

EFFECT OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED MANUFACTURING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

CHUKWURA Faith Oyinye

Department of Business Administration and Management, School of Management Science,
Federal Polytechnic Wannune, Benue State Nigeria

Abstract: *This study examined the effect of strategic management practice on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State Nigeria. The specific objectives were to assess the effect of environmental scanning, ascertain the effect of strategy formulation, and determine the effect of strategy implementation and to examine the effect of strategy evaluation; on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Makurdi, Benue State. The study adopted a survey research approach, using questionnaire administration for data generation from a sample of 162 management staff of the selected organizations where 153 questionnaires were finally returned and used for analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The t-test and p-values from regression analysis (statistical package for social science, version 25.0) was used for test of hypothesis. Findings showed that environmental scanning ($t= 7.87, p= 0.012$), strategy formulation ($t= 6.08, p= 0.003$), strategy implementation ($t= 7.98, p = 0.004$), and strategy evaluation ($t= 8.56, p= 0.001$) had significant/positive effect on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Makurdi, Benue State. The study concludes that strategic management practices (environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation) can be considered an effective and viable available tool for manufacturing small and medium enterprises performance (in terms of innovativeness, operational efficiency, and organizational responsiveness) as they have potentials for enhancing the competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises through creating a competitive edge over their competitors by being able to adjust their business process to customer needs. The study recommends among others that management of manufacturing small and medium enterprises should emphasize a more continuous scanning of the environment for more opportunities as they unfold due to the dynamism in the environment, as it will enhance regular understanding of societal needs towards meeting these needs and hence aiding innovativeness and organizational responsiveness towards enhancing competitive performance.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In recent years across the globe, competitive markets and business environments have been volatile, turbulent, uncertain, complex, and heterogeneous. Hence, the strategy or strategies employed by management have become a fundamental mechanism that can enable organizations to gain competitive advantage, survive, enhance performance and compete significantly in the

marketplace. Despite environmental constraints, some firms have sustained their success over the years, maintained distinctive competence over their competitors and enterprises have adopted various strategic management practices to guarantee their fit within the constraints of their environment (Okerenu and Odiri, 2024).

The current economic difficulties in Nigeria have created significant degrees of volatility in numerous businesses, including the manufacturing small and medium enterprise sector, requiring simply the ability to put initiatives into action (Madume *et al.*, 2024). As a result, the presence of effective strategic management techniques helps organizations become less exposed to the chaotic business environment in some aspects (Agwu, 2018; Obieze, 2023). Generally there has been a rapid change in the business environment due to the rate of globalization, changes in customers and suppliers demand pattern and high level of competition in the market. Organizations in this 21st century recently, according to Mba *et al.* (2023), have continually seek for ways to match-up with this challenges by constantly seeking for measures to increase their performances via cost reduction, product innovation, process innovation and the practice of quality management. Strategic management is an enduring process that entails the evaluation and controls of an enterprise and the industries in which the firm is involved. This involves an assessment of its competitors and goals and strategies to meet all existing and potential competitors, and a total re-evaluation of each of the strategy on interval bases to see how it has been implemented (Iheanachor, 2022). It also determines whether it has succeeded or needs replacement by a new strategy to meet changes in the environment such as new technology, new competitors, a new economic environment, or a new social, financial or political environment” (Echendu and Onuoha, 2023).

As Momoh and Iyebhebhe (2023) posited that a growing number of developing countries, especially are interested in the corporate performance of manufacturing companies, which is largely due to the more complicated and unstable environment in which they operate. In the majority of developing nations, manufacturing small and medium enterprises have been found to have turbulent dynamics (Tijani *et al.*, 2023). This has sparked more conversation about strategic management among other topics, with a basic focus on enhancing performance through situational product management (Obieze, 2023). Small and medium manufacturing companies must exhibit strong product portfolios that can adapt to changing client needs in order to keep up with the industry's developing development trends. This can solitary be attained through strategic management practices (Echendu and Onuoha, 2023). A comprehensive approach can fundamentally give rise to the central ideas of the strategic management practices used to improve business performance.

It is not only pertinent for all businesses to understand why they are in business but they must put in place a formidable strategic plan to improve their efficiency and business performances. Hence, Salau (2022) averred that strategy is a source of sustainable competitive advantage and in recent years, manufacturing enterprises have adopted various strategic management practices in a bid to guarantee their continuous survival within the constraints of their environment. According to Eniola and Ektebang (2014) business that fail to drive good planning practices and tools forward, will not only stay bound by slow, stovepipe planning processes, but also find it difficult to compete in good conditions. Strategic management is a disciplined approach utilizing the principles and process of management to identify the corporate objective or mission of any business. It determines

an appropriate target to satisfy the objective, recognize existing opportunities and constraints in the environment, and devise a rational practical way by which objective can be achieved (Ekon and Bemnet, 2021).

Meanwhile, companies grow from a one-man business into large multinational organizations whose activities cut across regional boundaries and such growth requires that strategic management had to be introduced in the operations of these organizations. Strategic Management is a concept that concerns making decisions and taking corrective actions to achieve long-term targets and goals of an organization (Aliyu *et al.*, 2022). It is a set of decisions and actions that result in the formulation and implementation of plans designed to achieve a company's objectives (Agwu, 2018). The business environment in which firms operate is dynamic and turbulent with constant and fast paced changes that often render yester-years strategies irrelevant. Therefore, it is important that good strategies are put in place to bailout the enterprises from the uncertainty that surrounds unpredictable environment (Mgbemena *et al.*, 2022). Strategic management addresses the reason why some organizations succeed while others fail (Adejuwon, 2019). Strategic management involves identifying the organization's current mission, objectives, and strategies, analyzing the environment, identifying the opportunities and threats, analyzing the organization's resources, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, formulating and implementing strategies and evaluating the results (Oyan *et al.*, 2021). It is against this backdrop; this study examines the effect of strategic management practices on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Nigeria has continued to be a critical issue of discuss as most companies continue to operate below sustainable level, more so turbulent situations with the most recent disruption in supply chain caused by the novel corona virus pandemic has called to question the strategic management practices of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in ensuring that performance is improved. Manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Nigeria especially in the Benue State are one of the sectors that have received significant attention in recent times in terms of their performances. Records from some agencies such as Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN) and Nigerian Association of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture(NACCIMA) indicated recently that the performances of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue has been very low in comparison to expectations. The low performances which have grown in numbers have also led to destabilization and closure of many promising enterprises. However, most of these organizations in their industry have been purported implementing strategic management in their quest to survive competition and grow significantly.

Observations are that manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State are involved in carrying out in several ways strategic management practices, such as strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation, yet there seems to be a short fall in the expected performance level as manifested in reported cases of shut down and some struggling to survive. Expectations are that with strategies of formulation/planning, environmental scanning, implementation and evaluation would be leading to appreciable performance, but there are yet abysmal reports of performance. Regrettably, there are indications that some are not living up to

expectations in terms of innovation, responsiveness and surviving competitiveness. In the last decade, majority of small and medium businesses have either closed down or scaled down their operations considerably. These strategic practices effect on the performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises relationship still shows inconsistencies in the results carried out in different locations by researchers (studies such as Salau, 2022; Tijani *et al.*, 2023; amongst others). Consequently, this study examines the effect of strategic management practices on the competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the effect of strategic management practices on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are; to;

- i. assess the effect of environmental scanning on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- ii. examine the effect of strategy formulation on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- iii. evaluate the effect of strategy implementation on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- iv. determine the effect of strategy evaluation on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

- H₀₁:** Environmental scanning has no significant effect on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** Strategy formulation has no significant effect on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** Strategy implementation has no significant effect on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.
- H₀₄:** Strategy evaluation has no significant effect on competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Strategic Management

According to Kumar (2021), strategic management is a continuous process of evaluating and controlling the business and the industries in which it operates, assessing its competitors, setting goals and strategies to meet all existing and potential rivals, and then reassessing each strategy in light of changed circumstances or a new economic environment or a new social, financial or political environment. Inkinen (2016) describes strategic management as an iterative and continuous process that contains essential interactions and feedback between five main aspects: goal-setting, environmental analysis, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation/monitoring. Direction (2020) suggests that this strategic management should be done in order to help businesses achieve both their short and long-term goals and objectives.

According to Iheanachor (2022), strategic management is both the process and philosophy for determining and controlling the organizational relationship in its dynamic environment. As a

process, it attempts to define approaches and techniques to assist management adapt to the changes in today's business environment, through the use of objectives and strategies. Strategic management endeavors to achieve effective and efficient programs that help organizations accomplish the goals and objectives. As a philosophy, it changes how manager looks at competitors, customers, markets and even the organization itself. Its objective is to stimulate management's awareness of the strategic implication of environmental events and internal decision. According to Nkemchor and Ezeanolue (2021) strategic management is a process through which organizations analyze and learn from their internal and external environments, establish strategic direction, create strategies that are intended to move the organization in that direction, and implement those strategies, all in efforts to satisfy key stakeholders.

Strategic management is the process of examining both present and future environments, formulating the organizations objectives, implementing and controlling decisions focused on achieving these objectives in the present and future environments, then evaluating on a continuous basis as the dynamics unfolds in the environment of the business operations.

2.2 Dimensions of Strategic Management Practices

Muriuki *et al.* (2017) presented a model of strategic management practices which involve the four major steps of environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy monitoring and evaluation. These strategic management practices have been utilized in studies such as that of Nwachukwu *et al.* (2020), Aliyu *et al.* (2022), Obieze (2023), amongst others, and is adopted in this study.

i. Environmental Scanning

Environmental scanning, according to Muriuki *et al.* (2017), is aimed at identifying current realities, needs and methods for meeting needs. Environmental scanning involves analyzing the internal and external environment in which the organization operates. While the external analysis aids managers in identifying organizations' opportunities and threats, the internal analysis is for identifying the distinctive competencies (Kraja and Osmani, 2013). Explaining further, Muriuki *et al.* (2017) state that environmental analysis includes the: remote external environment (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental landscape-PESTLE); industry environment (competitive behavior of rival organizations, the bargaining power of buyers/customers and suppliers, threats from new entrants to the industry and the ability of buyers to substitute products-the Porter's 5 forces); and internal environment (strengths and weaknesses of the organization's resources-its people, processes and IT systems).

ii. Strategy Formulation

Muriuki *et al.* (2017) viewed strategy formulation as a practice that defines the development of organizational strategy based on internal strengths, weaknesses and external threats and opportunities. The process of developing a company's strategy is known as strategy formulation. Identifying a company's strengths helps in strategy development. The three organizational layers of strategy formulation: operational, competitive, and corporate, are commonly referred to. An organization's operational departments, like human resources, finance, marketing, and production, all have short-term goals and objectives that operational strategies are linked to (Kasera, 2017). These are department-specific tactics. Hiring and training new staff are two examples of human resource initiatives that would be considered. The term "competitive strategy" refers to a

corporation or industry's specific means of competing (Nzewi *et al.*, 2021). Thus, developing a competitive strategy necessitates familiarity with the organization's competitors. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the competition is critical to the success of a firm. With this knowledge, the organization may devise a strategy for gaining an advantage over these rivals in the marketplace (Satyro *et al.*, 2017).

iii. Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is the activities within a workplace or organization designed to manage the activities associated with the delivery of a strategic plan (Adejuwon, 2019). It is the process of turning a strategic plan into action (Obieze, 2023). Implementing a strategy entails putting it into action. Steps, methods, and procedures for putting the strategy into action are all included here. Additionally, it comprises deciding which strategies should be put into practice first (Tijani *et al.*, 2023). It's important to prioritize strategies according to how serious the underlying issues are. To begin with, the organization should focus on the most pressing issues, and then move on to the rest. Strategy implementation decides the questions of who, when, where and how as related to the output of the second step (Muriuki *et al.*, 2017). It is necessary to put strategies and policies into practice through the implementation of development programs, budgets, and processes, respectively (Kasera, 2017). It may involve transformations in the general culture, structure, and management system of the organization. Thus, the three major approaches to the implementation of strategies involve procedures, budgets, and programs.

iv. Strategy Evaluation

According to Muriuki *et al.* (2017), strategy evaluation compares the actual results with projected results and thus provides a basis for evaluation of organizational goals and objectives. To what extent can management gauge success after the implementation period? Because of this, management must perform both evaluation and control. Evaluation is a method by which business operations and results are tracked and compared to the company's intended competitive performance. In the end, what matters most is how things turn out. It includes the results of the strategic management process in its entirety (Punt *et al.*, 2016). There must be a way for people to provide input during evaluation. With the development of an organization, a revision of the appropriate decisions initially made in the process must be done by the strategist (Hieu and Nwachukwu, 2019).

2.3 Concept of Competitive Performance

Competitive performance is viewed as the company's ability to carry out its activities in a distinct way or ways that other competitors cannot imitate, and in what makes the competitive advantage the most prominent (Uchegbulam and Akiniele, 2015). It is also defined as the ability of the working departments to continuously move the production factors towards the most efficient activities (Razavi *et al.*, 2016). Also, it can be seen as a company's ability to provide products with high performance and quality through creativity in designing these products in order to achieve competitive advantages on more than one level (Danielsen and Framnes, 2017).

Afum *et al.* (2023) view competitive performance as the extent to which an organization's products and services meet the expectations of its customers. It indicates the potential of the supply chain to provide products and services to the customers (Li and Zhang, 2018). The competitive performance concepts and SME performance requirements are changing as a result of the ongoing

changes that manufacturing SMEs are experiencing within organizations today (Bolaji *et al.*, 2020). Manufacturing SMEs require high-performing individuals alongside strategic management practices to meet their objectives, deliver the products and services in which they specialize, and, ultimately, gain a competitive advantage (Marei *et al.*, 2021). Zwingina *et al.* (2023) averred that the main aim of engaging in business is to consistently outperform competitors and deliver sustainable products, give superior values to shareholders or returns to the owners while satisfying other stakeholders.

2.4 Measures of Competitive Performance

However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher chose the following measures (operation efficiency, responsiveness and innovativeness) being the measures most consistent with the nature of the manufacturing firms, in addition to being tested and enabling the researcher to use the standards clearly and accurately (as supported by studies of Mgbemena *et al.*, 2022; Tijani *et al.*, 2023; Mba, 2023). Below is a presentation of each of the measures of competitive performance that are adopted for measurement purposes.

i. Operational Efficiency

This refers to the capability of an organization to deliver products or services to its customers in the most cost-effective manner possible while still ensuring the high quality of its products, service and support (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Operational efficiency looks at an organization's ability to minimize waste of inputs and maximize resource utilization so as to deliver quality, cheaper products and services to their customers. Mbah *et al.* (2019) viewed operational efficiency as the capability of a service sector to deliver products or services to its customers in the most cost-effective manner possible while still ensuring the high quality of its products, service and support. Efficiency refers to lower procurement costs and fewer unauthorized purchases, decreased fulfillment time, and an improved backward integration to office systems (Mestry and Bodalina, 2015).

ii. Organizational Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to ability of recognizing changes and quickly taking advantage and benefiting from them (Hanagandi and Melo, 2018). Responsiveness is the ability of a firm to respond to customers' needs in terms of quality, speed and flexibility and it is characterized by combined goals such as time, quality and flexibility (Asree *et al.*, 2010). Responsiveness is a measure of how quickly and efficiently an organization responds to the needs of its customers. It is determined by assessing how quickly customer inquiries and complaints are answered and how effectively recommendations are implemented and feedback is received (Olaleye *et al.*, 2021). *It encompasses the ability to anticipate needs, make informed decisions in unexpected situations, and seize opportunities as they arise. In short, it keeps you ahead of the game and competitive in a demanding business environment (Shaik and Dhir, 2021).*

iii. Innovativeness

Manufacturing companies must operate very innovatively if they want to compete in this cutthroat business environment. Innovative performance can be viewed as a catalyst that boosts an organization's financial stability and enables them to endure the fierce competition in the business environment (Zizlavsky 2016). According to Iherobiem (2023), innovative actions include a number of stages, ranging from research and development to product release and patenting.

However, the technical side of innovation and the launch of new products can be used to analyze inventive performance. According to Sunday *et al.* (2017)), an organization's efficacy and efficiency can be used to gauge an innovative performance. Akintokunbo and Obom (2021) defined innovative performance as the degree to which a firm introduces inventions into a new or existing market. They also noted that innovative performance can help an organization's processes and overall performance work together.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the resource base view theory, strategic fit theory and upper echelons theory.

i. Resource based view theory

The resource-based view theory by Wernerfelt (1984) expounded on the influence that both tangible and intangible assets have on the performance of an organization. The resource-based view theory magnifies the importance of internal resources within the firm and the use of these resources in formulating strategy to achieve sustainable advantage within the firms' competitive markets (Alvarez and Barney, 2017). According to the RBV, a firm's internal capabilities determine the strategic choice it makes in competing in its external environment. This is in line with the influence that strategic management practices have on the performance of a firm. Closer within the context of the SMEs, the RBV is used to identify and explore man-power expertise and strategic planning systems that can help SMEs manage present business and grab future business opportunities. The resource-based theory emanates from the principle that the source of organization's competitive advantage lies in their internal resources, as opposed to their positioning in the external environment. It is however evaluating environmental opportunities and threats in conducting business, competitive advantage depends on the unique resources and capabilities that a firm possesses (Barney, 2015).

The resource-based approach of an organization predicts that certain types of resources owned and controlled by firm have the potential to generate competitive advantage as well as superior organizational performance. In this theory, the competitive advantage and superior performance of an organization is explained by the distinctiveness of its capabilities (Johnson *et al.*, 2008). The resource-based view (RBV) as a basis for the competitive advantage of a firm lies primarily in the application of a bundle of valuable tangible or intangible resources at the firm's disposal (Wernerfelt, 1984; Rumelt, 1984;). To transform a short-run competitive advantage into a sustained competitive advantage requires that these resources are heterogeneous in nature and not perfectly mobile. Effectively, this translates into valuable resources that are neither perfectly imitable nor substitutable without great effort (Barney, 1991).

ii. Strategic fit theory

The strategic fit theory was developed by Venkatraman and Camilus (1984). Fit is well thought-out and fundamental to strategic management mainly because the initial strategy paradigm is rooted in the idea of 'matching' or 'aligning' organizational resources with environmental opportunities and threats. The strategic fit hypothesis posits that a strategy must be "suited" ("aligned") to its external surroundings, as well as that the internal organization must be correctly meshed ("aligned") with the strategy.

The theory is centered on the assumption that any strategy is appropriate only in a particular circumstance therefore the search for universally applicable strategies should be abandoned. Strategic fit helps a company to perform at its best in its specific competitive environment. This is accomplished through 'alignment,' which is optimized when the appropriate combination of four 'logics,' namely competitive situation, business strategy, development, and integration, is reproduced in four components, namely competitive situation, business strategy, development, and integration, organizational culture and leadership style (Chorn, 1991).

iii. Upper echelons theory

The upper echelons theory (UET) by Hambrick and Mason (1984) was founded on the premise that firms' performance is directly influenced by the experiences, knowledge and expertise of those individuals occupying prominent managerial roles in the organization. These authors introduced a model in which situations occurring in the context of organizational life are addressed by managers whereby strategic choices are made as a function of the unique characteristics these individuals exhibit. As a result of the choices made by these individuals, organizational performance is argued to be directly impacted. To reconcile the impact these "upper echelons" have on organizational performance, Hambrick and Mason (1984) argued that focus should be directed towards those data, readily observable, reflecting individual characteristics concerning the educational, professional, and social backgrounds of prominent managers in organizational contexts. Thus, through the collection and analyses of these data, UET states that organizational outcomes can be predicted to some degree based upon the characteristics of executive managers.

To apply upper echelon theory effectively in the examination of manufacturing SMEs competitive performance in Nigeria, causality is an important consideration (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Agwu, 2018). First, those managers with significant professional experience within the case study organizations act in accordance with these previous experiences more so than based on their attributes. Strategies employed in organizational life as a function of executive decision making are often a function of macro forces driving the pursuit of organizational goals. For example, an executive who is newly hired from an outside firm may bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than an individual promoted from within the organization to the manager's position. Thus, identifying the forces most directly driving the decision-making process is essential in UET research. Similarly, the industrial context in which the organization operates may directly impact the type of managers in positions of decision-making authority.

2.6 Review of Related Empirical Studies

Madume *et al.* (2024) examined the effect of strategic planning on manufacturing organizations performance in Port Harcourt. As suggested by the result, strategic planning, manifested by the dimensions used, enhanced organization performance. Zakari *et al.* (2024) analyzed the impact of strategic management on the corporate performance and profitability of selected enterprises in Kano State, Nigeria. Kano State's five largest publicly traded manufacturers were chosen. Management strategies were found to have substantial influence corporate performance and profitability of some selected enterprises in Kano State. Management strategies also correlated positively with the degree to which enterprises faced competition. The results of this research indicate that management strategies have a crucial role in improving enterprise output in Kano State. The study has revealed the significant and multi-faceted impact of management strategies

decisions, management policies, and management strategic programs has significant influence on the operational performance and profitability of Enterprises in Kano State.

Okerenu and Odiri (2024) study assessed the relationship between strategic management and organizational performance of six (6) selected manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. The simple regression result revealed that strategic management (strategy objective: $df=1, 67$, $f\text{-ratio} = 19.6$; strategy formulation: $df=1, 67$, $f\text{-ratio}=12.4$; strategy implementation: $df=1, 67$, $f\text{-ratio}=17.1$; and strategy evaluation: $df=1, 67$, $f\text{-ratio}=22.4$) had significant positive effect on organizational performance. Sakpaide *et al.* (2023) examined the relationship that exists between strategic management and the performance of manufacturing firms in Delta State Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that there is significant relationship between strategic management process and performance of manufacturing firms in Delta State, Nigeria. Tijani *et al.* (2023) examined the effect of strategic planning on performance of SMEs in Maiduguri, Borno State. The result showed that strategy formulation specifically affects performance of the selected SMEs. Also, strategy evaluation and strategy implementation had significant effect on performance of the selected SMEs.

Echendu and Onuoha (2023) examined the outcome of strategic management renewal practices on corporate performance of manufacturing firms in Rivers State. Empirical findings revealed that there is a positive effect of realignment competence on improved customers care, there is significance effect of transformation of strategic intent on improved customers care. Obieze (2023) examined the application of strategic management practices towards the sustenance of organizational competitiveness in selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. The study found that there is a significant and positive effect of the strategic planning practices dimension of strategic management practices on the organizational competitiveness of selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. (Coef.0.129, $P=0.001$). There are significant and positive effects of strategy formulation practices on the organizational competitiveness of selected manufacturing firms in Nigeria. (Coef.0.2059, $P = 0.000$).

Mba *et al.* (2023) study explored the impact of strategic management practices on the performance of hospitals in Nigeria. The outcomes from the tests of the three hypotheses indicate that strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation all have significant positive effects on hospital performance in Nigeria. Aliyu *et al.* (2022) investigated the impact of strategic management on the performance of small and medium-sized businesses in FCT-Abuja. The study's findings indicate that Strategy Formulation (SFN) has a positive and substantial (0.231, $p < 0.05$) effect on Business Performance. A 1% increase in SFN is expected to result in a 23.1% increase in performance. Similarly, Strategy Implementation was found to have a favourable and substantial (0.231, $p < 0.05$) effect on SMEs' performance. Business performance is projected to grow by 41.2 percent for every one percent increase in strategy adoption. This established strategy implementation as the component of strategic management with the greatest impact on corporate performance. Furthermore, Strategy Evaluation (SEV) was expected to improve performance by 9.6% for every 1% increase.

Mgbemena (2022) investigated the effect of strategic management on organizational performance in Anambra State, Nigeria with particular reference to some manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. It was discovered that strategic objective affect organizational performance of

manufacturing firms, strategy formulation has positive effect on organizational performance of manufacturing firms; Strategy implementations have significant effect on organizational performance and Strategic evaluation has significant effect on organizational performance of manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. Iheanachor (2022) study aimed to ascertain the role of strategy execution on the performance of the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. The study revealed that all issues pertaining to strategy execution in the case study firm are the sole responsibility of the top management team led by its founder and president, which is consistent with theory. Salau (2022) appraised the effect of strategic management on the performance of SMEs in Lagos State Nigeria. The study found that the all the variables of strategic management (environmental scanning, business strategy and organizational structure) are positively significant to the performance of SMEs. Also, that the not all the SMEs are aware of strategic management.

Omo-isibor (2022) study examined the effect of strategic management practices on organizational performance small and medium enterprises of food and beverages manufacturing companies in Ogun State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that environmental scanning had significant effect on organizational survival ($\beta=0.121$, $t= 2.227$, $p<0.05$). Strategic planning had significant effect on firm growth ($\beta=0.195$, $t= 2.8598$, $p<0.05$). Strategy implementation had no significant effect on profitability ($\beta=0.017$, $t= 0.302$, $p>0.05$). Strategy evaluation had a significant effect on competitive advantage ($\beta=0.139$, $t= 3.599$, $p<0.05$). The study further found that strategic management practices had a significant effect on organizational performance of the selected food and beverages manufacturing companies in Ogun State Nigeria ($AdjR^2 = 0.034$, $F(4, 380) = 4.301$, $p< 0.05$). Ekon and Bemnet (2021) investigated the relationship between strategic management practices and the performances of SMEs in Nigeria using a quantitative research approach. The study specifically revealed that strategic management practices like scanning the environment from opportunities, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation have a significant impact on organization performance within the sampled period. The study further revealed that most of the SMEs in Nigeria have embraced strategic management practices but are wrongly implemented and evaluated explaining why strategic management practices have not reflected in improved competitive advantages of the SMEs in Nigeria in the global scene.

Abodunde (2020) examined the impact of strategic management on the performance of SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that commitment to strategic management has a positive impact on SMEs' performance but not significant, while the inclusion of members of staff in the strategic management process has a positive and significant impact on SMEs' performance. Nwachukwu *et al.* (2020) investigated the influence of strategic management practices on small scale firm's performances in Niger delta region. Findings from the study disclosed that strategic management practices have a significant effect on small scale firms' performances in the Niger delta region. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the effectiveness, survival, competitiveness, innovativeness, profitability etc of small scale firms, depends on how strategically a firm plan is drafted and implemented.

Onyekwelu (2020) study investigated the effect of strategic management on organizational performance with particular reference to some manufacturing firms in South-East Nigeria. It was discovered that all the strategic processes including strategy objective, strategy formulation, Strategy implementations and Strategy evaluation had significant effects on organizational performance of manufacturing firms in South East, Nigeria. Adejuwon (2019) study examined the

effectiveness of strategic management practices in selected manufacturing companies. The test of hypothesis 1 confirmed a positive relationship between firm strategic management practices and firms' financial process effectiveness ($R = 0.522$). The analysis of variances showed that strategic management practices had a significant effect on the firm financial process ($F = 18.619$, $p < 0.05$). Test of hypothesis 2 showed a positive relationship between strategic management practices and firms' customer effectiveness ($R = 0.522$), and the ANOVA confirmed that strategic management practices had a significant effect on firms' customer effectiveness ($F = 16.617$, $p < 0.05$). Test of hypothesis 3 showed a positive relationship between strategic management practices and firms' internal process effectiveness ($R = 0.502$), the ANOVA showed that strategic management practices had a significant effect on firms' internal process effectiveness ($F = 16.619$, $p < 0.05$). Lastly, a test of hypothesis 4 showed a positive relationship between strategic management practices and the firms' learning/innovation effectiveness ($R = 0.558$), while the ANOVA indicated that strategic management practices had a significant effect on firms' learning/innovation process ($F = 18.819$, $p < 0.05$).

Agwu (2018) study explored the extent to which the adoption of strategic management practices among SMEs in Nigeria has increased their transaction volumes, number of customers, market shares and consequently their business performances. However, the result indicates that organizational structure has positive influence on SMEs' transaction volumes but not significant. Kimani (2018) examined the effect of strategic management practices on organizational performance of Fintech companies in Africa: A case study of Cellulant Corporation. Findings on the first objective revealed that the effect of strategy formulation was found to be at an R Squared coefficient of 0.178. For the second objective, the impact of strategy implementation on organizational performance was estimated to be at an R Squared coefficient of 0.232. Analysis of the final goal estimated the R Squared coefficient relating to the effect of strategy evaluation on organizational performance to be 0.267. Juwon *et al.* (2017) study focused on strategy implementation and its effect on superior performance and competitive advantage of SMEs in Kogi State. The study found that strategy implementation of SMEs has significant effect on superior performance relative to other competitors in Kogi State.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design approach. In particular, research design seeks to elicit opinions, perceptions and behaviors about people's feelings on the subject matter. This involves collection of information by administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals.

The population of this study comprise of 162 managers/management staff made up of 38 top level managers, 51 middle level managers and 73 lower level managers of selected manufacturing SMEs operating in Benue State and fully registered with Benue State Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment and with the small and medium enterprise development agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN); and have operated for over five years with the evidence of carrying out the strategic management practices of environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implication and strategy evaluation. The justification of making use of these respondents in these organizations is premised on the fact that they are more informed and aware of the company policies as regard the strategies of the firms as well as the perceived nature of the competitive performance of their enterprises.

Since the population is of a manageable size, hence all were used in this study (census method). The sample size for the study comprises of the entire population of 162 respondents, hence the census method was adopted since the number is of manageable size for the researcher.

The data for this study were collected through questionnaire administration. The questionnaire is divided into two sections (Section A and section B) for ease of administration and convenience. Section A is based on personal data of the respondents while section B contains questions on the study variables using five-point Likert-scale which constitutes strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

The researcher made use of the content and construct validity for this study. A pilot test was carried out on thirty managers of manufacturing SMEs in Makurdi (Aquatrust Nigeria limited and Oficon Nigeria limited) who are not originally part of the main study. Cronbach alpha was used for test and re-test to ensure reliability of the instrument.

Primary sources of data for this study were obtained mainly by means of questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was the chief instrument designed and used to collect data on strategic management practices as the basis for competitive performance of manufacturing SMEs in Benue State Nigeria.

The variables in this study are strategic management practices (independent variable) and competitive performance (dependent variable). The strategic management practices (independent variable) is made up of four dimensions namely; environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. Competitive performance (dependent variable) is to be measured by operational efficiency, organization responsiveness and innovativeness.

The model employed for this study is multiple regression analysis model which involves the independent variable (strategic management practices), and the dependent variable (competitive performance). Therefore the following model specifications to test the formulated hypotheses are as follows:

The model for this research is given as

$$CP = f(SMP) = ES, SF, SI, SE \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where

- CP = Competitive Performance
- SMP = Strategic Management Practices
- ES= Environmental Scanning
- SF = Strategy Formulation
- SI = Strategy Implementation
- SE= Strategy Evaluation

The regression model, thus is given as

$$CP = x + \beta_1 ES + \beta_2 SF + \beta_3 SI + \beta_4 SE + e \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where

- x = Intercept of the regression
- $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = parameter estimates
- e = error term

A priori expectations are: $\beta_1 > 0, \beta_2 > 0, \beta_3 > 0, \beta_4 > 0$; it is expected that the analysis based on the model in question will help to test hypothesis Ho₁ to Ho₄, answer the four research question for this study and achieve the four objectives.

Descriptive and inferential statistics of the data were carried out prior to evaluate the effect among the variables. Regression analysis was used to estimate the effect of strategic management practices on competitive performance of manufacturing SMEs in Benue State Nigeria.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation

A total of one hundred and sixty two (162) copies of questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the selected respondents chosen for this study, out of which one hundred and fifty three (153) were successfully filled and returned.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The model used to test the hypotheses designed for this study, explores the effect of strategic management practices on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adj.R Square	Std. Error of Estimate	Durbin Watson
1	.895 ^a	.801	.800	0.8740	2.01

a: Predictors (constant), environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, strategy evaluation.

b. Dependent variable: Competitive Performance

Source: SPSS printout (Version 25.0 for windows output), 2025

Table 2: Regression Coefficient Result

Model	Beta	T	Sig
1 (Constant)	1.088	11.03	.000
Envir. Scanning	.832	7.85	.011
Stra. Formulation	.812	6.06	.002
S.Implementation	.849	7.96	.003
Stra. Evaluation	.845	8.54	.022

Dependent variable: Competitive Performance

Source: SPSS regression print out (version 25.0 for windows output), 2025.

Table 3: ANOVA^b for the overall significance of the model

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	180.312	4	45.078	21.00	.001 ^a
Residual	44.715	149	0.3001		
Total	225.027	153			

a. Predictors: (constant); ES, SF, SI, SE.

Dependent variable: CP

Source: SPSS regression print out (version 25.0 for windows output), 2025.

Regression Model Explained

In the model, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation; were used to predict the competitive performance.

The F-statistics of regression model showed that the result is significant, as indicated by a value of the *F*-statistic, 21.00 and it is significant at the 5.0 percent level.

The coefficient of determination (R-square), indicates that the model is reasonably fit in prediction, that is, 80.1 % change in manufacturing small and medium enterprises competitive performance was jointly due to environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation, while 19.9 % unaccounted variations was captured by the white noise error term. It showed that environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation; had significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing and Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one:

H₀₁: Environmental scanning has no significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

From the regression result in table 2, the calculated t-value for environmental scanning (ES) is 7.85, and is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and with p-value of .011 which is less than .05. It falls in the rejection region and hence, we will reject the first null hypothesis (H₀₁). The conclusion here is that environmental scanning has significant and positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State. From table 1, the (R²) statistic was 0 .801. Taking into the record the contribution of the explanatory variable in competitive performance, from table 2, the beta value for environmental scanning was 0.832. The beta value apparently indicated that the predictor variable of environmental scanning had a positive effect on firm performance (t-computed 7.85 > t-critical 1.960, p=0.011 < .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings of this investigation agree with Madume *et al.* (2024), Zakari *et al.* (2024), Salau (2022), Omoisibor (2022), Nwachukwu *et al.* (2020) amongst others; who all avers that environmental scanning benefits companies by encouraging them to look for new alternatives to increase their innovativeness and competitive position. It emphasizes the importance of making decisions that allow the organization to respond successfully to changes in the environment. To increase competitive performance, it is necessary to explore further the factors that can influence environmental scanning to create the value of competitive advantage. Thus, environmental scanning practices occupy a crucial position, since it determines the comprehensive, coherent, and balanced long-term plans and short-term plans results produced by the company.

Therefore this study concludes that there is a positive/significant effect of environmental scanning on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Strategy formulation has no significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State

From the regression result in table 2, the calculated t-value for strategy formulation (SF) is 6.06, and is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and with p-value of .002 which is less than .05. It falls in the rejection region and hence, we will reject the second null hypothesis (H_{02}). The conclusion here is that strategy formulation has significant and positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

From table 1, the (R^2) statistic was 0 .801. Taking into the record the contribution of the explanatory variable in competitive performance, from table 2, the beta value for strategy formulation was 0.812. The beta value apparently indicated that the predictor variable of strategy formulation had a positive effect on competitive performance (t-computed 7.85 > t-critical 1.960, $p=0.02 < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings of this investigation also agree with Madume *et al.* (2024), Tijani (2023), Obieze (2023), Mba *et al.* (2023), Onyekwelu (2020) amongst others; who all avers that defining the corporate mission, specifying achievable objectives, developing strategies and setting policy guidelines, can enhance competitive performance. It is achieved by reviewing key objectives and strategies of the organization, identifying available alternatives, evaluating the alternatives and deciding on the most appropriate alternative. Strategy formulation is long range planning and is concerned with developing a corporation's mission, vision and policies.

Therefore this study concludes that there is a positive/significant effect of strategy formulation on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

Hypotheses Three

H₀₃: Strategy implementation has no significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

From the regression result in table 2, the calculated t-value for strategy implementation (SI) is 7.96, and is greater than the critical value of 1 .96, and with p-value of .003 which is less than .05. It falls in the rejection region and hence, we will reject the third null hypothesis (H_{03}). The conclusion here is that strategy implementation has significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State. From table 1, the (R^2) statistic was 0 .801. Taking into the record the contribution of the explanatory variable in competitive performance, from table 2, the beta value for strategy implementation was 0.849. The beta value apparently indicated that the predictor variable of strategy implementation had a positive effect on competitive performance (t-computed 7.96 > t-critical 1.960, $p=0.03 < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings of this investigation also agree with Madume *et al.* (2024), Zakari *et al.* (2024), Tijani *et al.* (2023), Mba *et al.* (2023), Aliyu *et al.* (2022), Mgbemena *et al.* (2022), Iheanachor (2022) amongst others; who all averred that strategy implementation stages are necessary to put the strategy in motion, instate strategic controls that can monitor the progress and ultimately achieve organizational goals. They further averred that the action stage of the strategic management process handles series of sub activities aim at determining how resources of the organization should be mobilized to accomplish its strategy in a cohesive manner and leads to competitive performance. The implementation process of strategy covers the entire managerial activities such as the aspects of motivation, compensation, control process and managerial activities; thus enhance innovativeness and competitiveness.

Therefore this study concludes that there is a positive/significant effect of strategy implementation on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

Hypotheses Four

Ho₄: Strategy evaluation has no significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

From the regression result in table 2, the calculated t-value for strategy evaluation (SE) is 8.54, and is greater than the critical value of 1.96, and with p-value of .022 which is less than .05. It falls in the rejection region and hence, we will reject the fourth null hypothesis (H₀₄). The conclusion here is that strategy evaluation has significant effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State. From table 1, the (R²) statistic was 0.801. Taking into the record the contribution of the explanatory variable of competitive performance, from table 2, the beta value for strategy evaluation was 0.845. The beta value apparently indicated that the predictor variable of strategy evaluation had a positive effect on competitive performance (t-computed 8.54 > t-critical 1.960, p=0.01 < .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The findings of this investigation also agree with Madume *et al.* (2024), Mba *et al.* (2023), Tijani *et al.* (2023) Aliyu *et al.* (2022), Mgbemena *et al.* (2022), Ekon and Bemnet (2021), Nwachukwu *et al.* (2020) amongst others; who all avers that strategy evaluation done continuously enables a company to bench mark its progress more effectively and thus improves organization responsiveness. They further noted that successful strategies combine patience with willingness to promptly take corrective actions when necessary and provide a true picture of what is happening and it should not dominate decisions instead it can foster mutual understanding, trust and common sense thereby improving operational efficiency. Evaluation checks if the productivity, profit margins, earnings per share and return on investment have gone up and if the firm's assets have increased and thus enhance competitive performance.

Therefore this study concludes that there is a positive/significant effect of strategy evaluation on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The summary of the findings are presented according to the four objectives and research hypothesis of the study as follows:

- i. Environmental scanning has significant/positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State (Beta = .832, t = 7.85, P = .011).
- ii. Strategy formulation has significant/positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State (Beta = .812, t = 6.06, P = .002).
- iii. Strategy implementation has significant/positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State (Beta = .849, t = 7.96, P = .003).
- iv. Strategy evaluation has significant/positive effect on competitive performance of selected manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Benue State (Beta = .845, t = 8.54, P = .001).

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that strategic management practices (environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation) can be considered an effective and viable available tool for manufacturing small and medium enterprises competitive performance (in terms of innovativeness, operational efficiency, and organization responsiveness) as they have potentials for enhancing competitive performance of manufacturing small and medium enterprises through creating a competitive edge over their competitors by being able to adjust their business process to customer needs.

5.3 Recommendations

Sequel to the findings and conclusions above, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Management of manufacturing small and medium enterprises should emphasize a more continuous scanning of the environment for more opportunities as they unfold due to the dynamism in the environment, as it will enhance regular understanding of societal needs towards meeting these needs and hence aiding innovativeness and organizational responsiveness towards enhancing competitive performance.
- ii. Management of manufacturing small and medium enterprises should focus more on developing, creating and enhancing strategy formulation, as this will help improve the decisions and actions for products and services to render and enhance operation efficiency thereby improving competitive performance.
- iii. Manufacturing small and medium enterprises should improve their capacity to the use of strategy implementation as a booster to put in motion and instate strategies that are geared towards goal achievement, so as to maintaining and sustaining steady flow and enhancing service delivery and operational efficiency, thereby increasing competitive performance for the firm.
- iv. Management of manufacturing small and medium enterprises should create stronger and robust strategy evaluation structure that is continuous to assisting in steady flow of operations, as this will assist in improving and foster innovation for the firm and thereby enhancing firm competitive performance.

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