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SUPPLY CHAIN CHANNEL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FIRMS

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined the relationship between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance of agricultural products firms in Nigeria. Despite the increase in supply chain channel management conflict literature and the development of the nation's agricultural industry, there seem to be few empirical research works on supply chain channel conflict management as they relate to marketing performance of agricultural products firms. Particularly, it appears like only few studies have taken into consideration the performance improvement of supply chain channel conflict management on marketing efficacy within the agricultural industry in Nigeria. The lack of literature by scholars with respect to supply chain channel conflict management in the context of Nigerian agricultural industry to resolve conflict among channel members could probably be the root cause of ineffective marketing performance of agricultural products' firms. On the basis of this limitation, the researchers therefore sought to discuss this lacuna, thereby bridging the acknowledged gap. Based on the objective of the study, a systematic survey was utilized to obtain information from 276 management staff of agricultural product enterprises. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results demonstrated that supply chain channel conflict management has a significant relationship with marketing performance of agricultural products firms. It was concluded that supply chain managers should develop adequate supply chain channel conflict management techniques in order to enhance their marketing performance.*

KEYWORDS: Agribusiness, channel conflict, marketing performance, resource-based view, supply chain channel management.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is very important for channel members to be mindful of dynamics or elements that increase productivity and efficacy of marketing success in terms of product availability, profitability and customer service (Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Lin *et al.*, 2022; Peare, 2009; Rajiv *et al*., 2013). The management of intermediaries or related enterprises engaged in the final delivery of goods and services needed by clients is known as distribution channel management (Kusuma et al., 2022; Agrawal et al., 2022; Rosebloom, 1996; Spacey, 2018). According to Guang et al. (2019), Coughlan et al. (2006), Raimbekov et al. (2023) and Chesesio and Makokha (2016), supply chain channel management is the extent to which a manufacturer or supply chain actor strategically or collaboratively manages marketing channels, intra- and inter-organizational processes by collaborating with its intermediaries or supply chain partners (Adolagba et al., 2016; Achayo & Owino, 2012). Nursyamah and Syah (2019) and Staal (2015) maintained that supply chain channel management is a network of players that plays a crucial function in facilitating entry to industries by integrating the various dynamics of supply chain channel management as channel strategy, channel design, channel selection, channel members motivation and channel conflict management to enhance marketing performance effectiveness and efficiency in terms of profitability, customer service and product availability.

Supply chain channel management helps intermediaries to provide the producer with precise and up-to-date data so they can better match their forecast with current orders (Tyaapine, 2019; Agogwa et al., 2012; Aviv et al., 2008). Bassavaraj and Prabhu (2017), Bawa (2015) and Xu (2022) argued that the dynamics of supply chain channel management will enable intermediaries to help its supply chain participants to organize their procedures together, helping all of its vendor participants to organize their procedures together, inter-organizational strategies procedures and behavior into synchronized collaborative and manageable structure. Bawa (2015), Ray (2023), Gu and Yu (2022) and Melo (2016) asserted that supply chain channel management dynamic such as channel strategy, channel design, channel selection, channel members motivation and managing channel conflict will encourage and ensure that the intended quality of provided items is met; purchasing organizations should actively participate in the manufacturing processes and other activities of their suppliers. Similarly, Halmond (2020), Gulmez and Sakar (2018), Kozlenko et al. (2015) and Swami and Shah (2011) declared that supply chain channel management strengthens marketing performance of agricultural products' firms through the implementation of successful supply chain relationship management (SCRM) that enables education spanning conventional inward and outward firm borders so that business knowledge can be successfully used to lessen the impact of supply chain outages. Mpuon et al. (2023a), Mohamed (3026), Halife and Alshukur (2022) and Erik (2007) noted that supply chain channel management dynamics enables the smooth running of the value chain of agricultural products. Through supplier integration, data sharing, communication, production scheduling, and other methods, businesses can improve their marketing performance while reducing upstream intricacy. Additionally, Mpuon et al. (2023b) and Nagarajan et al. (2022) stated that supply chain channel management helps intermediaries, suppliers, and manufacturers to produce practical solutions for business needs in supply and demand, planning and forecasting, sourcing and procurement in order to realign their supply chains to the flat world paradigm, the flow of information, fund, materials, and strengthening the integration of intermediaries in the value chain to enhance capability to visualize changes

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and the spread of response to these changes. Supply chain channel management dynamics improve on the marketing performance of agricultural products' firms by reducing cycle time and inventory, increasing production, market shares and profits for all members of the chain, and sharing of information among partners such as consumer preferences and market trends that allow firms to improve forecasting and customers' needs, customer service, and achieve a balance between costs and services, giving the company a competitive advantage (Simpson & Nagarajan, 2022; Mpuon et al., 2021, 2022; Chadha et al., 2022; Castillo et al., 2022).

According to Xu (2022), Lu and Reardon (2018), and Kushwaha (2012), manufacturers, suppliers, carriers, warehouses, sellers, and end-users are engaged in an unpredictable and constant supply of information, goods, and money, as are formerly rival vendors and intermediaries have become collaborators with the help of channel management dynamics. Ramezaninia et al. (2022), Zhao et al. (2020), Julia et al. (2018) affirmed that supply chain channel management enhances marketing performance of agricultural products firms by encouraging collaborative relationships between intermediaries, suppliers, third parties logistics and manufacturers to increase the range of channel activities; keeping pace with cost volatility; enhancing strategy alignment, design, motivation, conflict resolution techniques, process improvement, cost reduction; and facilitating external and internal visibility of projects collaborative decision making.

In the assertion of Mpuon (2023), Ahmad et al. (2022), Narauanaswamy and Heiens (2022) and Ray (2020), the earth structure, dimension of farms, the layout of markets, communication channels, the availability of finance and banking facilities, the access of distribution infrastructure and services, legislation, and the level of involvement from both sides are just a few of the complex and interrelated factors and issues that have an impact on agrarian logistics and supply chains. Moreover, Meppurath and Varghese (2022), Hamidy et al. (2022), Pei et al. (2021) and Edoge (2014) maintained that modern agric-output networks require effective supply chain channel management efficiency and effectiveness due to the increased flows of goods and information which will in turn enhance marketing performance in terms of customer services, profitability and product availability based on frameworks with intricate connections that are interrelated influencing the manners in which agricultural products are being produced, processed and delivered to customers. Yong and Qian (2015), Mose (2015), Lu and Reargon (2018) and Aramyan (2007) postulated that the fundamental variance betwixt agricultural products supply chain and others is the continuous and significant changes in the quality of agricultural products and the marketing performance efficiency and effectiveness regarding profitability, product availability and customer services through the supply chain channels network. Ray (2020), Julia and Kim (2018), Xu and Sun (2018) and Chong et al. (2021) argued that the trends toward rapid agricultural product production cycles, volatile nature of product demand, complex methods of supply chain partnerships as reflected by the emergence of contract farming and farmer cooperative, and the perishable nature of some agricultural products all require effective and efficient supply chain channel management to enhance marketing performance. Serdaris et al. (2014), Mpuon (2020, 2022) and Gu and Yu (2022) opined that depending on the focus and setting, the phrases supply chain, value chain, commodity chain, and agric meals are interchangeable but have somewhat distinct significations. Moreover, Tyoapine (2019), Raimbekov et al. (2023), and Chesesio and Makokha (2016) claimed that a number of participants, including agriculturalists, regional merchants, conveyances, processors, and merchants, are active in meeting customer needs across the supply chain of agricultural product manufacturing

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companies, starting at the entrance to the farm, helping the produced products to reach the consumer through these chains of intermediaries. According to Nursyamiah and Syah (2019), Staal (2015) and krushnapriya and Barel (2014) these chains of networks of middlemen perform a variety of tasks, including the ownership transfer of goods, their movement, upkeep and preservation of quality and quantity, payment to the seller, and delivery of the commodity to the client and all the processes required in efficient and effective channel management system that can enhance marketing performance.

Farming is a naturally dispersed and disorganized industry that entails a wide variety of unique players, including input suppliers, farmers, traders, commission agents, processors, and vendors requiring effective and efficient supply chain channel management to enhance marketing performance in terms of product availability, profitability and customer service (Araujo et al., 2022; Amed et al., 2022; Junaid, 2012). In the assertions of Kushwaha (2012), Xu (2022), Rajiv et al. (2013), Lu and Reardon (2018) and Ray (2020), every step of the agribusiness supply chain is unproductive; the inadequate channel strategy, poor channel design and selection of agricultural channel members, inadequate conflict techniques resolutions among channel actors, lack of motivational programs to induce intermediaries, and poor substructure for acquiring farm products from the farm entrance to the end users have brought about inefficiency and ineffectiveness in marketing performance of agricultural products producing firms. Similarly, Halife and Alshukur (2022), Mpuon et al. (2023a, 2021b) argued that despite the increase in channel management research and the agricultural industry development, there seem to be no empirical research on supply chain channel management dimensions adopted in this current study as they relate to marketing performance of agricultural products producing firms. According to Mpuon (2022, 2020), it appears that there has not been much studies on the impact of supply chain channel management dimensions such as formulating channel strategy, evaluating channel design, channel selection techniques, developing motivational programs for channel members and seeking for appropriate approaches to resolve conflict among channel participants within the agricultural industry. GU and Yu (2022), Ray (2020) and Mpuon (2021) maintained that the lack of literature by schools with respect to supply chain channel management dimensions in the context of agricultural products producing firms to trigger innovations in channel techniques and strategies might probably be the root cause of poor marketing performance of agricultural products in terms of effective customer service, profitability and product availability. Therefore, the goal of this work was to discuss this drawback and close the knowledge deficit. This study contributes to knowledge by developing an expanded model on supply chain and channel management to facilitate cooperation, integration, collaboration and coordination of activities needed in maintaining harmony between suppliers, producers, intermediaries and consumers, and also to facilitate the interdependence of organizations to achieve predictability and trust ability.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Channel rivalry refers to any disagreement, discord, or dispute that arises among multiple channel collaborators when a single partner's actions and practices impact the other partner's firm, revenue, earnings, market share, or achievement of similar goals and prevent another channel member from achieving its goal (Sharma & Parida, 2018; Vasanthet al., 2012). Channel conflict, according to Coughlan et al. (2006) and Eshghi (2018), is defined as the behaviour by a channel member that opposes its counterpart from achieving its own objectives. Ebitu (2019) and Kiran et al. (2012) said that a scenario known as "channel friction" occurs when a channel participant believes that an alternate channel user or individual is acting in a way that is hindering or stopping him from accomplishing his objectives; hence, conflicts in channel are antagonist-directed activities intended to hinder, harm, or destroy, manipulate or frustrate the activities of a different channel members. Sule et al. (2013) and Li et al. (2004) affirmed that conflict is an inherent aspect of interdependent relationships in distribution channels and they maintained that discord in the channel does not always indicate disorder; in fact, it can be beneficial if it helps members to stay engaged and receptive while allowing for more dynamic adaptability to a changing environment. On the other hand, excessive channel conflict is unhealthy (Roald, 2010). According to Ayaga and Alabar (2017), we are led to believe that there is channel conflict among the management of the institutions that comprise the marketing channel team when additional stakeholders of the delivery network start to irritate one another. Pelton et al. (2016) and Eshghi and Ray (2021) noted participants of a supply route work in a dynamic environment with both harmonic and conflicting goals. If the melodic goals are outweighed by the opposing ones, the efficacy of targeting customer satisfaction, cost reduction, delivering the products at appropriate quality, right measure, right time and place, right price and as at when demanded by the customer will be reduced.

According to Liu et al. (2022), Singh (2006) and Vasanth et al. (2012), the primary causes of channel disputes are disparities in objectives, divergent ideal product lines, a variety of channels for dispersion, and subpar performance, as well as difference in domain definition among channel members. Vasanth et al. (2012), Valos (2008) and Tung-Zong et al. (2003) found that there were three fundamental causes of conflict in channel relationships: absence of realm accord, aim contradictions, and intuitive incongruity. Ayaga and Alaber (2017) and Rajesh and Maurya (2017) submitted that because of their competing interests, manufacturers and intermediaries are often at odds, which leads to antagonism and a lack of consistent collaboration in the chain of delivery. They opined further that different objectives of channel members create conflict within a channel and when there is excess of goods in the market due to excessive output, channel disputes may also arise. Changes in brand, product updates, as well as the bankruptcy of distributors and merchants are also factors. Pelton et al. (2016) and Balakrishnan and Suresh (2022) submitted that when manufacturers (company names) offer their products directly to customers via traditional marketing techniques or online through e-commerce, they remove the middleman from their route actors, like merchants, vendors, merchants, distributors, and sales agents. This can lead to channel conflict.

Ebitu (2019) and Imam (2014) argued that conflicts may result from poor communication, a struggle over power in the channel, or incompatible objectives which may occur between members of different levels of the same channel, for example, between a producer and a wholesaler or between a wholesaler and a retailer, referred to as vertical conflict. They noted that this type of conflict is common and is inevitable and, on the other hand, conflict may

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occur between members on the same level of the channel, for example, wholesaler against wholesaler or retailer against retailer, called horizontal conflict. The third one is called conflict across many channels; this happens when a marketer uses multiple channels to reach the target audience (Tichelaar, 2010). Tsay and Agrawal (2004) and Fan et al. (2014) affirmed that the problem with channel conflict management is to better handle conflict rather than completely eradicate it. Different mechanisms for effective conflict management are recommended by Ayaga and Alabar (2017), Vasanth et al. (2012), and Williams et al. (1976). Adopting superior goals, whereby channel participants concur on the essential objective they are collectively pursuing in the market, like market share, client satisfaction, or superior quality, is one such approach. In the view of Sule et al. (2013), Wang (2009) and Shoviah (2012), cohabitation, another method of resolving conflicts, is when a company tries to get the support of business executives by appointing them to its council of executives. Roald (2010), Bari-Arara (2016) and Mcleay (1993) submitted that a diagnosis of the true amount of conflict is crucial because, in order to effectively manage channel conflict, it is necessary to verify the conflict's existence; otherwise, it will lead to inappropriate reactions. Sharma and Paris (2018) and William et al. (1976) maintained that disputes can be quantified by tracking their occurrence and severity, weighing the significance of the matter, and maintaining a record of points raised. Management can shed light on the presence of channel conflict. It also needs to determine the appropriate level of conflict because poorly managed perceived conflict can turn into actual conflict. On the basis of the foregoing argument, we propose the following hypothesis for testing:

Ho1: Supply chain channel conflict management has no significant relationship with marketing performance of agricultural products firms in Nigeria.

In conceptualizing Ho1 as supply chain channel conflict management, Sharma and Parida (2018), Eshghi and Ray (2021) and Fan et al. (2014) theorized that channel dispute resolution improved the marketing performance of companies that produce agricultural products by creating a central coordinating system that facilitates the development of strong relationships between product suppliers and merchants. Conceptualizing supply chain channel conflict management as a dimension of supply chain channel management, according to Liu et al. (2022), Gulmez and Sakar (2018) and Ayaga and Alabar (2017), encourages effective and efficient marketing performance in terms of product availability, profitability and improved customer service through the initiation of technological advancement that, when chain stores sell the same things in numerous formats, enable better interchange of supply costs and client details, influencing the behaviour of others or using other conflict resolutions techniques such as diplomacy, mediation or arbitration, reconciliation, persuasion, withdraw and joint work. Li et al. (2004), Mpuon (2021) and Kiran et al. (2012) noted that by assisting in the structuring of marketing channels in accordance with the proximity and preparedness of medium structures to carry out the marketing duties required to please the target market's desire for channel service, managing channel conflict will enhance the marketing performance of agricultural producing companies. In the actual sense, according to Rajesh and Maurya (2021) and Imam (2014), by assisting in the structuring of marketing channels in accordance with the proximity and preparedness of medium structures to carry out the marketing duties required to please the target market's desire for channel service, managing channel conflict will enhance the marketing performance of agricultural producing companies (Cullotta, 2007). Participants are encouraged to avoid conflict by offering incentives, and initiatives like pay plans are designed to support members' motivation. Architectural

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restrictions are employed to reinforce the conditions of the transmission pact and the channel's overall structure. Singh (2006), Tichelaar (2010) and Balakrishnan and Suresh (2022) maintained that structural controls are only effective if enforced and distribution strategies between the producer and the channel members are key to minimizing conflict. However, Roald (2010) and Eshghi and Ray chose crucial mechanisms to handle channel conflict, like adopting superordinate goals that appeal to shared objectives about staying alive, market share, sales growth, income, product availability, and customer satisfaction. Another strategy for handling conflict is to collaborate to develop cooperative solutions.

Conceptual Framework of the Study's Variables

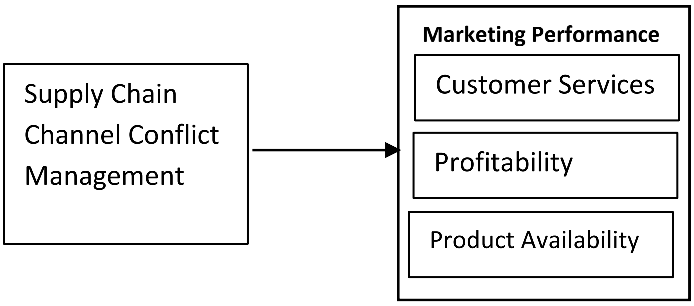

Figure 1: Showing the study's conceptual framework

The conceptual structure created to be assessed in this analysis is shown in Figure 1. Other supplemental theories are integrated to establish the conceptual framework, particularly managerial and business insight theories, while resource-based view theory serves as the anchored structure theory. This is because the best course of action for organizational performance depends on both internal and external organizational resources, and the dynamics within marketing channels are dependent on the power of each intermediary. Therefore, the researcher will use resource-based view and bargaining theory as the guiding theories for the study.

Resource-based View Theory

Resource based view theory considers the organization as a collection of resources and how these resources are integrated, and distinguishes organizations, allowing them to achieve a competitive advantage (Mpuon, 2022c, 2020; Inyang, 2004). The central tenet of resource-based perspective theory is that firms can create value-enhancing tactics that are challenging for rivals to imitate when they own essential, separate, distinct, and unalterable resources (Freeman et al., 2012; Harmel & Prahded, 1996; Irian et al., 2013). According to Aldona and Szymaniec (2012), Lan (2000) and Lami and Rahu (2013), firm resources are important if they enable businesses to design and implement plans that reduce net costs and enhance net revenues beyond what would have been the case otherwise. Barney (1991), Mpuon et al. (2023) and Wade and Hulland (2004) argued that the resource-based view is a multifaceted method that fundamentally alters how we perceive. Irian et al. (2013) and Huang et al. (2005) stated that the theory of resource-based view is interdisciplinary since it was developed in the fields of wide-ranging business, supply chain management, marketing, ethics, and law in addition to economics. Barney et al. (2001), Tsang (1998) and Das (2000) asserted that although it has roots in Recardian and Penrosian economic theories, resource-based view

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theory represents a new paradigm. According to these theories, firms can achieve exceptional returns over the long term if they possess more advanced supplies and are protected from some of the industry's solitary mechanisms. Shymko and Diaz (2010), Lan (2001) and Wernerfelt (1989) maintained that the exact impact of resource-based view is disputed as two strategic academics own Edith Penrose's 1959 publication. The company's modern resource-based approach was influenced by various concepts stated in "The Theory of the Company's Growth."

The resource-based approach principles defined the strategic supplies that an organization might utilize to gain a sustained competitive advantage, in the claims made by Watson et al. (200) and Aldona and Szymaniec (2012). Prahalad and Hamel (1990) and Halldorsson et al. (2007) opined that the most prevalent is the operational, intellectual, financial, legal, and logical utilization of an organization's resources, despite the literature having a variety of definitions for the term "resource advantage." Crook and Combs (2007) and Wade and Halland (2004) submitted that because of their heterogeneity and poor mobility, managing these resources effectively involves understanding where to put them and how to best use them to maintain competitive advantage over time. Mahoney and Pandian (1992) and Williamson (1999) argued that one essential takeaway from the resource-based perspective is that not all supplies are created equal and they do not offer long-term competitive advantages. Freeman et al. (2021) and Wernerfelt (1989) affirmed that the degree to which resources cannot be replicated or replaced determines how long a competitive advantage can last. According to Das and Teng (2000) and Barney (2001), it can be exceedingly challenging to comprehend in real-world settings the tenuous connections that exist between profit sources and efficient tactics for improving an organization's performance when employing the resource-based view method. Hence, Das (2000) and Irian et al. (2013) stated that to surpass rivals by carrying out things differently, important resources require a great deal of leadership work to grow, nurture and maintain, engage in organizational training to capitalize on resources and abilities, and generate distinct core competencies.

Rugman and Verbeke (2002) and Mpuon et al. (2019) noted that resource-based view theory posited that superior talents and resources are the foundation of sustained competitive advantage, with a focus on internal organizational resources to facilitate process optimization and attain competitive advantage. Prahalad and Hamel (1990) and Crook and Combs upheld that the resource-based view's guiding principles also recognize that the prescriptive paradigm that predominates in the strategic planning school directs management attention towards external issues and the noteworthy industrial structure. Barney (1991) and Huang et al. (2005) declared that the "positioning school" dominated the field in the 1980s, and this theory will assist enterprises that manufacture agricultural products in managing and developing their capabilities and tangible and intangible resources while exchanging valuable resources with other channel operators. The company's tangible resources, which include financial and human resources as well as tangible assets, including real estate, raw materials, equipment, plant, cash, inventories, trademarks, brands, and licenses, must be developed and maintained (Halldorsson et al., 2007; Irian et al., 2013). Important intangible elements that will support the positioning of the businesses that generate agricultural products and encourage the channel actors to swap complimentary resources include information or expertise, connections with clients, the standing of the company, knowledge gained through time, relationships with middlemen, customers, and heritage (Brahmadev & Leepsa, 2017; Lev, 2001). Sales managers, transportation managers, marketing managers, purchasing

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managers, and other functional managers of companies that produce agricultural products will have the opportunity to use heterogeneous resources, skills, capabilities, and organizational structures that set them apart from other industries to design strategies that improve their company's competitive advantage in the market. This will help other companies in the chain to accurately forecast customer demand, achieve sales growth, and increase their market share. Companies that create agricultural goods will be able to preserve a competitive edge by putting into practice a value-creating strategy that is not being adopted concurrently by any rival, either present or future (Wade & Halland, 2004; Shymko & Diaz, 2010; Freeman et al., 2021).

Marketing Performance

Marketing performance helps firms to ensure that managers carry out their duties and responsibilities of facilitating the production and smooth flow of goods from production centers to consumption centers and make sure that employees know what has to be done, are skilled at it, and finish it to a high enough degree for the benefit of all parties involved including customers (Osemeke, 2020). Evaluation of performance is a strategic instrument that offers the means of accomplishing the goals necessary to complete a firm's purpose and strategy statement. It is essential to the evaluation of any system (Kushwaha, 2012; Aramyan, 2007). According to Mpuon (2021) and Kozlenkova et al. (2012), marketing performance is a metric for assessing the efficacy of marketing strategies and planning efforts aimed at promoting products and services in the marketplace which might be also referred to as marketing activity appraisal system. Evaluating marketing performance is necessary in order to identify areas that need adjustments and changes for the improvement of organizational image and the leveraging of its sales performance, which in turn has a positive impact on a company’s performance in terms of sale growth, profitability, product availability, customer service, loyalty, patronage and satisfaction (Morgan, 2012).

According to Beukes and Gerhard (2016), when marketing is effective and sales and market shares increase, organizational reputation is strengthened, and institutional brand name positioning in the market improves. To appreciate the necessity of marketing performance indicators in an organization, Ambler and Robert (2008) defined marketing as the actions taken by a corporation as a whole with the goal of increasing shareholders’ value. Monetary indicators, such as sales volume, turnover, profit and capital returns. Customer service and fulfilment, availability, and delivery are examples of trade-related direct customer metrics. Intermediate consumer (end user) measures include behaviour, dedication, willingness to buy, and perception of quality.

Marketing efficiency is the evaluation and quantification of business outcomes via the use of particular metrics. Marketing performance, according to Adefulu and Adeniran (2019), is the efficacy and efficiency of an organization's marketing initiatives in relation to objectives connected to the market like profitability, revenues, growth and market share, product availability, customer service, customer satisfaction and increased sales. Morgan and Clark (2002) argued that the architecture of marketing performance comprises three dimensions: effectiveness, efficiency, and flexibility. One of the many facets of organizational performance is marketing performance, and marketing specialists are under growing pressure to defend the company's marketing expenditures (Eccless, 1991). Marketing performance, as opposed to marketing accountability, which concentrates on the financial contributions of marketing, emphasizes a wider dimension with financial contributions serving just as a

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subset. This study focuses on broader dimensions of marketing performance in the management of marketing channels of agricultural products rather than financial contributions alone. However, the question regarding if marketing performance is narrow-minded or multifaceted is not one that is particularly problematic today or in the past few years. Instead, negative remarks about marketing as an idea and career have been directed at its capacity to show how it contributes to the performance of the company Clark (2000). Several words, such as "marketing productivity and effectiveness" and "marketing efficiency" have been used synonymously in literature and are thought to be related to marketing performance (Clark, 2000; Morgan *et al*., 2002). Concerning the degree to which specific marketing initiatives assist a corporation in achieving its objective, marketing performance is correlated with perceptions of efficacy (Ambler *et al.*, 2001). From an efficient standpoint, the link between marketing outputs (like sales) and the resources used in marketing (such as marketing costs, man-hour, and knowledge and technology) is what matters in order to maximize the output (Emam, 2011). Additionally, from a productivity standpoint, marketing performance is determined by the ratio of marketing expenditure to marketing results (Sheth, 2002).

From the use of financial measurers, several viewpoints on marketing performance measurement have developed over time (Beukes & Gerhard, 2016). Early research on measuring marketing performance was primarily concerned with financial metrics, including sales values and units, cash flow, and profits (Davidson, 1999). On the other hand, because these measures do not account for long-term variables, academics have previously criticized their application in measuring marketing performance. From the perspective of marketing input leading to marketing outputs, these new perspectives welcomed non-financial measures of marketing performance. It was argued that marketing inputs and actions ought to result in intermediate results like brand equity, customer pleasure, and customer loyalty (Clark, 2000). These intermediary results have been viewed as marketing assets for businesses (Valos & Vocino, 2006), as opposed to gauging market performance exclusively by financial metrics, which may eventually result in financial performance. Stated differently, there is a solid foundation for improving financial success provided by the non-financial metrics of marketing performance. Based on preliminary study, an additional classification of marketing performance that includes both financial and non-financial metrics was proposed by Valos (2008) – financial indicators include things like market share, voice, sales volume and turnover, profit return on capital; indicators of consumer behaviour include things like knowledge, opinions, dedication contentment, and purchasing motives; and direct customer (trade) measures include things like circulation or accessibility, client profitability, pleasure, and service quality. A more thorough analysis of the literature reveals that normative and contextual approaches can be used to measure marketing performance. The chain-like mechanism by which marketing efforts transfer into financial performance is described by the normative approach (Morgan et al., 2002). In a nutshell, the normative method characterizes marketing success as a series of sequential effects, including those on customers, markets, finances, and business value (Rust et al., 2004). However, when considering the contextual approach from the standpoint of contingency theory, the system for measuring marketing success that best fits an organization's objectives, strategy, structure, and environment is the most effective one (Kannadasan, 2022; Strivastava *et al*., 1998). However, whatever performance metric is chosen by an organization, it tries to minimize individual biases, as argued by Clark (2000) that three basic principles should be considered when choosing marketing performance metrics: clear definition, accurate measurement standards and reward

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or punishments. In line with the above, marketing performance in this study is measured regarding client support and product accessibility and profitability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted cross-sectional field survey of the quasi-experimental research design as a useful aid in examining the extent to which supply chain channel conflict management explains or predicts the variables in marketing performance. A quasi-experimental design is an empirical interventional study used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on a target population without random assignment. The survey relies on a sample of elements from the population of interest which are measured at a single point in time. It is also a small sample approach that is particularly useful when examining the interrelationships among a number of variables. The research setting is a natural setting and the researcher cannot manipulate the research elements. Private agricultural enterprises in Nigeria that are listed on the Nigerian stock market or registered with the Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission, both of which were formed in 1990 under the Companies and Allied Issues Act No. 1990 as amended, served as the empirical context for our study.

The population of the study comprised three hundred and ninety-one (391) management staff of registered agricultural products' enterprises in Nigeria selected using judgment sampling.

A structured questionnaire was administered face to face to sales, procurement, logistics, supply chain, marketing and general managers as the source of data collection for the study by the authors and five additional persons hired and trained mainly for this purpose. The respondents were chosen because of their expertise in supply chain channel conflict management and marketing effectiveness and efficiency of agricultural products in the Nigerian agricultural industry based on their training, length of service and skills. The companies selected are focused on the production and distribution of agricultural products in Nigeria and have significantly contributed to the development of the industry. The questionnaire was split into two parts. The questionnaire's initial section was designed to collect demographics data on the respondents' highest educational level, gender, age bracket and respondents' years of experience. The second part of the questionnaire includes measures that were adapted from the literature reviewed to assist in measuring the variables in the study. Supply chain channel conflict management scale consists of 15 items that represent how the respondents believe that supply chain channel conflict management enhances marketing performance of agricultural products' producing firms in terms of customer service, profitability and product availability. The scale used to measure marketing performance is made up of 10 items that score participants' perception of how important product availability, profitability and customer service is to agricultural products' producing firms. With an exception of the demographic and filter questions in the first part of the questionnaire, all other items were graded on a five (5) point Likert Scale of Agree = 1, Strongly Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4 and Strongly Disagree = 5 was used to generate data. As stated earlier, these primary data were collected using structured questionnaire title channel management questionnaire (CMQ) adapted from Ntale (2016) and Rajiv et al. (2013) and were modified for the purpose of this research. Each questionnaire contains forty-one (31) questions, shared in two parts. The first part consists of six questions

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in the demographic characteristics while the second part consists of twenty-five (25) questions in the independent and dependent variables.

To assess the one-dimensional validity and reliability of the scale constructs, confirmatory factor analysis was utilized. The whole items that supported the various structures gave each construct a substantial amount of weight. A strong and sufficient model data fit, as recommended by Byme (2016), was discovered after removing the cross-loading elements. Importantly, all the scales satisfied the criterion for discriminating and convergent validity since the average variance extracted (AVE) for each of the variables in Table 1 is larger than 0.5, and these values are also greater than the squad correlation coefficient for any pair of constructs, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). To determine the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (a) and composite reliability (CR) scores were determined. Both a and CR values are more than 0.7, demonstrating strong dependability. When taken together, The CFA values show that the multi-item scales utilized in this study are unidimensional, valid and reliable, as shown in Table 1.

RESULTS

Table 4.1: Demographics of the Respondents

Demographics Variables	**No. Of Respondents**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender		
Male	270	69.1
Female	121	30.9
Total	**391**	**100.0**
Age (years)		
20-25 years	130	33.2
26-30 years	64	16.4
31-35 years	58	14.8
36-40 years	27	6.9
41-45 years	51	13.0
46-50	27	6.9
51 and above	34	8.7
Total	**391**	**100.0**
Educational Qualification		
None	9	2.3
Primary	78	19.9
Secondary	126	32.2
Tertiary	178	45.5
Total	**391**	**100.0**
Marital status		
Married	115	29.4
Single	197	50.4
Widow	40	10.2
Divorced	14	3.6
Separated	25	6.4

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Total	**391**	**100.0**
Experience		
1-5 years	95	24.3
6-10 years	154	39.4
11-15 years	83	21.2
Above 15 years	59	15.1
Total	**391**	**100.0**

Source: *Field Survey (2024)*

Of the 400 copies of the questionnaire administered, 391 copies (representing 97.75% of the total number of the questionnaire) were retrieved and found usable. The results presented in Table 4.1 show the distribution of the demographics of the respondents. The results reveal that 270 respondents (representing 69.1% of the respondents) were males and 121 respondents (representing 30.9%) were females. The distribution of their age shows that 33.2% were between 20-25 years, 16.4% were between 26-30 years, 14.8% were between 31-35 years while 6.9%, 13.0%, 6.9% and 8.7% of the respondents were between 31-35 years, 36-40 years, 41-45 years, and 51 and above years respectively. Nine respondents (representing 2.3%) had no formal education, 19.9% had primary education, 32.2% had secondary education while the majority of the respondents (45.5%) had tertiary education. One hundred and fifteen respondents (representing 29.4%) were married, 50.4% were single, 10.2% were widowed, 3.6% were divorced while 6.4% of the respondents were separated. The result of the years of experience shows that 24.3% of the respondents had 1-5 years, 39.4% had 6-10 years, 21.2% had 11-15 years while 15.1% of the respondents had above 15 years of experience.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for the Research Variables

	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Supply chain Channel conflict management	391	10.00	40.00	28.48	11.60	-0.56	0.12	-1.42	0.25
Marketing Performance	91	9.00	36.00	25.73	10.79	-0.65	0.12	-1.47	0.25
Customer service	391	8.00	58.00	21.71	9.27	1.64	0.123	5.02	0.25
Profitability	391	7.00	28.00	18.93	6.54	-0.22	0.12	-1.05	0.25
Product availability	391	4.00	16.00	11.48	5.28	-0.51	0.12	-1.61	0.25
Valid N (listwise)	391								

Source: *Researchers' Computation with SPSS 20*

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Table 4.2 presents the summary results of the descriptive statistics for the research variables. It presents the minimum score, maximum score, mean and standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis of the scores obtained on each of the research variables. The result shows mean scores of 28.48, 21.71, 18.93 and 11.48 for supply chain channel conflict management, customer service, profitability and product availability respectively with standard deviation values of 11.60, 9.27, 6.54 and 5.28 respectively. In terms of skewness, the result shows that the scores obtained for supply chain channel conflict management (-0.56), profitability (-0.22) and profit availability (-0.51) were less than 1, meaning that they were skewed to the left while that obtained for customer service was greater than 1 (1.64) meaning that the scores on customer service was skewed to the right. The result also shows that the kurtosis for supply chain channel conflict management (-1.42), profitability (-1.05) and product availability (-1.61) were less than 3.00 while that of customer service (5.02) was greater than 3.00 which is the kurtosis of the normal distribution. This result indicates that among the research variables, only customer service has higher kurtosis than normal distribution, suggesting that the scores obtained on customer service is leptokurtic (excess kurtosis). The normality values of the scores obtained on each of the variables using Shapiro-Wilks test are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of Normality Test Using Shapiro-Wilk Test for the Research Variables

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	P-value
Supply chain channel conflict management	0.801	391	0.000
Marketing Performance	0.732	391	0.000
Customer service	0.857	391	0.000
Profitability	0.927	391	0.000
Product availability	0.718	391	0.000

Source: *Author's Computation (2024) Using SPSS Version 20.0*

The result displayed in Table 4.3 reveals that channel strategy (P-value = 0.000), channel design (P-value = 0.000), customer service (P-value = 0.000), profitability (P-value = 0.000) and product availability (P-value = 0.000) have their P-values less than 0.05 (P<0.05). This indicates that among the research variables, all the research variables were not normally distributed.

Table 4.4: Correlation between the Research Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Supply chain Channel conflict management	1				
2. Marketing performance	0.807** (0.000)	1			
3. Customer service	0.548** (0.000)	0.699** (0.000)	1		

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4. Profitability	0.543** (0.000)	0.589** (0.000)	0.813** (0.000)	1	
5. Product availability	0.650** (0.000)	0.611** (0.000)	0.602** (0.000)	0.705** (0.000)	1

***significant at 5% (p<0.05), **significant at 1% (p<0.01), Source:** *Author's Computation (2024) Using SPSS Version 20.0. Values in the parentheses are the p-values.*

The result in Table 4.4 presents the correlation between the research variables. It reveals that supply chain channel conflict management has a significant positive relationship with customer service ($r = 0.548$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$), profitability ($r = 0.543$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$) and product availability ($r =0.650$, $p =0.000$, $p<0.01$). Supply channel conflict management was found to have a significant positive relationship with customer service ($r = 0.699$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$), profitability ($r = 0.589$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$) and product availability ($r = 0.611$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$). Customer service shows a significant positive relationship with profitability ($r = 0.813$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$) and product availability ($r = 0.602$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$). There was also a significant positive relationship between profitability and product availability ($r = 0.705$, $p = 0.000$, $p<0.01$).

Test of Hypothesis

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance of agricultural products firms in Nigeria.

Table 4.5: Model Summary for the Regression Relationship between Supply Chain Channel Conflict Management and Marketing Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	.827	.684	.683	2.96868	1.887

Source: *Researchers' Computation with SPSS 20.*

The result in Table 4.5 reveals r-square of 0.684 which implies that 68.4 percent of the variation in marketing performance was accounted for by supply chain channel conflict management. This result also signifies that if there is any improvement in supply chain channel conflict management, there will be a corresponding improvement in marketing performance. The Durbin Watson value of 1.887 was obtained, which implies that there is no evidence of autocorrelation. This is because the Durbin Watson value of 1.887 is greater than 1 but less than 3.00, which indicates that the error terms are not correlated, as suggested by (Field, 2009). The result of the Analysis of Variance for the regression is shown in Table 4.6.

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Table 4.6: ANOVA Result for the Relationship between Channel Conflict and Marketing Performance

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-calc.	F-crit.	p-value
Regression	7429.324	1	7429.324	842.990*	3.87	0.000
Residual	3428.282	389	8.813			
Total	10857.606	390				

***significant at p<0.05. Source:** Researchers' Computation with SPSS 20.

From Table 4.6, the F-critical of 842.990 was obtained with p-value of 0.000 and the F-critical of 3.87 at the 0.05 level of significance. The result reveals that the F-calculated (842.990) is greater than the F-critical (3.87) at the 0.05 level of significance, which means that there is a significant linear relationship between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance. This result also implies that supply chain channel conflict management accounted for a significant variation in marketing performance. The estimate of the parameters of the regression model is shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Parameter Estimates of the Regression of Marketing Performance on Supply Chain Channel Conflict Management

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-calc.	P-value
Constant	1.073	.389		2.762	.006
Supply chain channel conflict management	.404	.014	.827	29.034	.000*

***significant at 1 % (p<0.01), t-critical = 1.97. Source:** Researchers' Computation with SPSS 20.

Table 4.7 presents the regression coefficient for the model parameters. The result shows that supply chain channel conflict management (β = 0.827, S.E = 0.014, t-calc. = 29.034, t-crit. = 1.97, p = 0.000, p<0.05) has a significant positive relationship with marketing performance. Standardized beta coefficient of 0.827 was obtained which indicates that if other variables are held constant for every 1-unit improvement in supply chain channel conflict management, marketing performance will improve by 0.827. The result also shows that the t-calculated (29.034) is greater than the t-critical (1.97) at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis stated above is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant and positive relationship between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance. This result indicates that effective supply chain channel conflict management enhances marketing performance.

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Theoretical and Managerial Implications

In light of the inferences and results drawn from the discussion, the following theoretical and practical implications are deduced: Sales managers must exercise caution when managing distribution networks conflict, giving special attention to developing marketing strategies, inspiring members of the channel, and resolving channel disputes. Linear regression analysis was used in the study to show statistical correlations between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance of agricultural products' firms in Nigeria. The result of previous scholars like Rajiv et al. (2013), Adefulu and Adenira (2019), Ikaba et al. (2016), Schoviah (2012), Hidajet and Halit (2015), Isik et al. (2016), Ntale (2016), Ayaga and Alabar (2017), Obaji (2011) and Edoge (2014) was verified that supply chain channel conflict management has a significant and positive effect on the marketing performance of agricultural products' firms. As a result, this research complements the notion of resource-based view that maintains that effective organization resources will enable agricultural products' firms to develop superior tangible and intangible organizational skills and capabilities that are not easily imitated by competitors to enhance their marketing performance. This study provided the platform for sales managers of agricultural products firms to take advantage of the proposed model in this study to enable them to enhance their marketing performance. The study also contributed to existing supply chain channel conflict management literature by proposing supply chain channel conflict management as a dimension and linking it to marketing performance contrary to other studies that failed to emphasize the relevant of this dimension on the marketing performance of agricultural products firms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research examined the relationship between supply chain channel conflict management technique and marketing performance of agricultural products' businesses. Two hundred and seventy-nine (279) registered agricultural products' firms' employees in Nigeria were chosen judgmentally because of the spread of their activities with intermediaries. Two hundred and seventy-nine (279) questionnaires were given to management staff of these firms and a total of two hundred and seventy-six (276) were used for final analysis after checking for completeness, resulting in a modified sample size of two hundred and seventy-six (276). In keeping with the goal of the study, one research question and one hypothesis were developed. The research determined the impact of supply chain channel conflict management on the marketing performance of agriculture products firms. Linear regression analysis was used to examine the hypothesis, while descriptive statistics was achieved using frequency, mean, weighted mean, percentage, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness with the help of SPSS (version 21).

Based on the null hypothesis proposed, it establishes that a significant and positive relationship exists between supply chain channel conflict management and the marketing performance of agricultural products firms. Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that a significant and positive relationship does not exist between supply chain channel conflict management and marketing performance was rejected, meaning that a significant and positive relationship exists between the variables keeping with the suggested theory applied in the study to preserve a sustainable competitive advantage. These are significant concerns because

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they are discussed more often than alternative novel analysis of the inter-organizational management phenomena of managing upstream and downstream supply and demand involving products and consumption by decision makers in academics and business practices.

Based on the results, the following suggestions are offered: Firms should put in place effective and efficient channel strategies that will produce a supportive atmosphere for the actualization of the overarching business goals and plans of the company. The sales managers of the company ought to concentrate on creating new channels and adjusting the ones that already exist in order to enhance marketing effectiveness. Before selecting channel members, credit history, their reputation and market coverage should be taken into consideration for effective marketing outcome. For proper customer service delivery, profitability and product availability, firms should adopt various motivational programmes needed to induce middlemen to put in more work when marketing the company's goods. For efficient and successful marketing performance, businesses must actively seek out and use conflict management approaches to address conflicts as they negatively impact the performance of channel members.

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