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SUPPLY CHAIN CHANNEL STRATEGY AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FIRMS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *Even with the expansion of the vendor network supply chain channel strategy research and the development of the nation's agricultural industry, there seems to be no empirical research on supply chain channel strategy as it relates to marketing performance of agricultural products' firms. Particularly, it appears that there have not been studies on the relationship between supply chain channel strategy formulation within the agricultural industry in Nigeria. The lack of literature by scholars with respect to supply chain channel strategy in the agricultural industry to trigger innovations in channel techniques and strategies could properly be the root cause of ineffective marketing performance of agricultural products' firms in terms of customer's service, profitability and product availability. The researchers therefore sought to discuss this limitation, thereby bridging the acknowledged gap. Based on the objective of the study, a systematic survey was utilized to obtain information from 376 management staff of agricultural product enterprises, and three hypotheses were developed. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The results demonstrated a favorable and significant association between marketing success of agricultural product companies and channel management. It was concluded that if supply chain channel strategy is well implemented, there would be an increase in marketing performance as measured by client fulfillment, profitability and product availability. Considering the results, it was recommended that sales, supply chain and marketing managers should manage their supply chain channels by placing more emphasis on channel strategy.*

KEYWORDS: Agribusiness, Supply chain channel strategy, Marketing performance, Resource based view, Supply chain 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). 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). According to Raimbekov et al. (2023), 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. Nursyamah and Syah (2019) 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). Xu (2022) argued that the dynamics of supply chain channel strategy will enable intermediaries to help its supply chain participants organize their procedures together helping all of its vendor participants organize their procedures together, inter-organizational strategies procedures and behavior into synchronized collaborative and manageable structure. Ray (2023) asserted that supply chain channel management dynamics 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) declared that supply chain channel management strengthened marketing performance of agricultural products' firms through 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. Halife and Alshukur (2022) 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 and the spread of response to these changes. supply chain channel strategy improves on marketing performance of agricultural products' firms by reducing cycle time and inventory, increase 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 customer's needs, customer service, achieve a

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balance between costs and services giving the company a competitive advantage (Mpuon et al., 2021; 2022; Castillo et al., 2022).

According to Xu (2022), 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. Gang et al. (2019) 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, enhance strategy alignment, design, motivation, conflict resolution techniques, process improvement, cost reduction and facilitating external and internal visibility of projects collaborative decision making.

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 enhanced marketing performance in terms of product availability, profitability and customer service (Araujo et al., 2022; Amed et al., 2022). According to Gu and Yu (2022) and Rajiv et al. (2013), 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, poor substructure for acquiring farm products from the farms entrance to the end users has brought about inefficiency and ineffectiveness in marketing performance of agricultural products' producing firms. Similarly, Halife and Alshukur (2022) and Mpuon et al. (2023a; 2021b) argued that despite the increase in channel strategy research and the agricultural industry development, there seem to be no empirical research on supply chain channel strategy as adopted in this current study relating 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 strategy on marketing performance 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 strategy 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 customers service, profitability, product availability, while multiple levels of middlemen secure enormous profits, businesses and farmers virtually every benefit from price increases. 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 strategy to facilitate cooperation, integration, collaboration and coordination of activities needed in maintaining harmony between supplier, producers, intermediaries, consumers and also to facilitate the interdependence of organizations to achieve predictability and trust ability.

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LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Supply chain channel strategy refers to the fundamental principles, strategies and technologies used in making a product or service available from the manufacturer to clients (Mpuon et al., 2023; Kim, 2021). Yadav and Singh (2018) and Zhao et al. (2020) argued that supply chain channel strategy is widely used in sales and marketing parlance to facilitate proactive and swift response to customers’ requirements, volatile demand and changes in market conditions. According to Mpuon (2021), Adefulu and Adeniran (2019) and Zhang et al. (2022), supply chain channel strategy is the procedure wherein the business creates a variety of sales and marketing plans in order bring in as many potential customers as feasible by selling and marketing products using different strategies and channels. Kashyap and Lakhanpal (2022) maintained that the ultimate aim of channel strategy is to develop a broad set of principles objectives that incorporates the relationship between the supplier, manufacturers, intermediaries and customers fostering collaboration, cooperation and commitment leading to better matched demand and supply. In the assertion of Halife and Alshukur (2022), channel strategy takes into consideration information collection, dissemination, promoting technology usage, negotiating the selling of products, facilitating ordering to manufacturers and consumers, financing risks – taking, physical possession of products, payment and transfer of ownership. Hamidy et al. (2022) and Nugarajan et al. (2022) noted that network design takes into account variables like consumer behavior, the competitive landscape, and limitations like resources and expenses and the best ways of exposing a company’s goods and services.

Rajiv et al. (2013) and Sampson and Nagarajan (2022) affirmed that channel strategy formulation involves a wide range of guidelines that a business uses to try and accomplish its circulation goals and the designing and managing channels to improve the company's financial performance and long-term competitive edge. Adefulu and Adeniran (2019), and Meppureth and Varghee (2022) supported that channel strategy formulation focuses on the part that delivery ought to serve in the company's overarching corporate goals and tactics, including the complete alignment of the traditional Ps and channel layout. Meanwhile, Hidajet and Halit (2015) and Castillo et al. (2022) noted that channel strategy enhances marketing performance of agricultural products’ firms by enabling marketers and channel actors to confront the different strategic decisions in selecting channels member and marketing intermediaries for their products, and choosing a particular channel is the main reason for such decisions. The authors opined further that marketers need to ask questions concerning the level of distribution intensity, determine the need for vertical marketing systems and evaluate the current intermediaries marketing performance. Agrawal et al. (2022) defined marketing channel strategy as a comprehensive guideline which the firm intends to accomplish its distribution objectives for its target markets. Similarly, Liu et al. (2022), Ahmad et al. (2022) and Narayanaswamy and Heiens (2022) argued that handling the paths that are connected to reaching and gratifying customers is known as supply chain channel strategy and setting up strategies on effective and efficient modalities of Managing the associates who support the delivery procedure and oversee suppliers who maintain the inner control operating without hiccups. Lu et al. (2022) and Kusuma (2022) submitted that supply chain channel strategy enables marketers to successfully maintain and gain the assistance of different intermediaries via lining up the firm marketing objective overall, keeping the client's requirements in view. Ramesaninia et al. (2022), Arayo et al. (2022) and Amed et al. (2020) opined that the flow of information between

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the middlemen and the producers has the potential to impact on customer service, product availability and the firm profitability. Likewise, Pei et al. (2021) and Araujo et al. (2022) argued that in the process of setting marketing channel strategy, objectives and goals, firms need to define their policies and procedures and the means of achieving their result. Ray (2020) stated that efficient and productive conduit strategy leads to a highly favorable effect on the firm's relationship with intermediaries and ultimately enhances greater customer service, organizational profitability and product availability of agricultural products' firms .

Hidajet and Karaha (2015) and Dike (2019) submitted that channel strategy enables groups of businesses to sell or take title to products that may allow for swaps from the initial offer during the marketing process from producer to the final buyer. Efficient and effective market channel strategy requires a proper understanding of the demands of each customer segment and the choice of the majority correct and effective channel to reach them Tyoapine (2019). Choice of channel design involves the selection of the most adequate channel of distribution, the correct choice of the degree of magnitude of dissemination and external channel integration (Munoz et al., 2020). Several researchers have pointed out that the following are some of the variables that producers consider when selecting a distribution channel: competitive factors, product factors, institutional factors and market factors (Lu & Reardon, 2018). According to Agus et al. (2018), Xu and Sun (2018) and Mpuon et al. (2023a, 2022c), a lot of farmers/agricultural firms will properly like to choose a marketing channel strategy for their produce by considering economic profitability, product availability, increase sale, return on investment and convenient. Farmers and agricultural businesses might choose to use direct or indirect marketing channels to sell their goods according to Liu (2018) and that the selection of trade channel strategy by farmers for their produce also depend on the farmer demographics such as the level of education, age, marital status, gender as well as firms/farmers characteristics. For profitability, effective customer service and product availability, agricultural firms/farmers or marketers should adopt the right types of marketing channel strategies and they should be rational in fixing price of their products (Ikaba et al., 2016; Julia & Kim, 2018; Helmold, 2020). Mpuon (2019, 2018) and Melo (2016) argued that channels of distribution strategy change along continuous series under three groups of intensity: intensive distribution strategy, selective distribution strategy and exclusive distribution strategy. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is put forward for testing: Ho_1: Supply chain channel strategy has no significant relationship with marketing performance of agricultural Products' firms in Nigeria.

In conceptualizing Ho1 as an independent variable, Yadav and Singh (2018) and Zhang et al. (2022) theorized that supply chain channel strategy should be considered in terms of intensive distribution strateg**y,** selective and exclusive distribution strategy. Adefulu and Adeniran (2019) and Xu (2022) maintained that in considering Ho1 as a dimension of supply chain channel management the strategic implications of upstream and downstream business partnerships together with distributors and clients, interdependent organizations collaboration and cooperation, the linkages between them, the process of planning, sourcing, procurement, make, deliver and return, controlling supply and demand, locating components and necessary supplies, producing and putting together keeping track of inventory in storage, entering orders and monitoring them, distributing them through all available channels, and delivering them to the client should be the major focus of supply chain channel strategy. Likewise, Mpuon et al. (2022a, 2022b, 2020) and

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Gu and Yu (2022) theorized that conceptualizing channel strategy as an independent variable help in identifying a few of the elements preventing channel methods from being implemented effectively such as price, misconduct, culture and language, technology, infrastructure, connectivity, laws and regulations governing commerce, taxes and other financial matters, and a shortage of qualified personnel. Alshuku (2022) and Agrawal also mentioned the difficulties businesses face when implementing channel strategies for agricultural product-producing firms. These difficulties include the lack of adequate and reliable market information on taste, consumer demand patterns, quality improvement trends, and the company's operational performance in comparison to other competitors.

Conceptual Framework of the Study's Variables

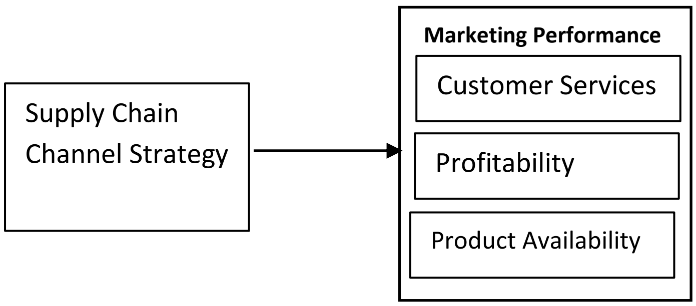

Figure 1: The study's conceptual framework that establishes the interrelationship between these two groups of variables.

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, distinguished 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 (Freeman et al., 2012; Harmel & Prahded, 1996; Irian et al., 2013). According to Aldona and Szymaniec (2012), Lan (200) 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,

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marketing, ethics, and law in addition to economics. Barney et al. (2001), Tsang (1998) and Das (2000) asserted although it has roots in Recardian and Penrosian economic theories, resource-based view 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; 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 do not offer long-term competitive advantages. Freeman et al. (2021) and Wernerfelt (1989) affirmed that the degree to which resources can not 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). While 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

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through time, relationships with middlemen, customers, and heritage (Brahmadev & Leepsa, 2017; Lev, 2001). Sales managers, transportation managers, marketing managers, purchasing managers, and other functional managers of companies that produce agricultural products will have the opportunity to use heterogeneous resources, skills, capabilities, and organizational structure 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 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 rivals, 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 responsibility of facilitating the production and smooth flow of goods from production centers to consumption centers, 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 and 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) and 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 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 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, 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 organization, Ambler and Robert (2008) defined marketing as the actions taken by a corporation as a whole with the goal of increasing shareholders value. It is not the division or a particular marketing campaign of a particular segment that determines the company's success in marketing; however, the business's overall effectiveness and marketing accomplishments. They argued that it is necessary to adhere to some criteria in line with the following classifications: competing market metrics including market share, share of voice, relative price, and proportion of promotion are used to assess the effectiveness of marketing. Monetary indicators, such as sales volume, turnover, profit and capital returns. Customer service and fulfillment, availability, and delivery are examples of trade-related direct customer metrics. Intermediate consumer (end user) measures include behavior, 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

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service, customer satisfaction and increased sales. Morgan and Clark (2002) argued that the architecture of marketing performance consists of 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 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 (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, additional classification of marketing performance that include both financial and non-financial metrics was proposed by Valos (2008) which include financial indicators include things like market share, voice, sales volume and turnover, profit return on capital; indicators of consumer behavior include things like knowledge, opinions, dedication contentment, and purchasing motives; 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

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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 the 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 or punishments. In line with the above, marketing performance in this study is measured regarding client support and product accessibility and profitability. Marketing performance is measured in terms of customer service, profitability and product availability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross – sectional field survey of the quasi experimental research design as a useful aid in examining the extent to which channel 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 one thousand, four hundred and seventy (1470) management staff of registered agricultural products' enterprises in Nigeria.

It was later modified to three hundred and six (306). Out of the three hundred and fourteen (314) questionnaire given to the management staff of the companies survey, three hundred and eight (308) were retrieved; two of the questionnaire were not suitable for inclusion in the final analysis resulting to a modified sample size of three hundred and six (306). The investigator used the purposive sampling technique, believing that choosing the right sample units would be crucial to producing pertinent data for the study based on the researcher's experience and understanding of the units. The employees of these enterprises are involved in agricultural products and marketing nationwide to final consumers and industrial users.

A structured questionnaire was administered face to face to sales, procurement, logistics, supply chain, marketing and general managers as a 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 management dynamics 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

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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 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 management scale consists of 25 items that represent how the respondents believe that supply chain channel management dynamics enhance 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. 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 (41) questions, shared in two parts. The first part consists of six questions in the demographic characteristics while the second part consists of thirty-five (35) 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.

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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
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. Results presented in Table 4.1 show the distribution of the demographics of the respondents. It reveals that 270 respondents representing 69.1% of the respondents were male and 121 respondents representing 30.9% were

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female. 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 widow, 3.6% were divorced while 6.4% of the respondents were separated. 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
Channel strategy	391	10.00	40.00	28.48	11.60	-0.56	0.12	-1.42	0.25
Marketing performance	391	9.00	36.00	25.73	10.79	-0.56	0.12	-1.47	
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

Table 4.2 presents the summary results of the descriptive statistics for the research variables. Table 4.2 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 that the mean score of 28.48, 25.73, 21.71, 18.93 and 11.48 for channel strategy, marketing performance, customer service, profitability and product availability with standard deviations of 11.60, 10.79 , 9.27, 6.54 and 5.28 respectively. In terms of skewness, result shows that the scores obtained for channel strategy (-0.56), marketing performance (-0.56), profitability (-0.22) and profit availability (-0.51) were less than 1 meaning that they are 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. Result also shows that the kurtosis for channel strategy (-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

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that the scores obtained on customer service is leptokurtic (excess kurtosis). The normality 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
Channel strategy	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 (2019) using SPSS version 20.0

Result displayed in Table 4.3 reveals that channel strategy (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. Channel strategy	1				
2. Marketing performance	0.807*** (0.00)	1			
3. Customer service	0.548** (0.000)	0.699** (0.000)	1		
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 (2019) using SPSS version 20.0. Values in the parentheses are the p-values.

Result in Table 4.4 presents the correlation between the research variables. Result reveals that channel strategy has significant positive relationship with marketing performance (r =0.807, p =0.000, p<0.01), 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). Channel strategy was found to have 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 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).

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Test of Hypothesis

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

Table 4.5: Model Summary for the Regression Relationship between Supply Chain Channel Strategy and Marketing Performance of Agricultural Products' Firms

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	.806	.649	.648	3.12832	1.975

Source: *Researchers Computation with SPSS 20.*

The result in Table 4.5 reveals r- square of 0.649 which implies that 64.9 percent of the variation in product availability was accounted for by supply chain channel strategy. This result also signifies that if there is any improvement in supply chain channel strategy, there will be a corresponding improvement in marketing performance, in terms of customer service, product availability and profitability. The Durbin Watson value of 1.975 was obtained which implies that there is no evidence of autocorrelation. This is because The Durbin Watson value of 1.975 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.

Table 4.6: ANOVA Result for the Relationship between Supply Chain Channel Strategy and Marketing Performance

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-calc.	F-crit.	p-value
Regression	7050.710	1	7050.710	720.463*	3.87	0.000
Residual	3806.896	389	9.786			
Total	10857.606	390				

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

From Table 4.6, the F-critical of 720.463 was obtained with p-value of 0.000 while the F- critical of 3.87 at the 0.05 level of significance. The result reveals that the F-calculated (720.463) 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 strategy and marketing performance. This result also implies that the supply chain channel strategy accounted for significant variation in marketing performance with respect to customer service, product availability and profitability. The estimate of the parameters of the regression model is shown in Table 4.7.

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Table 4.7: Parameters Estimates of the Regression of Marketing Performance on Supply Chain Channel Strategy

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-calc.	P-value
Constant	1.046	.420		2.492	0.013*
Supply chain channel strategy	.366	0.014	.806	26.841	0.000*

***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 channel strategy (β= 0.806, S.E = 0.014, t-calc. = 26.841, t-crit. =1.97, p=0.000, p<0.05) has a significant positive relationship with product availability. It also yielded a standardized beta coefficient of 0.806 which indicates that if other variables are held constant, for every 1 unit improvement in supply chain channel strategy, product marketing performance will improve by 0.806. The result further shows that t-calculated (26.841) 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 strategy and marketing performance. This result indicates that effective supply chain channel strategy enhances marketing performance.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

In light of the inferences and results drawn from the discussions, the following theoretical and practical implications are deduced. Sales managers must exercise caution when managing distribution networks strategies, giving special attention to developing marketing strategies, inspiring members of the channel, and resolving channel disputes. Multiple regression analysis was used in the study to show statistical correlations between supply chain channel strategy and marketing performance of agricultural products' firms in Nigeria.

The results of previous scholars like Rajiv et al. (2013), Adefulu and Adeniran (2019), Xu (2022) Gu and Yu (2022) verified that supply chain channel strategy has a significant and positive relationship with marketing performance of agricultural products' firms. As a result, this research complements the notion of resource-based view which will enable agricultural products' firms to develop superior tangible and intangible organizational resources 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 supply chain channel strategy as proposed in the study to enhance marketing performance of agricultural products. The study also contributed to existing channel management literature by proposing supply chain channel strategy as an independent variable, linking it to marketing performance contrary to other studies that failed to emphasize the relevance of this variable on marketing performance of agricultural products' producing firms. Further study should be conducted on other

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dimensions like assessing channel member's performance and coordinating. This research was conducted in Nigeria and other geographical factors were not considered which should be handled by future researchers by replicating this study in other countries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research examined the relationship between supply chain channel technique and marketing outcome of agricultural products' businesses. One hundred and forty-seven registered agricultural products' firms' employees in Nigeria were chosen judgmentally because of the spread of their activities with intermediaries. Four hundred and twenty-one (421) questionnaires were given to management staff of these firms and a total of three hundred and ninety-one (391) was used for final analysis after checking for completeness resulting in a modified sample size of three hundred and ninety-one (391). In keeping with the goal of the study, one research question and one hypothesis was developed. Multiple 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, a significant and positive relationship was established, therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, demonstrating that a positive and significant relationship exists between supply chain channel strategy and marketing performance. Perhaps the endeavor to address one research inquiry and one assumption about how companies that sell agricultural products can enhance their marketing performance in relation to (customer service, profitability and product availability) in keeping with the suggested theories applied in the study by employing supply chain channel strategy components (channel strategy to preserve a sustainable competitive advantage. These are significant concerns because 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. The empirical results of the study clearly underscore that supply chain channel strategy has a strong and favorable collaboration with marketing performance of agricultural products' firms in Nigeria.

Based on the results, the following suggestions are offered:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Before selecting channel members, credit history, their reputation and market coverage should be taken into consideration for effective marketing outcome.

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4. For proper customer service delivery, profitability and product availability, firms should adopt various motivational programmes that induce middlemen to put in more work when marketing the company's goods.

5. 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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