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Competitive Aggressiveness and Performance among Artisans in the Furniture Making Industry in Nigeria

[1]Yakubu Ali MBASUA & [2]Ruth Mele JOSHUA

[1]Department of Business Administration, Gombe State University
[2]Department of Public Administration, Gombe State University

Corresponding Author: mbasuajnr@gmail.com yambasua@gsu.edu.ng

Abstract

Competition is the most common challenges faced by not only furniture artisan, but even organizations and institutions shared same faith to sustain and maintain the synergy in the system. This study investigates the relationship between competitive aggressiveness with performance of furniture artisan. To predict the dependent variable, the independent variable was operationalized with skills, experience and talent were used to predict the dependent variable. The predictors were good enough to measure the performance of furniture artisans. The population of 853 furniture artisans were the targeted population while the sample size is 265. Survey was conduct to ascertain the opinions of the furniture artisans and was tested using regression technique. The findings revealed that, there positive and significant relationship between skills of an artisan, talent and the experiences of furniture artisans with the performance. The study concluded that, competitive aggressiveness has influence on the performance of furniture artisan and further recommended that, artisans should acquire skills and get experience at all cost.

Keywords: Artisan, Furniture, Competitive aggressiveness

Introduction

Furniture making industry is one of the leading industry that influence the evolution of the economy and offers a substantial contribution in developing tropical countries, providing essential economic benefits, hence the need to evaluate it performance. The role of furniture (s) product in beautifying places that are being used cannot be overemphasized nor under-emphasized, because, they add value, style and elegance to anywhere they are found, be it schools, hospital, office, homes and many other social infrastructures that they occupy. Furniture (s) of any kind in our present days is paramount, given its role in the immediate environment. They are in various form, such as chairs, tables, shelves, decoration, cupboard, bed, among others. Furniture are in different sizes and designs, shapes and colors, some are universal depending on the place of usage and the capability of the customer, this makes furniture very vital in our present society. For that, the call for competitive aggressiveness among furniture making artisans is timely and is necessary considering the raise in demand in the market.

Furniture industry has turned to be a corner stone and has since taken up more challenging and complex designs in a competitive market. With the emergence of modernized tools and equipment, the industry has become attractive and lucrative, for that,

competition is inevitable. Furniture making performance rest on the effectiveness of their ability to take risk, high level of innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, manpower and creativity of Artisans in the industry, unlike before, where advanced tools and equipment were lacking in the industry.

According to center for industrial studies (CSIL) report of 2010 as cited in Aurelio (2020), the world estimated worth of furniture making industry placed at US$ 376 Billion and it annual trade was estimated at US$100 Billion (CSIL, 2010). Sarawak in Malaysia, is the largest producer of timber product that are used majorly in the furniture work (Ngui, Agrawal & Voon, 2011), this makes them one of the major exporter of furniture product in the world. Turkey, Italy and China, contribute between 20% to 30% in their respective country's GDP (Karki, 2000; Ngui, Agrawal & Voon, 2011; Paluš, Maťová, & Kaputa, 2012). In Slovakia and Poland according to Paluš, et al., (2012) these countries are struggling to compete in the industry, due to poor Government policies in their country. Nigeria furniture industry couldn't be different with the above view, since most of the modernized furniture (multi usage furniture, universal furniture) are not available in Nigeria, especially in the Northeast region.

Even though, furniture making industry in Nigeria has been at the verge of intensification as in some developed countries, though operating at the abysmal performance and it has been so impressing in spite all odd of poor working environment but there best is still not enough. Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) in its techno economic survey of 2016, placed a major wooden furniture industry in Nigeria above 3021 in 2014 and 4045 in 2015. The industry has created jobs with over thirty-one thousand eight hundred (31,800) work force as at 2014, poverty reduction and the nation's GDP (Alao & Kuje, 2012; Aiyeloja, Oladele, & Ozoemena, 2014; RMRDC, 2016).

However, the general tendency in the present furniture making business environment in Nigeria, is poor quality compared to some countries like China, Turkey, Germany and Malaysia that adopted mechanized modern furniture (Center for Industrial Studies, 2010). In spite the effort of Nigerian Artisans to advance their performance in the sector, its seems that their performance is still below societal expectation, especially in the North-East where this research will be conducted. It is evident in the present world of constant changes that furniture makers in our nation are struggling to successfully implement practices that are commonly used by their (Artisans) foreign counter part, this makes so many Nigerians to believe in foreign product such as Beds, shelves, wooden doors, tables and chairs.

Artisan according to (Miyandazi, 2013), is a "skilled or semi-skilled manual worker who makes items that may be functional or decorative, that include furniture, decoration, mining and other household tools". In this definition by Miyandazi, it implies that, artisan can be found in any industry other than furniture making sector. Therefore, artisans in the

furniture making industry makes products through skills, experience and talent for expression.

Cursory study shows that, artisans of furniture making industry have been hampering and struggling to compete with foreign country in meeting up with the demand in the market and satisfaction of the customers. Even though, the industry now is very attractive (Jalali, 2012; O'Reilly-Briggs, 2010; Leão, Rodrigues & Brito, 2019), and has so much given its best to some extent, in the area of economic development and providing work to majority of people in both the developing and the developed country (House, 1981;1984 Akyuz, Yildirim, & Gungor, 2020), but the question remains whether these artisans are entrepreneurially oriented or not?

Furniture sector has received rising consideration in the economic advancement discourse of Nigeria (Alao & Kuje, 2012; Tasmin, Takala, Bakr, Shylina, Nizialek, & Rusuli, 2016), but little attention toward its development to compete favorable in the global market are drawn. It has, in effect, been the objective of several policy programmes and actions by some governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations (Arowosoge & Tee, 2010). The focus on this sector at the intellectual and policy levels has arisen out of the understanding that, the sector has not only continued from making Nigeria a novel country, but also a postern to African at large.

Artisans' performance of the furniture making industry in the North-East have taken a land slide and they are struggling to compete at all level. With majority of the Artisans in the furniture making in the region lack mechanized tools to perform better. Artisans performance and wealth creation is at the heart of entrepreneurship and strategic management through learning process (Ireland, Hill, Camp & Sexton, 2001; Shaher & Ali 2020), also, the keen interest of every artisan specifically those in furniture making industry, is to assume the learning of how to apply competitive aggressiveness and concepts in ways that help them create aggregate performance.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Competitive Aggressiveness

Competition is a thing that one cannot overrule in the current market dispensation. According to Abd-Hamid, Azizan, and Soroosian (2015) many businesses failed and some couldn't go beyond the starting stage because of their neglect to the strategies of competition in the system, for that, furniture making industry may not be immune in the same environment. Although studies have examined their relationship (see, Wiklund, & Shepherd, 2005; Zeebaree, & Siron, 2017; Hernandez-Perlines, 2018), there has not been such studies that used competitive aggressiveness as independent variable while adopting artisans performance as a dependent variable whereas this work want to provide an insight into the field of competitive aggressiveness with regard to the performance of artisans in the furniture making industry and also no such studies were conducted in the study area of this

research Gombe State, Nigeria. The level of aggressiveness among its competitors may be another strategy but many scholars (Abdullahi, Kunya, Bustani, & Usman, 2019; Mbasua, 2024) have proven that, competitive aggressiveness components such as skills, and experience have influence on the performance of the organization.

Looking at the concept of Competitive aggressiveness according to Lumpkin and Dess, (1996); Abdullahi, Kunya, Bustani, and Usman (2019) states that it is a firm's propensity to directly and intensely challenge its competitors to achieve entry or improve position, that is, to outperform industry rivals in the marketplace. In the above meaning of competitive aggressiveness, though refer to a firm while this study is on artisan, but I deduce that, artisans need to be aggressive for them to outshine their rivals and to stay ahead of them consistently. Similarly, in that definition, it summarily asserts that, competitive aggressiveness is a strategic response of artisans to achieve competitive advantage in the market place.

Another definition worth looking at is by Abdullahi, Kunya, Bustani and Usman (2019), assert that, competitive aggressiveness means the organization's way of engaging with its opponents, disintegrating between strategic artisans that are fearful in confronting the competition with other companies and those that aggressively pursue their competitors' target markets. It is a firm's propensity to directly and intensely challenge its competitors to achieve entry or improve position, that is, to outperform industry rivals in the marketplace. Competitive aggressiveness focuses on threats imposed by competitors and battles over existing customers (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Abdullahi, Kunya, Bustani, & Usman, 2019). In addition, competitive aggressiveness involves a high speed of action as well as the ability to simultaneously conceive of multiple attacks using varied repertoires (Ferrier, 2002).

All the literatures discussed in this work on competitive aggressiveness, it has demonstrated and revealed that, competitive aggressiveness is at the war front in position artisans to confront its opponents in the market, thus, making it significantly relevance especially on the performance, but this study has empirically look its relationship in the furniture making industry. It is on this premise that, the study hypothesized as;
H1: There is no significant relationship between competitive aggressiveness and performance of furniture artisans in Gombe State.

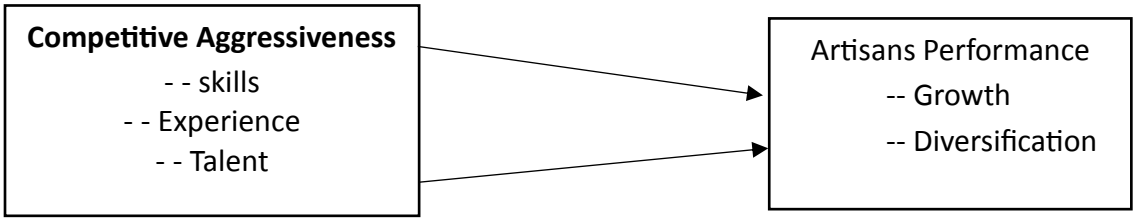

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Competitive Aggressiveness on Performance
Source: Modified Framework

Methodology

Survey approach was adopted to generate data from the participants using a well-structured questionnaire. A cross-sectional design was used because data were collated at once. The target population of the research was the entire furniture artisans in Gombe State, which is 853 as quoted from the register of the furniture makers association. The sample size of the study is 265 as suggested by Krejcia and Morgan (1970). 5 point Lakert scale was used to measure the components of competitive aggressiveness (skills, experience and talent) while artisans' performance was measured 7-point scale as adapted from Mbasua (2021). The data generated was analyzed using regression technique to ascertain the relationship between the constructs.

Results and Findings

Below are the findings from the output of statistical package for social sciences using regression technique to ascertain the relationship between the components of competitive aggressiveness and performance of artisans.

Table 1

Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Skills	.737	5
Experience	.895	5
Talent	.792	5
Artisan performance	.840	5

The Cronbach's Alpha values for Skills, Experience, Talent, and Artisan Performance are all above 0.7 threshold, indicating acceptable internal consistency and reliability of the variables measured. This means that the instruments used to assess these constructs are reliable for the sample being studied.

Table2: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Artisan Performance	19.9736	4.42480	265
SKILLS	15.7698	2.64071	265
EXPERIENCE	21.9283	4.36395	265
TALENT	20.3434	4.20306	265

The **Mean** and **Standard Deviation** values provide insight into the data:

Artisan Performance: Mean = 19.9736 (SD = 4.42480) suggests a generally favorable level of performance.

Skills: Mean = 15.7698 (SD = 2.64071) indicates a moderate level of skill among artisans.

Experience: Mean = 21.9283 (SD = 4.36395) shows that artisans have significant experience.

Talent: Mean = 20.3434 (SD = 4.20306) reflects a high perception of talent in artisans.

Table 3

Coefficients Determination

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.216	.618		-.349	.727		
	SKILLS	.113	.045	.068	2.541	.012	.648	1.543
	EXPERIENCE	.125	.033	-.123	-3.826	.000	.442	2.265
	TALENT	.390	.031	.987	33.600	.000	.530	1.886

a. Dependent Variable: Artisans Performance

The regression coefficients in table 3 above revealed the relationship between artisan performance and the independent variables (Skills, Experience and Talent): Skills have a positive coefficient (B = 0.113) and are statistically significant (Sig. = 0.012), indicating that as skills increase, artisan performance tends to improve by 11%.

Experience has a positive coefficient (B = 0.125) and is statistically significant (Sig. = 0.000), suggesting that artisan performance may increase if artisan has a lot of experience. Talent on the other side has a very high positive coefficient (B = .390) and is statistically significant (Sig. = 0.000), indicating that talent has the most substantial positive impact on artisan performance of the three factors.

Furthermore, the collinearity statistics reported in the coefficient table include the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the predictors: skills, experience, and talent. Tolerance value below 0.1 is an indication of high collinearity. Since skills Tolerance value is 0.648, experience tolerance value is 0.442 and talent tolerance is 0.530. Therefore, all the three tolerance values are above 0.1, suggesting that there is no significant collinearity problem among the predictors (skills, experience and talent).

The VIF value exceeding 10 indicates a problematic level of multicollinearity. However, the VIF for skills, experience and talent are 1.543, 2.265 and 1.886 respectively which they all fall below 10, it indicates that there is no issue of multicollinearity in this analysis.

Table 4
ANOVA output

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4551.416	3	1517.139	641.357	.000[b]
	Residual	617.399	261	2.366		
	Total	5168.815	264			

a. Dependent Variable: Artisans Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), TALENT, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE

The ANOVA table shows that the overall regression model which showed that, it is statistically significant (F= 641.357, Sig. = 0.000). This indicates that the combined predictors (skills, experience, and talent) significantly explain the variance in artisan performance.

Table 5
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.938[a]	.881	.879	1.53802	2.017

a. Predictors: (Constant), TALENT, SKILLS, EXPERIENCE

b. Dependent Variable: Artisans Performance

The Model Summary indicated that, there is a strong relationship between the dependent variable (Artisan Performance) and the independent variables (skills, Experience and Talent): R = 0.938, which means there is a very strong correlation among the constructs. R Square = 0.881 indicates that approximately 88.1% of the variance in artisan performance can be explained by the model, showing excellent explanatory influence. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.879 adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, demonstrating that the model still holds strong explanatory influence even when adjusting for the number of

variables included. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.017 suggests no autocorrelation in the residuals, which means that the model's predictions are reasonable.

Summary

In summary, talent, skills and experience are all significant and are good predictors of artisan performance. The model overall explains a high percentage of variance in artisan performance, indicating that competitive aggressiveness could be geared towards enhancing furniture artisans performance. Thus, the study concluded that, competitive aggressiveness has significant influence on the performance of furniture makers under investigation.

Recommendations

The study recommended that furniture artisan should acquire skills and gather experience so as to improve their performance, because the study has revealed that, skills and experience as well as talent have significant relationship that may lead to performance enhancement.

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