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Impact of Organizational Culture and Technology on Firm Performance in the Service Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the way organizational culture is adopted for exploring the relationship of firm performance. The primary objective is to explore the relationship between organizational culture and information technology effectiveness with reference to firm performance. The performance of the firm was measured using the dependent variables, return on assets (ROA) and Earning Per Share (EPS), obtained from the annual reports of the listed services industries in Nigeria. The random sample generated 200 usable responses. All the four cultural types adopted in the study had influence on the return on assets and earnings per share. The result of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed that masculinity culture factor was the most positively related to organizational culture and technology capability. The result provided evidence regarding the implications of organizational cultures as well as enabling factors associated with firm's performance and firm's innovativeness. The study increases our conceptual understanding of the variation and content of organizational culture, and technology. We recommended that management should consider developing the conducive organizational culture that requires the culture of openness, collaboration, trust, autonomy and authenticity. The study also recommended that future research be conducted utilizing larger sample size.

Keywords: Organizational culture, technology capability effects on performance

INTRODUCTION

Changing competitiveness in the global market has created challenges for many organizations as well as individuals. To cope with this changing environment, organizational cultures and information technology practices are expected to play a more vital role in firm performance improvement especially in the service sector organizations. This study investigated the impact of organizational culture and information technology on firm's performance with a sample of 200 enterprises.

Nigeria, like many other developing economies, is attracting foreign direct investment to accelerate its economic growth in term of employment creation and human capital development. The investment from foreign countries is seen as a strategy for combating poverty. To attract such foreign direct investment, the country needs to make the facilities of the service sector attractive as well as building of the skilled and productive labor force to supply to the service sector. As the competition in the global market becomes more fierce, firms in Nigeria are facing with greater challenges in maintaining their competitiveness. In recent years, service sector

organizations as well as other business sectors have started giving priorities for firm performance for managing organizational culture and information technology effectively to enhance their overall performance for their competitiveness.

With the worldwide globalization trends, attention has been given to the study of the relationship between the organizational culture, information technology and firm's performance. Empirical studies on culture and technology have been carried out across various countries and industries. In comparison, there seems to be a limited number of published studies related to the subject matter on the service sector organizations in Nigeria.

One of the most important yet least understood questions are how organizational culture and information technology relates to firm performance. Researchers initially favored a direct positive relationship, speculating that certain types of cultures result to better financial performance (Barney, 1986). Many have concluded that the link between organizational culture and firm performance lacks consistent and compelling support (Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011). Other studies found inconclusive relationships (Cameron & Freeman, 1991). In an effort to solve these inconsistencies, some researchers have suggested that the relationships between culture, technology and firm performance are contingent on environmental conditions. One argument is that strong culture, firms may gain advantages in stable environment but because of the corresponding social factors that promote conformity among members, they may perform worse or less reliably in dynamic environments and periods of change (van den Steen, 2005).since organizations operate in dynamic environment, this view suggests that strong cultures might reduce firm's performance.

Our task in this study is to resolve the inconsistencies in our understanding of the organizational culture –performance relationships. It is a common belief that organizations that have developed within similar environments usually have similar cultures and related mindsets about ways of doing business. For this reason, the study hope to contribute to an understanding of culture, technology relationships to firm performance specifically in the service sector organization in Nigeria. The main reasons for the growing importance of the organizational culture and technology can be explained by the internationalization of the service markets. It is a well-known fact that international services industries are facing many problems due to conflicts, confrontations, misunderstandings and the differences in ways of doing business with other cultures. Most organizational scholars recognize that culture has a powerful effect on the performance and long-term effectiveness of service organizations. Schein (1992) emphasizes that understanding of organizational culture is fundamental to what goes on in the organization. After reviewing research on organizational culture, we released that there is a need to become more aware of the importance of this phenomenon and its impact on firm's performance, especially in the service sector organizations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this study, the main objective is to identify the impact of organizational culture and information technology on firm performance in the service sector organizations in Nigeria. Other specific objectives include:

- To identify and assess the extent of the use of information technology in service sector organization performance.
- To identify the factors that influence information technology use in the service industry
- To review the related studies to the relationship between organizational culture and information technology use in the service industry
- To describe the prevailing organizational culture in the service sector

In essence, Information Technology (IT) plays a vital role in the sustained growth of service industries. This notion of IT focuses on a combination of hardware, software, telecommunication and office equipment that transform raw data into useful information for speedy retrieval. Research suggests that numerous outcomes have been associated either directly or indirectly with information technology. A healthy and robust IT sector provides various benefits, including the following:

- Competitive edge deprived from innovation and customer service
- Consistent, efficient employee performance
- High employee morale
- Strong company alignment towards goal achievement (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006)

HYPOTHESIS

The following research hypothesis was formulated to guide the study.

H₀: Firm performance is not positively correlated with the degree of organizational culture and technology dimensions.

RELATED RESEARCH

In today's rapidly changing environment, organizational culture has become an important component to organizational effectiveness. Organizations culture's evolution began when individual in organizations started to question their effectiveness and wanted to obtain and develop clearly defined goals and objectives. Organizational culture is recognized increasingly as an important determinant of firm's performance, serves as one of the most effective managerial control mechanism.

Although organizational culture evolution began in the early 1980s, its roots can be traced back to the 1940s when human relations became important for business survival and success. Consequently, organizational culture became a business phenomenon after the release of four seminal books in the early 1980s, which stimulated further study and analysis among researchers. The concept of organizational culture created considerable literature and has become an integral part to organizational effectiveness. Because of a large wave of research on the concept of organizational culture, defining the term has become complex. In and amongst the literature, there is no single definition. For instance, Deal and Kennedy (1982) suggested that organizational culture is indicative of an organization's values, whereas Sathe (1985) claims that it is the organization's operating philosophy; and Pettigrew (1979) claims it to be the organization's generally accepted system of meaning. According to Sathe (1985) and Louis (1985), organizational culture is best understood when there is a cognitive focus with related

meanings and understanding that culture is shared, distinctive and unique. Bidney (1968) describes organizational culture as idealistic and realistic.

Comprehensively, Schein (1992) defined organizational culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.

Deshpande and Webster (1989) described their organizational differently:

We define organizational culture as the pattern of shared value and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them with norms for behaviors in the organization.

Turner and Trompenaars (1993) proposed five cultural dimensions:

- Collectivism/individualism
- Neutral/affective relationships
- Diffuse/specific relationships
- Achievement/Assumption

Focusing on the relationship between the organizational culture and effectiveness, Zhang and Liu (2006) examined the organizational culture profiles of construction enterprises in China by means of organizational culture inventory (OCI) and organizational culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). Kotter and Heskett (1992) suggested that shared understanding of a firm's culture enhances strategy implementation, organizational changes and provides positive images of the firm in clients' eyes.

Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) pointed that organizations use organizational culture or social control to instill pride in membership, intensity and feelings of loyalty among organization members. This process ensures that members' objectives correspond to organizational objectives.

Studies by Zhang and Liu (2006) indicates that strong culture contributes to the organization's healthy working environment and self-assessment capabilities which in turn increases the proficiencies of individual, teams and the entire organizations. Empirical studies also provide evidence of link between organizational cultures and firm related performance outcome. Lee and Yu (2004) reported that culture was found to impact a variety of organizational processes and performance. The strength of cultural values was found to be correlated with the organizational performance of firms. Oparanma (2010) found that organizational culture is an important variable to be considered when organizational performance in consideration. The results published by Zain, Ihsak, and Ghani (2009) show that corporate culture motivates the employees to be committed to their organization. Tseng (2010) found that adhocracy culture improve firm performance more than clan and hierarchy cultures.

Martins and Terblanche (2003) reflected that the organizational culture with values, norms, and beliefs are an invaluable enabler of technological innovation.

Organizational culture has gained prominence as a way to comprehend and to be aware of human behaviors. Culture comprises the symbolic side of an organization and it gives dimension to the human contemplation and behavior in the system. Shafritz, Ott, and Jang (2001) pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation.

Research has shown that technology is related to organizational forms and performance (Perrow, 1967), that growth rate is a determinant of business strategy. Under a similar logic, technology and growth can also be related to organizational culture. Technology is one of the most salient factors among firms. Deal and Kennedy (1982) noted that if organizational culture represents how things are done by defining what is being done, that one way to conceptualize the relationship is to associate Thompson's technological classification schemes with specific dimensions of organizational culture (1967). Thompson's typology is appropriate in this study because it includes a critical element for the service sector firms. Thompson's classification of technological forms can be viewed as a continuum ranging from long-linked through mediating to intensive continuum.

The study on organizational culture has account on the potential for technology to transform organization structures and processes. Despite this enduring interest in the relationship between technology and organizational culture, the variety of actual consequences for organizations of actual consequences for organization has not been satisfactorily explained.

This study is particularly important as past research on organizational culture and IT in Nigeria have not identify the precise relationships between the different types of organizational cultures and its effects on firm's performance. The study could shed light on how to enhance the service industry in Nigeria through a better understanding of the relationship between culture and IT. This investigation, hopefully, might reveal general foundations and attitudes on cultural issues that might contribute to the general body of knowledge.

Nigeria's Service Sector Organizations

With the kind of Nigeria abundant natural, culture and human resources, Nigeria is too rich to be a poor country. The country's population of more than 140 million provides the largest market in Africa to support any business venture, and the population is adequate to make the country a haven from both foreign and local investors. Unfortunately, her economic potentials have remained largely untapped, its resources badly managed and its culture badly neglected to the extent that the economy has remained stagnated for many years. The country's service sector is fast crumbling. There is a collapse of the political system due to corrupt practices, economic, moral and ethical system. The combined effects of this complete system breakdown is what has brought us to where we are today as a beleaguered country. The country is not likely to develop economically unless and until we find solutions to our recurrent political and religious crises. Macroeconomic stability is required to jumpstart the economy and to encourage regular inflow of foreign investment. There is need to have a change of mindset, the need for a rethinking and the need to reinvent the wheels and by so doing both government and industry as an enterprise to be successful and make profit. This is a pre-requisite for any meaningful development in Nigeria.

For too long, we have run the economy in a lackadaisical manner and there has been lack of focus and direction. There has been massive corruption and infrastructural decay, electoral malpractices, overdependence on oil, insecurity of lives and property and now a crumbling service sector.

There is need for massive investment in upgrading the state of infrastructure especially power, rail ports etc. The case of electricity supply is very pathetic. Inadequate supply of power has driven many companies underground. It has scared away many potential investors both foreign and local. Without regular and uninterrupted power supply, not much can be achieved. The spate of policy reversals should be halted and replaced with stable and credible policies and programs that would instill confidence in investors and encourage unrestricted inflow of foreign capital.

There is an urgent need to devise an appropriate service sector policy that would emphasize reforms with respect to the development of industrial estates or clusters with full complements of all required infrastructure. In addition, Government should urgently take steps to rescue the service sector by releasing the bailout fund without further delay.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was conducted in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Capital City of Nigeria. In this study, in-depth interview and questionnaire survey methods were used to collect data. In this study, eight service sector organizations were used and 200 respondents randomly selected for the study. To collect data, the fieldwork was conducted in three stages: pilot survey, in-depth interview and full-scale questionnaire survey. The objectives of the pilot study were to pretest the items and to fine tune the item and construct measurement. This stage identified the weakness and potential of this study in regards to instrument clarity, wording and formatting of questionnaire. Thus, a pilot survey was undertaken to detect for error, validity and scale reliability. The five-point Likert scale was used (where 1 corresponds to “Strongly disagree” and 5 corresponds to “Strongly agree”).

The second stage of the study was the in-depth interview of executive officers, senior managers and other levels. The objectives of in-depth interviews were to investigate personal, sensitive and confidential information relating to the impact of organizational culture and information technology on firm’s performance. This method validates the construct, variables and concepts. Simple random sampling method was used to generate the sampling frame of firms in this study. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and feedback on the survey instrument with respect to the construct validity was obtained. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and the completed questionnaires were collected from the respondents. The researcher distributed and collected the questionnaires in person, which allowed the researcher to ask relevant questions. The response rate was satisfactory and statistically acceptable.

This study also adopted Hofstede’s (1980) four dimensions of culture. These dimensions were recognized as the most well known and widely applied in management and organizational research. The dimensions include:

- (i) **Power Distance**—the extent to which the less powerful members of the organization accept that power is distributed unequally.
- (ii) **Uncertainty Avoidance**—the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs that they try to avoid.
- (iii) **Individualism**—reflects ethnic positions of the culture in which people are supposed to look after themselves and their immediate families.
- (iv) **Masculinity**—a situation in which the dominant values and success, money and professions as opposed to the situational in which the dominant values are caring for others and the quality of life.

The study uses a quantitative approach with a sample of 200 respondents selected using random sampling. The questionnaire items were derived mainly from previous studies and modified to fit to the nature of this study. Organizational culture items were adopted from Cameron and Quinn (2006).

Part I of the questionnaire captured the background information about the respondents' organizational data. Single item questions were used to ascertain gender, age, educational level, organizational hierarchical level. Computer experience and literacy were assessed in Part II—the breakdown of the samples and services firms is provided below in Table 1:

Service Sector	CEO	Senior Managers	Others	Total
Finance Firms	5(12.5%)	15(14.7%)	8(13.7%)	28
Consumer Product	4(10.0)	9(8/80)	6(10.3)	19
Banks/Insurance	8(20.0)	18(17.61)	6(10.3)	32
Hotel/Food Catering	6(15.0)	12(11.76)	8(13.73)	26
Retailers/Wholesalers	5(12.5)	10(9.80)	7(12.06)	22
Shipping and Travel	4(10.0)	13(12.7)	9(15.5)	26
Construction	3(7.3)	11(10.7)	8(13.7)	22
Service Organizations	5(12.5)	14(13.7)	6(10.34)	25
	40(100%)	102(100)	58(100)	200

Instrument Reliability and Validity: Cronbach's Coefficient (δ) was used to calculate the organizational cultural components against 0.70 alpha coefficient

Table 1: Breakdown of Samples.

Factors	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Poor distance	8	0.820
Uncertainty avoidance	7	0.8142
Individualism	6	0.806
Masculinity	8	0.820

Table 2: Organizational Culture Components.

To ensure face validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was administered to some staff members in the management department and to some managers of computing firms. In light of discussion and feedback, the questionnaires were modified. The instrument possesses the content

validity that refers to the extent to which a measure represents all factors of a given social constructs.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to project the respondents' profiles as well as the general patterns of the variations in the cultural patterns and organizational performance. Then factor analysis and regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between organizational culture and information technology on Firm Performance. Table 3 below shows respondents' characteristics. It was found that the majority (i.e. 32%) hold general Bachelor degrees and about 22.5 percent earned neither M.B.A or M.Sc. with 4 percent earned Ph.D in the organizations. Based on the survey results, 20.5 percent were Chief Executive Officer while 67.5 percent were senior managers and 12 percent were others.

Demographic characteristics of the 200 respondents are summarized below in Table 3.

Respondent Characteristics	Profile	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	135	67.5
	Female	65	32.5
	Total	200	100
Age	Less than 30	27	13.5
	30-40	45	22.5
	40-50	74	37.0
	50-60	38	19.0
	60 and above	16	8.0
	Total	200	200
Educational Qualifications	OND	24	12.00
	HND	48	24.00
	Bachelor	64	32.00
	MBA/MSC	45	22.5
	Ph.D	11	4.00
	Others	8	
Total	200	100	
Position	Chief Executive Officer	41	20.5
	Senior Managers	135	67.5
	Others	24	12.00
	Total	200	100
Length of Service	Less than 5 years	24	12.00
	5-10 years	35	17.50
	10-20 years	84	42.00
	20-above	57	28.50
	Total	200	100

Source: Survey Data

Table 3: Respondents Characteristics (n = 200).

Table 3 above shows that 67.5 percent of the respondents were male and only 32.5 percent were female used for the study. Of the total respondents, 37 percent were in the 40-50 age bracket,

while 22.5 percent were in the 30-40 age bracket. Other characteristics are shown in Table 4 below:

Dimension of Culture	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity
Dominant Characteristics	3.58	3.47	3.38	3.42
Organizational leadership	3.42	3.36	3.47	3.54
Management of Employees	3.86	3.54	3.62	3.58
Organizational glue	3.72	3.64	3.57	3.48
Strategic Emphasis	3.69	3.43	3.47	3.54
Criteria of success	3.38	3.12	3.05	3.16
Total	21.55	20.56	20.58	20.72
Mean (Average)	3.59	3.42	3.42	3.45

Source: Survey Data

Table 4: Mean Score of the Organizational Culture Dimensions Types of Culture.

The cultural profile for each organization was obtained by averaging the respondents rating for each cultural type across the six dimensions. This provided an indication of the cultural orientation of sampled firms based on the four cultural types. The average scores for all participating firms are shown above. From the table, the dominant culture is the power distance with a mean of 3.59 and the least is the uncertainty avoidance with a mean score of 3.42. This result suggests that organizational culture in Nigeria service sector organizations are characterized by a power distance relationships. This finding is also consistent with other observations of the Nigerian society. Another explanation of the finding may be attributed to the nature of government business relations. The Government is an important institution in shaping organizational structure in the Nigerian private companies.

Cultural Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Return on Asset	0.24	0.078						
Earnings per share	0.32	0.25	1.00					
Power Distance	3.59	1.18	0.59	0.5*	1.00			
Individualism	3.43*	1.04	0.46	0.44*	0.42*	0.41	1.00	
Masculinity	3.45	1.16	0.66*	0.58*	0.53	0.52	0.51	1.00

Note: *Correlation significant at the 0.05 level

P < 0.05 (two tailed)

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Analysis.

Table 5 above shows the result of Pearson correlation analysis and the description statistics results (mean and the standard deviation). The correlation coefficients for the relationship between the independent variables (Power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity) and the dependent variables (Return on Asset and Earning per share) is less than 0.90, indicating that the data were not affected by collinearity problem.

From the analysis, only the masculinity type of culture exhibited the highest performance indicators (0.66). The overall results imply the organization culture acts as a variable in influencing firm's performance. This is in accordance with the stated hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to investigate the impact of organizational culture and information technology on firm performance. The demographic data of this study indicates that male employees were dominant at the higher position in all the firms. Most of the organizational culture variables have high value of means, suggesting that all variables were perceived by respondents to have strong influence on performance. The regression analysis results demonstrated that organizational culture practices have a strong significant relationship to overall improvement of firm performance. The findings provided some guidance for future direction to all of stakeholders for their business sustainability in the competitive business environment.

The study cannot escape from limitations. First, the participated firms in this study came from one city in Nigeria with relatively small sample size. This limits our ability to generalize the findings to the other context. This may have resulted in lack of significant relationship between organizational culture dimensions and technological capability. Moreover, another limitation in the study was found in a way that it does not measure the specific nature and level of the use of information technology (IT) as apply in the service sector organization.

Future studies might work to uncover the sources of cultures that embrace adaptability of culture norms.

CONCLUSION

The study of organizational culture in the service sector organization is still in an embryonic stage. We believe that studies of this sort might serve not only to enhance our understanding of organizational culture and technological awareness in the service industry, several issues that need to be investigated in future research.

The findings of this study emphasize that the culture in the Nigeria service sector organization could be classified as “Masculinity.” This shows that the organizational culture has an impact on the firm performance. This finding has important implications in relation to day-to-day operations in industry. The study attempted to uncover the culture of the organizations under investigation. The analysis shows that the employees perceived almost the same pattern in which the various values exist in the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that:

- The employees should be given training in developing confrontation abilities and approaches for the creative problem solving.
- The management should exhibit a very high level of authenticity, implying that what it says, it mean, and mean, and what it means, it says.

- The management should work for developing the conducive organizational culture that requires the culture of openness, collaboration, trust, autonomy, authenticity and experimentation.
- The management should involve the employees to anticipate in problem solving so that the necessary systemic and process changes are made without comprising quality and quantity.
- The future research be conducted utilizing a larger sample size. Although, the sample size for this study provided a good representation of the population group. It will be interesting to see if results change with a larger sample group. This study acts as a pioneer for further research, thus providing useful initial information to other related industries.

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