforeseen circumstances and recover from failures (Igudia, 2023).

Olaleye, et al. (2023) investigated how organizational learning and competitive intelligence affect sustainability in Nigerian fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms, utilizing resilience as a mediating factor. A cross-sectional survey and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) were used to examine data from a sample of 517 employees from various FMCG companies. The findings revealed that competitive intelligence had a direct and considerable positive impact on organizational sustainability. Resilience also had a role in mediating the relationship between organizational learning and sustainability, as well as

competitive intelligence and sustainability. According to Olaleye et al. (2023), resilient organizational structures improve learning processes and strategic intelligence in order to attain long-term competitiveness.

Baba and Nwuche (2021) investigated the link between organizational resilience and proactiveness in South-South Nigerian food and beverage manufacturing enterprises. The study distributed 321 questionnaires, yielding a high response rate of 93%, with 297 authentic responses. Using a cross-sectional survey methodology and Pearson correlation analysis, the researchers discovered that proactiveness had a significant and beneficial impact on resilience in organizational contexts. The authors concluded that organizations with proactive leadership are better able to anticipate issues, implement preventative measures, and recover from setbacks, all of which help them maintain a competitive advantage (Baba & Nwuche, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The cross-sectional survey was used in this study. This was used because the variables under study are not under the control of the researcher and the research intends to generate new fact without intentional manipulation of the variables. The accessible populations comprise of 208 managers and supervisors of the 20 food and beverages firms within Edo State. A sample of 132 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan 1970 table. The primary data was obtained using a well-structured questionnaire. The independent variable, managerial resilience, was operationalized using two dimensions: adaptability and proactive decision-making. Each of these constructs was measured using a set of five items. Five items were used in measuring adaptability (e.g., "I can adjust my management style to meet unexpected challenges."). Likewise, five items were used in measuring proactive decision-making (e.g., "I anticipate potential problems and plan accordingly before they occur."). On the other hand, the criterion variable, sustainable competitive advantage, was measured using product differentiation and customer loyalty. Five items were used to measure product differentiation (e.g., "Our products/services are perceived as unique by our customers."). Five items were also used to measure customer loyalty (e.g., "Our customers frequently return for repeat purchases and recommend us to others."). Face and content validity were used to determine the validity of the instrument used in this investigation. The reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability level of 0.7 was used in the investigation. Values above 0.7 are considered composite reliable. Spearman's rank correlation analyses were used for the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

132 questionnaires were distributed, but only 125 copies were returned, and this constitute the valid questionnaire. The hypotheses test is undertaken at a 94.7% confidence interval and the decision rule is stated below.

Where $P < 0.05$ = Reject the null hypotheses

Where $P > 0.05$ = Accept the null hypotheses

Table 1: Correlations between Adaptability and dimensions of Sustainable competitive advantage

			Adaptability	Product Differentiation	Customer Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.885**	.877**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	125	125	125
	Product Differentiation	Correlation Coefficient	.885*	1.000	.815*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	125	125	125
	Customer Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.877**	.815**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	125	125	125

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

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Adaptability and Product differentiation: As shown in Column Five of Table 1, the Spearman's rho value is 0.885 ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.783, indicating that approximately 78.3 % of the variation in product differentiation can be explained by adaptability. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0)

is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}) is accepted. This indicates a significant and positive relationship between adaptability and product differentiation.

Adaptability and Customer loyalty: Column Six of Table 1 reveals a Spearman's rho value of 0.877 ($p = 0.000$), which is also below the alpha level of 0.05. The r^2 value of 0.769 suggests that 76.9% of the variance in customer loyalty is attributable to adaptability. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This confirms a strong and positive relationship between adaptability and customer loyalty.

Table 2: Correlations between Proactive decision making and the dimension of Sustainable competitive advantage

			Proactive Decision Making	Product Differentiation	Customer Loyalty
Spearman's rho	Proactive Decision Making	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.842**	.835**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	125	125	125
	Product Differentiation	Correlation Coefficient	.842**	1.000	.795**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	125	125	125
	Customer Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.835**	.795**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	125	125	125

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

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Proactive decision making and Product differentiation: According to Column Five of Table 2, the Spearman's rho value is 0.842 ($p = 0.000$), which is below the significance level of 0.05. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.709, indicating that 70.9% of the variation in product differentiation is explained by proactive decision making. Given this result, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{a3}) is accepted. This demonstrates a strong and significant positive relationship between proactive decision making and product differentiation.

Proactive decision making and Customer loyalty: As shown in Column Six of Table 2, the Spearman's rho value is 0.835 ($p = 0.000$), which is less than the 0.05 significance level. The r^2 value is 0.697 indicating that proactive decision-making accounts for 69.7% of the variation in customer loyalty. Based on this evidence, the null hypothesis (H_{04}) is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This suggests that there is a highly significant and positive relationship between proactive decision making and customer loyalty.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 shows a strong and statistically significant positive link between flexibility, a key component of managerial resilience, and both dimensions of long-term competitive advantage: product differentiation and customer loyalty. The Spearman's rho correlation between adaptability and product differentiation is 0.885 ($p = 0.000$), with a coefficient of determination (r^2) of 0.783. This means that adaptability accounts for 78.3% of product differentiation variance. Similarly, the correlation between adaptability and customer loyalty is 0.877 ($p = 0.000$), with a r^2 of 0.769, indicating that adaptability accounts for 76.9% of the variation in customer loyalty. The results reject the null hypotheses (H_{01} and H_{02}) and support the alternative hypotheses, indicating that adaptation plays a crucial role in maintaining competitive advantage in food and beverage enterprises.

These findings are consistent with previous empirical investigations. Olaleye et al. (2023) discovered that organizational learning and resilience, particularly flexibility to change, had a direct impact on product innovation and brand loyalty in Nigerian food and beverage enterprises. Similarly, Onumah and Osuoka (2021) stressed that adaptable managerial structures enable businesses to respond swiftly to market changes, ensuring consistency in customer satisfaction and strategic distinction. Thus, the current study validates the notion that adaptability enables managers to proactively steer their businesses through volatile market circumstances, thereby improving their capacity to retain consumers and differentiate services from competitors.

Furthermore, Table 2 emphasizes the importance of proactive decision-making in developing long-term competitive advantage. Proactive leadership decisions account for 70.9% of product diversification variance ($r^2 = 0.709$, correlation coefficient = 0.842, $p =$

0.000). A correlation coefficient of 0.835 ($p = 0.000$) and r^2 of 0.697 indicate that proactive managing behavior influences 69.7% of customer loyalty outcomes. Therefore, the null hypotheses H_{03} and H_{04} are likewise rejected, demonstrating that proactive leadership contributes considerably to achieving and maintaining a firm's competitive advantage.

These findings support previous research by Baba and Nwuche (2021), who discovered that proactive management conduct promotes innovation readiness and strategic agility in Nigerian F&B manufacturing enterprises. Similarly, Gborogbosi and Onuoha (2024) discovered that organizations with proactive decision-making cultures had higher customer retention and product relevancy despite turbulent market situations. These findings support the claim that managerial resilience, particularly in proactive and flexible forms, is a strategic competence required for food and beverage companies seeking a long-term competitive edge in Nigeria's volatile economic environment.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the link between managerial resilience—specifically adaptation and proactive decision-making—and long-term competitive advantage in food and beverage companies in Edo State, Nigeria. The findings provide persuasive evidence that managerial resilience is crucial in allowing organizations to gain and preserve competitive advantages, notably in terms of product differentiation and customer loyalty. Statistical research utilizing Spearman's rho found high, positive, and statistically significant connections between adaptability and product differentiation ($r = 0.885$) and customer loyalty ($r = 0.877$). Similarly, proactive decision-making was found to have a substantial link with both product differentiation ($r = 0.842$) and customer loyalty ($r = 0.835$), indicating management resilience's effectiveness as a strategic instrument. The findings indicate that when managers can adapt swiftly to market changes and make timely, forward-thinking decisions, their companies are better positioned to develop unique goods, build stronger customer relationships, and respond effectively to competitive pressures. This contributes to the expanding body of literature emphasizing the relevance of dynamic talents and leadership adaptability in maintaining long-term company performance. In an economy as volatile and competitive as Nigeria's food and beverage business, these characteristics are not only favorable, but also necessary for survival.

Previous efforts to gain a competitive advantage have concentrated on operational efficiency and quality improvements, but this study emphasizes the need of incorporating resilience into leadership and strategic decision-making processes. Despite current solutions, many organizations continue to struggle to maintain market relevance due to ineffective leadership responsiveness. As a result, this study finds that developing managerial resilience is a realistic strategy for overcoming these strategic problems and securing long-term competitive positions in the market place. Future research should look into various aspects of managerial resilience, such as emotional intelligence, strategic foresight, and collaborative agility, and how they might contribute to long-term growth. This study, which focuses on leadership resilience, provides practical insights for policymakers, industry leaders, and corporate trainers looking to improve the competitiveness and long-term viability of Nigerian food and beverage firms.

Recommendations

- i. Food and beverage companies should invest in developing adaptive managerial skills through ongoing training, market trends, and scenario preparation. Managers should be empowered to make flexible judgments, incorporate emerging technologies, and customize goods to changing consumer needs. This will help the company differentiate its products in a saturated market and respond quickly to changes in demand and competition.
- ii. Firms should promote individualized customer service, responsive complaint resolution, and regular involvement across several channels to increase client loyalty. Managers must be trained to recognize client expectations and tailor service delivery or product offerings accordingly. Such adaptability builds trust and long-term emotional connections with customers, resulting in enhanced brand loyalty.
- iii. To promote proactive decision-making, management should implement data-driven early warning systems and encourage idea production across all organizational levels. Firms that anticipate client preferences and industry trends can proactively introduce unique product lines and branding strategies that set them apart from the competition. This strategy enhances the company's distinctiveness and matches offers with future market trends.
- iv. Encourage proactive customer interaction with technologies such as analytics, feedback loops, and loyalty programs. Managers must be empowered to foresee client pain spots and wants and provide solutions that exceed expectations. By continually being ahead of client issues, organizations create a reputation and loyalty that competitors cannot readily mimic.

References

- Abubakar, I., & Isa Mohammad, H. (2019). Linking product line strategies to competitive advantage: An empirical study of Nigerian food and beverages industry. *SEISENSE Journal of Management*, 2(4), 65–78. <https://doi.org/10.33215/sjom.v2i4.166>
- Amadi, L., & Thom-Otuya, I. (2025). Entrepreneurial resilience and business survival of food and beverage manufacturing SMEs in Rivers State. *BW Academic Journal*, 2, 50–63. <https://bwjournal.org/index.php/bsjournal/article/view/2730>

- Asikhia, U. O., Nwankwere, A. I., & Adebola, A. S. (2021). Dynamic capacities and firm performance of selected foods and beverages manufacturing companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Babcock Business and Marketing Review*, 1(1), 131–148. <https://journal.babcock.edu.ng/article/7a39eb13-eaca-4a85-8bb7-7c628db83150>
- Baba, S. A., & Nwuche, C. A. (2021). Proactiveness and organizational resilience of food and beverage manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. *Journal of International Business and Management*, 4(5). <https://rpajournals.com/jibm-2021-04-781/>
- Dirisu, J. I., Iyiola, O., & Ibidunni, O. S. (2013). Product differentiation: A tool of competitive advantage and optimal organizational performance (A study of Unilever Nigeria PLC). *European Scientific Journal*, 9(34), 258–281. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2013.v9n34p_core.ac.uk+7test.eujournal.org+7European Scientific Journal+7
- Gborogbosi, L. G., & Onuoha, B. C. (2024). Dynamic capabilities and strategic renewal of food, beverage and tobacco companies in Rivers State. *International Journal of Academic Management Science Research*, 8(10), 225–235. <https://ijeais.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/abs/IJAMSR241023.html>
- Igemohia, F., & Onobrakpeya, S. A. (2025). Competitive advantage through guerrilla marketing dimensions: Evidence from beverage companies in South East Nigeria. *University Journal of Marketing (UJM)*. <https://ujm.com.ng/index.php/2025/04/06/competitive-advantage-through-guerrilla-marketing-dimensions-evidence-from-beverage-companies-in-south-east-nigeria/>
- Igudia, P. O. (2023). Innovation and resilience of manufacturing firms in Nigeria: A study of bottling companies in Benin City. *American Journal of Business Management, Economics and Banking*, 18, 121–135. <https://www.americanjournal.org/index.php/ajbmbe/article/view/1497>
- Ihab, A. M., & Salman, N. A. (2015). Innovativeness and organizational resilience of food and beverage manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research (IJAMR)*, 2(5), 1–11. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351214319>
- Iyadi, D. I. R. C., & Itimi, L. (2023). Competitive marketing strategies and products sustainability: A focus on fast moving consumer goods firms in Nigeria. *British International Journal of Business & Marketing Research*, 6(5), 1–17. <https://aspjournals.org/Journals/index.php/bijbmr/article/view/420>
- Lengnick-Hall, C. A., Beck, T. E., & Lengnick-Hall, M. L. (2021). Developing a capacity for organizational resilience through proactive dynamic capabilities. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, XX(X), XX–XX. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.XXXX>
- Luers, A. L., Lobell, D. B., Sklar, L. S., Addams, C. L., & Matson, P. A. (2003). Adaptability and vulnerability of agricultural systems to climate change. *Climatic Change*, 61(2), 113–143. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026161518195>
- Mafabi, S., Munene, J., & Ntayi, J. (2012). Knowledge management and organizational resilience: Organizational innovation as a mediator in Uganda parastatals. *Journal of Strategy and Management*, 5(1), 57–80. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17554251211200455>
- Ndubueze, J. O. (2024). Product differentiation strategies and customer patronage in Abia State's fast-food sector. [Repository Thesis]. <https://repository.university.ac.ng/ndubueze2024.pdf>
- Obukor, P., Asuakak, E. A., Etim, H. D., & Inyang, R. F. (2024). Business intelligence model and competitive advantage of food and beverage companies in Nigeria. *Journal of Business Practice, Economics and Finance*, 2(1), 1–17. <https://ijois.com/index.php/jobpef/article/view/146>
- Olaleye, B. R., Olusanya, B., Lekunze, J. N., & Tella, A. R. (2023). Attaining organizational sustainability through competitive intelligence: The roles of organizational learning and resilience. *Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business*, 13(3). <https://doi.org/10.37380/jisib.v13i3.1143>
- Olusegun, A. J., Oyebamiji, O. A., & Oke, E. A. (2021). Building customer brand loyalty through product differentiation in Nigeria's fast-moving consumer goods sector. [Article]. <https://aspjournals.org/Journals/index.php/bijbmr/article/view/420>
- Onumah, E., & Osuoka, H. (2021). Innovativeness and resilience in food and beverage manufacturing: Evidence from South-South Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351214319>
- Starr, R., Newfrock, J., & Delurey, M. (2004). Managing risk through adaptability: A comparative study. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 46(3), 67–73. <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/managing-risk-through-adaptability/>

- Teece, D. J. (2018). Business models and dynamic capabilities: A recent framework and empirical evidence. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3), 513–536. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2752>
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509–533. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199708\)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z)
- Yakubu, A. N., Shehu, S., & Nwokenkwo, B. O. (2019). The impact of pricing strategy on customer loyalty in production companies (A case study of Hi-Malt and 7Up Bottling Company, Kaduna). *Journal of Management and Corporate Governance*, 11(1), 43–56. <https://www.cenresinjournals.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/PAGE-43-56-1341.pdf>
[SCIRP+6cenresinjournals.com+6journal.ucc.edu.gh+6](https://www.cenresinjournals.com+6journal.ucc.edu.gh+6)