

# Relative Importance of Integration Strategies in the Performance of Brewing Industry in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *This study was conducted to investigate the relative importance of integration strategies on the performance of the brewing industry in Nigeria. The research was aimed at addressing insufficient knowledge of how integration strategies respectively influence the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was 273 managerial staff in the brewing industry in Nigeria while the sample size was 162 as determined through Taro Yamane sample size determination formular. Questionnaire was used in data collection. The study had a response rate of 73.5%. Multiple regression method was used in testing the research hypothesis. Findings from the study indicated that with an  $R^2$  value of 0.386, there is a significant positive influence of internal integration strategy on the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria. The analysis also indicated that in terms of their relative importance, internal integration strategy (Beta = 1.302,  $t = 3.288$   $P < 0.05$ ) will have the highest influence on performance of brewing firms in Nigeria; this will be followed by supplier's integration strategy (Beta = 0.377,  $t = 2.772$   $P < 0.05$ ) and the third would be customer integration strategy (Beta = 0.931,  $t = 2.421$   $P < 0.05$ ). It was recommended that brewing firms in Nigeria should consider the relative strengths and importance of integration strategies in the formulation of relevant manufacturing strategies in order to enhance its organizational performance.*

**Keywords:** integration strategies, internal integration strategy, suppliers' integration strategy, customer integration strategy, Nigerian brewing industry

## INTRODUCTION

Increasing advancement in technology, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly enhanced globalisation. With globalisation, the expectations and tastes of customers have changed. Thus, customers now demand from their organisations, appropriate products in appropriate place and time, coupled with specified high quality and competitive pricing. This implies that business organisations that are determined to be competitive in the eyes of customers must necessarily live up to the aforementioned requirements of their customers. However, in doing that, business organisations must improve their operational activities and processes holistically in their value chain, navigating down to their marketing of finished products to the ultimate consumers. This necessarily requires a consideration of strategies and making viable decisions capable of positively impacting its delivery.

For manufacturing firms, because of the nature of their operations and coupled with the reality that businesses are under pressure to survive given increasing environmental turbulence as observed by some authors (Umoh *et al.*, 2023; Umoh *et al.*, 2022), a number of strategies have been deployed in supply chain management. These include, Integration Strategy, Total Quality Management, Benchmarking; and Innovation and Technology, Six Sigma, among others (Amue and Ozuru, 2019; Schoenheer and Swink, 2015). Among these strategies, the integration strategy is particularly appropriate given the difficult and complex nature of the present-day business environment where firms' supply chain is somewhat unreliable, experience increased costs and in some instances may not meet the organisations' peculiar circumstances. Here lies the importance of integration strategy.

Wado (2018) defines integration strategy as that quality of co-operation that is driven among different groups to achieve an effective and compelling framework. Integration strategy depicts the degree to which the various activities of businesses, including those of its suppliers, customers and other members of the supply chain are being integrated together (Uwamahoro, 2018). Three core integration strategies have been identified in literature; these are supplier integration, internal integration and customer integration strategies (Wambue, 2021; Saleh, 2019).

Supplier integration is the dimension of integration strategy with a focus on the extent to which a business organisation can effectively partner with its strategic supplier members. It is concerned with the core competencies required for co-coordinating critical suppliers (Flynn *et al.*, 2018). Internal integration explains the extent to which the various arms and units of a business unite and collaborate cross-functionally to address possible areas of conflict, hence achieving its common goals (Danese *et al.*, 2019). This aspect of integration is contextualized within the organisation and has factors that are controllable, hence can be determined by the organisation.

Customer integration is concerned with being able to build and maintain a strong partnership and relationship with customers (Saleh, 2019). Customer integration deals with market knowledge exchanges which empower organisations to better appreciate and understand the expectations of customers (Flynn *et al.*, 2018). These elements of integration strategy enhance improvement in customer service and organisational performance (Wambua, 2021).

Performance serves as the basis through which organisations evaluate the extent to which their set goals are being achieved. Organisational performance has two main categories; these are financial performance and non- financial performance. The financial aspect of performance deals with indices such as Return on Equity (ROE), and Return on Asset (ROA) among others while the non-financial aspect of performance deals with indicator such as customer satisfaction, retention, product quality and the like. For the manufacturing sector particularly the brewing industry, its performance indicators should focus more on gains of the supply chain in areas such as on-time order deliveries, faster response rate, reduced costs, profitability, market share and customer satisfaction (Crandall *et al.*, 2018). Despite the assumed significance of integration strategies in improving profitability, operational efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability in the manufacturing sector in literature, there is a gap in knowledge regarding the relative strengths and importance of internal integration, supplier integration and customer integration strategies in the performance of the Nigerian Brewing Industry, a gap addressed in this paper.

## CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

### Integration Strategies

Integration strategy is defined as the strategy that ensures cooperation between businesses and their suppliers in managing the inter and intra-organisational processes in their chain (Kang *et al.*, 2018). It deals with the quality of cooperation in which organisations foster with different groups in order to achieve their own goals. Integration strategy specifies how a firm will achieve its competitive advantages through its

supply chain capabilities, such as cost efficiency, response speed and flexibility (Batrage and Mardock, 2022). Integration strategy also specifies how the manufacturing, purchasing, marketing, and logistics functions work together to support the desired competitive strategy (Yang and Tsai, 2023). Integration strategy is also seen as the plan that enables businesses to harmonize their operations including the ones that involve the suppliers, its customers and others that may be part of the supply chain to realising service delivery effectiveness and efficiency. As posited by Iranban (2019), nowadays in order to meet customers' needs and market demand, there is a need for organisations to collaborate using appropriate strategies.

### **Internal Integration Strategy**

Internal integration strategy describes the plans for activities of services and product delivery the organisational level. This is essential because organisation need to understand internal functioning before attracting the service of external partners within the supply chain (Jones and Sigal, 2019). Internal Integration Strategy facilitates a coordinated and aligned internal process and functions for the purpose of achieving optimum performance. It is a process of interfunctional association, collaboration, communication, coordination and cooperation which brings functional areas of an organisation into a cohesive organisation (Flynn, *et al.*, 2018; Zhao *et al.*, 2021). Different organisational departments are integrated and linked together in terms of information concerning inventory management activities (Stein, 2018). Organisations can interact with one another to make inventory management easier for effective operations (Lee, 2018). To achieve customer satisfaction, various organisational units need to be integrated into its activities and practices.

### **Supplier Integration Strategy**

Kuo and Yang (2021) posited that for organisations to achieve supply chain effectiveness, supplier chain integration strategy should be an invaluable focus. The reason for this is that information regarding supplier anticipation which will help to ensure that demand forecasts, inventory and production processes are properly managed to maximize the ultimate benefits of the external supply chain. As organisations interact together using supply integration, the firm's partnership will, however, help them to reduce lead time with the view of enhancing quality and innovation in service delivery.

Li *et al.*, (2020) posit that supplier integration strategy is the initiative on the long term relationship between suppliers and organisations. This was established to foster their relationships and leverage the operational and strategic capabilities of suppliers in supporting the organisation to achieve operational benefits. Integration strategy is characterized by different activities and aspects such as information sharing, coordination, trust-shared technology and other managerial activities which the organisation needs to advance and innovate within the supply chain (Mohan, 2019). The degree of commitment can be enhanced through trust which is one of the vocal points in supplier integration (Yadar and Dutta, 2023). An integration strategy incorporates trust that assists management in reducing conflicts. It is a means of advancing cooperation between an organisation and its suppliers that fosters information sharing, material, knowledge and experiences. Supplier integration strategy is a move that improves and smoothenes the relationship between the organisation and its suppliers (Huo *et al.*, 2019).

### **Customer Integration Strategy**

This aspect of integration strategy is concerned with how organisations are able to demonstrate their understanding of the needs of their customers in a bid to meet those needs and satisfy the customers (Lai *et al.*, 2018). Sonik and Kodali (2022) explain that customer integration strategy targets management practice that supports long term customer interaction, satisfaction improvement and complaint management. This means that customer's integration strategy is aimed at yielding adequate benefits, and promoting coordination among various organisation's customers. Customer needs and complaints can be easily addressed through customer integration strategy. It is a focal point in modern organisations because quick response to customer demand can be easily addressed (Mohan, 2019). Fundamentally, customer integration

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strategy ensures that core capabilities are being driven through the practice of coordination with critical customers (Yadak and Dutta, 2023).

### **Concept of Performance**

The focal point of modern-day organisations has been their performance. This is because performance is one of the standards used to measure whether the organisation is doing well or not. Performance is the process of achieving an organisations' objectives. However, to objectify an organisation, all the performance indicators must be considered because performance indices need to be visible (Davis and Cobb, 2018). The performance comprises financial and non-financial performance indices. Daft (2017) explains that performance represents the organisation's ability to achieve its set objectives efficiently and effectively. Jones and Singhal (2019), assert that a performance management system considered effective would provide useful information in decision making which bothers on current performance level as well as any deviation from goals.

### **Integration Strategy and Performance**

The success of organisations over the years was not completely achieved due to the fact that most organisations have not been operating well in the management of their activities (Alavi and Khedmati, 2021). As a result of the current competitive environment which is driven by an increase in technological advancement, modern-day organisations have advanced into integration strategy in order to effectively handle its corporate coordination, complaints management strategy and partnership with other organisations with a view to gaining competitive advantage and recording above average return from their investments (Alavi and Khedmati, 2021).

Many scholars in the field of production and inventory management have advocated supplier integration, customer integration, internal and external integration; they have also indicated that there is a significant interaction between the dimensions of integration strategy supply and organisational performance functional areas (Huo, 2019). Saleh (2019) commented that there is significant relationship between supplier and customer integration and organisational performance. Others, however, stated that there is a positive interaction between upstream and downstream supplier integration with organisational performance (Tzery and Chen, 2022). Similarly, Yang and Tsai (2023) discovered that there is positive relationship between information technology integration and integration strategy and organisational performance in manufacturing and service firms.

This study was theoretically founded on the Systems Theory. The theory was developed by Von Bertalanffy in the 1950s as a framework for understanding the complexity of living organisms and their interactions. Bertalanffy, fosters systems thinking in all disciplines in order to find general principles valid to all systems. It introduces "system" as a new scientific paradigm contrasting the analytical, mechanical paradigm, characterising classical science.

The system theory states that the whole is greater than the elements of its parts. It contains the sub-systems which work together to achieve its common objectives. This means that an organisation depends on the environment to function effectively because it receives inputs from the environment, processes it and gives output to the environment. In this case, the various supply chain networks need to integrate so that each unit of the chain can contribute toward accelerating the sustainability of an organisational success.

Rosenzweig *et al* (2017) found that integrated strategy influenced competitive capabilities and performance of product manufacturers in Europe. Peterson (2015) established that supplier integration enhanced product development in France. Al-Lamy and Al-Amery (2018) revealed that implementation of integration strategy promoted shoe manufacturing companies production in Bagdad, Iraq. Zelbst *et al* (2019) found that supply chain linkage supported operational performance of business organisations in China. Awino

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and Gitmo (2019) found that supply chain management practices improved organisational performance in Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey research design guided the conduct of this study. The population of the study was 273 managerial staff sourced from selected breweries in Nigeria, namely, International Breweries Plc, Nigerian Breweries Plc, Champion Breweries and Infacto Breweries. The questionnaire was used in data collection while data analysis was done with multiple regression analysis. Performance was estimated as a function of integration strategy namely, internal integration strategy, supplier integration strategy and customer integration strategy. This was expressed in the form of an equation as follows:  $y = \alpha_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + e_t$

where

y	=	Performance
$\alpha_0$	=	Intercept (constant)
$b_1$	=	Coefficient of Internal Integration Strategy
$b_2$	=	Coefficient of Supplier Integration Strategy
$b_3$	=	Coefficient of Customer Integration Strategy
$e_t$	=	error term

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender	Male	76	63.87
	Female	43	36.13
Age	Under 30	18	15.13
	31-35	26	21.85
	36-40	37	31.09
	41-45	22	18.48
	46 and above	16	13.45
Education	B.Sc/HND	58	48.74
	M.Sc/MBA	39	32.77
	PhD	8	6.73
	Others	14	11.76
Work experience	Under 1 year	15	12.61
	1-5 years	37	31.09
	6- 10 years	26	21.85
	11-15 years	35	29.41
	16 years and above	6	5.04

**Source: Field Data, (2024)**

Table 2 is an analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study. From Table 2, the gender distribution shows that out of the 119 respondents who took part in the survey, 76 of them were



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male. This represented 63.87% while 43 respondents were female. This represented 36.13%. The result implied that majority of the respondents in the study were male. The table indicates the age distribution of the respondents. In terms of age, 18 respondents were under 30 years of age. This number represented 15.13%, 26 respondents fall between 31 – 35 years of age. This represented 21.85%, 37 of the respondents fall between the age of 36 – 40 years of age. This represented 31.09%. Furthermore, 22 respondents were between 41– 45 years. This represented 18.48% while 16 of the respondents were aged 46 and above representing 13.45%. The analysis indicated that more respondents in the study belonged to the age bracket of 36-40. Also, the table presents the educational background of the respondents. with respect of level to the education, 58 of the respondents possessed a BSc/HND. This represented 48.74%, and 39 of them had MSc/MBA. This represented 32.77%, 8 respondents had PhD. This represented 7.69 while 11 respondents had other qualifications. This represented 6.73%. The analysis showed that most of the respondents were holders of BSc/HND. Table 4.4 also presents the ‘years of experience of respondents. It shows the number of respondents that had work experience under one year was 15. This represented 12.61%, 37 of the respondents falls between 1-5 years of experience. This represented 31.09%, while 26 of them fall between 6-10 years of experience representing 21.85%, and 35 of the respondents fall between 11-15 years of experience. This represented 29.41% and 6 of them falls between 16 years and above of work experience. This represented 5.04%. The result means a majority of the research participants were well experienced.

**Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** Internal integration strategy, suppliers’ integration strategy and customer integration strategy have no combined significant positive influence on the performance of brewing industry in Nigeria.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Internal integration strategy, suppliers’ integration strategy and customer integration strategy have a combined significant positive influence on the performance of brewing industry in Nigeria.

**Table. 2: Multiple-Regression Analysis Result on combined influence of Internal integration strategy, suppliers’ integration strategy and customer integration strategy on the performance of the brewing industry in Nigeria**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.889 <sup>a</sup>	.790	.710	0.62086		
Goodness of Fit <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.631	3	44.712	192.621	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	41.392	117	.302		
	Total	78.023	118			
Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.063	.423		2.314	.031
	X1i	1.302	.396	.263	3.288	.000
	X2i	.377	.136	.329	2.772	.002
	X3i	.293	.121	.247	2.421	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Y<sub>i</sub>

b. Predictors: (Constant), X1i, X2i, X3i,

Table 2 presents the combined influence of internal integration strategy, suppliers integration strategy and customer integration strategy on the performance of brewing industry in Nigeria. The generalized model

summary showed an R of 0.889 which indicates a strong positive relationship between elements of integration strategy, namely, internal integration strategy, suppliers integration strategy and customer integration strategy on the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria.

The  $R^2$  of 0.790 implies that about 79% percent of the changes in integration strategy of internal integration strategy, suppliers integration strategy and customer integration strategy jointly influences about 79% of the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria. The model also showed significant goodness of fit ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ), this shows that these variables when brought together have a linear relationship as stated in the model. The analysis also indicated that in terms of their relative importance, internal integration strategy (Beta = 1.302,  $t = 3.288$   $P < 0.05$ ) will have the highest influence on performance of brewing firms in Nigeria; this will be followed by suppliers integration strategy (Beta = 0.377,  $t = 2.772$   $P < 0.05$ ) and the third would be customer integration strategy (Beta = 0.931,  $t = 2.421$   $P < 0.05$ ).

Findings of this study is in line with previous studies in the research area. For instance, Wado (2018) and Tsehay (2018) found a significant influence of integration strategy on performance of brewing companies. Similarly, Zeltst *et al* (2019) established a link between integration strategy and operational performance of business organisations in China. Further, as observed by Xu and Li (2016), in the manufacturing sector, the service delivered to customers is the cumulative result of other service providers, hence this strengthens the need for effective strategies. This findings imply that integration strategies are reliable predictors of the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria. Therefore, the strengthening of brewing firms' integration strategies towards their supply chain management would go a long way in enhancing improved performance of the brewing industry in Nigeria.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was conducted to examine the relative importance of integration strategies on the performance of the brewing industry in Nigeria. The research was aimed at addressing insufficient knowledge of how integration strategies respectively influence the performance of brewing firms in Nigeria. Finding's of the study indicated that there was a strong link between integration strategies and performance of brewing industry in Nigeria. Specifically, the result showed that in terms of relative strength and importance, internal integration strategy will have the highest influence on performance of brewing firms in Nigeria; this will be followed by suppliers integration strategy and the third would be customer integration strategy.

The study contributes to knowledge by empirically ascertaining the relative importance of integration strategies in the manufacturing environment in Nigeria, , thus supporting operations strategy formulation from an informed position that can guarantee the realisation of targeted goals. However, the acknowledge the generalization limitation posed by the fact that only four brewing firms were studied in Nigeria. Additional related studies with expanded scope are suggested for improvement of generalization of findings.

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