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CONFORMITY TO STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF ENTERPRISES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

The central focus of this study was to find out the extent of conformity to strategic management practices of enterprises in Anambra State. The questionnaire went through content and face validation by three experts from Business and Technical Education department, Nnamdi Azikwe University Akwa, Anambra State. The study was carried out with 201 enterprises that registered with Cooperate Affairs Commission Awka in Anambra State. There was no sampling as the entire population was sizeable for the researcher to handle. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire formulated by the researcher. Items related to research questions were analyzed using mean ratings while t-test Statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used in testing the null hypotheses of the study. The finding of the study showed that entrepreneurs in Anambra State, generally accepted as conforming, all the strategic management practices mentioned in the study. Recommendations were made for entrepreneurs, Vocational educators and planners to have insight into the relevant Strategic Management Practices for enterprises and Vocational undergraduates. This will make enterprises operate at full capacity and also encourage entrepreneurship education in order to make the vocational undergraduates become self-reliant at the end of their studies.

Keywords: Conformity, strategic management practices, Enterprises

Introduction

In every economy, enterprises are recognized as the most reliable vehicle for Socio-economic growth. The impact of enterprises in any economy according Alade (2000) is so great that no country can more forward economically and industrially without a strong enterprises sub-sector. An enterprise as used in this study means any privately owned business activity of person(s) aimed at producing, selling or servicing goods or providing services for profit. People involved in such activities are referred to as entrepreneurs.

Mc Oliver & Nwangwu (2010) stated that a lot of enterprises might have continued to fail due to their non-conformity to strategic management practices. Strategic Management therefore, according to Ansoff (1984) is a systematic approach to major and increasing important responsibility of general management to position and relate the firm to its environment in a way that will assure its continued success and make it secured from surprises. Thus

Onwuchekwu (2000) stated that strategic management is a systematic approach for managing strategic change which consists of the following:

- Positioning of the firm through strategy and capacity planning.
- Real time strategic response through issue management and
- Systematic management of resistance during strategic implementation.

The systematic management activity therefore is concerned with establishing objectives and goals for the organization and with maintaining a set of relationship between the organization and the environment which:

- enable it to pursue its objectives
- are consistent with the organizational capacities and
- continue to be responsive to environmental demands

One end product of strategies management is its potential for future fulfillment of organizations' objectives. In the business firm, this consists of:

(a) At the input to the firm, man power, information and raw materials

(b) At the output end, developed products and/or services tested for their potential profitability and

(c) A set of social behavioral rules which permit the organization to continue to meet its objectives.

In addition to the future performance potential, another end product of strategic management is internal structure and dynamics capable of continued responsiveness to changes in the external environment (Nwafor, 2006).

However, the role of management in an organization is to help such an organization attain its objectives while on the other hand, the major objective of strategic management is to help organizations, formulate effectives business polices, which can lead to attainment of organizations objectives (Onwuchekwa, 2000). So the relevance of strategic management is that it helps an organization to achieve its objectives and make it secured from surprises. it is a veritable instrument for the improvement of performance operations and profitability of the organizations (Ezeh, 2000)

Statement of the problems

Inspite of all the programmes of assistance to enterprises in Nigeria, the enterprises in Anambra State appear not to be attaining appreiable level of industrialization and socio-economic development. This is evidenced by the slow expansion rate and high rate of failure of enterprises in Anambra State. For example, in 2011, there were 253 private enterprises registered with cooperate Affairs Commission Awka, Anambra State, but in 2012 and 2013 the number fell to 218 and 208 respectively. The failure of these enterprises may not be unconnected with the strategic management practices of these enterprises among other causatives.

The problems of the study therefore is the slow rate of expansion and high rate of failure amongst enterprises in Anambra State resulting to high graduate unemployment

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to assess the extent of conforming to strategic management practices of enterprises in Anambra State. The study was especially used to rate the conformity to strategic management practices of the following:

1. Formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals
2. Analysis of their external competition environment to identify opportunities and threats
3. The selection of strategic choice.

Significance of the study

Educational institutions would find the result of this study very useful because it would provide educational institutions the justification to integrate entrepreneurship education (as a compulsory course at all levels) in schools' curriculum. The finding s of this study would help enterprises to adjust to environment issues and at such, be able to operate at full capacity. This will go a long way in making our young graduates move more into entrepreneurship development, thereby alleviating the problem of unemployment to a great extent and the general public would also be motivated by the expansion and growth of the private sector.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study. To what level are the following strategic management practices of enterprises conforming to strategic management practices?

1. Formulation of cooperate mission and major corporate goals?
2. Analysis of their external competitive environment to identity opportunities and threats?
3. Selection of strategic choice.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban enterprises on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to the analysis of external competitive environment to identity opportunities and threats.

3. The mean ratings on the conformity to strategic management practice relating to the selection of strategic choice of enterprises based on the type of business do not differ significantly.

Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey designed. Questionnaire items were developed with response categories as follows for all the registered enterprises in Anambra State:

Highly Conforming	(HC)
Conforming	(C)
Undecided	(UD)
Slightly Conforming	(SC)
Uncomforming	(UC)

The questionnaire went through content and face validation by three experts from Business and Technical Education department, Nnamdi Azikwe University Akwa, Anambra State. There was no sampling as the entire population was sizeable for the researcher to handle. Research questions with boundary limit of 3.5 and above were taken to be relevant for the study while those below 3.5 were rejected. A null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance when the calculated value of t was less than the critical t, otherwise the null hypothesis was rejected.

Results

The result of the study is presented in Tables 1-4 based on the research questions and hypothesis..

Research Question one: To what level are the enterprises conforming to formulation of cooperate mission and major corporate goals as a strategic management practice in Anambra State?

Table 1
Mean ($\overline{x}$) of response on items relating to the formulation of Corporate Mission and Major corporate Goals

S/N	Strategic Management Practices relating to Formulation of Corporate Mission and major Corporate goals	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Decision
1	Operating with a hierarchy of goals in which attaining superior performance is placed at or on top	4.58	Highly Conforming
2	Incorporating stakeholders into the organization's strategic decision in order not to lose their support	4.11	Conforming
3	Answering the question, "What is our business?"	4.70	Highly Conforming
4	"What will it be?" "What should it be" Answering question 3 above by defining its business	4.10	Conforming

	terms in three dimensions of identifying the customer groups, customer needs and skills to be applied in satisfying the customers		
5	Aspiring towards excellence by serving the customers with quality, reliability and efficiency.	4.20	Conforming
6	Constantly seeking, selecting and applying new methods and technologies to improve on productivity and services.	4.02	Conforming
7	Constantly seeking how to conduct business with the highest ethical and legal standards	3.00	Undecided
8	Constantly seeking how to achieve an excellent reputation through honesty, fairness, trustworthiness and sincerity in all the organization's activities	4.70	Highly Conforming
9	Considering value as the bed rock of an enterprise's culture and a driver of its competitive advantages	3.82	Conforming
10	Addressing only important issues by operating with a limited number of major goals	4.12	Conforming
11	Increasing the level of customer satisfaction through customer survey	4.14	Conforming
12	Specifying time periods within which the organization's goals should be advanced	2.33	Slightly conforming
13	Setting challenges but realistic goals that give mangers an incentive to look for ways to improve the operation of an enterprise	3.92	Conforming
14	Setting measurable goals that give managers a yard stick against which they can judge their performance	4.14	Conforming
15	Adopting means that improve communication flow, and demonstrating increased concerns for employees and customers	4.01	Conforming
16	Adopting measures that maintains outstanding financial performance by working in ways that are cost effect and efficient	4.34	Conforming
17	Marking the organization strategies to be consistent with the goals of the organization	4.17	Conforming

Table 1 indicated that the item means ranged from 2.33 to 4.70. Three items (item 1, 3 and 8) were agreed to be strategic management practices that are highly conforming to the strategic management practices for running of enterprises while 12 items were agreed to be conforming, item 7 was undecided by respondents, while item 12 was considered as been slightly conforming, following the decision rule set out. These items in their order of conformity are item 3, 8, 1, 16, 5, 6, 17, 11, 14, 10, 2, 4, 15, 13, 9, 7 and 12.

Research Question Two: To what level are the enterprises conforming to Analysis of their external competitive environment to identity opportunities and threats as a strategic management practice in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean $\overline{(X)}$ of response on items relating to analysis of the external competitive environment

S/N	Strategic Management Practices relating to Analysis of External Competitive Environment	Mean $\overline{(X)}$	Decision
1	Considering the risk of new entry by potential competitors into the organization's line of business.	4.34	Conforming
2	Seeing buyers as threat when the enterprise depends on them for business and they themselves are not dependent on the enterprise.	4.34	Conforming
3	Seeing suppliers as a threat when the enterprise depends on them for business but they themselves are not dependent on the enterprise.	4.21	Conforming
4	Considering macro-economic, social governmental, international and technological factors that may affect the enterprise.	4.37	Conforming
5	Considering that the more similar the substitute products are to each other, the lower the price changes without losing customers to substitute.	4.33	Conforming
6	Considering that the most enterprises are composed of strategic groups of enterprises pursuing the same similar strategies.	4.32	Conforming
7	Understanding that the companies in different strategic groups pursue different strategies.	4.32	Conforming
8	Visualizing that the organization can revolutionize the organizational structure and completely change the strength of different competitive forces.	3.11	Undecided
9	Considering that an enterprise will not be profitable just because it is based on an attractive industry or strategic group but more effort is required.	4.24	Conforming
10	Considering that each stage of an organization's life cycle has different implementations for competitive structure of the industry, and gives rise to its set of opportunities and threats.	4.17	Conforming
11	Taking into account the consequences of change which include more intense rivalry, more paid innovation and shorter product life cycles.	4.28	Conforming
12	Putting into consideration that there is a link between the national environment and competitive advantage of enterprises in global economy.	4.32	Conforming

From the data presented in table 2, entrepreneurs endorsed that strategic management practices relating to the analysis of their external competitive environment are conforming to the principles of strategic management practices in the running of their enterprises, except item 8 where entrepreneurs were undecided.

The data put in their order of conformity are item number4,2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 11, 1, 9, 3, 10 and 8.

Research Question Two: To what level are the enterprises conforming to selection of strategic choice as a strategic management practice in Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean ($\overline{X}$) of response on items relating to Selection of Strategic Choice.

S/N	Strategic Management Practices relating to Selection of Strategic Choice	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Decision
1	Generating series of strategic alternatives.	3.98	Conforming
2	Comparing organizations strength with other enterprises	4.22	Conforming
3	Identifying its weaknesses compared to other enterprises	4.23	Conforming
4	Identifying the opportunities in the external environment	4.23	Conforming
5	Identifying strategies that align fit or match her resources and capabilities to the demands of the environment (SWOT) to build on the enterprises, strength molder to exploit opportunities, counter threats and correct weaknesses.	4.09	Conforming
6	Being able to select among the alternatives generated by a SWOT analysis so as to arrive at a strategic choice.	4.26	Conforming

The date in Table 3 indicated that entrepreneurs in Anambra State regarded the strategic management practices that are related to selection of Strategic choice as conforming to the strategic Management Practices of enterprises following the decision rule set out. These items put in their order of conformity are item number 6, 3, 4, 2, 5 and 1

Hypothesis $H0_1$: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals.

Table 4: Result of the t-test of Male and Female Entrepreneurs' Mean ($\bar{x}$)ratings on the Extent of conformity to Strategic Management Practices of Corporate Mission and Major Corporate Goals.

Variables	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male Entrepreneurs	120	4.28	0.92	199	0.5	1.96	Ho_1 accepted
Female Entrepreneurs	81	4.21	0.94				

Form the data in Table 3 indicates that the value of the calculated t=0.5 is less than the table value of (t–1.96). The null Hypothesis (Ho_1) of no significant difference was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings on the extent of conformity to strategic management practices relating to the formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals by male and female entrepreneurs in Anambra State.

Hypothesis $H0_2$: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban enterprises on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to the analysis of external competitive environment to identity opportunities and threats.

Table 5

Result of the t-test of Urban and Rural Entrepreneurs Mean ($\bar{x}$) rating on the Extent of Conformity to Strategic Management Practices relating to the Analysis of External Competitive Environment

Variables	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Urban Entrepreneurs	128	4.26	0.88	199	2.36	1.96	Ho_2 Was rejected
Rural Entrepreneurs	73	3.93	1.03				

Since data in Table 5 collected from entrepreneurs confirmed that the calculated t-value of 2.36 was more than the critical t-value of 1.96. The null hypothesis 2 of no significant difference between the mean rating of urban and rural entrepreneurs on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to analysis of external competitive environment in Anambra State was rejected. This means that there was significant difference between the mean ratings of rural and urban enterprises on the conformity to strategic management practices relating to the analysis of external competitive environment to identity opportunities and threats.

Hypothesis $H0_3$: The mean ratings on the conformity to strategic management practice relating to the selection of strategic choice of enterprises based on the type of business do not differ significantly.

Table 6: Result of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Mean($\bar{x}$) ratings of entrepreneurs on the extent of conformity to strategic management practices in the selection of strategic choice based on type of business.

Variables	SS	DF	MS	Level of confidence	F-crit	F-cal	Decision
Between group	0.10	2	0.05	0.05	3.68	0.47	Ho accepted
Within group	1.59	15	0.106				

The data in table 6 collected from productive/manufacturing entrepreneurs, service oriented entrepreneurs and trading (buying and selling) entrepreneurs confirmed that the calculated value of F-ratio of 0.47 is less than the table value of F(f-crit 3.68). The null hypothesis (Ho) of no significant difference on the extent of conformity based on type of business was therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of entrepreneurs based on the types of business.

Discussion of findings

From the analysis of research question 1 in Table 1, entrepreneurs in Anambra State generally agreed with the fact that those strategic management practices relating to the formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals are conforming to the strategic management practices of enterprises. The strategic management practice of specifying the time periods within which the organizations goals should be advanced was taken as being slightly conforming. The finding in Table 1 is in agreement with the view of Hill & Gareth (1998) quoted by Onwuchekwa, (2000) that mission sets out why the organization exists and what it should be doing, while the major goals specify what the organization hopes to fulfill in the medium and long term. The author pointed out that the mission and major goals of an organization provide the context within which strategies are formulated. Hence, strategic management helps to position a firm where it can be to continue its productive activities.

The finding from research question 2 in table revealed that entrepreneurs accepted the strategic management practices relating to the analysis of their external competitive operating environment as conforming. Item 8 which is the strategic management practice of visualizing that the organization can revolutionize the organization structure and completely change the strength of different competitive forces which was endorsed undecided. The findings in

the Table 2 agree with Onwuchekwa (2000) who pointed out that strategic management helps to position a firm where it can be secured to continue its productive activities and then reduce environmental uncertainly in terms of contingencies, constraints, threats, opportunities etc. Therefore, strategic management is a contingent management since there is strong influence of environment on the positioning decisions reached. Similarly, the positioning decisions are influenced by the impact of technological development.

The finding in Table 3 also agreed with Eke (2006) who pointed out that in building an analysis concerning the nature of the environment and of the structure and features of an industry, it is important that the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) should be considered in relation to the organization's performance. Unfortunately, SWOT analysis in in-experienced hands tends to generate long list of points and the longer the list, the cloudier is the emerging strategic picture. This is because the categorization of what strength or weaknesses of the organization might be may not be clearly stated. Although, often asked explicitly, this technique begs for the answers to the following questions:

- Strength relative to what
- Weaknesses compared with what
- Is the management team using the same yardstick in their assessment

If managers can answer these questions with regard to strength and weaknesses, then they can compare the requirements of future success (Eke, 2013). The three null hypotheses discussed entrepreneurs' views on the three components of strategic management practices of corporate mission and major corporate goals, analysis of external competitive environment, and process of selecting strategic choice with respect to three independent variables of sex of entrepreneurs, location of establishment and type of business.

Test result of Table 4 and 6 indicated no significant difference of the strategic management practices of corporate mission and major corporate goals and the selection of strategic choice but result in Table 5 opposes the no significant differences in the entrepreneurs mean ratings on the importance of strategic management practices in urban and rural location as regards the analysis of their external competitive environment. The findings in Table 4 and 6 were supported by Hill & Gareth, (1998) as in Onwuchekwa (2000) who pointed out that for every organization to survive, it needs strategic management practices. The author equally pointed out that the strategic management practices an organization pursues have major impact upon its performance relative to that of competitors. These findings were equally supported by Mc Oliver and Nwangwu (2010) who wrote that the Nigerian situation showed strong evidence that there is a great need for indigenous business firms to professionalize management since this leads to impartiality, objectivity,

credibility and adaptability in the face of competition. Most indigenous businesses in Nigeria remain stagnated or have failed completely for lack of professionalism in management (Mc Oliver and Nwangwu 2010).

The result in Table 5, indicated significant difference in the mean rating of entrepreneurs on the importance of strategic management practices of the analyses of external competitive environment of enterprises by the urban and rural entrepreneurs is in agreement with Anyaele (2003) who pointed out that the socio cultural environment determines the peoples eating, dressing and living pattern and all these go a long way in influencing their demand for goods and services. The same author pointed out that a strategic management practice that is adopted by an enterprise in an urban area may not be as important as the strategic management practice of an enterprise in the rural area because of their socio-cultural environment. The scheduling for the strategic planning process depends on the nature and needs of the organization and its immediate external environment (McNamara, 2010).

Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that:

1. Entrepreneurs in Anambra State regarded as conforming to the strategic management practices of enterprises, the items relating to the formulation of corporate mission and major corporate goals, analysis of their external competitive environment, and selection of strategic choice in the running of enterprises.
2. The location of an organization can influence the strategic management practices adopted by such an organization in Anambra State.
3. The process of strategic choice indicated in the research work help in the arrival of strategic choice.

Therefore, this study is very important because strategic management helps to position a firm where it can be secured to continue its productive activities and then reduce environmental uncertainly in terms of contingences, constraints, threats, opportunities, etc. This will also go a long way in the socio-economic growth of the nation and also help our young graduates to move into entrepreneurship at the end of their programmes.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The manager must assess the changes in the environment in relation to the firm so as to determine whether the changes are permanent or not and also consider the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

(SWOT) of the firm relative to the environmental changes in order to arrive at a strategic choice. SWOT analysis therefore forms the basis of strategic analysis derived from comprehensive appraisal of all the situations of the firm.

2. Entrepreneurs should have insight into the relevant strategic management practices adopted in this study and use it in the running of their enterprises.
3. National Universities Commissioned (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should ensure that students are introduced into the concepts and principles of strategic management practices. This can be achieved through the present integration of entrepreneurship in educational curricula at all levels.
4. Federal Ministry of Industry should encourage entrepreneurs to gain relevant knowledge in strategic management practices and advise them to apply these practices in the running of their enterprises.
5. National Association for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises' Organization (NASME) should encourage her members to adopt the identified strategic management practices by organizing workshops, trainings and follow ups for their members.
6. Federal Ministry of Industry, NASME and other Small and Medium Enterprises' (SME) stakeholders should reward outstanding achievements by formulating suitable systems and procedures for assessing enterprises' strategic management performances.
7. Enabling study conditions should be made available in the academic environments by providing teaching materials and educational experiences that should orientate students towards intuitive thinking and imagination.
8. Action-oriented learning should be encouraged by vocational planners which connotes theoretical and practical features and thus offers advantage for the education of entrepreneurs. This form of education demands that the course contents of educational programmes at the undergraduate and graduate levels should be designed to cover a particular discipline. Course contents programme delivered with specific objectives should be made for successful enterprises and successful business managers. Academic activities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels should have the contents re-structured to enhance skill acquisition and in the interim, permit the learner to ask questions about a situation, penetrate the situation, gain insight on the nature of the matter and revise a workable solution.

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