
INTERNAL INTEGRATION: A VERITABLE TOOL FOR MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF DOWNSTREAM PETROLEUM SECTOR IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated the relationship between internal integration, product availability and customer satisfaction which are components of marketing performance of the downstream petroleum sector in Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested, as well as two research objectives and questions. The target population of nine hundred and thirty (930) petroleum major oil marketers was studied, deduced from seven (7) petroleum downstream sector with a sample size of 280 through the use of Taro-Yamen's technique. The study adopted cross-sectional survey methods with simple random approach. 218 of the quantitative data were useful for analysis. Descriptive statistics were generated with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 22.0, while partial least square-structural equation model was used for the test of hypotheses with the aid of Smart PLS 3.2.6. The study shows that significant and positive relationships exist between the studied variables.*

Keywords: Internal integration, product availability and customer satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Business success in a digital economy required the integration of internal processes, technology and people within the enterprise. The ability to seamlessly connect with other units in an organization for efficient business transaction is vital for business growth. According to the systems management perspective, every function (subsystem) in an organization (system)

should be integrated for the organization to pursue excellent performance. Scholars stated that personnel in different functional units within a firm who do not interact with each other to make its objectives and practices consistent will not be successful (Swink, Narasimhan & Wang, 2007). Strategic alliance literature also suggested that internal integration, including communication, information sharing and cross-functional teamwork across internal functions within a firm is particularly important to establish and maintain the company's alliance with external customers and suppliers (Kanter, 1994). Furthermore, the author emphasized that companies with strong communications across functional units and widely shared information within the company tend to have more productivity (Kanter, 1994).

This implies that the incorporation of internal functions in the downstream petroleum sector will enhance productivity that will sustain effective demand and supply of petroleum products to the society. Internal integration is the degree to which a firm can structure its organizational practices, procedures and behaviors into collaborative, synchronized and manageable processes in order to fulfill customer requirements (Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Stank, Keller & Closs, 2001).

It is worthy of note that when a company has a high level of internal communication and coordination capabilities, it will be more capable to achieve a high level of success. This is why scholars explained that internal integration represents an absorptive capability for learning from external partner as well as internal coordination capability (Hillebrand & Biemans, 2004; Lane, Koka & Pathak 2006; Takeishi, 2001). It is equally understood that good enterprise resource planning system allows for cross-functional transparency of data for operational planning and control. In the same vein, information sharing in an organization through internal mechanism is necessary to enhance internal functions within the firms as well as identifying critical issues regarding product supply (Bhatt, 2000; Crocitto & Yonsef, 2003). Stank et al (2001) submit that effective information sharing or coordination between internal functions will result to effective marketing performance which eventually give birth to availability of petroleum products and customer satisfaction.

Hence, this study examined the relationship between internal integration and measures of marketing performances which are; product availability and customer satisfaction in the downstream petroleum sector in Nigeria. In this paper the following questions were given attention to. Hence:

- What is the relationship between internal integration and product availability?
- What is the relationship between internal integration and customer satisfaction? From the above research questions, the following objectives were derived.
- To evaluate the influence of internal integration on product availability.
- To ascertain the impact of internal integration and customer satisfaction.

Review of Relevant Literature Internal Integration and Product Availability

Internal integration is defined as the company practices of combining and developing internal information or resources with the aim of generating know-hows and knowledge beyond borders of single department or unit in order to support external integration activities, and eventually achieve goal alignment and improved performance (Alfalla-Luque, Medina-Lopez & Dey, 2013; Huo, 2012, Zhao, 2011 & Zhao, Huo, Sun & Zhao, 2013). In other words, internal integration is the degree a firm set its structural strategies and practices into mutual,

join and synchronized activities in order to meet customer demands and effectively cooperate with suppliers (Boon-Itt & Wong, 2011; Zhao, Huo, Selen, & Yeung, 2011). Internal integration is equally viewed as the chain of activities or functions within an organization that results in goods delivered to customers. Integration of such functions involves the holistic performance of organizational processes across departmental boundaries, and thus integrating firm's materials management, production, sales, and distribution is vital to meet customer needs at lower cost (Basnet, 2013; Morash & Clinton, 1998). Furthermore, other scholars opined that systematic coordination between departmental functions and mutual problem-solving initiatives are capable of diminishing the barriers caused by traditional departmentalization and functional borders (Aryee, Naim & Lalwani, 2008; Germain & Iyer, 2006 & Zhao et al 2011).

The advent of internal integration concept encourages greater intra-firm collaboration and coordination between different functional organs of an organization. Additionally, it is established in the extant literature of internal integration that to achieve proper coordination and collaboration, it required higher integration of information system sharing and cross-functional collaboration (Schoenherr & Swink, 2012; Williams, Roh, Tokar, & Swink, 2013). Pagell (2004) supported the view by reaffirming that internal integration enables better usage of each of the individual functional department's competences. In the same vein, Pagell (2004) emphatically stated that internal integration enables cross-functional teams to concurrently improve product and process design. Studies have found that internal integration enables the share of knowledge throughout different departments and manufacturing plants and thus allows better coordination of production capacity that enhanced production flexibility and better delivery performance (Droge, Jayaram & Vickery, 2004; Narasimhan & Kim, 2002).

It is important to stress that product availability is regarded as an important indicator of quality in the stream of supply chain (Salam, Panalifar & Byrne, 2016). Astrup and Kotzab (2010) submit that two streams of product availability have been operational in the recent past. The first stream revolved around how customer behaves in connection to product availability, and the second is connected to the supply side of product availability. Scholars emphasized that low quality in terms of product availability may translate to loss of sales and customers (Salam et al, 2016; Ehrental & Stolzle, 2013). Other supporting opinions was that when customers do not find the product that they seek, it does affect their purchasing behavior, which leads to substitution, delay or to operate on leave pattern (Salam et al). To avoid the consequences of delays in purchase or leaves without a purchase as a reflection of the behavior of customers, internal integration of the various departments is a necessity (Salam et al., 2016). Hence, relationship exists between internal integration and product availability in the downstream petroleum section.

Internal Integration and Customer Satisfaction

Internal integration has to do with the degree to which a firm can structure its organizational practices, procedures and behaviours into collaborative, synchronize and manageable processes in order to satisfy customer needs and wants (Cespedes, 1996; Chen & Paulraj, 2004; Kahn & Mentzer 1996). Internal integration involves data and information

system integration through the use of enterprise resources planning (ERP), real-time searching of inventory and operating data as well as the integration of activities in different functional areas. Internal integration is best explained as information sharing between internal functions, strategic cross-functional cooperation, and working together. Internal integration enhances competitive advantage that gives rise to customer satisfaction (Kuofteros, Vondermbse & Dolly 2001; Holweg, 2007). In marketing philosophy, customer satisfaction is the essence of marketing practice that is if customers are not satisfied with products and services provided by an organization, such organization will cease to function because customer is the oxygen to every business survival. This is why scholars in logistics and distribution opines that there should be well functional internal interface in an organization to ensure that customer has products as at when needed so as to earn their satisfaction (Biemans, 1991). In line with customer satisfaction, scholars submitted that customer satisfaction is an important reason for business success (Horovitz & Panak 1994). This assertion was supported by Minton (2015) who admitted that customer satisfaction is central to organizational success. The principal goal of most business organizations is to maximize profit. Organizations can realize maximize profit through sales increase which implies that customer satisfaction plays a critical role in increasing sales through repeated buying and loyalty (Viswanathan & Vemigopal, 2015). This payer is of the view that customer satisfaction as a critical component of marketing performance is achievable through effective internal integration process. Therefore, internal integration significantly and positively influenced customer satisfaction in downstream petroleum sector in Nigeria.

Premised upon the above literature review, the research model in the figure below was formulated. Thus:

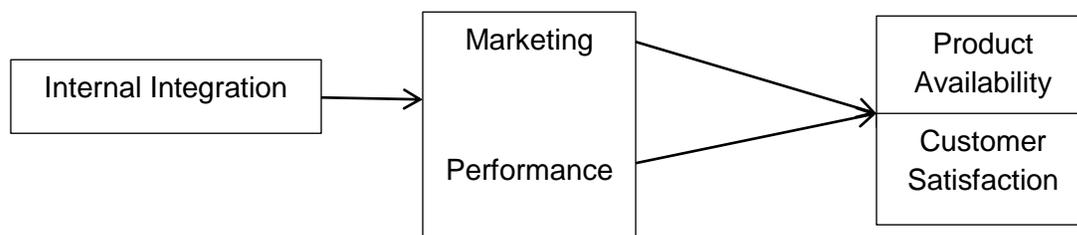


Figure 1.1: conceptualized model

Thus; the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: Internal integration has positive and significant influence on product availability.

H₀₂: Internal integration positively and significantly influenced customer satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

This paper aimed at ascertaining the relationship between internal integration and marketing performance that will enhance product availability and customer satisfaction which is the pivotal point in this study. The research was conducted in downstream petroleum sector in Nigeria. Seven (7) petroleum major oil marketers which comprises: Conoil Plc, forte oil Plc, MRS Plc, Mobil oil Plc Oando oil Plc, Total oil Plc and NNPC Mega. The unit of analysis was top management cadre. Simple random sampling technique was used in this study and questionnaire was structured in five point likert format to elicit information from respondents.

Pilot test was conducted on 28 respondents which is 10% of 280 as the sample size of the study deduced from 930 accessible population with the used of Taro-Yamane’s technique. A reliability test was conducted through the instrumentality of Cronbach’s Alpha and results reveals ≥ 0.7 . Statistical Package for Social science (SPSS) version 22.0 output was used to analyzed descriptive statistics of variables while partial least square-Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze inferential statistics of variables, with the aid of Smart PLS 3.2.6 package.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire	Frequencies	Percent
Distributed	280	100
Retrieved	221	78.9
Not retrieved	59	21.1
Discarded	3	11
Useful response	218	77.9

Sauce: Survey data 2020.

Table 1, indicates that a total of 280 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 221 (78.9%) were retrieved, 59 (21.1%) were not retrieved, 3(1.1%) were retrieved but not useable. 218 (77.9%) were accepted for entry and subsequent analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of Variable

Variables	Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Internal Integration	5	0.74
Product Availability	5	0.72
Customer Satisfaction	5	0.70

Source: Research’s Desk, 2020

Information in table 2, show that all the variables recorded cronbach’s alpha value greater than or equal 0.70 which is the minimum threshold.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Internal Integration

Items	N	Mi n	Ma x	Mea n	Std. Deviati on	Skewness (S_k)		Kurtosis (Ku)	
	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
INI ₁	218	1	5	2.53	.632	.324	.159	3.03	1.54
INI ₂	218	1	4	2.58	.577	-.291	.145	2.94	1.47
INI ₃	218	1	5	2.52	.474	-.578	.169	4.04	1.11
INI ₄	218	1	4	2.61	.605	-.603	.071	3.98	1.20

INI ₅	218	1	5	3.99	.549	.209	.104	3.10	1.55
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Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2020

Table 3, shows the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness of each item for Internal Integration. The results show that all indicators, except INI₃ and INI₄, fall within the acceptable range of normality, with the largest skewness value of 0.603 scored by INI₄ and largest kurtosis score of 4.04 recorded by INI₃. In response to item one (INI₁), respondents affirmed that there is a moderate extent to which different units in their organisations work together for effective service delivery ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.632$).

Secondly, in INI₂, respondents agreed that there is a moderate extent to which operational activities are communicated across departments ($M = 2.58, SD = 0.577$). The third item (INI₃), got an approval that functional units interact effectively to provide good services ($M = 2.52, SD = 0.474$). Moreover, INI₄ elicited respondents' view on whether all operational departments work as a team to achieve the companies' goals. This attracted moderate scores ($M = 2.61, SD = 0.605$). Finally, the fifth item (INI₅) got responses that there is high extent to which there is coordination among functional units in the organisations ($M = 3.99, SD = 0.549$).

Thus, the mean scores on INI₁– INI₅ suggest that there is a moderate extent to which different units in their organisations work together, communicate, interact, coordinate and organise themselves effectively as a team to achieve the companies' goals.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics on Product Availability

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness(S _k)		Kurtosis (Ku)	
	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
PA ₁	218	2	5	2.72	.443	.397	.232	2.831	.037
PA ₂	218	2	4	2.53	.391	-.472	.179	3.104	.531
PA ₃	218	2	5	3.14	.915	.388	.333	2.955	.524
PA ₄	218	2	5	2.81	.603	-.295	1.582	3.121	.070
PA ₅	218	2	4	2.57	.751	-.403	.208	3.042	.188

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2020

Table 4, shows the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness of each item for Product Availability. The results show that all indicators are within the acceptable limits of normality, whereby PA₂ is the most skewed (- 0.472) and PA₄ scoring 3.121 as the largest value of kurtosis.

Respondents agreed that their organisations are within moderate range on all the items under Product Availability. The first item, PA₁, which is about the extent to which products are available had a moderate score ($M = 2.72, SD = 0.44$). The second item, PA₂, which solicits responses regarding the availability of PMS also had a moderate score ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.39$).

Similarly, item PA₃ which is directed towards getting a response on the extent to which AGO is available had a moderate score ($M = 3.14, SD = 0.92$). Also, on item PA₄, when respondents were asked if DPK is always available, the aggregate response indicated a moderate score ($M = 2.81, SD = 0.60$). Lastly, for PA₆, there was a moderate mean score on the extent to which the firms forecast demand and supply products accordingly ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.75$).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on Customer Satisfaction

Items	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness(S _k)		Kurtosis (Ku)	
	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Stat.	Std. Error	Stat.	Std. Error
CS ₁	218	1	4	2.38	.491	.239	.350	3.031	2.012
CS ₂	218	1	4	2.04	.384	-.442	.172	2.804	1.559
CS ₃	218	1	4	2.55	.708	.411	.240	3.130	1.910
CS ₄	218	1	4	2.49	.676	-.183	.098	3.106	2.001
CS ₅	218	1	4	2.57	.513	-.038	.208	2.992	1.689

Source: SPSS Computation from Data, 2020

Table 5, shows the mean, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness of each item for Customer Satisfaction. The results show that all indicators are within acceptable limits of normality, whereby CS₂ is the most skewed (- 0.442) and CS₃ scoring 3.130 as the largest value of kurtosis.

Responses on the five items of Customer Satisfaction reveal that the petroleum marketing firms are low in customer satisfaction rating on all indicators except on item CS₃ and CS₅. In the case of CS₁, the researcher sought to know if customers are satisfied with the products of the organisation. Response to this item attracted low mean score ($M = 2.38, SD = 0.49$). The second item on Customer Satisfaction (CS₂) which measures the ability of the firms to meet customers' demand had moderate mean score on the scale ($M = 2.04, SD = 0.38$). However, on the third item (CS₃), respondents agreed that customers in some instances get products from the organisations ($M = 2.55, SD = 0.71$). In item CS₄, respondents were asked the extent to which products are made available to loyal customers. Analysis on this item revealed a low mean score ($M = 2.49, SD = 0.68$). Lastly, as could be deduced from CS₅, the respondents believe the firms have a moderate propensity to weather environmental disturbances and continue to thrive ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.51$).

Table 6: Results of R² and Q²

Endogenous	Correlation	Predictive	Adjusted	Predictive
Latent variable	Coefficient (R)	Accuracy (R ²)	R ²	Relevance (>)
PA	0.624	0.389	0.387	0.181
CS	0.591	0.349	0.348	0.107

Source: Smart Plc 3.2.6 output on research data, 2020.

The figures in table 6, Depict that there is positive moderate and significant correlation (R) between internal integration and measures of marketing performance. The correlation of internal integration on product availability is 62.4%; while customer satisfaction recorded R value of 59.1%. Thus, product availability attracted the higher correlation score whereas customer satisfaction recorded a lower score added to this is the R² which shows the predictive power (or accuracy) of the model, thus PA = f (INI), recorded a moderate R² of 0.389. This implies that internal integration explained 38.9% of the variance of product availability, while other unidentified variables are responsible for the remaining 61.1%. Thus, the model has a moderate predictive accuracy. Secondly, CS = f (INI) recorded moderate R² of 0.349. This means that internal integration explained 349% of the variance of customer satisfaction, which other unidentified variables are responsible for the remaining 65.1%. Thus, the model has a moderate predictive accuracy.

Table 7: Summary of Results on the Tests of Hypotheses H₀₁ and H₀₂

Null Hypothesis	Path (Relationship)	Path Coefficient (β), (t - value)	Predictive Accuracy R ²	Effect Size- f ²	Predictive Relevance -Q ²	Decision
H ₀₁ :	INI -> PA	0.371(4.103) Significant	0.389 Moderate	0.351 Large	0.181 Relevant	Not supported
H ₀₂ :	INI -> CS	0.383(1.968) Significant	0.349 Moderate	0.247 Medium	0.107 Relevant	Not supported

Source: Smart PLS 3.2.6 output on research data, 2020.

Discussion of Findings

Results in table 7, indicates that Internal integration has a significant and positive relationship with product availability of the downstream petroleum sector. This means that greater interaction, cooperation and collaboration in the downstream petroleum sector will slightly cause more products to be available for public consumption.

The report on H₀₂ shows that positive, moderate and significant relationship exists between internal integration and customer satisfaction. This implies that the more there is interaction, cooperation and collaboration in the production, purchasing and logistics aspects of the firm, the more will the petroleum major oil marketers will meet up customers demand and give satisfactory services.

The results on internal integration and product availability revealed that (β = 0.371, t = <<.103). This shows relationship between INI and PA. This finding is supported by Chain and Paulraj (2004) and Ralim and Mentzer (1996) submitted that the interaction of internal units or departments in on organization will enhance effective production which will give to product

availability. On the part of internal integration and customer satisfaction, the results revealed that $\beta = 0.383$, $t = 1.968$, while $R^2 = 0.349$. This implies that internal integration has significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction. This finding is supported by the assertion of Paulraj (2004) that through internal integration firms are able integrate and collaborate across traditional functional boundaries to provide better customer services.

CONCLUSION

This study established a relationship between internal integration and the measures of marketing performance which are product availability and customer satisfaction of downstream petroleum sector in Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested and results show that significant and positive relationship exists between internal integration, product availability and customer satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Managers, supervisors, unit heads and practitioners of the petroleum major oil marketers should apply the techniques of stimulating marketing performance through the inculcation of internal integration in a turbulent business environment.
2. The petroleum major oil marketers should build strong relationship with all functional units and departments in the industry in a way to increase capacity of the industry to easily make products available to the consuming publics.
3. Management of petroleum major oil marketers should ensure that customers are satisfied with their service delivery by making the satisfaction of customers a priority.

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