

Enhancing Service Quality through Intensive Strategies: An Empirical Study of Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State

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***Abstract:** This study examines the relationship between Intensive Strategies and Service Quality of Manufacturing Firms in Rivers State. The population of this study consists of four hundred and ninety-eight (498) registered manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The sample size is to be determined from the population, while Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient SPSS 0.05 version was used to test the hypotheses. Based on the conclusion, it is therefore recommended that managers in this service quality of manufacturing firms should develop policies that promote market development among employees in managing their firms. Managers of service quality of manufacturing firms should also create environment that favour firm to be responsive, reliable and able to take risks in pursuing emerging opportunities in the market that differentiate and give an advantage to their firm from competitors (rivals).*

***Key Words:** Intensive strategies, Market development, Reliability, Responsiveness, Service quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Intensive strategies are those strategies, which demand furthermore intensive efforts to improve the performance of existing products in the market. When an organization struggles to improve its competitive position with the current products then different types of intensive strategies is been considered. Intensive strategies consist of market penetration, market development, and product development. It is so-called because it takes intensive efforts to improve the competitive positioning of a company's existing products (Hunger, 2017). The product development strategy could improve business performance using financial performance and customer base as the indicators Intensive strategies refers to ways or strategies that are proposed or adopted so as to be able to create a niche in the already existing market. Although it can be performed throughout the business's life, it can be especially helpful in the primary stages of setup (Hendricks and Singhal, 2012).

It helps establish the business's current station and which direction it needs to expand in to achieve market growth. Successful outcomes stem from careful monitoring by key staff and leaders. Timing is key to successful market growth; this can be dependent on the overall market welfare, the business's competitors, and current events. Questions, brainstorming, and discussions can help distinguish whether it is the best time for market growth (Gaur 2010). These can include questions surrounding market share increases or decreases. Sales can be declining but show opportunity for the business, which could be the perfect time to make alterations so as to grow market share.

Intensive strategies, such as market development, and product development together establish market growth for a company. Overall the major growth opportunities they implement attempt to peak sales through stressing current products in present markets and present products in new markets. This includes developing new products for existing markets, subsequently. It is about finding new ways to boost sales and keep customers loyal and increase market share. When implementing change, organization must be careful not to compromise their existing revenue or customers. Intensive strategies are implemented when a company wants to expand its market reach or its product lines. Such strategies require intensive efforts so as to improve the competitive position of the company with the existing or new products. While implementing such strategies, Companies basically wants to expand their scale of operations. Thus, if a firm enters a new market, develops a new product or develops its own capabilities, then the firm is undertaking intensive strategies. These strategies helps in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing as well as the new products by adding value to these products and therefore increasing sales and revenues of the firm. These strategies also help in fast growth and thus making the company stronger and competitive. Market penetration strategy is used to increase the market share for the existing products or services in the existing markets.

Service quality is as one of the significant structures to explain and justify behavioural objectives related to future and the desired effects on the financial results and consequences of company and service quality is as one of the key strategies for the survival of a company that have examined and evaluated it and considering importance of service quality, there's no wonder that many researchers have dedicated themselves to understanding the dimensions of service quality (Gilaninia et al, 2013). Since the first model of services quality provided by Parasuraman et al, different models are presented and tested to determine the dimensions of service quality in target population. Services quality is defined as a measure of meet customer needs and expectations by the service. Therefore, services quality can be defined difference between customers' expectations of service and services received. In addition, services quality has been defined as "an attitude or general judgment of customers in relation to supremacy of a service" (Koozehchian et al., 201 1). Services quality in marketing literature is defined as: overall assessment of customers from company services. The concept of service quality includes service delivery process and also the results offered services (Najafizadeh et at, 2013). Many experts have commented about constituent elements of service quality that their common factors include: (Gilaninia, 2013). Service quality is an input variable for customer satisfaction and leads to customer satisfaction. This relationship could be clarified in a way that quality of products and services is lead to customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction also lead to profitability.

The probable connection between ever increasing strategies, innovation and information technology in product-market competition which supposed to result into improving activities. It is of note that day by day firm's success and survival depend largely on quantum of strategies deployed in competitive business environment. Hence managers continually need to make some strategies and take some actions by improving product quality and productivity, reducing product cost, promoting product and process innovations, and improving product speed to the market and customers' goodwill. Firms therefore need to strive to be at par with the global change, achieving competitive advantage position and enhancing performance relative to their competitors. Therefore intensive strategy is a detailed plan for a business in achieving success. Since business is a high-

stakes game, a poorly planned and executed strategic move could result in loss of millions of naira, thousands of jobs, or even bankruptcy of business.

There are studies on intensive strategies and customers' patronage. For example, Hamdani and Susilawati (2010), carried out a study on intensive strategies and customers patronage of telecommunication firms in Lagos State, the study revealed that intensive strategies do not correlate with customers patronage of telecommunication firms of Lagos State. Adesola and Oyewale, (2012) did a study on intensive strategies and sales performance of small and medium scales business in Delta State, the study revealed that intensive strategies does not relates with sales performance of small and medium scale business in Delta State. Clarke, and Fuller, (2015), carried out a study on intensive strategies and business performance of manufacturing firms in Kano State, the study revealed that intensive strategies enhance business performance of manufacturing firms in Kano State. There is no study carried out on intensive strategy and service quality of manufacturing companies in Nigeria, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, however, this study when accomplished will fill gap in the body of knowledge. Therefore, this study is carried out to examine the relationship between intensive strategies and service quality of manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The aim of this study is to contribute to the existing research in the field of intensive strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Contingency Based Theory

The development of contingency approach was stimulated by managers, consultants and researchers who tried to apply the concepts of the major schools of management to real- life situations. They often found that methods that were highly effective in one situation would not work in other situations. They discovered that a technique that works in one case may not necessarily work in all cases because of differences in their respective situations. They then sought an explanation for these experiences which brought about the contingency based theory (McWilliams et al., 2002). The contingency theory draws the idea that there is no one or single best way or approach to manage organizations.

Concept of Intensive Strategies

These strategies are implemented when a company wants to expand its market reach or its product lines. Such strategies require intensive efforts so as to improve the competitive position of the company with the existing or new products. While implementing such strategies, Companies basically wants to expand their scale of operations. Thus, if a firm enters a new market, develops a new product or develops its own capabilities, then the firm is undertaking intensive strategies. These strategies helps in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing as well as the new products by adding value to these products and therefore increasing sales and revenues of the firm. These strategies also help in fast growth and thus making the company stronger and competitive.

Kotler (2010) notes that intensive distribution consists of the manufacturer placing the goods or services in as many outlets as possible and such strategy is generally used for items such as tobacco products, soap, snack foods, and gum, products for which the consumer requires a great deal of convenience of location. Nnabuko (2016) posits that intensive distribution involves inducing the maximum number of retailers to distribute the product (e.g. convenience goods) therefore, the

quality, location or capability of the retailer is secondary, what is important is maximum exposure of the product to the maximum number of customers.

Dimensions of Intensive Strategies.

Market Development

Market development strategy involves introducing the existing products and services into the new markets. It is a two-step process. It starts with the market segmentation. Segment is a small section of the overall market and one need to identify' the market segment which is worth pursuing with the help of market research. Once the market segment is known, then next step is of developing a promotional strategy to penetrate in the market. It is somewhere similar to market penetration but in market development more focus is given to establishing presence in the new markets. Market development strategy can be achieved in the following ways:

New Geographical markets. This involves selling the existing product or service to the new region, country or continent. Risk is involved in this strategy if one could not use its well-known sales channels in the new market.

New product dimensions or packaging: This strategy includes repacking the product so as to open up in the new market.

New Distribution channels: This involves identifying new distribution channels in order to be in more reach to the customers.

New market segment created by different pricing: This strategy incorporates different pricing policies to create a new market segment.

Concept of Service Quality

Service quality is acknowledged as a 'critical prerequisite for establishing and sustaining satisfying relationships with valued customers' (Lassar, Manolis, & Winsor, 2000). It is a subjective phenomenon that hinges on the individual perceptions of customers (Schneider & White, 2004), and this explains why there is a high number of definitions attributed to service quality (Radomir, Wilson, & Mircea, 2011). Some recent definitions of service quality include; the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of a company and its services (Siddique, Karim, & Rahman, 2011), a measure of the extent to which the service delivered fulfils the customers' expectations (Wei, 2013).

Many researchers believe that service quality is an elusive concept, and there are considerable arguments among researchers on how to conceptualize this phenomenon. It is also acknowledged in literature that service quality is a dynamic, multidimensional concept, incorporating a number of aspects of both past and present service experiences (Ab.Aziz, Shukor, & Abdullah, 2014).

Measures of Service Quality

Service quality according to Bitner et al (1994) is the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority or superiority of the organization and its services. From this definition, service quality is said to be a key to the survival of all servicing companies. Adding to this, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (2004), affirmed that service quality is a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimension. Customer expectations are beliefs about a service that serve as standards against which service performance is judged. As customers become well educated, they demand new products, better and more reliable delivery, as well as more responsive services.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness in the context of a system can be defined as the outcome that can be achieved when institutions and institutional relationships are designed in such a way that they are cognisant and respond appropriately to the universally legitimate expectations of individuals. Responsiveness can be viewed from two angles. Firstly, the user of the health care system is often portrayed as a consumer, with greater responsiveness being perceived as a means of attracting consumers. Secondly, responsiveness is related to the safeguarding of rights of patients to adequate and timely care. Owens and Batchelor (1996) cite patients' charters as an attempt to lay down the manner in which to "treat those who use health services as consumers within a market based and people centred system".

Reliability

Reliability means that the company delivers on its promises-promises about delivery, service provision, problem resolutions and pricing.

Customers want to do business with companies that keep their promises, particularly their promises about the service outcomes and core service attributes.

Intensive Strategies on Service Quality

Intensive strategies are those strategies, which demand furthermore intensive efforts to improve the performance of existing products in the market. We may also say that when an organization struggles to improve its competitive position with the current products then different types of intensive strategies should be considered. Intensive strategies consist of market penetration, market development, and product development. It is so-called because it takes intensive efforts to improve the competitive positioning of a company's existing products Kotler, (2009). The product development strategy could improve business performance using financial performance and customer base as the indicators. Likewise, marketing development was also reported to improve business performance, the export performance of Garut leather industry products is restricted by limited supplies of raw materials and information. Empirically, the domestic demand for leather reaches 20% of the total national production ranging from 60,000 — 70,000 tons/year, some of which is supplied by leather industries in Sukaregang, Garut. With over 1,285 workers, current production of Sukaregang leather industries has only reached 1,500 tons month. Leather industries are currently diminishing due to their limited product development and inadequate market capability Mobbs, (2016). This study aimed at examining the effect of internal environments including human resource, finance, production and operation, and marketing on intensive strategy and its implications for leather industry business performance and of external environments including policy, social condition and culture, other institution, and economic condition on intensive strategy and its implications for leather industry business performance. Intensive strategies allow us to take advantage of opportunities abroad to ensure that the company is in a position within the market that allows it to maintain the indicators above the breakeven point.

Empirical Review

Greenley (1994) in his study to investigate whether or not an association can be identified between strategic planning and performance identified a total of 29 relevant and empirical studies. He classified the studies into three groups, in the first group, there are nine studies where the researcher concluded that there is no association between strategic planning and company performance, there were 12 studies in the second group which supports an association between strategic planning and performance. In the third group of eight studies, it was concluded that firms with strategic

management outperform firms without strategic management. Gichunge (2007) examined the effect of formal strategic management on organisational performance of medium sized manufacturing enterprises in Nairobi Kenya. He investigated the effect of various administrative/legal factors on the extent, to which formal strategic management are adopted, and also determined the relationship between level of competition and formal strategic management. He selected eighty medium enterprises (MEs) using simple random sampling. Primary data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Results showed that the MEs have not fully adopted formal strategic management and that administrative/legal factors and competition influence adoption of strategic management.

Dauda et al. (2010) examined the influence of strategic management on corporate performance in selected small scale enterprises in Lagos, Nigeria. Cross sectional survey research method was adopted for the study and 140 participants were randomly selected among small-scale enterprises in Lagos metropolis. Findings of the study showed that strategic management enhances both organizational profitability and company market share. Askarany and Yazdifar (2012), investigated the diffusion of six proposed strategic management tools of the past few decades through the lens of organizational change theory, examined the relationship between the adoption of these techniques and organizational performance in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing organizations in New Zealand. The findings suggested a significant association between the diffusion of these relatively new strategic management tools and organizational performance. Muogbo (2013) examined the impact of strategic management on organisational growth and development in selected manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design to collect detailed and factual information. Cluster sampling was used to select equal number of manufacturing firm s from each sample cluster in the study. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire. He found out that Strategic management was not yet a common business practice among manufacturing firms in Anambra State. This study therefore attempts to contribute to the existing body of empirical studies on the relationship strategic management and firm performance.

manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The aim of this study is to contribute to the existing research in the field of intensive strategies. Based on the review of literature, the following conceptual framework was designed:

Conceptual Framework

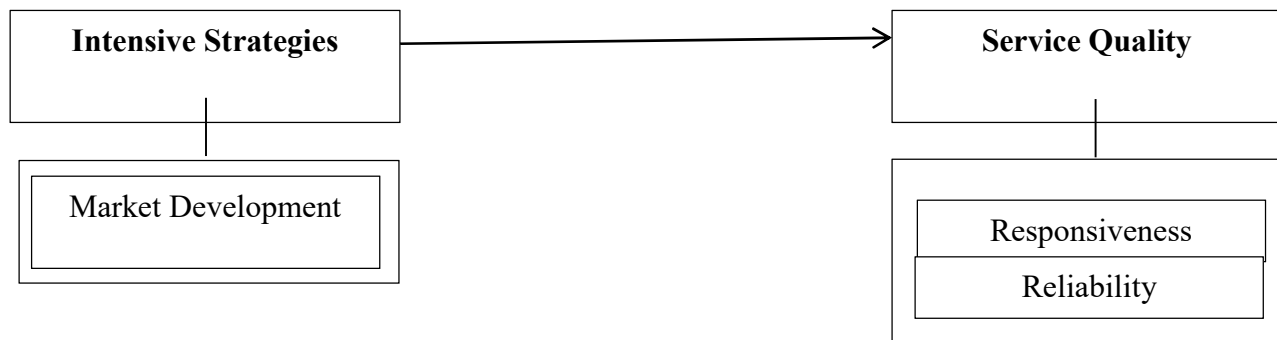


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on Intensive Strategies and Service Quality.

Source: Researcher’s Desk 2024.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey research method which involves questionnaire, personal interview with respondents and perusal of past records and publications. This choice is made due to the fact that the survey method is effective when it comes to getting opinions, attitudes and descriptions as well as getting cause and effect relationship. The population of the study comprised of all the 498 employees from three manufacturing firms located in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Population of Respondents

Organization	Population	Sample size 44.5%
Pabod	358	159
Sun- light	78	35
C-Way	62	28
Total	498	222

Source: Human Resources Helpdesk (2024)

The method of data collection was done through structured research questionnaire; personal discussion (oral interview) with managers and staffs of the selected manufacturing firms in Port Harcourt. This constituted the primary source of data collection. The review of related literature with the aid of professional human resources textbooks and journals and other materials constituted to the

The construct and content validity of the instrument of research were established by the researcher. The instrument was presented for expert opinions in quantitative analysis to the research supervisor for vetting. This was done to ascertain whether or not the items are related to the hypotheses which were tested. The responses from the supervisor showed whether or not the items on the instrument are adequate in generating data required to test the hypotheses.

The survey instrument was measured by means Cronbach alpha coefficient using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) therefore, only items that returned alpha values of 0.70.

Data collected from the field were edited to ensure consistency of responses. Data collected were first being sorted and cleansed; it were categorized and coded mathematically and entered into the Data editor of statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS 21.0). Descriptive statistic in the form of frequencies, tables, percentages, means, and standard deviation were used for the demographic profiles and items related to the characteristics of the respondents. To determine the strength and direction of the relationship between variable inferential statistical analyses were employ using Spearman ranking correlation coefficient. It is appropriate for analysis because all variables in this study were measured in interval scale. This will help us to establish the nature of association between examined variables. Below is the formula of Spearman Ranking.

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6\sum d_1^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where,

D= difference in paired ranks and

n = number of cases.

A mean value of 3.0 was used as the acceptance criteria. Mean values from 3.0 and above was accepted while mean values below 3.0 was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Sullivan (2001), univariate statistics are used to describe the distribution of a single variable through the use of simple frequency tables. According to Saunders et al (2003), commencing initial analysis is best done by looking at individual variables and their respective components. Earlier in this study, that is, in chapter one, we clearly delineated our study variables as intensive strategies -predictor variable; service quality - criterion variable.

For the purpose this study, we adopted 5point Likert scale in our questionnaire, having response categories in the order of VHE 5, VHE4, U=3, LE2 and VLE1. Going by this, the interpretation of our mean is according to Asawo’s (2009) categorization where all responses with mean value (x) between 1-2 as being low, 2.5-3.5 as being moderate, 3.5-4.5 as high and 4.5 above as very high.

In determining the statistical technique to suit our purpose, we considered Kothari (2004) who argued that when there exists association or correlation between two variables, correlation technique should be used and when there exists cause and effect relationship between two variables in the case of the bivariate population or between one variable on one side and two. This was the basis for our choice of the Spearman Rank Order Correlation to test our hypothesized relationships in our study. This section was therefore used to present answers to our research questions and hypotheses. We commence by first presenting a proof of existing relationships.

Scatter Plot of the Relationship between study variables

According to Neuman (2000) cited in Asawo (2009), Scatter graph is one of the techniques used in deciding whether a bivariate relationship does exist between interval scaled variables. In our bid to determine the existence and trend of this relationship, we plotted a scatter diagram as presented in Figure 4.6 intensive strategies as a predictor variable is plotted on the X axis whereas service quality as the criterion variable is on the Y axis.

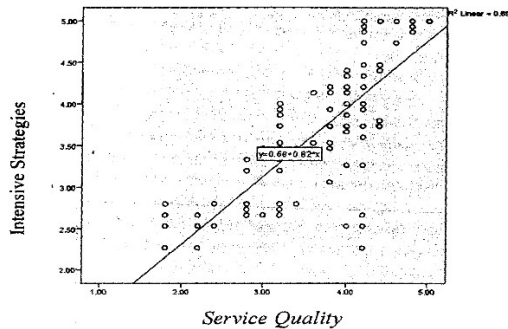


Figure 1: Scatter plot for relationship between intensive strategies and service quality of banks in Port Harcourt.

Figure 1 shows a strong relationship between internal marketing(independent variable) and marking performance(dependent variable). The scatter plot graph shows at R2 linear value of (0.691) depicting a positive relationship between the two constructs. The implication is that efficiency in intensive strategies simultaneously brings about an increase in the level of service quality.

Test of Hypotheses

The Spearman Rank Order Correlation coefficient is calculated using the SPSS 21.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. Correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation while the value of +1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation. In testing hypotheses one to nine, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicate levels of significant (* or **) as calculated using SPSS were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient r value, we reject our alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study.

Table 2 Correlations for the relationship between Market Development and Responsiveness

		Market development	Responsiveness	Reliability	
Spearman's rho	Market development	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.813**	.777**
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	198	198	198
	Responsiveness	Correlation Coefficient	.813**	1.000	.902**
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		.000
		N	198	198	198
	Reliability	Correlation Coefficient	.777*	.902**	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	
		N	198	198	198

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

Source: Research Data 2024, (SPSS output version 21.0)

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between market development and responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Rivers State

From the result in the above, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between market development and responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient 0.813 confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is statistically significant at $p\ 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between market development and responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Rivers State

H0₄: There is no significant relationship between market development and reliability of manufacturing firms in Rivers State

From the result in the table above, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between market development and reliability of manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient 0.777 confirms the magnitude and strength of this relationship and it is

statistically significant at $p < 0.000 < 0.05$. The correlation coefficient represents a high correlation between the variables. Therefore, based on empirical findings the null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and the alternate accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between market development and reliability of manufacturing firms in Rivers State.

Table 3: Summary of Findings

Hypotheses	Statement	Decision on Null Hypotheses
H0 ₁	There is no significant relationship between market development and responsiveness of manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria	Rejected
H0 ₂	There is no significant relationship between market development and reliability of manufacturing firms in Rivers State, Nigeria	Rejected

Test for Market Development and Responsiveness

From the analysis on market development and responsiveness, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between market development and responsiveness, the p(calculated value is 7.16033) and the t(critical) is 0.867 at a significant level of 0.005.

Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis of market development and responsiveness and restated that there is a relationship between market development and responsiveness. This was in line with Young et al., (1989), who stated that market development involve increasing sales by selling an existing product into a new market that was originally considered non-profitable for the organization; this strategy enables organization to get more consumers for the products they currently offer. This strategy can be achieved by getting into new geographical market, creating new product dimensions like packaging, using new distribution channel or by creating a new market segment by offering different prices.

Test for Market Development and Reliability

From the analysis on training and customer retention, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between market development and reliability, the p (calculated value is 7.30 19) and the t(critical) is 0.867 at a significant level of 0.005. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis of market development and reliability and restated that there is a relationship between market development and reliability. This was in line with Marvin (2014), who stated that market development provides the organizations with superior brand recognition and customer loyalty which provides sustained market-share advantage over later entrants; this rewards them with huge profits and monopoly-like status in the market. With later entrants into the market by competitors, first movers may suffer loss of market share in situations brought about by the first mover disadvantage.

Summary

This study investigated the relationship between intensives strategies and service quality of manufacturing firms in Rivers State. The expanse of this study encompassed five distinct chapters.

In chapter 1, we established the essence and foundation of the study, and accordingly highlighted the study problems, objectives and hypotheses. In chapter 2, we established and appraised the relevant baseline theory that underpins the study and equally reviewed extant literature on the study variables. In chapter 3, we made clarifications relating to the assumptions on the methodology of the study. The thrust of chapter 4 was in the presentation of research findings which arose from the interpretations of results. From the data analysed in chapter 4, research findings emerged and were discussed in line with extant literature. In this chapter, we have made a presentation of our summary, the list of our conclusions, and a presentation of appropriate recommendations based on our findings and indicated directions for future research.

CONCLUSION

In relation to our findings, the following inferences are made:

- i. An effective use of market penetration in the manufacturing firms will lead to good responsiveness of consumers.
- ii. An effective use of market penetration in the manufacturing firms will lead to the reliability.
- iii. An effective use of market development can lead to responsiveness in manufacturing firms.
- iv. Market development can lead to reliability in manufacturing firms.
- v. Product development system enhances responsiveness because it will boost the manufacturing firm's product and there will be positive responds from reliable consumers and customers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings, that emanated from our analysis and our conclusions, we proffer the following recommendations:

- i. Management of the manufacturing firms and other organizations alike should explore the realities of market penetration strategies in other to enhance customer responsiveness and reliability.
- ii. Management of manufacturing firms should be proactive in the trend of market development so as to maintain the responsiveness of their consumers which will boost their reliability.
- iii. Management of manufacturing firms should endeavour to always improve i' the development of their product especially on the new ones this will enhance responsiveness and reliability.

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