

## **SUPPLY CHAIN INNOVATION AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF FURNITURE DISTRIBUTING FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated supply chain innovation and marketing performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The research design adopted was correlational research design. The population of this study comprise of ten (10) home furniture firms. The respondents were three hundred and eighty four (384) for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument for the study, it was tested for reliability using Pearson's product moment correlation (PPMC), established a reliability index of 0.86. Mean and percentage was used to analyse the research questions, while T-test statistics was used with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 26 to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between supply chain innovation and market performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. The following recommendations were made: Furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt should provide valuable insights into the critical linkages between supply chain innovations and marketing performance, Policymakers should use the insights from the study to inform the development of policies and regulations aimed at fostering a conducive business environment for furniture distribution firms, Academicians/Scholars should build upon the study's findings to further explore the mechanisms through which Supply chain innovation influence marketing performance and develop theoretical frameworks that capture the unique dynamics of supply chain innovations in diverse contexts.

***Keywords: Supply chain, Innovation, Collaborative partnership, Artificial intelligence, Sales growth, Market share***

### **INTRODUCTION**

A product's entire delivery process involves everything from acquiring components and raw materials to distribution and assembling, as well as warehousing, inventory management, distribution through a variety of channels, customer delivery, order entry, order management, and the information systems needed to observe these processes (Lummus & Vokurka, 2008). Supply chain is a network of organizations, people, activities, information, and resources involved in producing and delivering a product or service from raw materials to end consumers (Gattorna, 2018). Supply chain innovation is a trend in supply chain management. It involves the introduction of new technologies, processes, or business models that improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of supply chain operations (Levy, & Weitz, 2012). By embracing innovation, supply chains can become more resilient, adaptable, and responsive to changing market conditions and customer needs Sarkar (2017).

Supply chain management (SCM) is the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the operations of the supply chain to satisfy customer requirements as efficiently as possible. It is the management of the flow of goods and services and includes all processes that transform raw materials into final products. A supply chain consists of all parties involved in the movement of goods from the raw material supply stage to the point of consumer consumption. It is the set of value adding activities connecting the enterprise's suppliers and its customers. However, in a distribution firm, the supply chain consists of all functions involved in receiving and filling a

customer order (Ifekanandu, 2024). Supply chain covers the coordination of operations that start with the purchase of raw materials, continue through their transformation into semi-finished or finished commodities, and culminate with the delivery of those goods to their final users (Karabiyik, 2009).

On the other hand supply chain innovation is the introduction of new technologies or methods of getting the raw material to the point of consumption. Supply chain innovation relates to the implementation of automated solutions — from robotics to warehouse management software — in stages such as distribution, storage and internal product transport. It has become an important focus of competitive advantage for organization business. The management of supply chain study emphasizes how to maximize the overall value of the firm by better using and deployment of resources across the whole of the firm. The principle of supply chain activity is receiving input from firm's suppliers – add value – deliver to customers (Levi, et al, 2004). A supply chain encompasses all the parties that involved, directly or indirectly, in fulfilling a customer request. The supply chain includes manufacturer, suppliers, transporters, warehouses, retailers and even customers themselves. Within each organization, such as a manufacturer, the supply chain includes all function involved in receiving and filling a customer request. These functions includes new product development, marketing, operation, distribution, finance, customer service and other function related to serving customer request (Chopra & Meindl, 2007). Effective supply chain management is important to build and sustain competitive advantage in product and service firms. A supply chain is a grouping of three or more entities (organizations or people) actively engaged in the upstream and downstream flows of goods, services, money, and/or information from a source to a client (Mentzer, et al. 2001). It is the implementation of new and improved strategies, technologies, processes, and practices within the supply chain to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, mitigate risks, and improve overall performance. There are appropriate dynamics that influence supply chain procedures. These dynamics include the length, kind, position, firm size, and industry of the supply chain. For the firm's services and goods to develop and maintain their competitive advantage, an efficient supply chain must be formed. Furthermore, supply chain innovation can be a useful instrument for a firm to improve its competitive advantage, which can be a beneficial tool to firms as to maintain the profitability, sales and market share growth, and stability of the firm.

According to George and Madhusudanan (2019), supply chain is a network of stakeholders connected by the flow of information, resources, and money with the objective of constructing a chain that gives the maximum value to the client and to eliminate waste. Innovations in supply chain is embedded in technological breakthrough such as artificial intelligence (AI), which has proven to be a significant revolutionary element of the upcoming digital era as various companies adopt AI technology to provide a better customer experience and improve their presence in the artificial intelligence industry. Companies adopt AI services to reduce their overall operational costs, yielding more profit. Artificial intelligence is a technology that enables computers or machines as intellectual as humans, able to perform activities associated with those performed similarly to the human brain (Thilagavathy & Kumar, 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) is finding its application in various business disciplines and is expected to be one of the most important technological tools used in marketing in the years to come.

Equally interesting is collaborative partnership, the power of partnerships and alliances in sales. By joining forces, companies can tap into new markets and enhance their brand visibility exponentially. It's a win-win situation where pooled resources and shared expertise lead to mutual growth and success (Lieberman, 2018). The fundamental tenet in the firms marketing performance in terms of sales growth, market share and profitability is in the grouping of productive, human, and capital resources used to accomplish a single goal. If these resources add value to the organization, they will be dedicated to it (Kontsevaia & Berger, 2017). Additionally, these committed assets will continue to be available to the organization so long as the value received exceeds the asset's expected value (Carton, 2004).

Today organisations are realizing that their level of innovativeness in supply chains is an integral part of strategic success and long term survival. Supply chain innovation underpins the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage and ability to respond effectively and efficiently to rapidly changing market conditions as business organisations strive to be innovative despite intense technological uncertainties. Innovativeness is seen as a complex process that handles environmental uncertainties to seek and adopt new processes, ideas, products, and technologies for satisfying customers (Sarkar, 2017). Gunasekaran and Spalanzani (2011) asserted that enhanced innovativeness facilitates more sophisticated management procedures and operations in information and physical flow of goods along the supply chain. Therefore, to be successful as a business organization, innovations have to become best practices upon which all supply chain actors capitalize and create value. Innovative supply chain management is seen as a source of knowledge management for participants in the supply chain network. It improves the chain members' practices and creates value for customers. Its primary motivational force is increasing of organization's performance through customer satisfaction and production or marketing efficiency (Batenburg & Rutten, 2003).

Innovativeness assists supply chain managers to foster the development of information and progressive technologies using innovative operations to improve efficiency and service effectiveness. Organisations that are innovative in their supply chain processes and practices tailor their products and services to meet their customers' needs and wants in terms of cost, flexibility and quality and this act attracts more customers, leading to increase in sales value and volume, market share and profitability and increase in marketing performance of the organization at large (Brettel & Neubauer, 2011). It is a clear fact that the application of supply chain innovations, marketing performance of furniture distributors are made manifest. The desire for firms to improve their performance in the competitive market is the paramount push behind all marketing decisions and programs. The marketing performance of furniture firms is cardinal to the corporate wellbeing of the business undertakings and also determines the continued existence of the firm in the business landscape (Chukundah, & Kalio, 2024).

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is undeniably truth that furniture distribution firms are veritable tools in economic development. Their activities do not only bring satisfactions to the consumers but also contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the state and country at large. They are source of employment as well and employ the citizens of their host communities, the state and the country at large. Their contributions to the society are great and their existence of their business success is of great concern to every well-wishing society or government. However, it has been observed with displeasure that furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt are recording low sales and low market share. It is on against this backdrop this study is carried out to investigate supply chain innovation and marketing performance believed to provide succor to furniture distributing firms in Port-Harcourt and other parts of the country who are experiencing similar situations, believing the that knowledge in supply chain innovation and integration of these innovation in their supply chain operations, marketing strategies and tactics with new marketing opportunities for growth, product differentiation and customer satisfaction.

## Conceptual Framework

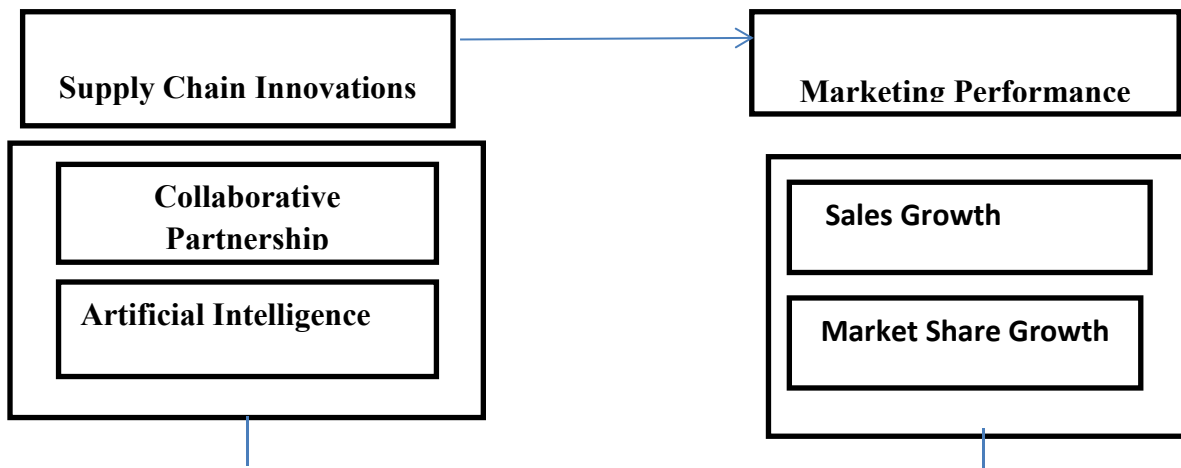


Figure 1.1: Showing supply chain innovations and marketing performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Source:** Moretto & James (2012).

## Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of the study is to investigate supply chain innovation and market performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the relationship existing between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.
2. ascertain the relationship existing between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

## Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt?
2. What relationship exists between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt?

## Research Hypotheses

The study hypotheses remains tentative guess or hunches stated in null form and acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses helped to re-enforce the findings of the study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

## Literature Review

### Concept of Supply Chain Innovations

Supply chain is dynamic and involves the steady flow of goods, information and finances between distinctive ranges (Bilkis, et al, 2018). According to the council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP), supply chain is a network of organizations, people, activities, information, and resources involved in the producing and delivering of a product or service from supplier to customer. The Association for Supply Chain and Operations Management (APICS) defined supply

chain as the flow of goods, services, and information from raw materials to end customers, involving various stakeholders and processes.

MIT center for Transportation and Logistics (MIT CTL) opined that supply chain is a system of organizations, people, technology, activities, information and resources involved in moving a product or service from suppliers to customers. The World Economic Forum (WEF) sees supply chain as a global network of organizations, people, and activities that work together to design, produce, and deliver a product or service to the end customer. From the various views, a supply chain can be defined as a combination of organizations, people, activities and processes involved in producing, moving and delivering goods and or services from supplier to final consumers.

### **Concept of Innovation**

Rogers (1995) notes: "Innovation has been broadly defined as an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption." For Drucker and Hesselbein (2002), innovation is "change that creates a new dimension of performance," while Baregheh et al. (2009) maintain it is "the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into improved products, services or processes, in order to advance, compete, and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace." Innovation is the process of creating new or improved products, services, processes, or business models that meet new or existing market needs. It involves introducing change or novelty to existing solutions, products, or services, often resulting in increased value, efficiency, or effectiveness (Davilla, Epstein, & Shelton, 2006).

Supply chain innovation is a trend in supply chain management. Nick, (2023) defined supply chain innovation as the implementation of new and improved strategies, technologies, processes, and practices within the supply chain to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, mitigate risks, and improve overall performance. It involves the application of creative thinking and the adoption of emerging technologies to optimize the end-to-end processes involved in the production, distribution, and delivery of goods or services. Bello et al. (2004) in Moretto and James (2012) asserts that "supply chain innovations combine developments in information and related technologies with new logistic and marketing procedures to improve operational efficiency and enhance service effectiveness." Lavastre, et. al (2011) define supply chain innovation as a set of methods and tools that are previously in-existent in companies or their subsidiaries that will be generated, developed and deployed within supply chains to tackle different supply chain issues such as quality, costs and lead-time.

### **Dimensions of Supply Chain Innovations**

Below are the various dimensions of supply chain innovations

#### **Collaborative Partnership**

According to Larson, and Knemeyer, (2015) collaborative partnership refers to a mutually beneficial and cooperative relationship between two or more organizations, individuals, or entities that work together to achieve common goals, share resources, and expertise. It involves:

i. Shared vision and objectives. ii. Trust and open communication. iii. Joint planning and decision-making iv. Shared risks and rewards v. Flexibility and adaptability vi. Respect for each other's autonomy and expertise vii. Continuous learning and improvement

Kim, (2014) sees collaborative partnership or partnership marketing as a strategic collaboration between two or more businesses to develop joint marketing initiatives that benefit all parties involved. Collaboration lets you tap into new markets, expand your reach, and amplify your brand impact. At its core, partner marketing is about leveraging the strengths, resources, and customer bases of multiple brands to achieve shared goals more effectively than doing it alone. It's a win-win situation where partners can cross-promote, co-market, and tap into each other's networks, resulting in increased brand exposure, lead generation, and sales.

### **Forms of Collaborative Partnerships**

There are various forms of collaborative partnerships in supply chain management. These forms includes but not limited to

- i. Vertical Partnerships: Collaboration between companies at different stages of the supply chain (e.g., supplier-manufacturer-distributor).
- ii. Horizontal Partnerships: Collaboration between companies at the same stage of the supply chain (e.g., competitors sharing resources).
- iii. Joint Ventures: Partners share ownership, resources, and risks to achieve common goals
- iv. Strategic Alliances: Long-term partnerships to achieve strategic objectives.
- v. Third-Party Logistics (3PL) Partnerships: Companies outsource logistics and transportation to a 3PL provider.
- vi. Vendor-Managed Inventory (VMI) Partnerships: Suppliers manage customer inventory levels.
- vii. Collaborative Planning, Forecasting, and Replenishment (CPFR) Partnerships: Partners share data to improve forecasting and replenishment.
- viii. Supply Chain Networks: Multiple companies collaborate to achieve common goals.
- ix. Co-creation Partnerships: Partners work together to develop new products or services.
- x. Open Innovation Partnerships: Partners share knowledge and resources to drive innovation.
- xi. Service-Level Agreement (SLA) Partnerships: Partners agree on service levels and performance metrics.
- xii. Risk-Reward Sharing Partnerships: Partners share risks and rewards to achieve common goals.
- xiii. Information Sharing Partnerships: Partners share data and information to improve supply chain visibility.
- xiv. Capacity Sharing Partnerships: Partners share resources and capacity to improve efficiency.
- xv. Joint Distribution Partnerships: Partners share distribution resources and costs.

These forms of collaborative partnerships can help companies achieve greater efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness in their supply chains (Taylor, 2004, 2008, 2010 & Ayers, 2006)

Benefits of Collaborative Partnerships: Supply chain collaboration offers several benefits, including

- a. Improved Customer Satisfaction: Collaboration can lead to better customer service and satisfaction due to increased product availability and reduced order cycle times.
- b. Cost Savings: Collaborative supply chain management can result in cost reductions across the chain, leading to increased revenue and competitiveness.
- c. Increased Inventory Turnover: Collaboration can help reduce inventory levels, leading to increased inventory turnover and reduced costs.
- d. Reduced Order Cycle Times: Collaborative supply chain management can lead to faster order fulfillment and reduced order cycle times.
- e. Improved Product Availability: Collaboration can help ensure that products are available when and where they are needed, leading to increased customer satisfaction.
- f. Increased Responsiveness: Collaborative supply chain management can lead to increased responsiveness to changing market conditions and customer needs.
- g. Economic Value Added: Collaboration can lead to increased economic value added, through reduced costs, increased revenue, and improved customer satisfaction.
- h. Capital Utilization: Collaborative supply chain management can help reduce capital utilization, leading to increased efficiency and reduced costs.
- i. Reduced Time to Market: Collaboration can help reduce the time it takes to get products to market, leading to increased competitiveness and revenue.
- j. Reduced Logistics Costs: Collaborative supply chain management can lead to reduced logistics costs, through increased efficiency and reduced waste.
- k. Increased innovation and creativity
- l. Improved efficiency and productivity

- m. Enhanced problem-solving capabilities
- n. Access to new markets and customers
- o. Shared costs and risks
- p. Improved reputation and credibility
- q. Increased competitiveness

### **Artificial Intelligence**

(AI) is playing an increasingly important role in the supply chain industry, as businesses can work to optimize and streamline their operations across many areas. According to a 2022 McKinsey survey, respondents stated that their highest cost savings from AI were in supply chain management. AI algorithms are employed to analyze large datasets and predict future demand patterns more accurately. This enables companies to adjust production schedules and inventory levels in anticipation of changing market demands. Nestlé, for example, uses AI to optimize its demand planning processes.

Machine learning and Artificial intelligence will play an increasingly large part in diversifying supply chain and improving the responsiveness and resiliency of supply chains. Even so, workers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to be trained on new technologies such as generative AI (Gen AI) in order to advance business development. In today's supply chain, automation is the use of modern technologies to automate tasks that are traditionally manual. This is done to streamline workflows and increase overall efficiency. Technologies used include warehouse robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI). Supply chain management harnesses robotic process automation to automate low-value tasks, streamline operations and remove human error (Dyer, et al., 2018).

AI applications in logistics are new technological innovations that are driving supply chains forward. Advanced AI algorithms empower machines, robots and software to make intelligent decisions without the need for human interaction. As a whole, robotics can enable supply chains to upscale faster and meet supply requirements as demand increases. Within supply chains, IoT can help to track and trace shipments by harnessing real-time monitoring technologies. A key example of how IoT has been implemented within a supply chain is Amazon harnessing the technology to improve efficiency and customer experience. In connecting physical objects and using sensor-based technologies, Amazon can track the position, quality and timely delivery of products. Important areas where AI can make improvements are in customer experience, as AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can help companies provide better and faster customer service. In fact, there is a huge technology ecosystem built around the application of AI technologies across all aspects of business, including supply chain. One of the benefits AI can bring to logistics is the ability to forecast consumer trends. AI leverages big data to make deductions about users' consumption intent, thereby predicting demand behaviour. This functionality allows for a predictive logistics strategy capable of avoiding stock outs and overstock in addition to enhancing customer satisfaction. Interesting success story of AI and logistics can be seen in the area of internal goods transport. AMRs (autonomous mobile robots) are devices capable of performing tasks and moving through a facility independently, thanks to AI and machine learning technologies. We can find an example of this technological innovation in the warehouse of Normagrup, a leading player in Spain's emergency lighting market. The Mecalux Group equipped the Company's Centre with a mini-load system connected to its production lines by autonomous intelligent vehicles. Every time operators assemble a kit, Easy WMS notifies the software that runs the AMRs. This program then designates a vehicle to pick up the kit and bring it to the corresponding production line swiftly and autonomously.

### **Sales Growth**

A transaction that includes an exchange of services or goods for a certain amount of money is known as a sale. In other words, any activity that involves transferring the ownership of a good or

commodity to the buyer in exchange for a monetary price is known as a sale. Sales planning are considered the entry point into the complex process of supply chain management. It refers to the forecasting of sales volumes and revenues for products, goods or services in a specific period. Sales planning are therefore an important basis for further planning and measures. Sales is an activity involving selling of products and services in return of money or other compensation, which is initiated and completed by the seller, the owner of the goods (Pendharkar & Pandey, 2011). Sales represent the act of trading the product of a company. This could be a tangible or intangible product. That is, physical product or service (Porter, 2008). Specifically, the larger the number of products sold per unit and per day, the believed that sales are on the increase. Thus, sales increase is the number of units of products sold within a reporting period. Sales increase is used to technically test the acceptability of the company's product among the buying population. For example, a constant increase in demand of a product leading to possible inability to meet demand may be inferred to mean high demand or acceptability of the company's product among the population (Okolo, et al., 2022). At this point, a business may not be judged as performing business. Likewise, if reversed is experience, such that a company constantly records reduction in sales volume or customer request, it could mean their product is no longer acceptable hence, there will be a downward trend in likely profit (Okolo, et al., 2022).

### **Market Share**

Market share represents the percentage of an industry, or a market's total sales, earned by a particular company over a specified period. Market share is calculated by dividing a company's sales by the total sales of the industry over a period. Using sales, the formula to determine market share for a specific period of time is  $(\text{total company revenue}/\text{total market revenue}) \times 100$ . Using units sold, the formula is  $(\text{total number of units sold by company}/\text{total number of units sold in the industry})/100$ . Market share is calculated by taking the company's sales over the period and dividing it by the total sales of the industry over the same period. This metric is used to give a general idea of the size of a company to its market and its competitors. Market share is the percentage of a market's total sales garnered by a firm over a specified time period (Ferrier, Smith, & Grimm, 1999). The market may consist of all suppliers selling products/services with the same characteristics, or those that are thought of similarly by customers and are purchased for the same use.

### **Theoretical Review**

Our study was built on Knowledge-Based View. Knowledge-based view considers intangible resources of organizations. According to Stock (2007) this theory looks at various dimensions such as organization learning, organizational capabilities and competencies. It promotes sharing of knowledge as a tool for improving efficiency and value creation. Information is power, the organization that cultivates culture of sharing information is able to know and understand its customer needs (Ketchen & Hult, 2007). This helps in tailoring products and services that add value to the customers more efficiently, to meet their needs. According to Ketchen & Hult (2007) supply chain collaboration is one of the supply chain practice that involves sharing of information with the suppliers to create more value for goods and services delivered (Anand & Ward, 2004). Hult, Ketchen and Slater (2004) applied the knowledge-based view to the information process and knowledge development in organizational supply chain performance. The results revealed that use of information process and knowledge development led to reduction in cycle time and cost reduction hence improved supply chain performance. The relevance of this theory with regard to the objective of this study is that it demonstrates innovation in supply chain management, which is essential in improving the quality of products and services offered by firms. This enables the organization to meet the growing needs of their customers more conveniently in manner that meets customer satisfaction. And this enhances the firm's competitiveness (Anand & Ward, 2004).

## **Empirical Review**

Odunayo & Adim (2020) noted that supply chain innovation underpins the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage and an ability to respond effectively to rapidly changing markets as organizations strive to be innovative despite intense technological uncertainty. Innovativeness is seen as a complex process that handles environmental and technological uncertainty to seek and adopt new processes, ideas, products and technologies for satisfying customers. They examined the relationship between supply chain innovation and marketing performance. Mass customization, e-procurement and integration were the dimensions of supply chain innovation discussed. The finding from the review of extant literature reveals that Supply chain innovation significantly influences and predicts marketing performance of organizations. The study recommends that companies should invest in modern technologies by increasing specific efforts and strategies regarding choosing, establishing, comprehending, orientating, enhancing and improving technology. Also, there is need for increased capacity on training and development programmes on supply chain management and provide the employees with resources and facilities to enhance efficiency in supply chain management.

Mauludin, (2021) examined the impact of supply chain management practices (SCMP): strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship, level of information shared, and information quality on competitive advantage and organizational performance in the Nigerian distribution sector. In so doing, the study was set out to find out if these practices generate conditions that promote higher or lesser competitive advantage and organizational performance. The survey research design was adopted because the characteristics of the respondents were fully captured in order to make important decisions. A total number of 122 were found usable out of 146 copies of questionnaire circulated. The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was the estimation technique employed to measure the relationships among the various variables/constructs using AMOS 22.0. It was found out that the four predictors (strategic supplier partnership, customer relationship, level of information shared, and information quality).

Maina, (2020) explored the effects of supply chain management practices on the organizational performance underpinned on resource-based view theory (RBV). Methodology: The study adopts descriptive and explanatory research design with purposive sampling and quantitative methods to collect primary data through cross-sectional questionnaires from 109 dairy co-operatives in Kenya. Data collected was organized and cleaned using both excel and statistical package for social scientist (SPSS). Additionally, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) techniques were used to analyze data in Smart PLS version 3.2 software, and the results for both descriptive and inferential were presented. The result revealed that SCMPs has a positive and significant impact on Market performance ( $\beta=0.558$ ), operational performance ( $\beta=0.371$ ) and customer satisfaction ( $\beta=0.543$ ). These results reveal that SCM practices are associated with high levels of organizational performance.

Phawitpiriyakliti, (2020) studied the role of competitive advantage in mediating the effect of supply chain management on company performance. This research was conducted at CV. Timan Agung, Tabanan. The method used to determine the sample is quota sampling with the number of samples used is 80 samples. The method of collecting data was through a questionnaire. The data analysis technique used is path analysis. The results of the study indicate that supply chain management has a positive and significant effect on competitive advantage; supply chain management has a positive and significant effect on company performance; Competitive advantage has a positive and significant effect on company performance and the competitive advantage variable significantly mediates the relationship between supply chain management and company performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted for this study was correlation research design. This design was considered apt because it will examine relationship between the dimensions and the criterion as well as generate data through the standardized collection procedures based on highly structured research instrument(s) and well defined study concepts and related variables in the supply chain innovation and marketing performance of furniture distribution companies in Rivers State.

### Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised of ten (10) home furniture firms considered to be best in Port-Harcourt based on their size and product breadth and depth (<https://port-harcourt.infoinfo.ng>). Ten employees comprising managerial staff, supervisors, and sales representatives each were covered using the census approach to have a total of one hundred and twenty (100) respondents for the study. T-test statistics was used with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 22 to test the null hypotheses formulated for the study

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of extent of collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt**

Collaboration partnership Questionnaire Items	Responses					SUM	Mean	Percentage
	SA	A	UD	D	SD			
Our partnerships with suppliers have enhanced the quality of our products.	231	21	44	52	36	1511	3.93	60.14
We frequently collaborate with stakeholders to improve supply chain efficiency.	241	11	42	51	39	1516	3.94	60.34
Cross-functional collaboration within the organization has boosted our market responsiveness.	221	31	41	47	44	1490	3.88	59.30
Our partnerships have led to faster delivery times for our products.	204	48	43	61	28	1491	3.88	59.34
Collaborative efforts with logistics providers have optimized our distribution process.	231	32	45	35	41	1529	3.98	60.85
<b>Grand mean %</b>							<b>3.92</b>	<b>59.99</b>

**Source:** Survey Data, 2024

Table 1: shows that items (1 to 5) have means which were greater than the criterion mean (3.0). Moreover, the grand mean (3.92) was also greater than the criterion means, while the percentage was 59.9%. This indicates that significant relationship exists between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Research Question 2:** What relationship exists between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt?

**Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of extent of artificial intelligence and market share of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt**

Artificial Intelligence Questionnaire Items	Responses					SUM	Mean	Percentage
	SA	A	U D	D	SD			
Implementing new technologies in our supply chain has improved our operational accuracy.	222	21	46	43	52	1470	3.82	71.69

We have effectively integrated data analytics to optimize supply chain decision-making.	245	15	40	23	61	1512	3.93	73.74
Technology has allowed us to better manage inventory levels and reduce stock outs.	215	45	51	43	30	1524	3.96	74.32
Our supply chain technology investments have improved our customer satisfaction.	211	51	61	56	5	1559	4.05	76.03
Real-time tracking systems have enhanced our transparency with customers.	245	16	45	54	24	1556	4.05	75.89
<b>Grand mean %</b>							<b>3.96</b>	<b>74.33</b>

Source: Survey Data, 2024

Table 2: shows that items (1 to 5) have means which are greater than the criterion mean (3.0). Moreover, the grand mean (3.96) was also greater than the criterion mean, while the percentage was **74.33%**. This indicates that significant relationship exists between artificial intelligence and market share of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Test of Hypotheses**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Table 3: Summary of t-test analysis comparing relationship between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt**

t-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t	Sig(2 tailed)
collaborative partnership	<b>3.92</b>	<b>1.01</b>	1.44	380	20.313	.000
sales performance	4.04	0.20	.034			

Table 3 shows that the value of the T-calculated (20.313) at 5 % level of significant. The sig value of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significant, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Meaning, there is a significant relationship between collaborative partnership and sales growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Hypothesis2:** There is no significant relationship between artificial intelligence and market share of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

**Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis comparing relationship between artificial intelligence and market share of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt**

t-test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	t	Sig(2 tailed)
artificial intelligence	3.89	0.32	1.44	380	10.313	0.000
market share	4.04	0.20	.034			

Table 4 shows that the value of the T-calculated (10.313) at 5 % level of significant. The sig value 3 of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significant; therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Meaning, there is a significant relationship between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between supply chain innovation and market performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. This revealed that supply chain innovation relates with market performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. Hence, there is significant relationship between collaborative partnership and sales performance of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt. There is also a significant relationship between artificial intelligence and market share growth of furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Base on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations were made.

1. Furniture distribution firms in Port Harcourt should provide valuable insights into the critical linkages between supply chain innovations and marketing performance,
2. Policymakers should use the insights from the study to inform the development of policies and regulations aimed at fostering a conducive business environment for furniture distribution firms.
3. Academicians/Scholars should build upon the study's findings to further explore the mechanisms through which Supply chain innovation influence marketing performance and develop theoretical frameworks that capture the unique dynamics of supply chain innovations in diverse contexts.

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