

Strategic Choices and Competitive Advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine strategic choices and competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria. The specific objective was to investigate the influence of strategic alliance and resource availability on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2427 with a sample size of 343 which was determined using Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination. Data was collected through the use of questionnaire and was distributed to the respondents out of which 322 copies were filled and returned. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and simple linear regression analysis. Findings indicated that strategic alliance and resource availability have statistically influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria (R^2 . of 864, .828, Beta coefficients of 0.847,882, and P-value of .000,.00, $P>0.05$). It was concluded that the dimensions of strategic choices such as strategic alliance, and resource availability have significant and positive influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended that Manufacturing firms should actively seek and establish strategic alliances with complementary firms, technology providers, and research institutions to access new resources, reduce innovation costs, and expand market reach.

Keywords: *Strategic Choices, Strategic Alliance, Resource Availability and competitive Advantage & Manufacturing Firms.*

INTRODUCTION

Manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria face a highly dynamic and competitive environment, influenced by various factors such as resource availability, flexibility, adaptability, and strategic alliances. Over the years, the region has seen substantial economic growth, yet it is also confronted with challenges like infrastructure deficits, regulatory issues, and limited access to financing. These challenges have heightened the need for firms in the region to adopt strategic choices that can foster competitive advantage. Understanding how manufacturing firms in this area leverage resources, engage in strategic alliances, and adapt to market dynamics can provide valuable insights into their long-term success (Akinyemi and Akinmoladun, 2020).

Strategic alliances have become increasingly important for manufacturing firms seeking to enhance their competitive position. In the context of South-South Nigeria, alliances can provide firms with access to new markets, technological capabilities (Uford & Akpan, 2024), and critical resources that they might otherwise lack. Alliances also allow firms to share the risks associated with new ventures and overcome the challenges of a volatile business environment (Olayiwola & Olawale, 2021). Recent studies emphasize the role of strategic alliances in facilitating innovation, improving operational efficiency, and fostering a sustainable competitive edge, especially in emerging markets like Nigeria (Ugoani and Ogbari, 2021).

Another critical factor influencing the strategic choices of manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria is the availability and management of resources. Resource-based theory suggests that the availability of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources can provide firms with a significant competitive advantage. In the region, access to natural resources such as oil, gas, and agricultural products plays a central role in shaping the strategic choices of manufacturing firms. Additionally, the management of human, technological, and financial resources has become crucial for firms aiming to improve productivity and efficiency (Irefinet *et al.*, 2021).

Competitive advantage refers to the attributes or strategies that allow a firm to outperform its rivals, typically by offering superior value to customers, achieving cost leadership, or differentiating its products (Porter, 1985; Charles & Uford, 2023). For manufacturing firms, this can involve factors such as operational efficiency, innovation, strategic alliances, and resource management, which enable them to gain and sustain an edge in a highly competitive marketplace. In Nigeria, and particularly in the South-South region, manufacturing firms face challenges such as infrastructural deficits, resource scarcity, and economic instability, making the pursuit of competitive advantage crucial (Akinyemi and Akinmoladun, 2020, Bassey *et al.*, 2025). Leveraging local resources, forming strategic partnerships, and adopting flexible operational models are some of the strategies that firms in the region use to gain a competitive edge (Irefinet *et al.*, 2021). Despite the growing attention on competitive advantage in global contexts, there remains limited research on how firms in South-South Nigeria, specifically, navigate these challenges to establish sustainable competitive positions (Olayiwola and Olawale, 2021). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the key drivers of competitive advantage among manufacturing firms in this region.

Statement of the Problem

The manufacturing sector in South-South Nigeria plays a critical role in the economic development of the region, yet many firms in this sector continue to face significant challenges in achieving and sustaining competitive advantage. Despite the increasing recognition of strategic choices such as strategic alliances, resource availability, flexibility, and adaptability, there remains a gap in the literature regarding how these factors specifically contribute to the competitive positioning of manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria. Most existing studies on strategic management focus on broader national contexts or large multinational firms, leaving a limited understanding of how smaller or mid-sized firms in this region can strategically align their operations to thrive in a volatile business environment. The lack of region-specific insights significantly impedes the ability of local firms to leverage these strategies effectively.

While strategic alliances are acknowledged globally as a means of enhancing competitive advantage, research specific to South-South Nigeria remains scant, and the role of these alliances in the region's manufacturing sector has not been sufficiently explored. In particular,

the literature does not fully address how manufacturing firms in the region engage with local or international partners to access critical resources, technology, or new market opportunities. Without a thorough understanding of the potential benefits and risks of strategic alliances in this context, many firms miss out on opportunities to innovate and expand, leading to stagnation in their competitive positioning (Olayiwola and Olawale, 2021). Furthermore, inadequate attention to the operationalization of strategic alliances results in the underutilization of collaborative synergies that could enhance their market resilience.

Additionally, the dynamic nature of resource availability and the need for flexibility and adaptability remain underexplored in the South-South Nigerian context. Manufacturing firms often struggle with unreliable access to raw materials, energy shortages, and infrastructural deficits, which complicate their ability to implement flexible strategies or adapt to shifts in market demands. While resource-based theories and adaptability frameworks are well established in global research, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of how these elements impact the day-to-day operations of firms in South-South Nigeria. The inability to harness these resources or adapt to changing conditions has led to a decline in the performance and competitiveness of many firms in the region, thereby limiting their growth prospects in an increasingly competitive global market. The negative influence of these challenges on manufacturing firms underscores the need for further investigation into the strategic choices that can foster sustainable competitive advantages in the region.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of strategic choices on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. evaluate the influence of strategic alliance on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria.
- i. investigate the influence of resource availability on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria.

The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

H₀₁: Strategic alliance has no significant influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria.

H₀₂: Resource availability has no significant influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Review

Strategic Choices

Strategic choices refer to the decisions and actions that firms undertake to position themselves advantageously in the market, ensuring sustained profitability and market dominance. For manufacturing firms, these choices typically revolve around factors like cost leadership, differentiation, innovation, resource allocation, and market positioning. Competitive advantage, as defined by Porter (1985), is the ability of a firm to outperform its competitors by providing greater value, either through lower costs or differentiated products that customers perceive as more valuable. Manufacturing firms that strategically choose to focus on innovation and operational efficiency can create a distinct competitive advantage, allowing them to deliver products at lower costs or with higher quality than their competitors. Recent studies highlight that in Nigeria, particularly in the South-South region, firms are increasingly adopting

strategies such as technological advancements, supply chain optimization, and process improvements to drive down production costs while maintaining product differentiation (Akinyemi and Akinmoladun, 2020). This approach helps them navigate challenges such as resource scarcity and infrastructure deficits, thereby sustaining their competitive position in a volatile market (Olayiwola and Olawale 2021; Irefinet *et al.*, 2021).

Strategic Alliance

Strategic alliances play a significant role in shaping the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms by enabling them to combine resources, knowledge, and capabilities. Strategic alliances involve partnerships between firms to jointly pursue objectives that might be difficult or costly to achieve independently (Das & Teng, 2020; Etuk *et al.*, 2023). For manufacturing firms, such alliances provide access to new markets, advanced technologies, and complementary resources, all of which enhance their competitive positioning. By sharing risks and costs associated with innovation and expansion, firms can build a robust competitive edge, often faster than through organic growth alone (Chen *et al.*, 2021). The collaborative efforts in strategic alliances allow firms to achieve economies of scale, reducing production costs and improving their market reach.

Resource Availability

Resource availability remains a crucial factor in the competitiveness of manufacturing firms. A firm's access to both tangible and intangible resources such as capital, human capital, technology, and intellectual property can determine its ability to innovate, scale, and optimize operations (Shin *et al.*, 2019). Firms that strategically manage their resources are better positioned to reduce operational costs and enhance product differentiation. For example, the adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies like automation and AI requires substantial investment, which smaller firms may lack unless they leverage alliances or external partnerships (Gligor *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, resource availability influences the overall capacity of manufacturing firms to sustain a competitive advantage, particularly in an increasingly technology-driven industry landscape.

Competitive Advantage

The competitive advantage of manufacturing firms is a critical factor for success in today's globalized and rapidly evolving business environment. In emerging economies like Nigeria, manufacturing firms face unique challenges such as resource scarcity, infrastructural deficits, and economic volatility, making the quest for sustainable competitive advantage even more vital (Akinyemi and Akinmoladun, 2020). Strategies such as innovation, operational efficiency, strategic alliances, and resource management play a pivotal role in positioning firms to outperform their competitors. Research suggests that leveraging local resources effectively, forming strategic partnerships, and adopting flexible operational strategies can significantly enhance a firm's competitiveness (Olayiwola and Olawale, 2021). Despite the growing body of literature on competitive advantage, there remains a gap in understanding how manufacturing firms in specific regions, particularly South-South Nigeria, navigate these challenges to secure long-term success (Irefinet *et al.*, 2021). Understanding these dynamics can offer valuable insights into how manufacturing firms can improve their competitive positioning in a volatile market.

Theoretical Review

Resource Based View Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, originally developed by Wernerfelt (1984) and later expanded by Barney (1991), posits that the resources and capabilities within a firm are key to

gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. The RBV emphasizes that firms can achieve superior performance by leveraging valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (the VRIN attributes). According to Barney (1991), these resources enable firms to implement strategies that enhance their competitive positioning and provide long-term advantages. RBV highlights the importance of internal resources such as human capital, technological capabilities, brand reputation, and financial strength in shaping the strategic direction and competitive advantage of firms (Barney, 1991; Peteraf, 1993).

The RBV's relevance to strategic choices lies in its emphasis on leveraging existing resources to make informed decisions about market positioning, product development, and innovation. In manufacturing firms, the strategic allocation and management of resources, including tangible assets like machinery and intangible assets like intellectual property, are critical in shaping the firm's ability to differentiate itself in the market. As argued by Barney and Hesterly (2019), firms that focus on strengthening their resource base can make strategic choices that enable them to outperform competitors. For example, decisions regarding investments in advanced manufacturing technologies or the development of proprietary processes are deeply influenced by the RBV, as these resources can form the foundation of a firm's competitive advantage. Manufacturing firms are encouraged to evaluate their unique resources and capabilities when determining their strategic direction, ensuring that their resources align with long-term goals and market demands.

As the theory correlates with this study, the RBV theory underscores the importance of firms possessing resources that are difficult for competitors to replicate or substitute. Manufacturing firms that have access to specialized technologies, exclusive supplier relationships, or unique expertise are more likely to develop a sustainable competitive edge (Teece, 2020). Furthermore, the theory suggests that firms with a strong resource base are better positioned to adapt to market changes, which is crucial in the highly competitive and fast-evolving manufacturing sector. According to researchers like Teece (2020) and Barney et al. (2021), the integration of valuable resources into a firm's strategic choices not only ensures competitive advantage but also fosters innovation and adaptability, key factors for long-term success in global markets.

Empirical Review

Lin and Liu (2021) investigated Strategic alliances and competitive advantage in the manufacturing industry: A resource-based view approach in China. The objective was to investigate how strategic alliances influence the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms in China, specifically considering resource availability and organizational capabilities. The research design used was quantitative research design using a survey method. The population was Manufacturing firms in China, with a focus on those involved in strategic alliances with the sample size was 250 manufacturing firms. Data were collected using structured questionnaires distributed to managers of manufacturing firms. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings indicated that strategic alliances significantly enhance competitive advantage by enabling firms to access critical resources, share knowledge, and innovate more effectively. The availability of complementary resources was identified as crucial for sustaining long-term competitive advantage. It was concluded that strategic alliances are essential for firms in the manufacturing industry to develop and sustain competitive advantage, particularly through resource exchange and innovation. Therefore, it was recommended that manufacturing firms should actively engage in strategic alliances to gain access to valuable resources and improve their competitive positioning, especially in rapidly changing markets.

Sharma and Gupta. (2020) The role of flexibility and adaptability in maintaining competitive advantage in manufacturing firms India. The objective was to examine the role of organizational flexibility and adaptability in sustaining competitive advantage within India's manufacturing sector. The research design adopted was descriptive research design with a mixed-method approach. The population was manufacturing firms in the automotive and electronics sectors in India with the sample size were 180 firms. Data were collected surveys and in-depth interviews with senior managers were analyzed Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

Findings indicated Flexibility in production processes and adaptability to market changes were found to significantly improve manufacturing firms' competitive advantage. Firms that adapted quickly to customer demands and technological changes were better positioned to outperform competitors. it was concluded Flexibility and adaptability are key drivers of competitive advantage in the manufacturing industry, particularly in environments characterized by technological advancements and market volatility. It was recommended that manufacturing firms should invest in agile production systems and foster a culture of adaptability to enhance their responsiveness to changing market conditions.

García and Ruiz. (2022) examined resource availability and strategic alliances as determinants of competitive advantage in European manufacturing firms in Spain. The objective was to examine how resource availability and strategic alliances contribute to the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms in Europe. The research design adopted Cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study was 200 manufacturing firms across Spain, with the sample size of 120 firms. The method of data collection adopted was online surveys targeting managers involved in strategic decisions and analyzed using regression analysis. Findings indicated that the research revealed that firms with access to rare and inimitable resources, coupled with strong strategic alliances, were able to sustain competitive advantages. Moreover, strategic alliances provided access to innovation and resources critical for growth. It was concluded that the combination of strategic alliances and resource availability plays a pivotal role in sustaining competitive advantage for manufacturing firms in Europe. It was recommended that manufacturing firms should prioritize the development of strategic alliances to access critical resources and enhance their innovation capabilities, which are essential for long-term competitiveness.

Choi and Lee. (2021) examined Adapting to change: The role of flexibility and strategic alliances in improving competitive advantage for South Korean manufacturing firms in South Korea. The objective was to investigate flexibility and strategic alliances contribute to the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms in South Korea, focusing on the role of adaptability. Research design adopted was mixed-method design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The population of the study was 300 South Korean manufacturing firms in the technology and automotive sectors sample size was 150 firms. Data were collected using Surveys and case study interviews with executives and analyzed using ANOVA and thematic analysis. Findings indicated that the study found that firms that demonstrated both flexibility in production processes and the ability to form effective strategic alliances were able to better adapt to external shocks, such as economic downturns or supply chain disruptions .it was concluded Strategic alliances, when combined with organizational flexibility and adaptability, are powerful mechanisms for enhancing the competitive advantage of South Korean manufacturing firms. It was recommended that manufacturing firms should focus on strengthening their adaptive capabilities through flexible systems and build more robust strategic alliances to safeguard against market volatility.

Kim and Park. (2019) examined resource-based view of strategic alliances and competitive advantage in the Korean manufacturing sector in South Korea. The objective was to investigate the role of resource-based view (RBV) in shaping the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms through strategic alliances in South Korea. The research design adopted was quantitative research with a survey-based approach. The population: of the study was 250 manufacturing firms in South Korea's electronics and automotive industries with sample size of 200 firms. Data were collected using questionnaire-based survey and Analyzed using Factor analysis and path analysis. Findings revealed that firms with access to unique and valuable resources, including through strategic alliances, were more likely to have a competitive advantage. Firms that could rapidly adapt their resources to changing market conditions gained a superior edge over rivals. It was concluded that the resource-based view provides a strong foundation for understanding how strategic alliances can enhance competitive advantage, particularly when firms leverage rare and inimitable resources. Therefore, it was recommended that manufacturing firms should adopt the resource-based view to identify and protect key resources that can be leveraged through strategic alliances, ensuring they maintain a competitive advantage over time.

Gap in Knowledge

While existing research highlights the significant influence of strategic alliances, resource availability, flexibility, and adaptability on the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms, there remains a gap in understanding how these factors interact across different contexts, particularly in diverse geographical and industrial settings. Most studies have focused on specific regions (e.g., China, South Korea, India) or industries (e.g., automotive, electronics), leaving the broader applicability of these findings underexplored. Additionally, the dynamic nature of these relationships—how alliances evolve over time, how firms balance internal resources with external partnerships, and how adaptability directly influences long-term competitive advantage—requires further investigation. Moreover, while strategic alliances and flexibility are well-researched in isolation, studies examining their combined impact on competitive advantage, especially in times of economic uncertainty or technological disruption, are limited. These gaps present opportunities for future research to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how these factors collectively shape the competitive landscape for manufacturing firms in a globalized economy.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 2300 employees of the Nestle Nigeria Plc and 127 employees of Champion Breweries Plc. Therefore, a total number of 2427 employees were used for the study with a sample size of 343 which was determined using Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination. Data were collected using questionnaire and were distributed to 343 respondents who were used for the study proportional distribution formula was used to allocate 322 respondents to Nestle Nigeria n Plc and 18 respondents to Champion Breweries Plc since the population was not obtain from a given organization. The face and content validity were used to validate the instrument used for the study while test-retest method was used to measure the reliability of the instrument and Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to compute the reliability coefficients which yielded a value of 0.721 and 0.871. Data were analyzed through the use of simple percentage and simple linear regression analysis. The model was given as:

$$CA = f(SA) \text{ ----- Model 3.1}$$

$$CA = a_0 + a_1SA + e \text{ ----- Equation 3.1}$$

$$CA = f(RA) \text{ ----- Model 3.2}$$

$$CA = a_0 + a_2RA + e \text{ ----- Equation 3.2}$$

a = Interception of the equation
CA= Competitive Advantage
SA = Strategic Alliance
RA=Resource Availability
 $a_1 a_2$ = Coefficients of the Independent variables
e = Error term

Data Presentation Analysis and Findings
Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved
Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire

Firms	Questionnaire Administered	Questionnaire Returned	Percentage Returned
Nestle Nigeria Plc	325	305	93.9%
Champion Breweries	18	17	
Total	343	322	93.9%

Source: Researcher's Compilation (2025)

Table 1 indicated that 343 copies of questionnaire were distributed to Nestle Nigeria Plc and Champion Breweries but 322 copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned in usable for which form the basis of the analysis.

Data: Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Responses

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Competitive Advantage	322	1.00	4.00	2.5311	1.19212
Strategic Alliance	322	1.00	4.00	2.4783	1.11678
Source Availability	322	1.00	4.00	2.2981	1.17526
Valid N (listwise)	322				

Source: Researcher's Computation (2025)

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Bottom of Form

The mean score of 2.531, standard deviation of 1.19212, minimum scores of 1.00, and maximum of 4.00. This implies that a mean score of 2.531 suggests a moderate level of influence of strategic alliances on competitive advantage. It indicates that manufacturing firms recognize the relevance of partnerships but may not fully exploit them. The relatively wide standard deviation of 1.19212 implies variability in responses, some firms may be benefitting significantly from alliances, while others may not be leveraging them at all.

Questionnaire mapping of Q1, Q2 suggested that assessed how collaboration and partnerships contribute to innovation, market expansion, or operational efficiency can enhancing strategic

alliances, such as joint ventures or supplier partnerships, could be a viable strategy for improving competitiveness among these firms. The mean score of 2.4783, standard deviation of 1.11678, minimum of 1.00, and maximum of 4.00. A mean of 2.4783 indicates a modest perception of how resource availability affects competitiveness. Although the score leans slightly below the neutral midpoint (2.5), it still reflects recognition of its importance. The standard deviation of 1.11678 again highlights a moderate spread in perceptions. The questionnaire mapping shows that Q3, Q4 focused on access to financial, human, and technological resources. There may be unequal access to critical resources across firms. Addressing this could involve policy intervention or internal optimization strategies to ensure better resource allocation and usage.

H₀₁: Strategic alliance has no significant influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria

Table 2: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the influence of Strategic Alliance on Manufacture Firms in South-South Nigeria

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.920 ^a	.846	.845	.32676

Model Fit

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	187.037	1	187.037	1751.704	.000 ^b
	Residual	34.168	320	.107		
	Total	221.205	321			

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.342	.064		5.356	.000
	Strategic Alliance	.847	.020	.920	41.853	.000

Source: Researchers' Computation (2025)

The findings from the statistical analysis provide compelling evidence supporting the positive influence of strategic alliances on firms' competitive positioning. A key result of the regression analysis reveals a high coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.846, indicating that approximately 84.6% of the variance in the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms can be explained by their engagement in strategic alliances. This is a strong indication of model fitness and underscores the substantial influence of alliance strategies in shaping competitive outcomes.

Further analysis demonstrates a highly significant F-value of 1751.704, which strongly confirms the overall significance of the regression model. This high F-statistic indicates that the relationship between strategic alliance activities and competitive advantage is not due to random chance. Instead, it highlights a robust and systematic link between the variables, validating the model's predictive capability.

Additionally, the Beta coefficient of 0.847 reflects a very strong positive relationship between strategic alliances and competitive advantage. This coefficient implies that for every unit increase in strategic alliance efforts such as joint ventures, partnerships, supply chain collaborations, and technology-sharing agreements—there is an expected 0.847 unit increase in competitive advantage. The strength of this coefficient illustrates the critical importance of strategic alliances in driving market positioning, innovation, and efficiency among manufacturing firms. Most notably, the p-value of .000 indicates that the relationship is statistically significant at a 99.9% confidence level. This essentially rules out the possibility that the observed effect is due to random variation or sampling error. Hence, strategic alliances significantly and positively affect competitive advantage among manufacturing firms in the region.

H02: Resource availability has no significant influence on competitive advantage of Manufacturing Firms in South-South Nigeria

Table3: The Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the influence of Resource Availability on Manufacture Firms in South-South Nigeria

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.910 ^a	.828	.827	.34519

Model Fit

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	183.075	1	183.075	1536.422	.000 ^b
	Residual	38.130	320	.119		
	Total	221.205	321			

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.304	.069		4.396	.000
	Resource Availability	.882	.023	.910	39.197	.000

Source: Researchers' Computation (2025)

The regression analysis conducted reveals a remarkably strong explanatory power of resource availability on competitive advantage, as evidenced by an R-squared (R^2) value of 0.829. This

implies that approximately 82.9% of the variance in competitive advantage among manufacturing firms can be accounted for by the availability of resources. Such a high R^2 value underscores the critical role that both tangible and intangible resources—such as raw materials, skilled labor, technology, and capital play in shaping a firm's ability to outperform competitors.

Further strengthening this inference is the F-value of 1536.422, which is substantially high and indicates that the regression model is statistically significant overall. This means that the model's predictors, primarily resource availability in this context, reliably forecast competitive advantage and that the relationship observed is unlikely to be due to random chance.

Delving deeper, the Beta coefficient of 0.882 highlights the substantial positive effect resource availability has on competitive advantage. In practical terms, this suggests that for every unit increase in resource availability, there is an 88.2% increase in the competitive advantage score of manufacturing firms, all else held constant. This strong beta value accentuates the magnitude of influence resources exert on enhancing firms' market position, innovation capability, and operational efficiency.

The statistical significance of this relationship is further confirmed by a p-value of 0.000, which is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This p-value decisively indicates that the impact of resource availability on competitive advantage is statistically significant and robust, providing confidence that resource availability is not merely correlated but a meaningful predictor of competitive success in the manufacturing sector within the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that strategic alliance, resource availability, flexibility, and compliance collectively exert a significant and positive influence on the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms in the South-South region of Nigeria. This multidimensional influence reflects the complex nature of competitive dynamics in today's manufacturing sector, where firms must simultaneously leverage external partnerships, internal capabilities, adaptive capacity, and regulatory adherence to outperform competitors.

Firstly, the significant impact of strategic alliances on competitive advantage aligns with the observations made by Kim and Park (2019), who emphasized that collaborative partnerships enable firms to access new markets, share risks, and pool complementary resources. In the context of South-South Nigeria, where infrastructural and economic challenges can hinder isolated firm growth, strategic alliances serve as critical conduits for acquiring technological know-how, enhancing innovation, and strengthening supply chains. The synergistic effects of such alliances thus provide firms with a competitive edge by enabling more efficient resource utilization and market responsiveness.

The profound role of resource availability in shaping competitive advantage, as indicated by this study's high explanatory power, corroborates the insights of Shama and Gupta (2020). Their work highlighted that the possession and effective management of resources—including capital, skilled labor, and technology—are foundational to developing unique capabilities that competitors find difficult to imitate. In the South-South manufacturing environment, where access to raw materials and skilled personnel can be inconsistent, firms that secure steady resource flows are better positioned to optimize production processes, innovate, and sustain superior performance, reaffirming resource availability as a critical determinant of competitive success.

Similarly, the influence of flexibility resonates strongly with the findings of Garcia and Kuiz (2022), who demonstrated that operational agility enables firms to swiftly adapt to market fluctuations, customer preferences, and technological advancements. Manufacturing firms in South-South Nigeria operate in a volatile business environment characterized by fluctuating demand, supply disruptions, and regulatory changes. Those firms that cultivate flexibility—through adaptable processes, decentralized decision-making, and responsive supply chains—can mitigate risks and capitalize on emerging opportunities more effectively, thereby securing competitive advantages.

Summary of Findings

The study explored the influence of strategic alliances, resource availability, flexibility, and adaptability on the competitive advantage of manufacturing firms. It found that strategic alliances significantly contribute to competitive advantage by enabling firms to share resources, knowledge, and capabilities. These collaborations provide access to new markets, advanced technologies, and complementary assets, which are essential for firms looking to enhance their competitive positioning. Additionally, the availability of critical resources—ranging from capital and human talent to technology was found to be a fundamental determinant of a firm's ability to innovate and differentiate itself in the marketplace. Moreover, the findings highlighted the role of flexibility and adaptability, showing that firms able to adjust their strategies and operations in response to market changes are more likely to maintain a competitive edge over time. Manufacturing firms with the capacity to rapidly innovate and reconfigure their operations in response to disruptions or shifting market demands exhibit superior performance in comparison to those with rigid structures.

Conclusion

The analysis concluded that strategic alliances, resource availability, and the ability to adapt and remain flexible are essential components for manufacturing firms seeking to sustain a competitive advantage. Strategic alliances foster synergies and open avenues for innovation, while resource availability ensures that firms have the necessary tools to compete effectively. Flexibility and adaptability, on the other hand, are critical for responding to industry shifts, technological advances, and market volatility. Collectively, these factors enable manufacturing firms to stay ahead of competitors, achieve operational efficiencies, and deliver products that meet evolving consumer needs. The integration of these elements into strategic frameworks allows firms to position themselves for long-term success, particularly in industries characterized by rapid change and innovation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for manufacturing firms aiming to enhance their competitive advantage:

- i. Manufacturing firms should actively seek and establish strategic alliances with complementary firms, technology providers, and research institutions to access new resources, reduce innovation costs, and expand market reach.
- ii. Firms should focus on enhancing their internal resource base by investing in human capital, cutting-edge technologies, and process improvements. This will provide the necessary foundation for innovation and competitiveness.

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