

Resource-Based Collaboration and Responsiveness of Mobile Telecommunication Companies in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT : This study examined the relationship between resource-based collaboration and responsiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was the four (4) major mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria (MTN, Airtel, Glo and 9-Mobile). A census sampling was adopted hence, the entire four telecommunication companies were studied. However, copies of the research instrument were distributed to ten senior managers of the four (4) mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria bringing the total number to forty (40) respondents. The managers involved included both non-executive directors and Senior managers at the Headquarters of the four (4) mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria located in Lagos. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and responsiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. Therefore, this study concludes that the engagement in resource-based collaboration among mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria positively enhances their responsiveness especially in the current dynamic business environment. Hence the study recommends that mobile telecommunications companies need to continually adopt resource collaborations that influence responsiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's economy, nearly all businesses work in precarious and vibrant competitive settings. There exist many springs of change resulting from factors such as enhanced worldwide competition, decreased lead time and product life, demand variety and fresh techniques (Khoshnood & Nematizadeh, 2017). Conventional long-term strategic planning and the strategic approaches that would be unchanged are not bases of competitive benefit anymore, as there is no surety in most sectors about the development of the company setting and what it will be like in the future (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Organizations need to identify and seize possibilities quicker than their competitors do to attain enhanced agility. According to Salih and Alnaji (2014) it includes carrying out a thorough evaluation of the key players in a business entity's external environment: vendors, consumers and competitors.

Responsiveness is the act of being ready and disposed to offer services in a timely manner to clients in a bid to meet or surpass their expectations by utilizing information obtained from the market. Responsiveness is important in creating a good impression in the minds of customers which will likely increase their tendency in prolonging their relationship with the organization. Through technology, organizations are now able to perform creditably and respond swiftly in line with customers' expectations that will bring up the level of customers' satisfaction (Shariq & Tondon, 2012 cited in Georgewill, 2021).

The dynamic business environment has caused some changes in the structure of companies to go beyond the traditional geographical, industrial and organizational boundaries. Moreover, periods of market uncertainty have suggested to take advantage from collaborations instead of facing limitations of self-sufficiency in order to access different rent sorts of intangible assets. This new phenomenon requires organizations to learn and manage future opportunities as well as be able to manage existing ones. They must find new sources of improving their performance and engage in new forms of competition. Companies that rely on inter-organizational collaborations are more profitable and perform better than vertically integrated counterparts (Tully, 2008). Collaborations help firms strengthen their competitive position by enhancing market power (Kogut, 2011), increasing efficiencies

(Ahuja, 2000), accessing new or critical resources or capabilities (Rothaermel &Boeker, 2008), and entering new markets (Martinez-Noya, Garcia-Canal & Guillen, 2012).

This study was guided by the following research objectives:

- i. Examine the relationship between resource-based collaboration and agility of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria?
- ii. Assess the relationship between resource-based collaboration and adaptability of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria
- iii. Determine the relationship between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria

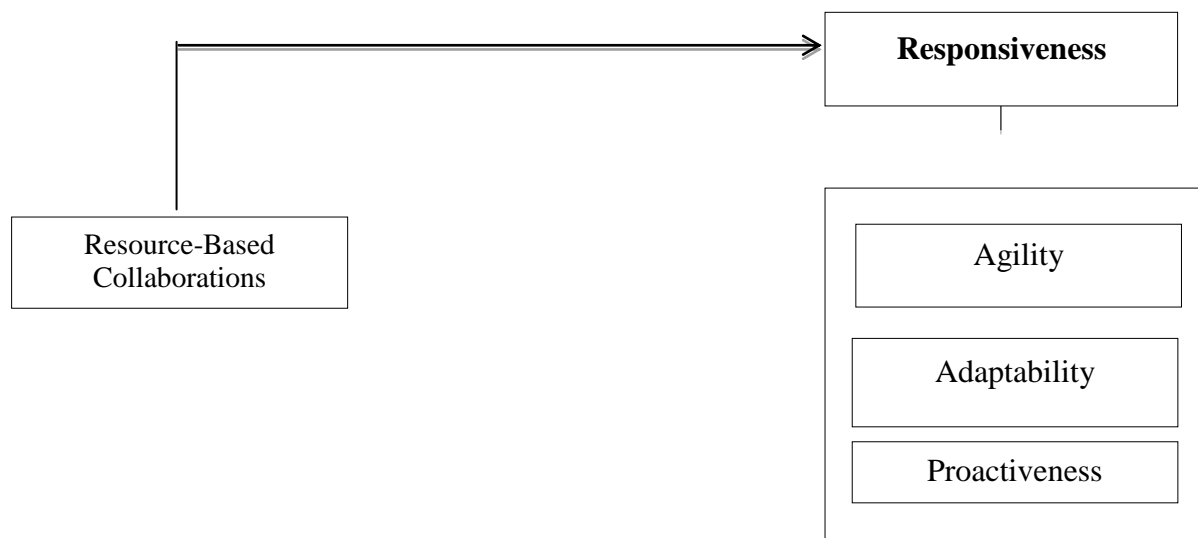


Fig.1 Conceptual framework for Resource-Based Collaborations and responsiveness

Source: Desk Research (2022)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Transaction Cost Theory

The transaction cost theory was developed by Coase (1937) and it asserts why companies exist, why companies expand or source out activities to the external environment. The theory supposes that companies try to minimize the costs of exchanging resources with the environment, and that companies try to minimize the bureaucratic costs of exchanges within the company. Companies are therefore weighing the costs of exchanging resources with the environment, against the bureaucratic costs of performing activities in-house.

Transaction Cost Economics is a theory that offers an alternative approach to the traditional mainstream economics through a lens of "choice" (Williamson, 2002). This alternative approach is to view the nature of the firm and its boundaries via the lens of "contract" (Williamson, 2008). In a collaborative relationship, it has been found that asset specificity and environmental uncertainty positively affect an intention for a long-term orientation between supply chain partners (Benavides, Luis & Versa de, 2012). The underlying Assumption of the theory is that there is a transaction cost in any supply chain interaction (Grover & Manoj, 2003). TBased on the classical economics theory, it is assumed that humans have perfect rationality of their behaviors. Therefore, bounded rationality is viewed as a source of transaction costs because all factors cannot be considered in the decision-making process (Barros, 2010). It is expected that suppliers may deliver inferior goods if they know that their clients cannot detect the difference (Wuyts&Geyskens, 2005; Morgan, Anna & Richard, 2007). This opportunistic behavior leads to the cost of monitoring the outsourced production processes and the quality of delivered products (Vieira *et al.*, 2011). Although the firm may not discover any opportunistic behaviour of its suppliers, quality checking is still necessary as long as the expectation of opportunistic behavior still exists. This theory is relevant to the study as it explained why inter-organisational collaboration occur in organisations. Further, Nix and Zacharia (2014) noted that firms choose collaborations that minimise transaction costs. If internal collaborations reduce the transactions costs, then they will be preferred as opposed to external partnerships. The transaction cost theory has been used by a number of scholars especially in collaboration related studies. Rota, Reynolds and Zanasi (2014) used the theory to explain the contribution of collaboration and sustainable relationships to the life cycle analysis in agri-food supply chains.

Resource-based Collaborations

Resource-based inter-organizational collaborations (RBIOCs) by-pass the limitations of competition and organizational boundaries as all the tangible and intangible resources can be shared and combined. Resources, tangible and intangible, are strategically important not only for companies operating autonomously (Tiwana, 2000), but also for companies joining in networks or inter-organizational collaborations with customers, competitors, suppliers, subcontractors and partners (Ritter & Gemunden, 2003).

RBIOCs refer to those inter-enterprise relationships where each partner focuses on core competences, as well as on the accessibility to external capabilities (Mentzas, 2006). RBIOC has been considered as a productive factor capable to influence the performance of a productive system (Corvello & Migliarese, 2007).

Moreover, RBIOCs affect the strategic initiatives of the involved companies by combining competences, sharing resources, distributing risks, and running from minor incremental improvements right through to radical innovation. In other words, these collaborations offer the possibility of exploiting potential cognitive synergies and accessing resources wherever located within the network (Wilkinson & Young, 2002).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the extent to which firms react rapidly to changes in a business environment to seize potential opportunities (Bernardes & Hanna, 2009). This responsiveness reflects “the efficiency and effectiveness with which firms sense, interpret, and act on market stimuli (Garrett, Covin & Slevin, 2009), and has been treated as a competitive advantage. For example, Wei and Wang (2011) proposed that this responsiveness represents a competitive marketing advantage by deploying resources to satisfy customer needs. Inman Sale, Green, Jr and Whitten (2011) noted that a firm with a high level of responsiveness outperforms its competitors in terms of operations. Inman *et al.* (2011) noted that a firm with a high level of responsiveness outperforms its competitors in terms of operations.

Scholars have conducted numerous studies to explore how organizational responsiveness can be enhanced (Wei & Wang, 2011). According to Bernardes and Hanna (2009) central to this concept of organizational responsiveness seems to be the capability to learn fast in an environment where changes are fast-paced and difficult to foresee. Accordingly, scholars have increasingly realized that to develop and maintain responsiveness, a firm must constantly learn from partners with rich experiences in terms of responding to market changes (Yu, Jacobs, Salisbury & Enns, 2013).

From the perspective of dynamic capabilities, organizational responsiveness assumes the role of adaptive capacity, which is reflected in the company's ability to reconfigure its resources and coordinate processes according to the fast-changing environment. Although some recent research has been carried out into the responsiveness of firms from the perspective of dynamic capabilities (Thongsodsang & Ussahawanitchakit, 2011), these investigations are still in their early stages and require more consistent results. What can be observed is that the perspective of dynamic capabilities is a versatile integrated theoretical approach both to the broader theories of management, such as RBV, and the more specific approaches to marketing, as in the case of market orientation (Morgan, 2012).

Agility

A standard definition of agility is that it is “... the ability to create and respond to change. It is a way of dealing with, and ultimately succeeding in, an uncertain and turbulent environment” (Agile Alliance, 2020). Gren and Lenberg (2019) have proposed a shorter and more straightforward definition of agility as “responsiveness to change”. From these definitions, it becomes clear that the concept of agility is mostly concerned with organizational responsiveness and adaptability in what many commentators describe as increasingly turbulent and dynamic competitive environments (Millar, Groth & Mahon, 2018). Strategic agility has to do with the capacity to respond swiftly to changing situations as demonstrated by business organisations. The ability of an organisation to have the foresight to see the trend and forecast the future in order to respond appropriately defines the strategic agility of such an organisation.

Strategic Agility (SA) is the ability of a firm to respond swiftly to changing environmental conditions. The flexibility in the operational responses of firms to discontinuities and volatility in the business environment defines the SA of a firm. Firms that are embedded with SA capability can successfully predict and adapt to new opportunities and threats. In line with this, Mavengere (2013) posits that SA has to do with an organisation's sensitivity to or being armed with the foresight to understand and predict novel happenings in the environment where the organisation operates. It is the capability of a firm to identify and react to environmental opportunities and threats with affluence, speed, and nimbleness (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011).

Strategic agility has to do with the capacity to respond swiftly to changing situations as demonstrated by business organisations. The ability of an organisation to have the foresight to see the trend and forecast the

future in order to respond appropriately defines the SA of such an organisation. Tende and Ekanem (2018) opine that SA is the capability of an organisation to predict, anticipate, and forecast trends and events in the business environment to fashion appropriate response with proactive moves. Therefore, survival is no longer guaranteed on the premise of having financial muscle or capital, but in the ability to adjust to changes in the environment and device means to stay relevant. Akhigbe and Onuoha (2019) posit that it is no longer the fittest organisation that last longer, but organisations with high resilience and capacity to adjust.

Adaptability

Adaptability is an aspect of resilience that reflects, learning, flexibility to experiment and adopt novel solutions, and the development of generalized responses to broad classes of challenges (Walter, *et al.*, (2006). According to Bowden (1946) researching the past world war, adaptive capability is the ability or inclination of individuals or group to maintain an experimental attitude towards new situations as they occur and to act in terms of changing circumstances. Adaptability is addressed in this context through two approaches; socio environmental and organizational (Mc Manus, *et al*; 2008).

An organization's ability to adapt is at the heart of their ability to display resilient characteristics. Starr, *et al*; (2003) discusses the importance of adaptation and notes that the aim is to create advantages over less adaptive competitors. This suggests that adaptability is also linked to competitiveness. Dalziell and Mc Manus (2004) define adaptability as the engagement and involvement of organizational staff so that they are responsible, accountable and occupied with developing the organization's resilience through their work because they understand the links between the organization's resilience and its long-term success. It is the ability of the system to respond to the changes in its external environment and to recover from damage of internal structures with the system that affect its ability to achieve its purpose.

Organizational adaptation is a process of adjustment to the change and environmental uncertainty, of maintaining an effective alignment with the environment while internal interdependencies are efficiently managed (Miles & Snow, 2003). The process is considered a dynamic process, with adaptation being the strategic aspect needed to achieve competitive advantage in a long-term perspective. The process of adaptation is not seen as phenomenon, but rather as a result of complex interactions that consider the changes in the external environment on one side, and on the other side the internal environment. Further, the process of adaptation is affected by previous decisions on strategic positioning according to this stream of research. While organizational characteristics enable firms to design and implement certain strategies, routines that take a firm to learn, adapt, change and renew itself constantly can be considered dynamic routines (Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997).

Proactiveness

According to Onyema and Hamilton (2020) proactiveness is a firm's ability to think ahead, foresee, initiate a change or take a first mover leap rather than being reactionary or defensive in its strategic posture. Proactiveness refers to an on-going perspective where a firm actively seeks to anticipate and take advantage of opportunities to develop and introduce new products and implement changes to existing firm's strategies and tactics.

Pro-activeness is related to initiative and first-mover advantages and to taking initiative by anticipating and pursuing new opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). The oxford dictionary defines pro-activeness as acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. Lumpkin & Dess (1996) argued that pro-activeness may be crucial to an Entrepreneurial Orientation because it suggests a forward-looking perspective that is accompanied by innovative and entrepreneurial activity. Pro-activeness relates to market opportunity in entrepreneurship by seizing initiative and acting opportunistically in order to shape the environment, that is, to affect trends and, perhaps, even to create demand. The characteristics of a Proactive enterprise involve aggressiveness and unconventional tactics towards rival enterprises in the same market segment, such enterprises shape their environments by actively seeking and exploiting opportunities. Proactive firms introduce new products, technologies, administrative techniques to shape their environment and not react to it (Callaghan, 2009).

Proactiveness is an opportunity-seeking, forward-looking perspective involving introducing new products or services ahead of the competition and acting in anticipation of future demand to create, change and shape the environment (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Kreiser *et al.*, 2002). Proactiveness is manifested in: aggressive behavior directed at rival firms and the organizational pursuit of favorable business opportunities. It is simply the ability to take initiative, whenever the situation demands. Porter (1985) suggested that in certain situations, firms could utilize proactive behavior in order to increase their competitive position in relation to other firms. Proactiveness is concerned with first mover and other actions aimed at seeking to secure and protect market

share and with a forward-looking perspective reflected in actions taken in anticipation of future demand (Dimitratos *et al.*, 2004). It refers to processes aimed at anticipating and acting on future needs by seeking new opportunities which may or may not be related to the present line of operation, introduction of new products and brands ahead of competition, strategically eliminating operations which are in the mature or declining stages of life cycle (Green *et al.*, 2008; Kreiser & Davis, 2010). Thus, proactiveness pertains to a willingness to initiate change, to which competitors then respond.

The concepts of innovativeness and risk-taking are related to pro-activeness because to innovate and take risks indeed requires no more than the intention to leave the comfort zone and cause change and drive business growth through the launch of a new product or process (Kandemir & Acur, 2012; Talke & Hultink, 2010). Proactiveness as a dimension of EO refers to “the will and foresight to seize new opportunities” (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). A proactive firm is forward-looking and opportunity-seeking (Talke *et al.*, 2011). It focuses on the future and seeks to capitalize on opportunities it sees by using all its knowledge of the environment, that is, the needs of customers, supply of resources, technology availability, competitor strategies, etc. Pro-activeness is related to first-mover advantage since a firm which is able to anticipate future needs and develop new products to meet such needs ahead of competition tends to capture advantageous positions in sourcing, funding, access to markets, etc. (Rauch *et al.*, 2009).

Resource-Based Collaboration and Responsiveness

Gachengo, Muli and Maina (2017) carried out a study on the effect of resource-based collaborations on performance of courier firms in Nairobi City County. The study was anchored on the Resource Based View Theory. The study used a combination of descriptive and explanatory research designs. The target population consisted of 423 managers in 141 courier firms as at January 30th 2015 (CAK, 2015) and the stratified sampling procedure was used to group the firms into strata using the licensing category. The study used mainly Primary data which was collected using self-administered questionnaire. Quantitative data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize data while inferential statistics applied stepwise multiple regression analysis to test hypothesized relationships. Content analysis was also used for qualitative data. The analysis used SPSS Version 21 to aid data analysis. The study findings were that resource-based collaborations had a positive significant influence on the performance of Courier firms in Nairobi City County.

Faems, Looy and Debackere (2005) carried out a study on inter-organizational collaboration and innovation: Toward a portfolio approach. This study empirically addresses this research question by analyzing data on 221 Belgian manufacturing firms collected in the Community Innovation Survey, a biannual survey organized by Eurostat and the European Commission aimed at obtaining insights into the innovation practices and performance of companies within the various European Union (EU) member states. The Tobit analysis whereby the total turnover resulting from new or improved products acts as the dependent variable. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between inter-organisational collaboration and innovative performance of Belgian manufacturing firms. The study also showed that the impact differed depending on the nature of partners involved suggesting a moderating role of the type of collaborative partnerships on the relationship between collaboration and performance. This study did not, however, include organisational characteristics or competitiveness in the model and, therefore, offers a gap in research that the present study seeks to bridge. It further focused on the innovation performance yet the present study focuses on entirely different performance measures.

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses were derived:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and agility

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and adaptability

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional research survey design. Primary data was generated through structured questionnaire. The population of this study was the four (4) major mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria (MTN, Airtel, Glo and 9-Mobile). A census sampling was adopted hence, the entire four telecommunication companies were studied. However, copies of the research instrument were distributed to ten senior managers of the four (4) mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria bringing the total number to forty (40) respondents. The managers involved included both non-executive directors and Senior managers at

the Headquarters of the four (4) mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria located in Lagos. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by the use of the Cronbach Alpha coefficient with all the items scoring above 0.70. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The tests were carried out at a 0.05 significance level.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The level of significance 0.05 was adopted as a criterion for the probability of accepting the null hypothesis in ($p > 0.05$) or rejecting the null hypothesis in ($p < 0.05$). The level of relationship between Resource-Based Collaborations with each of the measures of responsiveness is to examine the extent Resource-Based Collaborations can impact on the outcome of each measure of responsiveness.

Table 1 Correlations Matrix for Resource-Based Collaborations and measures of Responsiveness

			Resource-Based Collaborations	Agility	Adaptability	Proactiveness	Innovativeness
Spearman's rho	Resource-Based Collaborations	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.667**	.768**	.660**	.601**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	37	37	37	37	37
	Agility	Correlation Coefficient	.667**	1.000	.685**	.440**	.273
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.006	.102
		N	37	37	37	37	37
	Adaptability	Correlation Coefficient	.768**	.685**	1.000	.450**	.178
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.005	.291
		N	37	37	37	37	37
	Proactiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.660**	.440**	.450**	1.000	.728**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.006	.005	.	.000
		N	37	37	37	37	37

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

Source: SPSS Output

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and agility of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.667 on the relationship between resource-based collaboration and agility. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in agility was as a result of the adoption of resource-based collaboration. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between resource-based collaboration and agility of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. Similarly displayed in the Table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from Table 1, the sig-calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and agility of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and adaptability of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

Similarly, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho) of 0.768 on the relationship between resource-based collaboration and adaptability. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in resource-based collaboration was as a result of the adoption of adaptability. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between resource-based collaboration and adaptability of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. Also displayed in the Table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from Table 1, the sig-calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null

hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and adaptability of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows a Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (ρ) of 0.660 on the relationship between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness. This value implies that a strong relationship exists between the variables. The direction of the relationship indicates that the correlation is positive; implying that an increase in proactiveness was as a result of the adoption of resource-based collaboration. Therefore, there is a strong positive correlation between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. Also displayed in the Table 1 is the statistical test of significance (p-value) which makes possible the generalization of our findings to the study population. From the result obtained from Table 1, the sig- calculated is less than significant level ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, based on this finding the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate upheld. Thus, there is a significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and proactiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings showed that there is a positive significant relationship between resource-based collaboration and responsiveness of mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria. This finding confirms the earlier finding of Dangelico and Pontrandolfo (2013) who assessed 122 Italian companies on the effect of environmental collaborations on firm performance and found that market performance is influenced by capabilities to implement environmental actions with a focus on energy and pollution and to develop collaborations both with business and with non-business actors. The study further showed that none of the firms' characteristics (size of the firm, age of the firm, and ISO certification) influence performance. This study limited itself to environmental collaborations whereas the present study focuses on all other available inter-firm collaborations.

Similarly, the study also agrees with the previous finding of Zacharia, Nix and Lusch (2009) who carried out a study on a sample of 342 supply chain managers from multiple industries in USA to assess the effect of collaboration between buyers and suppliers on business performance. The results showed that higher levels of collaborations led to improved organisational performance and profitability. Further, independence of knowledge and supply chain partner insight was found to mediate the relationship while operational and relational outcomes moderated the relationship. Firm characteristics and competitiveness were not included in the model and, therefore, the present study offers a new insight into this relationship. The study had focused on buyer-supplier relationships while the present study will go beyond the scope.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes that through resource-based collaborations mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria can positively enhance their level organisational responsiveness. Similarly, the study concludes that through relational-based collaborations mobile telecommunications companies in Nigeria can positively enhance their level organisational responsiveness. The study recommends that management of Mobile telecommunications companies could develop sustainable innovation by collaborating with customers and enhance their firm social performance.

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