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COVID-19 SPIKE, ORGANIZATIONAL PRO-ACTIVITY AND SME'S SURVIVAL

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Department of Business and Entrepreneurship, Kwara State University

Abstract

The study examined organizational proactivity and SME's survival as a result of the Covid-19 spike that is disrupting business operational activities, using innovation as a measure for organizational pro-activeness while survival is measuring SME's performance. Institutional theory was utilized for the theoretical position of the study, primary data were collected using interview of selected business managers which formed the study (unit of analysis), non-probability sampling was adopted, using purposive sampling techniques as a result of the homogeneity of the study observation and level of Pro-activeness through innovation, qualitative analysis was conducted to determine the joint contribution of the explanatory variable (pro-activeness) on the given variable (survival). Nvivo 11. was adopted as a tool for data analysis. the findings from the study reveal that organizational pro-activeness has a positive influence on SME's performance, innovation has a strong influence on survival. The study recommends that business operators in the service industry should constantly innovate their business in order to be competitive, also organization should be proactive rather than reactive this will afford them the opportunity to be relevant in contingent period.

Keyword: Covid-19 Spike Entrepreneurship, Ecosystem, Organisational Pro-activity, SME's Survival, Performance

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the ecological and global environment of business experiences a dramatic change in business operating environment as a result of the global pandemic that hampers business activities globally. This event affects business operations and almost immediately has a far-reaching implication on business sustainability. Most business were forced off the market and some reduced their production capacity due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic that hits many countries of the world, such as China, USA, Germany, London, France, Nigeria, South-Africa among others. The threats of the virus immediately affect businesses, whereby the only way out is for business to respond to the outcome experienced from the nature of the pandemic if they must remain in business. However, some organization most especially in the service industry were forced to think strategically in order to see things in motion so

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as to act proactively in such a way that will assist the business to operate effectively and efficiently. Among the proactive measures taking in the service industry is the adoption of technology to service their customers with less involvement of employee. The technological adoption comes with the use of internet services, WhatsApp platforms and other online services available and convenient to their customer's, this medium was utilized as a Proactive measure of sustaining the business in order to remain competitive in the business environment. This measure becomes a strategy that most businesses in the service industry key into as the impact of the covid-19 becomes too hardened on business, and governments were forced to introduce lockdown and social distancing to reduce the curve of the pandemic not only on business but the overall livelihood of all citizens of the country. Feeding becomes a necessity for every household during this period, but due to restrictions in public gatherings due to lockdown, operators in the service industry must up their game and utilize technology to take advantage of the situation; however, organizations that are proactive in nature took advantage of the situation rather than reacting to it. More specifically, the extent to which organizational proactivity during this challenging period assists businesses in surviving the turbulent situation and threats posed on businesses as a result of the covid-19 pandemic becomes a subject of debate, which is the core reason why this study focuses its attention on food vendors in the service industry as the situation presents an opportunity that can be taken advantage of, but some businesses in this category did not take advantage. In view of the above background, the study intends to investigate the extent to which the covid-19 surge affects businesses and how organizational proactiveness enables survival during this era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concepts of Covid-19

Coronavirus, declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019), has now infected over 45 million individuals and killed over one million as of the end of October 2020. The hurried work to decrease COVID-19 human-to-human transmission resulted in network shutdowns and business closures. Directly following this worldwide wellbeing emergency and to keep away from closure of monetary exercises, the utilization of certain advancements that were not viewed as fundamental by private companies became vital to stay away from a total closure of the worldwide economy (Ting et al., 2020).

Since then, numerous firms of all sizes have implemented innovations such as Zoom virtual gatherings and other tactics (Ting et al., 2020; Webster, 2020). These advancements became one of the endurance procedures during the network lockdown by various levels of government in order to contain the spread of the

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COVID-19 pandemic and enable remote management of tasks and projects (Vaccaro et al., 2020), or lead conferences without actual contact among workers (Puddister and Small, 2020; Vaccaro et al., 2020).

Organizations in specified areas identified by specialists as critical for moving forward with financial lead were permitted to continue with their operations subject to restrictions such as maintaining worker separation. However, it is difficult to imagine how things would have turned out if the innovations currently being deployed by organizations during this global health pandemic had not been as unavoidable (Akpan et al., 2020).

However, the plague and ensuing lockdown have accelerated and intensified the impact that innovation can have on particular organizations' plans of action. Many private companies have also had the choice to apply innovative approaches to alter and improvise their plans of action (Puddister and Small, 2020; Vaccaro et al., 2020). Outstanding models involve individual training, coaching, and client counseling through the use of virtual video platforms like Zoom (Puddister & Small, 2020) and eateries that have declined to take and deliver options supported by online dinner requesting (Pantelidis, 2010).

Concepts of Organizational Proactivity

In hierarchical conduct and modern brain science, proactivity implies expectant conduct, assuming responsibility for circumstances and starting activities to make changes. A proactive position, instead of a receptive one, includes acting ahead of a future circumstance rather than basically reacting to a circumstance that has effectively occurred. Proactivity is tied in with starting change inside the association. A proactive position implies tackling an issue when you know about it, regardless of whether inside your own organization or from a contender.

Proactive Behavior

Because of situations that may exist as a result of a future occurrence that has the potential to affect their business operational activities, business organizations choose either proactive or receptive approaches. For example, a proactive organization might analyze a defective line of items rather than hoping that customers will complain and the problem will be resolved soon. Proactivity is a crucial proclivity for organizations to develop, and it requires organizations to take on an important manner to deal with direction. Receptive behavior results in the loss of business and the need to work more harder to obtain new business or repair broken relationships with customers.

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Transforming from a Reactive to a Proactive Behavior

Most firms repeatedly make similar movements since these activities have previously worked or address the standard technique to deal with adjusting to bad business conditions. Rather of following a similar example, an organization can adapt its methods on its own, evaluate the conditions as they occur, and develop new cycles based on these variables. To properly carry out proactive systems, the organization should examine prior execution and deconstruct results on a daily or weekly basis. A proactive role necessitates both foresight and ingenuity. Understanding industry drifts and focusing on issues contenders have confronted, assist organizations with building a proactive position. Being receptive, particularly when another organization has set an illustration of what not to do, recommend to the general population and potential clients that you don't want to resolve the issue.

Taking on the Proactive Stance

An organization practices, triumphs and disappointments are the immediate effect of choices. Subsequent to building up what variables add to the accomplishment of the business, the association can begin to place things in context, acting faster and free of what different organizations do. Information about the inward tasks and what these activities mean for benefit and market position will empower the association to react to changing conditions while as yet zeroing on business destinations. With the evaluation of the data from past choices and activities, the organization can embrace a proactive position. Preferably, an organization can predict likely issues and foster the proactive position before an issue emerges.

Innovation Practices as Organizational Proactiveness

Technology advancement has become a requirement for all modern enterprises that need to survive in a planet defined by competition, inventive change, and recurring emergencies. This is obvious during the Covid-19 lockdown era, where organizations must bring innovation into their practices in order to stay in business and serve their customers. The concept of development refers to the use of new technology or new management practices in an organization to achieve a specific improvement in its activities (Tornatzky et al., 1990). According to a SME, development typically exhibits new items or cycles that answer client needs more seriously and advantageously than previous ones (Regan & Ghobadian, 2006). The term "creative practices" is used in this study to refer to the successful implementation of new solutions for problems faced by SMEs, which include the viable execution of ground-breaking ideas for connection to the organization's item, administrations, or cycles; new promoting components; or new authoritative

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practices for work enhancement and redesigned execution (Damanpour, 1992).

The desire to improve performance is a significant driver of innovation in commercial ventures. As a result, innovation is defined as implementing specific changes in business procedures that are expected to result in an increase in execution (Curristine, 2006). In light of the foregoing, performance in this study is defined as achieving the organization's goals in terms of sales, productivity, competition, market share, and other critical objectives (Hult et al., 2004). Furthermore, proactivity refers to an organization's willingness to alter operations during times of uncertainty in order to become more competitive and achieve business sustainability.

Innovation Practices as Business Survival

Business survival was utilized in this study to show how much time the venture takes to do its activities and operations since organizations must be quick and strategic in responding to their environments most especially during contingent period where decisions as to be reached on whether to continue the business or not (Bercovitz & Mitchell, 2007). There are many entities who benefits from the survival of the business beside its manager. They incorporate specialists such as employees' consumers, and suppliers (Bercovitz & Mitchell, 2007). Literature posits that business survival is one key features of organizations performances (Danes et al., 2008). A business can survive if the operators of the business are proactive in understanding the conditions for survival and general knowledge of the business climate (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Contrasted with enormous undertakings, SMEs have more limited life, more beneficial, and to a great extent impacted by outer natural elements (Carroll & Huo, 1986). A few analysts believe endurance to be a true proportion of big business achievement in terms of survival (Miner, 1997).

In the midst of emergent circumstances, the presences of SMEs are at serious risk (Reilly & Tushman, 2011). Emergencies debilitate SMEs' development and undermine their ventures on the grounds that their adverse consequence reaches out to all components of the outside big business climate (Dhochak & Sharma, 2015). For example, on schedule of emergency, SMEs have restricted financing openings because of powerless capital market execution, absence of adequate data, and part surrenders all through the economy (Mason and Harrison, 2015).

Business survival through organisation Proactiveness and innovation has been represented in various studies. Innovation is basic to the progression of any business surviving the complex business environment (Ortiz-Villajos, 2014). Gaynor (2002), tech-advancement is the centre component behind the survival and progression of business; it upholds the organization's extension and development and upgrades the

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venture's future achievement. Previous studies recommended utilizing innovation to defeat the obstructions and difficulties of modern SMEs' prosperity and endurance (Hurley & Hult, 1998). Schumpeter (1942) posits that the business survival is emphatically connected to its innovation. A few studies have clarified the connection by highlighting a few ideas applicable to both innovation and business survival. For example, business advantage gained is as a result of innovation which is a mainstay of its survival (Helmers & Rogers, 2010).

Small and Medium Enterprises

For a long time, small and medium-sized businesses were discovered to be the foundation upon which large corporations were built. However, small and medium have been distinguished differently by various persons and organizations, with the end goal that an effort that is considered as tiny and medium in one place is perceived differently in another. Indeed, even within a country, the definition evolves throughout time. Some common descriptors used in various definitions are total resources, magnitude of work performed, benefits of annual turnover, and capital investment (Baenol, 1994). As far back as 1979, the Federal Ministry of Industries defined small-scale businesses as "enterprises with capital (interest in land, building, hardware and equipment, and working capital) up to N60,000.00 and employing no more than 50 people."

According to the Central Bank's financial and credit standards, restricted scope enterprises were defined as foundations with a yearly turnover of less than N6 million and capital of less than N10 million. According to Ayaggari et al. (2003) and Beckley (1988), the "meaning of small and medium-sized endeavors alters as a result of setting, creator, and nations." Limited scope business is defined in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada in terms of annual turnover and the number of paid staff. 1992 (Ekpeyong and Nyang) In the United Kingdom, for example, a limited scope business is defined as an industry with a yearly turnover of two million pounds or less and fewer than 200 paid employees. (Ibid., p. 4)

In Japan, it is conceptualized as a type of industry, settled capital, and number of representatives. As a result, small and medium-sized businesses are defined as those with a capital of 100 million yen and fewer than 300 employees. Those in the discount exchange with a capital of $300 million and 100 employees, while those in the retail exchange with a capital of $100 million and 50 representatives (Fatai, 2012). Because of Nigeria, there isn't a clear classification that defines small and medium-sized projects. Nonetheless, the Central Bank of Nigeria, in its money related approaches circular No. 22 of 1988, considers restricted scope industry to be those operations with annual turnovers of less than 500,000 naira. (CBN, 2011).

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In a larger and more comprehensive sense, Ogechukwu (2006) documented an overall criteria for categorizing small and medium-sized businesses in various countries. These include the number of representatives, annual turnover, neighborhood activities, deal volumes, financial strength, directors and proprietors independence, generally small business sectors in comparison to their enterprises, and capital typically provided by individuals or investors, among other things. Because of these definitional differences and the absence of an all-inclusive definition, the European Union in 2003 adopted a widely accepted definition of small and medium-sized enterprises and miniature businesses as organizations with less than 250 workers. In terms of monetary models, incomes should not exceed 50 million Euro (measured as turnover) or 43 million Euro (measured as accounting report). Furthermore, the European Commission indicates term of possession expressing SMEs sho 2007 (European Commission).

In a ventures association report, Macqueen (2004) defines SMEs as projects with 10-99 full-time employees or with a proper capital investment of US$1000-500,000. Small and medium-sized undertakings are clearly not transnational organization, global collaboration, freely owned ventures, or large office of any kind. Nonetheless, they can rely on business and proprietorship structure to develop into a large specialty unit (Macqueen 2006). While it may be argued that 80 percent of SMEs' financing comes from proprietors, loved ones, business structure can take various forms including private possession, restricted organization, agreement and sub-agreements, cooperatives or affiliations.

Importance of SME's

The small and medium scale nexus with each economy of the world can't be over-underscored. As its pertinent to the improvement of around the world couldn't go unrecognized. Researchers: Ahmed (2006); Ojo (2009); Thurik and Wennerker, (2004) and Westhead and Burrows (2008) have expressed the overall significance of limited scope: Small Scale industry has a superior possibility for creating home grown economy through the age of labor and products that drives the economy of Nigeria. Limited scope business fills in for of guaranteeing self-freedom, work creation and import replacement, powerful and effective use of neighborhood unrefined substance. Others are commitment to work and way to business venture. Thurick and Wennerker (2004) expressed that, there has been a change in private venture as a method for social greatness and competitiveness, however as a vehicle to business, cause of occupation creation and monetary development.

Different researchers, for example, Munro (2013), Ayyagari et al. (2007) Zeng et. Al

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(2010): Asare et al. (2015); St Piere et al. (2015) and fisehe and oyalana (2015). They posited that, SMEs commitment to neediness lightening and sustainable financial development is definitive, government participate in the improvement of networks in country economies in the nation's overall extending neighborhood advancement is more indispensable to annihilating destitution, disparity and joblessness in rustic area. Different significances are that: it helps the economy of its ability to using neighborhood resources: nearby unrefined substance, age of nearby saving, production network for self-employment and opportunity for preparing semi-talented work by means of apprenticeship (Asan et al. 2015). All in all, SMES uses a neighborhood mechanical base, support the investment of important gathering, give training to pioneering and significant capacity and make change for the utilization of own capital assets (Fiseha and oyalana, 2015). The significance of Small and Medium Scale could likewise be compare to the business age, commitment to send out income and GDP (Abdulraheem, Yahaya, Etudaiye &Abogun 2012).

Business Survival

According to Mata and Portugal (2002), basic economic theory holds that businesses depart markets when they experience losses and remain in markets when they are lucrative. Pérez and Others (2004) find opportunities to expand on this fundamental premise. High company profitability, they argue, can be an indication of both efficiency and market dominance. If more profitability is tied to improved efficiency, then the higher the productivity, the better the chances of survival. If market power is the source of high profitability, more profitable enterprises are predicted to have longer lifespan. Profits, in other words, may supply the required resources.

The chances of a small business surviving in the early stages are slim (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). According to Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014), it is vital for small business owners to adopt successful business plans at the outset of their venture if the venture is to succeed. Business strategies entail decision makers taking aggressive and defensive activities in order to position the organization to obtain a significant return on investment (Porter, 1980). Ibrahim (2015) underlined the significance of a small business owner choosing the right business plan. The business strategy establishes a pattern of aims, purposes, and goals for the organization (Ibrahim, 2015).

According to López-Garca and Puente (2006), one hypothesis has been advanced that liquidity limitations drive start-ups to enter small and that this early underinvestment has a negative impact on the firm's survival probability. According to Van Praag and others (2005), financial capital constraints may prohibit entrepreneurs from constructing buffers against random shocks, negatively

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impacting investment timing and having an influence on their enterprises' survival prospects.

Institutional Theory

North developed institutional theory (1990). It serves as a theoretical foundation for descriptive models that aim to explain specific organizational phenomena. This encompasses the formation of various forms, processes, strategies, outlooks, and competences as a result of social interaction and adaption patterns (Selznick, 1996). The urge to respond to external forces often drives its development. Initially, traditional institutionalism was concerned with individuals' deliberate efforts to respond to environmental influences in ways that were consistent with the institution's rituals and formality and based on principles that were significant to the institution (Stinchcombe, 1997). Contingency theory and resource dependence in terms of technical needs, resource streams, information flows, and influence interactions are examples of theories that are consistent with the "old" institutional theory perspective (Scott, 1987). Thus, traditional institutionalism describes a continuous evolution of patterned organizational behavior to respond to environmental challenges while preserving the institutional members' values (Stinchcombe, 1997). New institutionalism emphasized legitimacy, the embeddedness of organizational fields, and the importance of classification, routines, scripts, and schema (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

This interpretation of institutional theory emphasizes the absence of adaptation. Isomorphism, on the other hand, is the focal point. This isomorphism emerges from an organizational need to gain and retain legitimacy, a need to deal with uncertainty using generally used rather than new ways, and normative influences from authoritative sources. Meyer and Rowan (1997) noted in their critique of old institutionalism that prevailing theories assume that coordination and control of activity are the critical dimensions on which formal organizations have succeeded in the modern world; however, much empirical research on organizations casts doubt on this assumption. They understood that when an organization improves its social acceptance or legitimacy by acting on collectively valued goals in a proper and acceptable manner, it increases its social acceptance or legitimacy. It improves its access to resources and trade opportunities with other organizations, boosting its chances of survival (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Recognizing the contribution that both old and new institutional theory bring to the understanding of organizations, achieving legitimacy via social acceptability, as well as economic optimisation of structure and operations, contribute to organizational success and survival (Oliver, 1997).

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Empirical Evidence

Peterson (2020) carried out a study titled COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Catastrophe, which was focused at analyzing the COVID-19 situation in Nigeria, its impact on the economy, and the structural issues that exacerbate the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The findings show that the Nigerian economic downturn was caused by a combination of falling oil prices and spillovers from the COVID-19 outbreak, which not only reduced demand for oil products but also halted economic activity when social distancing laws were implemented.

Abioye, Oguniyi, and Olagunji (2020) investigate the impact of COVID-19-related cases and lockdown measures on issues affecting Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Nigeria. This study examines the data using a linear probability model to assess the effect of the pandemic on the entrepreneurs and models the factors influencing coping techniques using a multivariate probit model, which was collected using an electronic data collecting approach. We discovered that the majority of entrepreneurs were affected (both significantly and modestly) by the COVID-19 pandemics through partial and total lockdown and movement limitationsIn a study conducted by Ruochen, Hao, Junpeng, Quan, Huiwen, Ranran, Ruixin, Lihe, and Xiaobo (2020), this paper examines both the short-term and mid-term impact of COVID-19 restrictions on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), based on two waves of phone interviews with a previously surveyed large SME sample in China. The COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdowns had a significant toll on SMEs. At the time of the first wave of interviews in February 2020, 80 percent of SMEs were temporarily closed due to logistical issues, labor difficulties, and decreases in demand. After successfully containing COVID-19, officials relaxed lockdown restrictions in April. As a result, by the time the second round of surveys was conducted in May, the majority of SMEs had reopened.

METHODOLOGY

This study examined organizational proactiveness and SME's survival in selected restaurants in Ilorin metropolis Kwara State, Nigeria. Non-probability sampling was adopted, using purposive sampling techniques in selecting (4) food vending outlets, they were selected based on their years of operation and quality of service. primary data was utilized as source of data, interview was utilized as a means for data collection, qualitative analysis was conducted to determine the extent in which explanatory variables (pro-activeness) affect the given variable (*survival*) using Nvivo 11 as a tool of analysis.

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Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

H_{o1}: pro-activeness has no significant effect on survival of restaurants business

Theme

To determine the effect of organizational proactivity on business survival which based on the interview discussions with four participants, relevant pro-activeness information that relates to business (survival) emerged in (figure 4.1) as ways in which restaurant business can thrive and survive.

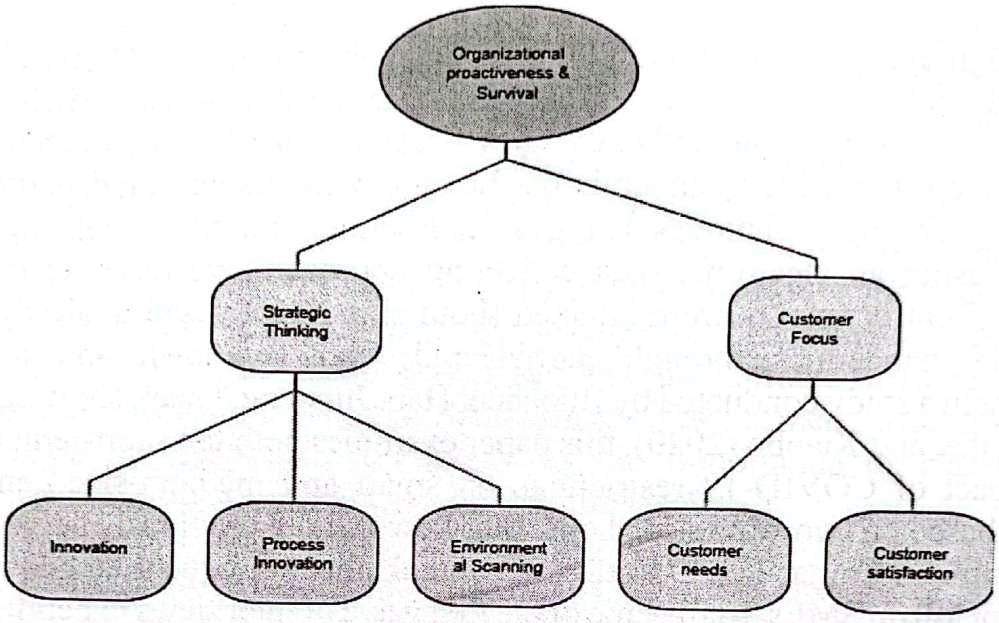


Figure 1: Thematic representation of organizational proactiveness and survival
Source: Author's Field Survey (2021)

Innovation

In current knowledge era, many firms consider innovation as a strong contributor and method of generating business and profitable growth, which will increase an organization's performance and competitiveness (Potters, 2009). A company's long-term and profitable growth necessitates long-term innovation initiatives (Gupta, 2007) From a micro perspective, innovation is a management discipline that focuses on the organization's mission, searches for unique chances, decides whether they fit the organization's strategic direction, establishes success measurements, and constantly reassesses opportunities (Lin & Chen, 2007).

Pat1, Pat2 and Pat3, identified strategic thinking, environmental scanning and innovation as key ingredient in facilitating business survival among restaurants

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businesses in the service industry. This implies that corporate survival is more likely to occur when strategic thinking and innovation are prioritized through organizational proactivity. Thus, in response to the question of how to generate employment, participants pat1 and pat3 unanimously agreed that strategic thinking, innovation, and organizational proactivity will positively influence firm survival, resulting in:

"I want to say that with the rate at which the global environment is affected with the pandemic organization find it difficult to operate and service their customers as a result of the covid-19 protocols such as social distancing and lockdown, however, only organization that are innovative and proactive are able to survive this period and remain competitively active. Around march 2020, Nigeria experience the first phase of lockdown and movement restrictions, servicing the needs of the customers becomes almost impossible for organization that are not innovate and proactive, most especially the food vendors as most customers can't come outside to buy, but businesses who are proactive to utilize technology as an innovative means of reaching out to customers took advantage of the of the pandemic and remain in business while most business were shut down. However, only organization that are proactive were able to take this advantage to survive their business when most operators were forced to close down." **(pat1; Pat3).**

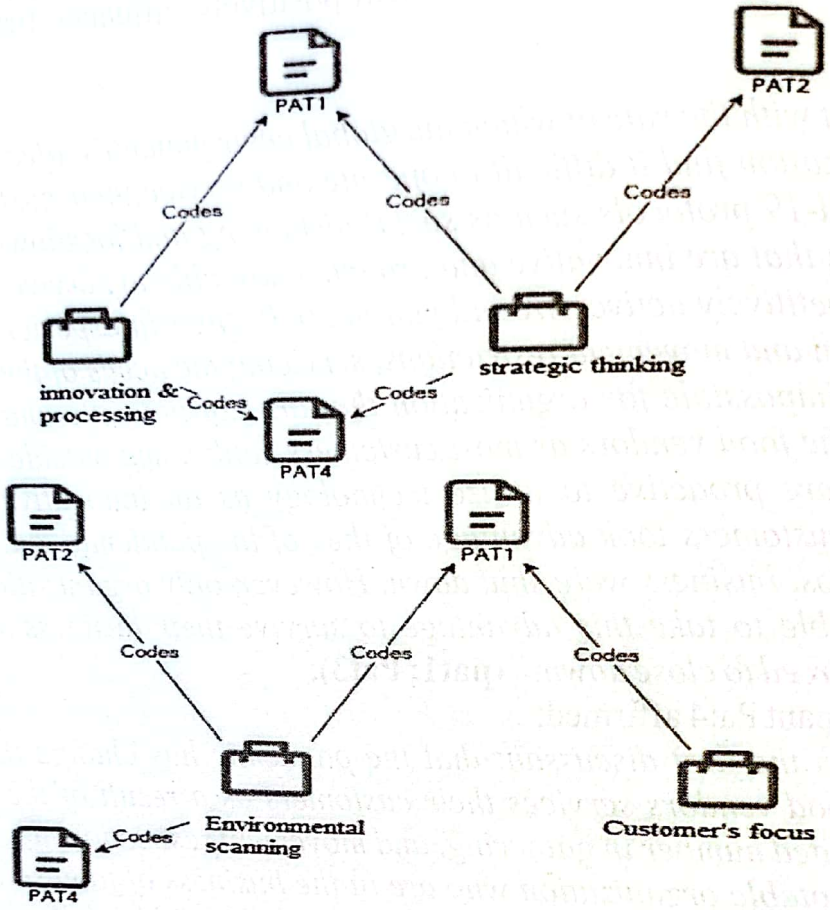
Similarly, participant Pat4 affirmed:

"I will agree with the first discussant that the pandemic has change the process through which food vendors services their customers as a result of the protocols involves likes limited number in gathering, and movement restriction at some point, this force some notable organization who are in the business of food sales creates platforms where their customers can order for food and it will be delivered to their address or locations, however this is made possible through innovation and organizational proactiveness." **(Pat4).**

By implication, the position of the participants in the discussion with regards to what could aid business survival brought out the findings that strategic thinking, innovation and proactiveness are essentials for business survival.

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Strategic thinking attempts to develop in the participants the intention to perform environmental scanning that will lead to innovativeness and pro-activeness (Liñán, 2004).



Source: Author's Field Survey (2021)

FINDINGS

The study revealed that (pro-activeness) has a great influence on business survival in the restaurant business, and other themes that emerged such as, strategic thinking, innovation and environmental scanning, can all drive business survival.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that organizational pro-activeness has a strong influence on business survival in which innovation is a major determinants of business survival as the business involves competition. However, the ability of the managers and owners

to think strategically and conduct environmental scanning will also influence survival of the business The study recommends that there should be consistent scanning of factors that can affects business survival and proactive measures such as innovations through process should be adopted in order to survive the business amidst competition and contingent period where organization has to make use to innovation to survive their businesses.

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