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INNOVATIVE MARKETING AND PERFORMANCE OF FOODS PROCESSING COMPANIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *This study examined the impact of innovation marketing on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria using Mikap Nig. Ltd and Seraph Nig as researched firms. The specific objectives are to determine the impact of product innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue state of Nigeria. Innovation diffusion theory serves as the foundation for our investigation. To get the necessary data, the study used the survey approach. The 200 employees of the chosen food processing businesses in Benue State, Nigeria, made up the study's population. The entire population served as the sample size for the study, which used a census sampling technique. Thus, 200 employees of the chosen organizations make up the study's sample size. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to administer questionnaires, collect data, and perform multiple regression analysis. The results showed that the performance of food processing businesses in Benue State, Nigeria, is positively and significantly impacted by product, process, and marketing innovation. According to the study's findings, food processing enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria, have performed better as a result of creative marketing that incorporates product, process, and marketing innovation. In order to increase their performance, food processing enterprises in Benue State, Nigeria, are advised to adopt product, process, and marketing innovation.*

Key words: *innovation marketing, product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation, performance.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Our world is changing more quickly than ever before due to technological advancements. There has been a significant impact on business, particularly on marketing strategies. To meet the needs of its customers and maintain its competitive edge, every company makes every effort to build internal and external market connections, market segments, customer focus, ideas, and knowledge sources. Rapid technological and environmental change has made innovation a common theme in the planning, designing, and development of production processes and services that are introduced to the market in order to effectively address the needs of customers. Innovation and marketing have often been seen as the two sides of the coin. As Drucker noted more than fifty years ago, "because the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two – and only two – basic functions: marketing and innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results; all the rest are costs" (Drucker, 1954). It should come as no surprise that innovation has been a prominent topic in the marketing literature, and the main foundation for the inextricable link between marketing and innovation is the nature and overlap of both disciplines (Foxall, 1988). An offering that addresses this opportunity is developed, produced, and marketed through the iterative

process of innovation, which is started by the perception of a problem or unmet customer needs. (Garcia & Calantone, 2002; Thornhill, 2006) Accordingly, innovation encompasses not only market research but also invention, production development, commercialization, and subsequent product adaptation and upgrading.

Innovation is a key component of today's competitive advantage (Baker and Sinkula, 2002; Balkin et al., 2000; Darroch and McNaugton, 2002; Lyon and Ferrier, 2002; Vrakking, 1990; Wolfe, 1994). Companies are trying to develop strategies to defend their competitive advantage as well as create some new innovations (Porter 1990). Numerous ideas are involved in the innovation process, including the gathering, sharing, and application of new knowledge (Veroma, 1996). In today's competitive advantage, innovation is increasingly seen as one of the most important components of a company's long-term success (Baker and Sinkula, 2002; Balkin et al., 2000; Darroch and McNaugton, 2002; Lyon and Ferrier, 2002; Vrakking, 1990; Wolfe, 1994). Marketing innovation is defined by many authors and in many contexts. According to OECD, innovation contains conversion of an idea into a service or a product ready for sale, a new or an improved process of production or distribution, or a new method of social servicing (OECD 2005, 2011). Marketing innovation is defined as the implementation of a new marketing concept or strategy which is significantly different from the marketing methods applied previously in a given enterprise (Science, 2011). It also refers to some marketing concepts like: market research, price-setting strategy, market segmentation, advertising promotions, retailing channels, and marketing information systems (Vorhiesand Harker, 2000; Weerawardena, 2003).

Product enhancement, alternative channels and methods of product distribution (Carson, Gilmore, Cummins, O'Donnell, & Grant, 1998), market research, a change in the marketing mix, and new operational systems are the main elements of innovative marketing, according to an evaluation of the literature (Stokes, 1995). According to Cummins, Gilmore, Carson, and O'Donnell (2000), who reviewed these components, innovation encompasses more than only the creation of new products; as a result, it also includes creative advancements in other areas of marketing. Innovation in businesses has been defined more broadly as the pursuit of "creative, novel, or unusual solutions to problems and needs." Innovative marketing, when properly implemented at the right time in the right proportion under appropriate conditions with the right sales people, can lead to an increase in performance such as market share and customer satisfaction in any organization. This includes the development of new products and services as well as new processes for carrying out organizational functions (Knight, Omura, Hills, and Muzyka, 1995).

Foods processing is the transformation of agricultural products into foods, or of one form of foods into other forms. Foods processing includes many forms of processing foodss, from grinding grain to make raw flour to home cooking to complex industrial methods used to make convenience foodss. Some foods processing methods play important roles in reducing foods waste and improving foods preservation, thus reducing the total environmental impactt of agriculture and improving foods security (Gartenstein & Seidel, 2018).The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics defines foods manufacturing as industries that transform livestock and agricultural products into products for immediate or final consumption. Except for salt, which is a mined mineral; virtually every other basic foods ingredient falls under the scope of livestock or agricultural products. This study is poised to investigate the impact of innovative marketing

on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria with a particular focus on Mikap Nig. Ltd, Makurdi and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the rapidly evolving business environment, the adoption of innovative marketing strategies has become crucial for enhancing the performance of companies. Food processing companies in Benue State face increasing competition, dynamic consumer preferences, and technological advancements, which necessitate the adoption of innovative marketing practices to maintain and improve their market share. However, despite the growing importance of innovation in marketing, many food processing companies in Benue State still rely on traditional marketing methods, which may limit their performance outcomes. The problem under investigation has attracted a lot of write ups from different stakeholders including academic practitioners, management and marketing practitioners, journalists, among other researchers, however, a lot of gaps still exist in such previous similar studies which the present dissertation seeks to eliminates; Many of such studies have been done long time ago, for instance, Chandrakhanthan and Karthika (2007); O'Dwyer, Gilmore and Carson (2009); Gunday, Ulusoy, Kilic and Alpkan (2011); Harshi and Stajcic (2010); Hassan, Shaukat, Nawaz and Naz (2013); however, with changes in the economy including technology, income, consumption pattern, perception, government rules and regulation, among others, there is need to replicate a similar study and arrive at findings that are true reflection of the present times and situations.

The extent to which innovative marketing strategies such as digital marketing, product packaging, promotional techniques, branding, and customer relationship management impact the performance of food processing companies in Benue State remains unclear. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on how these innovative strategies translate into improved sales volume, customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and overall profitability within the local context. Furthermore, the lack of adequate knowledge, infrastructure, and financial resources may hinder the effective implementation of innovative marketing practices among these companies. This gap raises questions about the level of awareness, adoption, and effectiveness of innovative marketing strategies in enhancing the performance of food processing companies in Benue State.

Most studies on innovative marketing and performance were carried out outside the study area, for instance, Chandrakhanthan and Karthika (2007); O'Dwyer, Gilmore and Carson (2009); Gunday, Ulusoy, Kilic and Alpkan (2011); Harshi and Stajcic (2010), Hassan, Shaukat, Nawaz and Naz (2013); Ngamsutti (2016); Omodafe and Nwaizugbo (2017); Lee, Lee and Gareth (2017); Sonia (2018); Ungerman, Dedkova and Gurinova (2018); Peng, Qin and Tang (2021); So, there is need to carry out this study in the present study area which is Benue State, Nigeria of Nigeria. It is also established that all the studies on innovative marketing and performance were domiciled in other areas but none of these studies were centered on foods processing companies.

It is based on the above identified gaps and many other ones that this study is conceived and put in place to investigate the impact of innovative marketing on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the impact of Innovation Marketing on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria using Mikap Nig. Ltd and Seraph Nig. Ltd. The specific objectives to;

i. assess the impact of process innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.
ii. determine the impact of product innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria
iii. examine the impact of marketing innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above stated research objectives, the following questions were formed;

1. What is the impact of process innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of product innovation on the performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria?
3. What is the impact of marketing innovation have impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria?

1.5 Statement of the Hypotheses

The followings are statement of the hypotheses for the study;

$H0_1$: Process innovation has no significant impact on sales growth of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

$H0_2$: Product innovation has no significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria

$H0_3$: Marketing innovation has no significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria;

1.6 Significance of the Study

When the study is finished, it should be pertinent to the following:

In order to accomplish the marketing goal, this study may assist manufacturers in identifying and producing goods that align with the requirements and desires of consumers. The study will shed light on the necessity of fostering business expansion with a focus on ongoing innovation and the launch of new goods. This is relevant due to the fact that businesses might pay more taxes to the government as they expand. In that it will assist them in advising manufacturing enterprises on the social obligations of a product to the nation's economy, it is of use to the government. As it aims to investigate areas where top management support is required in the new product development process and strategies that can be used to manage the life cycles of products introduced in the market to ensure that the product did not fail soon after launch, this research work will also be pertinent to top organizational managers. The study contributes equally to the body of knowledge already in existence in the field and will also provide students who want to do additional research on organizational performance and new product creation with foundational knowledge.

This study is divided into five main parts. Part one covers the introduction to the research study, and part two contains the literature review that includes a conceptual review, an analysis of the theoretical underpinnings, and a review of relevant empirical investigations. Research methodology is covered in component three, results and comments are covered in

component four, and the study's conclusion and recommendations are covered in component five.**2.0**

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The concepts of innovation marketing and performance is reviewed accordingly.

2.1.1 Concept of Innovative Marketing

Innovation may therefore apply to products, services, manufacturing processes, service delivery processes, managerial processes or the design of an organization (Johannessen et al, 2001). There are numerous authors and circumstances that define marketing innovation. Since innovation can produce growth virtually regardless of the state of the broader economy, it has long been believed to be the growth engine (Trott, 1998). Innovation is viewed as a process or the introduction of change that has evolved into its current status, which encompasses terms like creativity, success, profitability, and consumer satisfaction, according to Johannessen, Olsen, and Lumpkin (2001). Innovation may also be defined as the process of creating, developing, and implementing a new product, service, or process with the goal of increasing efficiency or competitive advantage. Nonetheless, it is most frequently seen at the product/process level, where process innovation increases effectiveness and efficiency and product innovation meets customer expectations (Omiyi, 2008). Furthermore, Kleindl, Mowen, and Chakraborty (1996) defined innovative marketing as "doing something new with ideas, products, services, processes, methods, or technology and refining these ideas to a market opportunity to meet the market demand in a new way." They noted that the success of innovative marketing depends on how novel it is, how widely it is adopted, and how well it is translated into an opportunity that food processing companies can take advantage of.

2.1.2 Dimensions of Innovative Marketing

Product, process, and marketing method innovation are considered to be the three elements of innovative marketing for the purposes of this study. These parameters have been changed and adapted from the OECD (2005), Johannessen Olsen and Lumpkin (2001), and O'Dwyer, Gilmore, and Careson (2009). Therefore, they are described as follows:

i. Process Innovation

According to Poller et al. (2010), process innovation refers to making major advancements in manufacturing and logistics techniques as well as in supporting functions including purchasing, accounting, maintenance, and computing. Process innovation, according to the OECD (2005), is the application of a novel or greatly enhanced production or delivery system. Process innovation involves making major advancements in the tools, software, and technology used in the manufacturing or delivery process. Businesses implement innovative production and delivery techniques to increase business efficiency. The organization must be unfamiliar with the new approach or have never used it before. The company can work with another company or independently to develop a new procedure (Polder et al., 2010). Businesses use process innovation to create novel products, and they also modify their existing processes to create the new products (Adner & Levinthal, 2001).

ii. Product Innovation

Product innovation is the process of launching new goods or services or making major enhancements to already-existing goods or services (Polder et al., 2010). Product innovation requires that a product be either brand-new or substantially enhanced in terms of its features, intended purpose, software, user-friendliness, or material and componentry. Microprocessors

and the first digital camera are two examples of innovative products. Product innovation also includes design changes that significantly alter the product's intended purpose or features (OECD, 2005). There are numerous facets to the product innovation. First, the product is new to the customer from their point of view. Second, from the company's point of view, the product is novel. Third, product modification entails adding a variant to the company's current offerings (Atuahene-Gima 1996). Businesses innovate their products to increase corporate efficiency (Polder et al. 2010). The secret to business success is undoubtedly new products. On average, new items make up an astounding 40% of company sales.

iv. Marketing innovation

Implementing novel marketing techniques that entail substantial adjustments to product placement, design, packaging, promotion, and pricing is known as marketing innovation. Increasing sales and market share as well as entering new markets are the goals of marketing innovation. The application of a novel marketing strategy that the company has never used before sets marketing innovation apart from other forms of innovation. Marketing innovation also includes product designs that solely alter the product's look without altering its characteristics or functionality (OECD, 2005). Non-technological innovation is marketing innovation. Businesses use innovative marketing strategies to increase corporate efficiency (Polder et al., 2010). Creating innovative marketing strategies and tactics is known as marketing innovation. Creating innovative marketing strategies, tactics, and resources is crucial to an organization's success. "Changed ways for collecting customer's information" is an example of marketing innovation. Computer software is now used by businesses to gather client data. Another example of marketing innovation is the new trading format, such as an online store (Chen, 2006).

2.1.3 Concept of Performance

Performance is defined as the organization's accomplishment of its objectives. It covers results attained or accomplished as a result of teams' or individuals' contributions to the organization's strategic objectives. Both behavioral and economic results are included in the term performance. Regularly measuring outcomes and results yields accurate information about an organization's efficacy and efficiency. This is known as performance measurement. According to Neely (2012), performance measurement is the process of calculating the efficacy and efficiency of previous acts by gathering, organizing, classifying, analyzing, interpreting, and disseminating pertinent data. Performance measurement, according to Ogunmokun and Li (2014), is an assessment of an organization's management effectiveness and the value it provides to its stakeholders, including customers.

2.1.4 Measures of Firm Performance

Customer satisfaction and market share are used as performance metrics in this study. These two actions were selected because businesses require methods to protect their market share and enhance client retention and loyalty.

i. Customer Satisfaction

The phrase "customer satisfaction" is commonly used to characterize a metric that quantifies how well a company's goods and services meet or exceed the expectations of its clients. The number of customers or percentage of total customers whose reported experience with a company, its products, or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals (Farris et al., 2010) is a mental state that arises from the customer comparing a) expectations prior to a purchase with b) performance perceptions after a purchase (Oliver, 1996). The idea is frequently included in a balanced scorecard and is regarded as a critical performance indicator

in the corporate world. Customer happiness is viewed as a crucial distinction in a competitive market where companies vie for clients, and it has grown in importance as a component of corporate strategy (Morgeson and Petrescu, 2011). Since the real expression of the state of contentment will differ from person to person and from product or service to product or service, it is also vague and abstract. Numerous psychological and physical factors influence the level of satisfaction and are correlated with satisfaction behaviors like return and recommend rate. The degree of satisfaction may also differ based on the customer's other options and other items that they can use to evaluate the company's offerings.

ii. Market share

The percentage of a market that a particular entity controls is known as its market share. It can be described as the proportion of total revenues in a market or industry that a specific company earns over a given time frame. The company's sales for the period are divided by the industry's total sales for the same period to determine market share. This indicator is intended to provide competitors and the market a rough notion of a company's size. It is the portion of a market's or industry's overall sales that a specific company makes over a given time frame. The company's sales for the period are divided by the industry's total sales for the same period to determine market share. This indicator is intended to provide competitors and the market a rough notion of a company's size.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on innovation diffusion theory and supported resource based view theory.

2.2.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

Diffusion is the process through which innovations—in this case, technologies, ideas, practices, or products that are foreign to the society—spread and are shared by members of the society through communication (Rogers, 2009). They spread to their intended users over time in the society. The process of adopting innovations is not a one-time event; rather, it occurs in the following stages: learning about the innovation, being convinced to adopt it, deciding whether or not to adopt it, adopting and implementing it, and receiving confirmation (Rogers, 2009). The choice to embrace an innovation is determined by its perceived benefits, compatibility with current systems and procedures, complexity, simplicity of testing, and whether or not the outcomes of implementing the innovation are readily apparent, according to Rogers (2009). This model is appropriate for this study since it sheds light on the elements that influence food processing companies' adoption of digital marketing as well as the process of adopting it. According to Kithinji (2014), employing digital advertising has several benefits, such as better customer relations, more sales, and increased brand awareness. Although they can be utilized simultaneously, digital advertising and traditional marketing are not entirely compatible. Additionally, digital marketing may be too complicated for older generations, but this obstacle can be addressed by employing skilled digital marketers (Minama, 2016). Additionally, food processing companies can see the benefits of digital marketing adoption, which include better customer interactions, lower advertising costs, access to new markets, and increased sales and brand awareness (Nganga, 2015).

Four Main Elements in the Diffusion of Innovations

i. Innovation

According to Rogers, an innovation is described as follows: According to Rogers (2003), an innovation is any concept, procedure, or undertaking that a person or other adoption unit

views as novel. Even if an invention has been around for a while, people may still consider it innovative if they believe it to be novel. The three stages of the innovation-decision process—knowledge, persuasion, and decision—that will be covered later are more closely linked to the novelty feature of an adoption. Furthermore, Rogers asserted that diffusion studies on technological clusters are lacking. According to Rogers (2003), a technology cluster is made up of one or more distinct technological components that are thought to be closely connected. One significant barrier to the acceptance of innovations is uncertainty. Uncertainty could result from an innovation's effects: According to Rogers (2003), consequences are the alterations that take place in a person or a social system as a result of an innovation being accepted or rejected. People should be made aware of all the implications of the invention, including its benefits and drawbacks, in order to lessen the ambiguity surrounding its adoption. Furthermore, according to Rogers, repercussions can be categorized as anticipated against unanticipated (planned or not), direct versus indirect (immediate result or effect of the immediate outcome), and desirable versus undesired (functional or dysfunctional).

ii. Communication Channels

Communication channels are the second component of the invention diffusion process. In order to arrive at a shared understanding, Rogers (2003) defined communication as a process in which people generate and exchange information. Sources communicate with one another through channels. According to Rogers, a source is a person or organization that creates a message. The way a message travels from its source to its recipient is called a channel. According to Rogers, diffusion is a particular type of communication that involves three communication components: an innovation, two people or other adoption units, and a route of communication. Two modes of communication are interpersonal and mass media. Interpersonal channels are two-way conversations between two or more people, whereas mass media channels include mass media like TV, radio, or newspapers. However, diffusion includes interpersonal communication ties and is a highly social process (Rogers, 2003). Interpersonal channels are therefore more effective in forming or altering a person's strong beliefs. Communication through interpersonal channels may exhibit homophily, which is the degree to which two or more people who interact share certain characteristics, like beliefs, education, socioeconomic status, and so forth. However, the diffusion of innovations necessitates at least some degree of heterophily, which is the degree to which two or more people who interact differ in certain characteristics. The fact that participants in the transmission of innovations are typically highly heterophilous is actually one of the most unique issues (Rogers, 2003). Channels of communication between members of the social system and external sources can also be divided into localite and cosmopolite channels. Nearly all mass media channels are cosmopolite, while interpersonal channels can be either local or global. Mass media and cosmopolite channels are more essential at the knowledge stage of the innovation-decision process due to these communication channel features, while location and interpersonal channels are more important at the persuasion stage (Rogers, 2003).

iii. Time

Rogers (2003) asserts that the majority of behavioral research overlooks the time component. He contends that one of the advantages of diffusion research is demonstrated by the inclusion of the time dimension. Time is a component in the innovation-diffusion process, adopter classification, and adoption rate. We shall go into greater detail about these facets of Rogers theory later.

iv. Social System

The final component in the dissemination process is the social system. According to Rogers (2003), the social system is a collection of interconnected units that work together to solve problems in order to achieve a common objective (p. 23). The social structure of the social system has an impact on the diffusion of innovations since it occurs within the social system. According to Rogers (2003), a system's patterned unit groupings constitute its structure (p. 24). He added that the primary criterion for classifying adopters is innovativeness, which is influenced by the social system..

2.3 Review of Related Empirical Studies

To demonstrate the work done by earlier researchers on the study variables and to identify the research gaps that the current study will address, a number of related empirical studies are reviewed.

Omodafe and Nwaizugbo (2017), studied Innovative Marketing and Performance of Selected SMEs in Delta State Nigeria. It makes the assumption that SMEs' performance would increase if they adopted high-level marketing-oriented practices, created value-added offerings, and developed marketing competencies. The study employed a survey to gather information from randomly chosen respondents in the study area, using a sample of 213 SMEs picked from a population of 496 registered SMEs as listed in the 2013 Delta State Business Directory. The gathered data was analyzed using the Chi-square Test of Association and the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The findings indicate a slight positive correlation between value creation and marketing orientation, as well as a relationship between Delta State SMEs' performance and marketing strategy competencies. The unsatisfactory outcomes show that SMEs in the state have a very limited understanding of innovative marketing and a low adoption and practice of marketing orientation. Therefore, it was suggested that funding a project to teach SME operators on the goals and procedures of marketing orientation would greatly benefit the SMEs by enabling them to enhance their performance and support national growth.

Lee, Lee and Gareth (2017), investigated Synergy effects of innovation on firm performance. The synergy effects of product, process, marketing, and organizational innovation are examined with consideration of the innovativeness levels and industrial categories. The impact of a firm's exploration and exploitation strategic orientations on innovative activities is also examined in this study. The findings show that, respectively, exploration and exploitation orientations promote process and product innovation. Both radical and incremental product innovation are fostered by process innovation. There are certain distinctions between high-tech and low-tech industries with regard to the moderating influence of marketing and organizational innovation. The introduction of marketing innovation increases the association between a new product and firm success for high-tech companies. Process innovation directly and favorably affects a company's performance with organizational innovation in low-tech enterprises. The results demonstrate that there are synergistic impacts of innovation that can be altered based on industrial categories and levels of innovativeness.

Sonia (2018), research Study looks at various innovative marketing strategies used by our top most companies. In order to achieve a sustained competitive advantage, marketing strategies are a long-term, forward-looking approach to planning. This paper's overall goal is to establish a connection between new marketing techniques and company growth rates. Effective marketing is not a coincidence; it is a combination of art and science that is achieved by

meticulous preparation and implementation of cutting-edge techniques and technologies. Marketing, then, is about how important it is to understand customers and the marketplace. Since customers are king these days, any business must comprehend their wants and demands. When it comes to marketing strategies, the main considerations are: Which customers will we service, and how? Coming up with thoughtful responses to these seemingly straightforward but challenging queries is the challenging part. Creating more value for customers than rivals is the aim of marketing strategy. According to this survey, companies like Apple, V-MART, Amazon, and Patanjali—whose names alone demonstrate their position in the market—have benefited greatly from creative marketing methods. The results of this study could assist readers learn more about other businesses and their marketing approaches, as well as help them discover more creative marketing approaches.

Ungerman, Dedkova and Gurinova (2018), studied the impact of marketing innovation on the competitiveness of enterprises in the context of industry 4.0. Marketing innovation is identified as a search for creative and new solutions to problems and needs. Businesses must continuously create new goods and strategies in order to improve their performance and become more competitive. The study given here focuses on the consequences of digitization. A pilot study was conducted among 50 businesses that advertise themselves utilizing Industry 4.0 based on the findings. After a content analysis examination, a list of 15 fundamental marketing innovation tools was created. Following that, eleven primary effects of marketing innovation that the respondents deemed significant were produced. These effects were explained and then assessed through the use of descriptive statistical techniques, which allowed for the empirical confirmation of their significance. Businesses ranked three impacts as the most significant: enhancing the company's competitiveness, boosting productivity, and altering the corporate culture. According to the study's findings, SMEs and major corporations have different perspectives on impacts. Businesses in the automotive sector with a European corporate culture rank the impacts as the most significant. The study's highest-rated benefit, the rise in company competitiveness, has been experimentally verified to be the most significant effect that companies believe innovative marketing has in the context of Industry 4.0. Our current view of innovation as a competitive element has been clarified by the paper.

Peng, Qin and Tang (2021), studied The Influence of Marketing Innovations on Firm Performance under Different Market Environments: Evidence from China. Adopting marketing innovations can help a company remain sustainable. There is, however, little research on the many kinds of marketing innovations and their impacts. Analyzing the aspects of marketing innovations, their impact on company performance, and the ways in which market environmental factors mitigate such effects is the aim of this study. This study developed a model to describe the dynamics of marketing innovation and business performance under various market settings, and it identified two categories of marketing innovations based on a review of the literature. The model was validated using empirical data that was gathered. The results indicate that a firm's performance is greatly influenced by both market-driven and market-driving innovations. Furthermore, demand uncertainty has no effect on their effects, but the level of competition and technological volatility do. This study adds to the body of literature by presenting the dynamics of marketing innovation, the market environment, and business performance, as well as by elaborating on the conception of marketing innovation. It also offers useful advice on how businesses might apply marketing innovations to attain long-term viability.

Research Gap: Because the aforementioned empirical studies were carried out outside the study area, most of them were conducted over an extended period of time, which does not accurately reflect the realities of modern life, and none of them focused on food processing companies, there is a serious need for this study.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The survey method will be used in the study to collect the necessary data. The survey method was chosen in accordance with Hair, Money, Samuel, and Pages' (2007) argument that this type of method is interested in evaluating the characteristics of the study population. The city of Makurdi is the study's geographic focus. Benue State, located in North-Central Nigeria, has Makurdi as its capital. The 200 employees of the chosen food processing businesses in Benue state made up the study's population. Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi, are the chosen businesses. With the exception of their security guards, they employ 130 people in overall and 70 in particular. Makurdi East is where Seraph Nig. Ltd. and Mikap Nig. Ltd. are situated. These businesses were chosen by the researcher due to their familiarity, convenience of data collecting, apparent involvement in manufacturing, and accessibility. The entire population will serve as the study's sample size, and a census sampling approach will be employed. Consequently, 200 employees of the chosen organizations will make up the study's sample size. Respondents will be given a questionnaire to complete in order to gather data for this study.

Table 2: Reliability Test Result

Variable	Items	Cronbach Alpha
Process Innovation	5	.860
Product Innovation	5	.768
Marketing innovation	5	.789
Performance	5	.876
Average Reliability		**.823**

Source: SPSS Output, 2022.

This study employed primary data from the administration of questionnaires. The numerous important factors and/or items required for analysis are carefully taken into account when developing the questionnaire. To make sure the questions are respondent-friendly, the items' language and order have been carefully considered. Part A and Part B of a structured questionnaire were employed in the study. General demographic data, including respondents' gender, age, marital status, level of education, and work experience, was collected in the first section. Respondents were asked to reply to questions about innovative marketing and business performance in the second section of the survey. In order to do this, the basic features and definitions of these dimensions from literature were constructed into questions. The four-point Likert (1961) scale, which ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree, was used to create these questions. Performance, the dependent variable, and innovative marketing, the independent variable, are the two main factors that are the focus of this study. Market share and customer satisfaction are used to measure performance, the dependent variable. The three proxies or characteristics of innovative marketing that were employed in the study are utilized to measure the

independent variable, which is innovative marketing. In other words, innovation in products, processes, and marketing strategies.

In this study market entry is regarded as a function of new product development. In this vein, this study suggest that,

Perf = f (IM) - - - - - - - (i)

Where; P = Performance

IM = Innovative Marketing

Given that Innovative Marketing comprises three dimensions, the implicit form of the model is given as follows:

Perf = f (PDI, PRI, MMI) - - - - (ii)

Where:

PDI = Product Innovation;

PRC= Process Innovation; and

MMI =Marketing Method Innovation

Thus, the explicit form of the model for the study will be as follows:

$$P = \alpha + b_1 PDI + b_2 PRI + b_3 MMI + \varepsilon \quad - \quad (iii)$$

Where:

α = Intercept of the Model (constant)

$b_1$to b_3= coefficients of X_1, X_2 and X_3 respectively

ε = error term

Other variables are as earlier defined.

With the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21), the study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics to present and analyze its data. Descriptive Statistics: The demographic (socio-economic) characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, marital status, educational background, and work experience, were ascertained through the use of percentages and tables. Inferential Statistics: The hypotheses in this study were tested using multiple regression analysis. It calculates the degree to which two or more independent variables account for the variation in the dependent variable.

Decision Rule

Standard error test was used in testing the hypotheses and acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis was based on the decision rule which holds that:

If the standard error of b_i[S (b_i) $>^1/_2 b_i$] accept the null hypothesis; that is, accept that the estimated b_i is not statistically significant at the 5% level of significance.

If the standard error of b_i[S (b_i) $<^1/_2 b_i$] reject the null hypothesis, in other words, accept that the estimated b_i is statistically significant at the 5% level of significance

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

The respondents were given 200 copies of the questionnaire in total, all of which were accurately completed and sent back by the respondents for data analysis.

Table 2: Demographic Attributes of Respondents (n=200)

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	117	58.5
Female	83	41.5
Total	**200**	**100**
Age Distribution		
18-27 years	42	21.0
28-37 years	40	20.0
38-47 years	44	22.0
48 -57 years	55	27.5
57 years and above	19	9.5
Total	**200**	**100**
Marital Status		
Married	99	49.5
Single	101	50.5
Total	**200**	**100**
Education Attainment		
SSCE/GCE	23	11.5
OND/NCE	31	15.5
HND	42	21.0
B.Sc	70	35.0
M.Sc	18	9.0
Ph.D	16	8.0
Total	**200**	**100**
Work Experience		
1-3 years	64	32.0
4-6 years	67	33.5
7-9 years	40	20.0
10 years and above	29	14.5
Total	**200**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

According to Table 2's results, the majority of employees (58.5%) were men, while 41.5% were women. This finding suggests that men make up the majority of respondents who work for Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi. The respondents' age distribution, as shown in table 2, also showed that 21.0 percent of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 27, 20.0 percent were between the ages of 28 and 37, and 22.0 percent were between the ages

of 38 and 47. Additionally, 27.5 percent of respondents were between the ages of 48 and 57, and 9.5% were 58 years of age or older. This suggests that the respondents were distributed throughout a range of age categories, with the majority of them being employed. According to the respondents' marital status distribution, 49.5% of the respondents were married, while

the remaining 50.5% were unmarried. According to this data, the majority of respondents who work for Seraph Nig. Ltd. and Mikap Nig. Ltd. in Makurdi are still unmarried. According to Table 2, the respondents' educational backgrounds were as follows: 11.5% had SSCE/GCE, 15.5% had OND/NCE, 21.0% had HND, 35.0% had B.Sc., 9.0% had M.Sc., and four employees (8%) had Ph.D. This data unequivocally shows that the respondents had a wide range of educational backgrounds and were sufficiently educated to comprehend the subject of the study. Lastly, Table 2's results indicate that 32.0% of the employees have worked for 1–3 years, 33.5% have worked for 4–6 years, 20.0% have worked for 7–9 years, and 14.5% have worked for 10 years or more. This suggests that the majority of the staff has been with the Makurdi branch of Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd. for a long time.

Table 3: Respondents Views on Process Innovation (n=200)

Item	N	Mean	ST.D	Decision
Novelties in production and delivery method bring efficiency	200	3.11	0.887	Accepted
Process Innovation brings cost efficiency	200	2.99	0 .988	Accepted
Firms adapt new processes to compete with others	200	3.08	0.921	Accepted
Process innovation increases productivity of the firm	200	2.99	0.876	Accepted
Your company review the process if the new product launch is not successful	200	3.23	0.840	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to display the responses that were gathered from the respondents on questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. According to the results in Table 3, all of the statements that demonstrated that they are signs of intrinsic benefits were accepted by the respondents. All of the mean scores, which varied from 2.99 to 3.23, were higher than the 2.50 threshold. This outcome suggests that process innovation has led to process improvement.

Table 4: Respondents Views on Product Innovation (n=200)

Item	N	Mean	ST.D	Decision
Your company develop new products in line with customer needs	200	3.25	0.815	Accepted
Your company regularly modifies new products to keep up with customer change in taste	200	3.14	0.845	Accepted
Product innovation attract new customer	200	3.24	0.818	Accepted
Your company face out competition through new products	200	3.12	0.924	Accepted
Your company products surpass customer expectation	200	3.14	0.843	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to display the respondents' answers to items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. According to the results in Table 4, all of the statements that demonstrated that they are signs of extrinsic incentives were accepted by the respondents. All of the mean scores, which varied from 3.12 to 3.25, were higher than the 2.50 threshold. This finding suggests that product innovation has led to performance improvements.

Table 5: Respondents Views on Marketing innovation (n=200)

Item	N	Mean	ST.D	Decision
The firm used computer software to collect and store customer information	200	2.99	0.915	Accepted
Improved promotion strategies attract new customers	200	3.02	0.912	Accepted
Changes in product design and packaging enhance customer satisfaction	200	3.05	0.885	Accepted
Improved product placement enhance customer awareness	200	3.03	0.884	Accepted
Changes in company pricing enhance customer retention	200	3.10	0.852	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to display the responses that were gathered from the respondents on questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. According to the results in Table 5, all of the statements that demonstrated that they are indications of total benefits were accepted by the respondents. All of the mean scores were above the 2.50 cut-off, with a range of 2.99 to 3.10. This finding suggests that performance has significantly improved as a result of innovative marketing techniques.

Table 6: Respondents Views on Performance (n=200)

Item	N	Mean	ST.D	Decision
Product innovations has improve the market share of your company	200	2.96	0.903	Accepted
Process innovation has increase the market share of your company	200	2.93	0.973	Accepted
Your company market share is enlarged as a result of new marketing methods	200	3.12	0.861	Accepted
Product and process innovations has enhance customer satisfaction of your company	200	3.11	0.762	Accepted
Marketing method innovation has increased your customers' satisfaction	200	2.93	0.932	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Mean scores and standard deviation were used to display the responses that were gathered from the respondents on questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. According to the results in Table 6, all of the statements demonstrating that they are markers of employee success were accepted by the respondents. All of the mean scores, which varied from 2.93 to 3.12, were higher than the 2.50 threshold. This outcome suggests that performance has significantly improved.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.267	.260		4.864	.000
Process Innovation	.378	.065	.489	5.833	.000
Product Innovation	.274	.076	.201	2.285	.024
Marketing Method Innovation	.219	.070	.237	2.318	.029

a. Dependent Variable: Company Performance

Source: Researcher's Computation using SPSS (2024).

According to Table 7's regression coefficient, performance would be impacted by 37.8% for every unit change in process innovation, 27.4% for each unit change in product innovation, and 21.9% for each unit change in marketing innovation. The outcome also demonstrates that process innovation has a greater effect on business performance.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

The three hypotheses formulated in this study were tested as follows:

4.2.1Test of hypothesis one

$H0_1$: Process innovation has no significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, the computed p-value =.000 at a significance level (α) of 0.05 was used to quantify the strength of the link between process innovation and performance. Since the calculated p-value (p-value.000 < α 0.05) is less than the significance level (α) of 0.05, the alternative hypotheses were accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. It is determined that Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi, perform much better as a result of process innovation.

4.2.2 Test of hypothesis two

$H0_2$: Product innovation has no significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, the computed p-value =.024 at a significance level (α) of 0.05 was used to quantify the strength of the link between product innovation and performance. The alternative hypotheses were accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected since the calculated p-value (p-value.024< α 0.05) was less than the significance level (α) of 0.05. Thus, we draw the conclusion that product innovation significantly affects Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi's performance. .

4.2.3 Test of hypothesis three

$H0_3$: Marketing innovation has no significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, the computed p-value =.029 at a significance level (α) of 0.05 was used to measure the strength of the association between marketing innovation and performance. The alternative hypotheses were accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected since the calculated p-value (p-value.029< α 0.05) was less than the significance level (α) of 0.05. Therefore, we draw the conclusion that employee performance at Mikap Nig. Ltd. and Seraph Nig. Ltd., Makurdi, is significantly impacted by marketing innovation.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings was based on the objectives of the study as follows:

4.3.1 Impact of process innovative on performance

The result collected on hypothesis two indicated a positive significant impact of process innovation on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria. Regression was used to test the hypothesis at 5% level of significance and the p-value (.000) was lower than the significance level. P-value.000 < α = 0.05 indicates that the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected. Results are in line with studies that demonstrate process innovation has a positive and substantial impact on listed food and beverage manufacturing businesses' competitiveness in Nigeria (Gyedu et al., 2021; Wongsansukcharoen and Thaweepaiboonwong, 2023). The results, however, are at odds with those of previous studies by Mung'ora (2020) and Ringo et al. (2023), which found that

process innovation had no discernible and beneficial impact on the competitiveness of mentioned Nigerian food and beverage manufacturing companies.

4.3.2 Impact of product innovation on performance

The result collected from the respondents showed that product innovation has significant impact on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria. At the 5% level of significance, regression was employed to test the hypothesis, and the p-value (.024) was less than the significance level. The alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis was rejected, as indicated statistically by the P-value of.024 < α = 0.05. Similar findings from additional investigations are supported by the results (Christa and Kristinae, 2021; Ramajet al., 2022; Issak and Odollo, 2023). However, the findings diverge from those of other earlier studies (Mung'ora, 2020), which found that product innovation had no discernible positive effect on the competitiveness of the mentioned Nigerian food and beverage production firms.

4.3.3 Impact of marketing innovation on performance

The result from the analysis on hypothesis three indicated that total rewards have significant impact on company's performance. Regression was used to test the hypothesis at 5 % level of significance and the p-value (.029) was lower than the significance level. This can be statistically given as P-value .029< α = 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted. According to earlier studies (Gyeduet al., 2021; Issak and Odollo, 2023; Ramaj et al., 2022; Wongsansukcharoen and Thaweepaiboonwong, 2023), market innovation has a significant and positive impact on the competitiveness of quoted food and beverage manufacturing firms in Nigeria. These findings echo those findings. The findings, however, contradict those of a previous study by Ringo et al. (2023), which found that market innovation had no discernible and beneficial impact on the competitiveness of mentioned Nigerian food and beverage manufacturing companies.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study was carried out to examine the impact of innovative marketing on performance of foods processing companies in Benue State, Nigeria using Mikap Nig. Ltd and Seraph Nig. Ltd, Makurdi. Analysis of the result based on the data collected from the respondents revealed the following findings:

i. Findings of the study also revealed that process innovation has significant impact on sales growth of foods processing in Benue State, Nigeria (P-value 0.000< α = 0.05) and (beta coefficient of 37.8%).

ii. The findings of the study indicated that product innovation has significant impact on performance of foods processing in Benue State, Nigeria (P-value 0.001 < α = 0.05) and (beta coefficient of 27.4%).

iii. Lastly, findings of the study revealed that marketing innovation has significant impact on performance of foods processing in Benue State, Nigeria (P-value 0.000 < α = 0.05) and (beta coefficient of 21.9%).

5.2 Conclusion

The performance of foods processing businesses in Benue State, Nigeria, is positively impacted by innovative marketing done through process, product, and marketing innovation, according to the data analysis and study findings.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. In order to boost business performance, management of foods processing enterprises should concentrate on maintaining and improving process innovations.
ii. The management of food processing businesses should prioritize promoting ongoing product development, distinctiveness, and market compatibility.
iii. The management of businesses that process food should concentrate on strengthening digital marketing plans, raising brand awareness, and maximizing consumer interaction.

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