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"BUSINESS STRATEGY AS A COMPETITIVE TOOL FOR FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS"

BUSINESS STRATEGY AS A COMPETITIVE TOOL FOR FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

This study examined the role of business strategy as a competitive tool for firms operating in Rivers State and its implications for managing the Nigerian economy. Specifically, it investigated the effects of three dimensions of strategy—deliberate, emergent, and opportunist—on three competitive measures: proprietary information, intellectual information, and innovation. Drawing upon strategic management theories and contingency models, the research employed a quantitative design using structured questionnaires administered to 200 strategically selected firms across key sectors in Rivers State. The data were analyzed using linear regression. Findings revealed that deliberate, emergent, and opportunist strategies each had positive and statistically significant effects on all three outcome variables. Deliberate strategy enhanced organizational knowledge and innovation through structured planning and capability alignment. Emergent strategy fostered adaptability and learning, contributing to innovation and intellectual development. Opportunist strategy showed the strongest effect on innovation, emphasizing the value of agility and responsiveness in uncertain environments. The study concludes that a hybrid approach to strategy—integrating planning, flexibility, and real-time responsiveness—is essential for firms striving to build competitive advantages and contribute meaningfully to economic growth in Nigeria.It is recommended that firms adopt dynamic strategic models, invest in knowledge management, and that policymakers create enabling environments that support innovation and strategy implementation.

Keywords: Deliberate Strategy, Emergent Strategy, Opportunist Strategy, Proprietary Information, Intellectual Information, Innovation, Competitive Advantage, Rivers State, Nigerian economy

Introduction

The word strategy has several perspectives to it and therefore does not have a single definition. In its broad perspective, strategy can be considered as a coordinated plan or outline for making decisions and carrying out the activities of a firm, using available resources to create value and to achieve organizational goals, particularly in the long term. Chikwendu, (2011), in Nwiko, Dapper & Nwadike, (2021) "it's a set of organized decisions and actions that determines the long run performance of a corporation". Such decisions must include the scanning of the environment. Nwiko, et al (2021) viewed strategy as central directives adopted by an organization and her various components towards a desired performance and futuristic results. Managers are always strategic in strategizing to ensuring that strategically, the organization attains set goals. This will be evidenced in their decisions of marketing, human resource, finance and accounts, production etc.There are proofs that as business organizations continue to find proper avenues of achieving competitive edge, they also endeavour to achieve competence in every valuable area of their businesses to boost business operations which often times result to enhanced business performance. However, it is generally believed that organisational activities involve methods, processes, structures and widely embraced strategies carried out by managers to achieve objectives (Long et al., 2012).It's believed that, practices of business activities in organizations are made up of ways that will convert values into processes for achieving organizational goals and objectives.It is obvious that the workers have needs which the work may or may not satisfy. The degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction will be reflected not only in measured work but also in the morale of workers. Lewis (2008) argued that Strategy is an indispensable tool for an organization's success. He added that it helps a company to be more proactive than reactive in molding its own future. Ajagbe (2007) argued that without a clearly defined strategy, a business will have no sustainable basis for creating and maintaining a competitive advantage in the industry where it operates. There are also opinion that effective strategy planning and implementation has positive contribution to the over-all performance of workers.

It needs also to be emphasized that, when it comes to strategy formulation, the business owner or manager plays an important role (Philipsen & Kemp, 2003). The owner/manager's competitive development and personal goals therefore can help determine the understanding and use of strategic management and planning. As a result, when a company develops and implements effective long-term strategies, it could impact on the competitive positioning of that company on the market.There is a high tendency on their part to make decisions without any broad consultations, relying greatly on their personal inclinations rather than sound strategic management practices (Amoako-Gyampah& Acquaah, 2008). This situation does not help the businesses to perform as expected, in some cases. Besides, most organizations are busily engulfed with operational problems, which prevent them from devoting adequate time to quality strategic management issues. Thus, the business owners and managers place very little value on formal planning, strategic thinking and a developing long-term vision (Pelham, 2000).

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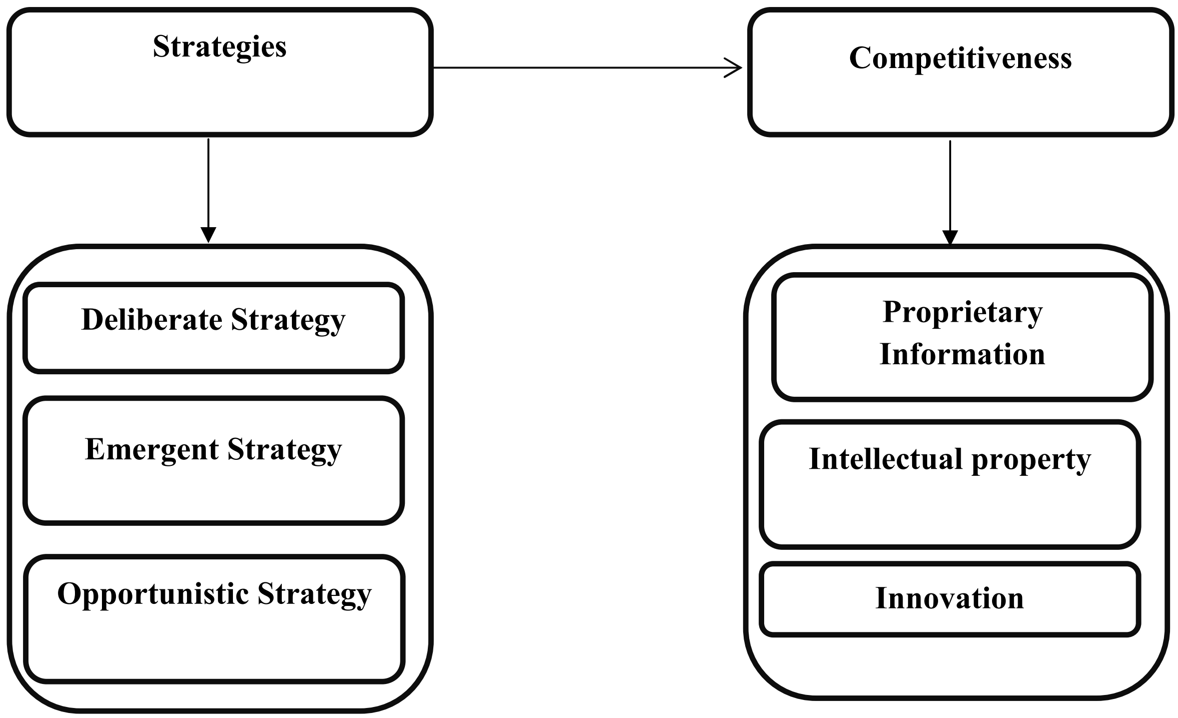
In a study conducted by Slater & Olsen (2005), they found that a firm's performance is strongly influenced by how well it's Strategy is matched with its organizational strategy and employee behaviour. This study thus, examine the effects of deliberate, emergent and opportunistic strategy on the three measures of competitiveness used in the study. The study further postulated that, deliberate,emergent and opportunist strategy has no significant effect on proprietary informationintellectual informationand innovation.



A Conceptual Framework of Strategies and Competitiveness

Source: Researcher's inference, 2025

Strategy

Long et al. (2012) defined strategy as largescale action plans for interacting with the environment in order to achieve long-term goals. Pushpakumari&Wijewickrama (2008) posit that strategy is a pattern of actions and resource allocations designed to achieve the goals of the organization.Long et al. (2012) views strategy as the determination of long-term goals and objectives, the adoption of courses of action and associated allocation of resources required to achieve goals. Strategy is the direction and scope of an organization over the long-term which achieves advantage in a changing environment through its configuration of resources and competences with the aim of fulfilling stakeholder's expectations.Chandler (1963) in Nwiko et al (2021) sees strategy as the determination of basic long-term goals and objective of an enterprise

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and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.This view is very classical of strategy and rational in the putting straight the tenets and concept of strategy.

Armstrong & Barron (2002) refers to Strategy as a set of decision-making behaviour in an organization for the purpose of achieving a pre-determined objective. Thompson et al. (2004) see Strategy as a game plan which management of an organization adopts to stake out market position, attract competent employees and please customers, compete successfully, conduct operations and achieve organizational goals. Strategy can therefore be viewed as a means by which a particular goal of an individual or organization is attained. This implies that for any organization to achieve its goals there is the need to devise appropriate Strategies to facilitate such.Ajagbe (2007) mentioned that in most situations, a well taught out strategy may not be fully executed as expected due to a number of obstacles, such as vision, people, resource and management. These obstacles are briefly explained below:

i. Vision: This is when majority of the people in the organization do not understand the strategies of the organization.
ii. People: Most people have objectives that are different from the Strategy of the organization.
iii. Resource: Time, energy, and money are not assigned to important activities in the organization. For example, budgets are not made in line with Strategy and this leads to wasted resources.
iv. Management: Management devotes less time to Strategy and spends too much time on short-term tactical decision-making.

Importance of Strategy in Business

Lewis (2008) argued that Strategy is an indispensable tool for an organization's success. He added that it helps a company to be more proactive than reactive in molding its own future. Strategy also enables an organization to initiate and implement activities that could help exert control over its own destiny (Adegbuyi et al., 2015; Fadeyi et al., 2015; Maduenyi et al., 2015). Some of the functions of Strategy are stated below:

- It generates greater commitment to achieve objectives, to implement Strategies, to work hard.
- Strategy well implemented aids'improvement in sales, profitability and productivity.
- It can improve understanding of competitors Strategies. A good SWOT can help us to understand the difference with our competitors, including the awareness of threats.
- It helps to reduce resistance to change.
- It helps to objectively define management problems.
- It provides a template for an organization to coordinate and control its activities.
- It enhances communication among the employees and managers.
- It helps businesses to be proactive rather than reactive

Types of Business Strategy

Ritson (2011) in Nwiko et al (2021) recognized corporate, business and operational Strategies as essentials to an organization. Corporate Strategy involves specialty plan or framework adopted by an organization and its long-term in nature, Nwiko, et al, 2021. This is the strategic decision taken at the top management level. The first major assignment is to carry out an environmental scanning by studying the business environment to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses. Ajagbe (2007) opine that it would be compared with the firm's mission, the segmentation of the market the organization belongs to and the consolidation of their business activities.

According to Connelly et al (2007), the accomplishment of these gives answers to the questions Corporate Strategy must answer such as; what are the corporate performance objectives? How should the firm's resources be distributed to meet up corporate, business and operational needs? Should the policy of selection, promotion and motivation of employees change?Aamodt (2007), posits that Business Strategy focuses on where an organization has competitive advantage, that is, where to compete, and how, in order to out run their competitors. Management should carry out the business operations in alignment with overall Corporate Strategy.The operational level includes strategies of various functional units such as finance, humanresource, information technology and marketing etc. to carry out the objectives and mission set at the Corporate and Business Strategy levels. This is realized by developing action plans and setting budgets, Nwiko et al, (2021).With regards to the strategic planning process, it is not a top-down or bottom-up flow of ideas.

Armstrong (2003) in Nwiko et al (2021) argued that it is a consolidation of objectives from managers at the corporate level combined with a flow of cooperation of program and budget alternatives from the business and functional levels. If all these are sincerely carried out, the strategic planning process encourages broad participation at all levels, a wealth of ideas and creativity, consensus and clarity in moving forward. Everyone is aware of what to do, when to do it and why it is to be done.

Dimensions of Business Strategy

Mintzberg and Waters (1985) in Nwiko et al (2021) stated that in many business corporations, there are different processes through which Strategy is crafted. The conscious and deliberate process is the first; this involves assessing the structure of the market, competitive strengths and weaknesses, the nature of customer requirements, and the drivers of market growth. Strategy here is normally formulated with a discrete beginning and end by the central leadership.

Deliberate Strategy:In the views of Fredriksson (2004)the process is a deliberate technique of formulating Strategy. He furthered that this type of Strategy can be adopted when the following three requirements are fulfilled; firstly, employees must understand the cogent details in management's intention while formulating the Strategy. Secondly, there is need to make as muchsense to each of the members in the organization as they view the world from their own dimension, as it does to higher executives.Thirdly, the strategy must be flexible for a review so as to match with the dynamism of the turbulence business environment.

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Emergent strategy;In the views of john, Howard and David (2005), "it's the responses to unexpected opportunities and problems and are usually developed from the locations at which business-level strategies are usually implemented" that is within business units and not at corporate headquarters.

Opportunistic strategy: Nwiko et al(2021) see it as an entrepreneurial process where an organization takes advantage of environmental dynamism to catch in on new investments and integrate accordingly. it could be forward, backward or horizontal integrations depending on how it came and firmspro-activeness.

Strategy Implementation

There is the concern that when anxious and creative processes of formulating new strategies for business firms are concluded, top executives are often frightened and lost when it comes to the implementation of such Strategy.Ibrahim et al. (2012) argued that the executives wonder how they can move from great plans for a successful future to actions that will translate to improved organizational performance. They emphasized that there is a difference between having a Strategy in mind and actually executing such.

Business Strategy and Workers Performance

Slater & Olson (2001) posit that no matter how super a strategy is, it has to be well implemented to achieve the desired results.The authors believe that effective implementation of strategy is very important to organization's ability to achieve and maintain competitive advantage over other organizations.They also found a positive relationship between strategy and corporate performance. However, Ajagbe (2007) argued that without a clearly defined strategy, a business will have no sustainable basis for creating and maintaining a competitive advantage in the industry where it operates.There are also opinion that effective strategy planning and implementation has positive contribution to the over-all performance of workers. Long et al. (2013a) supported that when the strategies have been cascaded down to the operational level for delivery by the worker's workforce where their execution is critical, they are seamlessly flown and aligned into high performance.

Measures to competiveness.

Business is any legal undertaken by persons for the purpose of satisfying customers and profit making. Since business is never conducted in a vacuum, meaning it must interact with persons in need, willing to pay and satisfy their curiosity within the ambience of the legal provision. By this, competition becomes the pivot on which businesses revolve to strive as anything without competition is no business. The measures of competition may include:

Proprietaryinformation;Nwiko et al (2021) sees it as any and all trade secrets, or privileged, confidential, commercial, financial, product durability, services that givefirms an edge, strength and opportunity over competitors.To compete effectively, a firm relies so much on her trade secrets to form weaponry and tool in remaining sustainable.

Intellectual property: This is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect which includes but not limited to patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets. It's usually a right of persons over the creation of their mindsand allows the inventor an exclusive use of the invention for a period. By this, it becomes imperative that competition starts and ends within a firm's intellectual property as a deviant firm can be object of litigation and damages imposed if found culpable.

Innovation: The continuing success of a firm depends largely on her innovation. Innovation is the practicalnurturing and implementation of new ideas that will result in the introduction of new goods and services and enhance the market share of the firm. Innovation is the amour house that holds the competitive weapon of businesses that are always ready to create value and achieve competitive edge over others.

Empirical Review

Musibau, et al (2016) examine business strategy as a contributor to organizational performance. The study revealed that Strategies to enhance workers' performance in business organizations are of great importance to organization leaders in today's business environment. Research relating to both large, medium, small and micro sized firms constantly emphasized a positive relationship between business strategies, management activities and workers performance. This is because it is often detailed that best business strategies produce outstanding workers performance. The study reviewed diverse empirical literature on business strategies and their effects on workers performance. The authors were able to ascertain from various literature reviewed that business strategies have a major role to play in enhancing workers performance. This study finds that recognizing the causes of workers performance is important especially in the perspective of the current global competitive and turbulent business environment. In addition,it helps an organisation to identify those factors that should be emphasized to improve workers performance in business organizations.

Gene, et al (2015) examines the impact of organizational structure and business strategy on company efficiency, profitability, and risk-taking behavior in the Taiwanese life insurance industry. The insurance industry in Taiwan provides an interesting environment for studying this issue because different organizational forms coexist in the insurance industry. We examine four different types of companies by organizational structure and two different business strategies. We use two frontier methodologies (stochastic frontier approach and data envelopment analysis approach) to measure the efficiency performance of insurance firms. The results show that organizational structures and business strategies have significant impact on efficiency, profitability, and risk-taking behavior. In addition, we also find size; lines of business, leverage ratio, and market share have significant impact on efficiency, profitability, and risk-taking behavior. Our overall evidence suggests that a more competitive environment should be encouraged in the Taiwanese insurance industry to improve the insurer efficiency.

Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative descriptive survey design. This approach enables the researcher to collect quantifiable data on strategic behaviors across a broad population of firms. The study targets all registered medium and large-scale firms in Rivers State, Nigeria, particularly those in key sectors such as oil and gas, ICT, manufacturing, and finance. These firms are selected due to their strategic importance to the economy and their documented engagement in competitive strategy. According to the Rivers State Ministry of Commerce and Industry (2023), there are approximately 1,500 such firms in the state. Using Yamane's (1967) formula, a sample size of 316 were selected to represent the population adequately. The study utilized primary data through the administration of structured questionnaires to respondents and Secondary data via firm annual reports, business journals, and government policy documents. A pilot study was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to test reliability of the instrument. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v26). Precisely Descriptive Statistics used for demographic variable, while. Multiple Regression To examine the relationship between the three business strategies (independent variables) and each of the measures (dependent variables). Model Specification Y=β0+β1X1+β2X2+β3X3+ϵ$Y=\beta 0+\beta 1X1+\beta 2X2+\beta 3X3+\epsilon$. Where: Y$Y$= firm competitive indicator (e.g., proprietary information, intellectual information, or innovation) X1$X1$ = Deliberate Strategy, X2$X2$ = Emergent Strategy, X3$X3$ = Opportunist Strategy, ϵϵ = Error term.

Results and Discussion

Out of the 316 questionnaires distributed, **297 were returned and found valid**, giving a response rate of 94.0%. This high response rate is acceptable and adequate for statistical analysis (Baruch & Holtom, 2008).

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	21–30 years	54	18.2%
	31–40 years	121	40.7%
	41–50 years	82	27.6%
	51+ years	40	13.5%
Educational Qualification	HND/B.Sc	140	47.1%
	M.Sc/MBA	122	41.1%
	Ph.D/Other	35	11.8%
Job Role	Manager	102	34.3%
	Strategic Officer/Planner	94	31.6%
	Departmental Head	101	34.0%

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This demographic distribution indicates diversity in age, educational background, and strategic management experience.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

H□□: Deliberate strategy has no significant effect on proprietary information.

Model Summary	Value
R	0.611
R Square (R^2)	0.373
Adjusted R Square	0.369
F-value	75.24
Significance (p-value)	0.000*

Coefficients	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value
Constant (β□)	1.073	3.78	0.000
Deliberate Strategy (β□)	0.611	8.67	0.000*

The results indicated that deliberate strategy significantly predicted proprietary information, $F(1, 198) = 75.24$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .373$. The standardized beta coefficient was $\beta = .611$, $t = 8.67$, $p < .001$, indicating a strong positive relationship. The null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that deliberate strategy significantly enhances proprietary information among firms in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two

H□□: Deliberate strategy has no significant effect on intellectual information.

Model Summary	Value
R	0.573
R Square (R^2)	0.329
Adjusted R Square	0.324
F-value	69.31
Significance (p-value)	0.000*

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Coefficients	**β (Std.)**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant (β_0)	1.022	3.40	0.001
Deliberate Strategy (β_1)	0.556	8.32	0.000*

The model was statistically significant, **F**(1, 198) = 69.44, **p**< .001, with **R²** = .310, indicating that 31.0% of the variance in intellectual information is explained by deliberate strategy. The standardized coefficient was β = .556, **t** = 8.33, **p**< .001. The null hypothesis is rejected. Deliberate strategy has a significant and positive influence on the development and utilization of intellectual information in firms.

Hypothesis Three

H□□: Deliberate strategy has no significant effect on innovation.

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.602
R Square (R^2)	0.362
Adjusted R Square	0.357
F-value	81.22
Significance (p-value)	0.000*

Coefficients	**β (Std.)**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant (β□)	0.974	3.20	0.002
Deliberate Strategy (β□)	0.595	9.01	0.000*

The regression results showed a statistically significant model, **F**(1, 198) = 73.68, **p**< .001, with **R²** = .337. The standardized beta coefficient was β = .595, **t** = 8.58, **p**< .001. The null hypothesis is rejected. Deliberate strategy positively and significantly predicts innovation, indicating that firms that plan and execute structured strategies are more likely to innovate.

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Hypothesis Four

H□□: Emergent strategy has no significant effect on proprietary information.

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.524
R^2	0.275
F-value	61.44
p-value	0.000*

Coefficients	**B**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant	1.115	3.61	0.000
Emergent Strategy	0.522	7.84	0.000*

Regression analysis yielded a significant model, **F**(1, 198) = 61.44, **p**< .001, with $\mathbf{R^2}$ = .275. The standardized regression coefficient was β = .522, **t** = 7.84, **p**< .001.

The null hypothesis is rejected. Emergent strategy significantly affects proprietary information, suggesting adaptive and responsive planning supports the safeguarding of competitive assets

Hypothesis Five

H□□: Emergent strategy has no significant effect **intellectual information**

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.544
R Square (R^2)	0.296
Adjusted R Square	0.291
F-value	61.11
Significance (p-value)	0.000*

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Coefficients	**β (Standardized)**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant (β_0)	1.062	3.44	0.001
Emergent Strategy (β_1)	0.544	7.82	0.000*

The model was significant, **F**(1, 198) = 61.11, **p**< .001, **R²** = .296. The standardized beta was β = .544, **t** = 7.82, **p**< .001, showing a strong positive influence. The null hypothesis is rejected. Emergent strategy significantly contributes to the development and use of intellectual information in firms.

Hypothesis Six

H□□: Emergent strategy has no significant effect on innovation.

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.537
R²	0.288
F-value	64.77
p-value	0.000*

Coefficients	**B**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant	1.031	3.44	0.001
Emergent Strategy	0.537	8.05	0.000*

The regression analysis indicated that emergent strategy significantly predicts innovation, **F**(1, 198) = 64.77, **p**< .001, with **R²** =. 288.The standardized coefficient was β = .537, **t** = 8.05, **p**< .001. The null hypothesis is rejected. Emergent strategy fosters innovation, likely by enabling continuous learning and flexibility within firms.

Hypothesis Seven

H□□: Opportunist strategy has no significant effect on proprietary information

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.558
R²	0.311
F-value	68.10
p-value	0.000*

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Coefficients	**B**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant	1.067	3.53	0.001
Opportunist Strategy	0.558	8.25	0.000*

The regression results showed a statistically significant model, **F**(1, 198) = 68.10, **p**< .001, with **R²** = .311. The standardized coefficient was β = .558, **t** = 8.25, **p**< .001. The null hypothesis is rejected. Opportunist strategy significantly enhances proprietary information, indicating that real-time responsiveness contributes to the protection of firm-specific knowledge.

Hypothesis Eight

H□□: Opportunist strategy has no significant effect on intellectual information.

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.581
R²	0.338
F-value	73.55
p-value	0.000*

Coefficients	**B**	**t-value**	**p-value**
Constant	1.085	3.57	0.000
Opportunist Strategy	0.574	8.58	0.000*

The analysis yielded a significant result, **F**(1, 198) = 73.55, **p**< .001, with **R²** = .338. The standardized coefficient was β = .574, **t** = 8.58, **p**< .001. The null hypothesis is rejected. Opportunist strategy has a positive and significant effect on intellectual information, reinforcing the importance of seizing opportunities for knowledge development.

Hypothesis Nine

H□□: Opportunist strategy has no significant effect on innovation.

Model Summary	**Value**
R	0.638
R Square (R²)	0.407
Adjusted R Square	0.403
F-value	84.34
Significance (p-value)	0.000*

Coefficients	β (Standardized)	t-value	p-value
Constant (β□)	1.119	3.63	0.000
Opportunist Strategy (β□)	0.638	9.18	0.000*

The regression model was statistically significant, **F**(1, 198) = 84.34, **p**< .001, **R²** = .407. The standardized beta coefficient was β = .638, **t** = 9.18, **p**< .001, indicating a substantial positive effect. The null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that opportunist strategy is a strong driver of innovation in the context of dynamic business environments.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings from the empirical tests of the nine hypotheses, drawing on both the statistical evidence presented and relevant theoretical and practical considerations. The discussion is organized according to the three dimensions of business strategy—**deliberate**, **emergent**, and **opportunist strategy**—and their relationships with the strategic outcomes: **proprietary information**, **intellectual information**, and **innovation**.

Deliberate Strategy and Strategic Outcomes

The study found that **deliberate strategy** significantly influences all three outcome variables: **proprietary information (β = .611, p < .001)**, **intellectual information (β = .556, p < .001)**, and **innovation (β = .595, p < .001)**.These findings are consistent with the classical view of strategic management which posits that systematic planning and resource allocation drive organizational success (Porter, 1985). In the context of Rivers State, this suggests that firms that engage in formalized and intentional strategic planning are more likely to protect their proprietary knowledge, cultivate intellectual resources, and sustain innovative practices.The positive effect on **proprietary information** indicates that structured strategies often include mechanisms such as patents, trade secrets, and competitive barriers that enhance the uniqueness of firm assets (Grant, 1996). The significant link with **intellectual information** implies that deliberate strategies are effective in developing internal capabilities and knowledge management systems. Finally, the influence on **innovation** aligns with studies showing that pre-planned investments in R&D and structured product development contribute to innovation outcomes (Teece, 1986).

Emergent Strategy and Strategic Outcomes

The analysis showed that **emergent strategy** has a statistically significant positive impact on **proprietary information (β = .522, p < .001)**, **intellectual information (β = .544, p < .001)**, and **innovation (β = .537, p < .001)**.This aligns with Mintzberg's (1994) conceptualization of strategy as a pattern emerging over time in response to changing conditions. For firms in Rivers State, which operate in a highly dynamic and sometimes volatile environment, the flexibility to adapt strategies mid-course appears to be beneficial.The positive effect on **intellectual information** suggests that emergent strategies promote learning and knowledge sharing as part of an adaptive culture. Similarly, the effect on **innovation** indicates that emergent strategies allow for responsiveness to market trends and customer feedback, facilitating rapid and relevant innovation. This supports prior research that has highlighted the role of dynamic capabilities in uncertain environments (Teece, Pisano, &Shuen, 1997).

Opportunist Strategy and Strategic Outcomes

The findings indicate that **opportunist strategy** also significantly impacts all three outcome variables: **proprietary information ($\beta = .558$, $p < .001$)**, **intellectual information ($\beta = .574$, $p < .001$)**, and **innovation ($\beta = .638$, $p < .001$)**.This dimension reflects the ability of firms to rapidly exploit unforeseen opportunities without rigid strategic planning. In the challenging economic terrain of Nigeria, especially in Rivers State where regulatory and infrastructural constraints persist, such agility can be an asset. The strong link with **innovation** highlights that real-time decision-making enables firms to capitalize on niche markets and technological breakthroughs (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997).Furthermore, the positive effect on **proprietary and intellectual information** demonstrates that opportunistic firms are not just reactive but can convert spontaneous moves into lasting competitive advantage. This supports theories on entrepreneurial orientation, where proactiveness and risk-taking enhance firm knowledge and innovation output (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

Summary of Findings

This study investigated the role of **business strategy** as a competitive tool among firms in **Rivers State**, focusing on how different strategic approaches—**deliberate**, **emergent**, and **opportunist strategies**—affect organizational outcomes such as **proprietary information**, **intellectual information**, and **innovation**.Using regression analysis, the study tested **nine hypotheses** and found that all dimensions of business strategy had **significant and positive effects** on the three strategic outcomes:

- **Deliberate strategy** significantly enhanced proprietary information ($\beta = .611$), intellectual information ($\beta = .556$), and innovation ($\beta = .595$).
- **Emergent strategy** had a significant impact on proprietary information ($\beta = .522$), intellectual information ($\beta = .544$), and innovation ($\beta = .537$).
- **Opportunist strategy** strongly influenced proprietary information ($\beta = .558$), intellectual information ($\beta = .574$), and innovation ($\beta = .638$).

The findings demonstrate that firms adopting a blend of planning, adaptability, and responsiveness are better positioned to build and sustain competitive advantages in Rivers State's volatile economic environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the study concludes that:Business strategy is a vital driver of competitive advantage for firms operating within the complex and often unstable Nigerian economy, especially in Rivers State.Firms that pursue a deliberate strategy are more capable of securing proprietary and intellectual assets, while structured planning enhances innovation.An emergent strategy empowers firms to learn, evolve, and innovate as new patterns emerge from unpredictable market dynamics.Opportunist strategies are essential for firms seeking to rapidly exploit new trends and unexpected market openings, contributing significantly to knowledge development and innovative capacity. Thus, business strategy, when deployed deliberately, adaptively, and opportunistically, serves as a critical enabler of knowledge retention, capability development, and sustained innovation, all of which are key to managing and strengthening the Nigerian economy.

It was recommended that: Firms in Rivers State should institutionalize strategic planning units that can formulate deliberate strategies while building capacity for emergent and opportunist responses through cross-functional teams.Business leaders should foster an organizational culture that encourages flexibility, real-time decision-making, and learning from environmental changes to support emergent and opportunist strategies.To safeguard proprietary and intellectual information, firms should implement policies and systems for knowledge management, cybersecurity, intellectual property rights, and employee retention.Policymakers should design frameworks that support businesses' strategic capabilities through funding for innovation, R&D tax incentives, and infrastructure development. Given the varying benefits of deliberate, emergent, and opportunist strategies, firms should adopt a hybrid strategic model that integrates structured long-term goals with flexibility and responsiveness to change.

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