CUSTOMER INTEGRATION PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS IN AIRLINE INDUSTRY IN RIVERS STATE

Ogbuji, Chinedu N.1 & Orduwa, W. Helena1

1Department of Marketing, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study examines the extent of the relationship between customer integration practices and organizational success in airline industry in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. It involves survey design and uses structured questionnaire to collect data from fifty (50) management staff of airline firms. The data collection instrument was validated using Cronbach Alpha test while spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient statistical tool and partial correlation are used in testing the hypotheses. Results show that all two dimensions of customer integration practices (crowd-sourcing, user co-design) have significant relationship with all two measures of organizational success (profitability and relative sales volume). The study therefore concludes that appropriate customer integration practices could be a means of gaining strong competitive advantage in the aviation industry. Based on the findings, airline firms in Rivers state are, among others, advised to inject more customer-based ideas and competences in the organization for maximum success.

A. Introduction

The Nigerian aviation industry is a major sector within the tourism industry that has contributed in no small measure to the development of economic stability of the country. It comprises several commercial airlines that shuttle various domestic communities and international destinations. The airline sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the service industry (Lovelock, Patterson and Walker, 2004) and has attracted seamless investment opportunities to the economy.

The airline industry is a major driver that controls the direction of other activities in the tourism industry. It is a vital component of the travel and tourism industry and remains essential to the conduct of international business (Tiernan et al., 2008). Ghana Airports Company Limited (GACL, 2012) revealed that the airline industry is known to be the major catalyst for the socio-economic development of emerging economies. It is the connecting rod that links peoples, cultures and businesses together and a stimulator of economic activities globally. In 2012, International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimated that about 2.2 billion passengers globally patronize the airline firms annually.

According to the Nigerian Aviation Sector third quarter report (2015), the traffic level of passengers via Nigerian routes had a staggering increase of (8.5%) relative to the number in the second quarter within the period under review. This influx of passengers is an indication of the economic importance of the airline sector to the economy. However, the Nigerian airline industry, despite these healthy reports, are faced with myriad of challenges ranging from natural disasters, security issues, low service quality and high fuel prices which have affected organizational success. On April 29, 2016, THIS DAY newspaper as reported by Egene (2016), highlighted a hike and scarcity of aviation fuel (Jet A1) which hampered flight operations in Nigeria and caused unquantifiable financial losses to these airline firms.

Also, Phillip Consulting Limited, revealed in a survey in 2015, a sharp and abysmal reduction of patronage rate in Rivers State based airline firms which were attributed to poor service quality delivery and safety challenges. As a result of this downward trend, profit and sales level of airline firms in Nigeria nose-dived in the fourth quarter (NAS 2015). This decline could be attributed to inability of the airline firms to integrate their passengers in the service delivery processes.

Traditionally, the core aim of effective and improved marketing is to ensure that there are right products, at the right price, in the right place and at the right time. However, successful marketing today requires a complete reliance on the customer and their preferences (Christopher et al., 1993). This is called, Customer retention. It is ideal, reliable and a potent source of superior performance (Reichhled and Sasser, 1990).
Bateson (1983; 1985) demonstrated empirically that, across several service industries, an aggregate of customers find self-service intrinsically attractive. According to Mills, Chase and Margulies (1983), improved service performance can be attained by viewing the client/customer as a “partial” employee.

There are myriad of literature on customer integration pointing to its usefulness in achieving corporate organizational performance in different sectors of the economy. The thrust of this study is therefore, on Customer Integration Practices and organizational success of airline Firms in Rivers State.

B. Statement of the Problem

The aviation industry in Nigeria is one that requires huge financial outlay to participate in. Granted this and the huge opportunities inherent in the industry, one expects all participants to successfully propagate their businesses. However, evidence abound that most participants in the industry are barely managing to survive. This brings a lot of questions to mind as to what may be responsible for this present state of affairs.

Organizational success is viewed by many scholars and practitioners as a reflection of the extent to which customers are integrated in the service delivery process. There are practical evidence in the academic literature on the significant association between customer integration and organizational stability. Many of these authors have emphasized the importance of co-creation in gaining competitive advantage especially in current converging business environment. The need to achieve steady and improved organizational success has been a bone of contention in the ever increasing cut-throat aviation sector. It is possible that this success can be achieved if adequate integration activities are introduced by these airline firms. Adequate customer collaborated design in terms of integration practices expected to result to rapid influx of passengers which will impact positively on organizational success. Therefore, this study sought to determine the degree of relationship between customer integration and organizational success of airline firms in Rivers State with particular reference to crowdsourcing and User co-design. In line with achieving this objective, the following hypotheses were tested in the study.

\[ H_{01}: \text{The relationship between crowd-sourcing and profitability is not significant.} \]

\[ H_{02}: \text{The relationship between crowd-sourcing and relative sales volume is not significant.} \]

\[ H_{03}: \text{The relationship between user co-design and profitability is not significant.} \]

\[ H_{04}: \text{The relationship between user co-design and relative sales volume is not significant.} \]

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundation

Understanding the nitty-gritty of this scholarly investigation will require an appreciation of some theoretical underpinings that laid the foundation for this study. This study is specifically anchored on Value Co-creation and Service Dominant (SD) logic theory of Vargo and Lusch (2004) and Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a, 2004b, 2004c) which clearly state that “the consumer is networked, active, informed and involved in consumer communities, while co-creation is the result of the changing role of consumers” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004c). According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), specialized skills and knowledge are the key components in creating and sustaining competitive pressure and these special skills and competencies are embedded in customers.

The theory recognized consumers as brand evangelists and their knowledge, a key asset as a result of years of experiences they have gathered. According to this view, all the efforts between production and consumption are to successfully harness the endowed creative intelligence of the consumer. Based on the view of the Service Dominant (SD) Logic, people go for products that provide maximum satisfaction and value that depends largely on customer experiences than mere purchase of goods and services.

Customer Integration Practices (CIP)
Customers are a resource in value networks (Lusch et al. 2010) and the value creation process; organizations work towards involving the customers in the production and service delivery processes. There is a growing body of literature on the need to integrate consumers in the service delivery process. Customers have special skills, ideas and competencies coupled with information technology that drive rapid innovation in every sector and increasingly serve as active partners in value delivery processes.

In the new frontier, the role of the consumer has changed from unaware to informed, from passive to active, and from isolated to connected thinkers. As a result of this healthy development, service providers can no longer boast of having monopoly of ideas and capability to enforce efficient service delivery. The adoption of customer integration is therefore, the crux of emerging reality in the service sector.

Customer integration is a collaboration of ideas, skills, competencies and capabilities between the organization and its customers for efficient service delivery. In service settings, customers ‘often find that performing tasks themselves is faster, more efficient, affords a larger sense of control, and in some cases presents greater customization of the results and this makes customers able to unlock more value from purchased goods and services when they can successfully complete tasks themselves,’ (Honebein and Cammarano, 2006).

Despite the importance attached to customers as value creators, the opportunity of regarding customers as partners of value creation during new product development as well as the chance of actively involving them into the process is often neglected, (Joshi/Sharma, 2004). Most organizations have reduced their customers to a more passive role than active role. Eric von Hippel, (1978) criticizes the insufficient customer and user involvement in innovation processes as “speaking only when spoken to”.

The trigger for customer integration is the high failure rate of innovative products and services (Atuahene-Gima, 1995). Customer integration can reduce this rate: customers know what they want and need and thus, guarantee that new products developed accordingly will satisfy the market. At the same time customers constitute a reliable buyer potential. In addition, early customer integration minimizes the risk of a later change of construction due to customers’ wishes and so prevents an increase in costs and a reduction of profits caused by a delayed market introduction (Atuahene-Gima, 1995, Kohli and Jaworski, 1990, Murphy and Kumar, 1996, 1997).

When developing a new and attractive service, it is essential to learn from and with users in their own habitat or use situations. While customer integration has always been an issue in service development, previous research has shown that the particular way in which customers are integrated has a major impact on the quality of user information gained and therefore on service development.

This study sought to understand the workability of customer integration and to validate claims by much scholarly view, of customers being the custodian of special skills and competencies that can transform the service sector. Furthermore, it is of interest to find out in which way customers are most often involved and how this asset they have can be fully maximized.

Crowd-sourcing (CS)

The extent of human reasoning and ingenuity is insatiable. There are deposits of wealth of ideas, abilities and capabilities in humans which makes them exceptionally intelligent to undertake and solve every life problem. These ideas are a pool of collections from dispersed individuals but brought together via web 2.0 platform. The web provides a perfect technology capable of aggregating millions of disparate, independent ideas in the way markets and intelligent voting systems do, without the dangers of ‘too much communication’ and compromise, (Surowiecki, 2004).

The concept of crowd-sourcing has attracted vast arrays of empirical attention in recent times. Jeff Howe and Mark Robinson made popular the term crowd-sourcing in the year 2006. According to How, (2006) crowd-sourcing is the act of “a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call”.
Crowd-sourcing makes available unlimited amount of skilled and competent labor which has the desire and passion to compete and complete a task for a reward within a stated time. These crowds are embedded with expertise in different fields of endeavor gathered from experiences and learning which when properly harnessed can solve complex of life issues.

It is an act of an institution delegating tasks, duties and responsibilities originally performed by own employees to undefined large network of online participants (Howe, 2012). The said task can be performed by individuals or group of individuals for the purpose of creating a remarkable idea. According to Zhao and Zu, (2012), “Crowd-sourcing seeks to mobilize competences and expertise which are distributed among the crowd”.

Despite different array of definitions and meanings attributed to crowd-sourcing, there is yet to be an agreed and generally acceptable definition from all the authors. In this study however, crowd-sourcing will be defined as online function performed by group of individuals who are not employees of the firm but have unlimited amount of skills and competence to compete and complete a task for a reward within a stated time.

**User Co-Design (UCD)**

The notion of design explains detailed specification which contains information about shape, appearance, quality and colour of a product or service that meet customers demand. Hippel (2011), states that “a design is a set of instructions that specify how to produce a novel product or service”. This, in essence, allows customers to render unquantifiable services to the firm through idea generation. The creativity of the customer is an indispensable tool that drives competitiveness in the service sector. “Collaborative co-design can foster creativity and lead to better choices of individual customers who are forced to select from a high variety of choices” (Gascó-Hernández and Torres-Coronas, 2004, Franke and Shaw, 2003; Hippel and Tyre, 1995).

Hippel (2011) opined that co-design refers to a process of collective creativity in which ideas and thoughts are shared between at least two people to design a product, as previously noted. It is an idea sharing process that specifies the prototype of a product or service and ensures its realization. Customer Co-design describes a development process in which the customer and provider collectively ideate, elaborate and create a design specification for a product, which is purchased by the customer, (Thallmaier 2005).

The customer helps as an ‘organizational consultant’ during decision-making and design processes (Schneider and Bowen 1995; Büttgen, 2009). This role enables customers to voice their opinions, likes and dislikes about a new service or product in early development stage.

**Organizational Success (OS)**

Organizational success has attracted an array of scholarly debate in recent times. Most often, organizational success is inter-used with organizational performance. In this study, both organizational success and organizational performance convey same idea. In connection with the ongoing economic crisis, there are new opportunities for corporate innovation, which are important to be measured (Drugă, 2009; Svbodová and Koudelková, 2011).

Modern businesses are dependent on the control of intangible assets such as brand, intellectual property, human capital or market relationships (Ambler, 2002). In order for marketers of these abstracted elements to determine whether they are effective or not, they must be able to convert the results into financial terms (Kotler and Keller, 2006). In the view of Morgan et al, (2002) performance has been a central issue in businesses and remains a vital concern for a large majority of organizations. It is elusive and challenging to manage in the sense that businesses have continually searched unsuccessfully for a certain and reliable signal of performance by which marketing merits can be judged (Bonomia and Clark, 1998).

Point and Shaw (2003) have argued that assessment of performance remains an important but elusive concept in marketing discipline. Wheelen and Hunger (2002) see performance as the end result of an activity. A genuine business performance measure is a vehicle that ascertains organizational growth in all key aspects and provides useful feedback to the business executives for a clearer and goal-driven decision making.

Neely (2002) contends that there are several points of departure that can be used to
assess performance of a business. These include, among others, accounting perspective (assessment of financial measures of performance), marketing perspective (assessment of marketing outputs) and operations perspective (assessment of effectiveness and efficiency). Measuring financial performance, marketing outputs or efficiency alone cannot guarantee the expected result; therefore, a hybrid perspective is the most ideal.

According to Morgan et al. (2002), performance assessment systems can be holistically seen as processes with four basic steps which include: setting a desired performance standard, collecting and communicating information relating to actual performance, comparing this information with the performance standard, and taking corrective action where necessary. The steps in the overall assessment ensure that the needed data is captured and analyzed; neglecting any step may prove costly for any business. This is supported by Austin and Gittell (2002) who opined that performance should be clearly defined and accurately measured.

There are growing arguments about the ability to measure or observe performance successfully. Some scholars are of the opinion that performance measurement pose a big challenge in any attempt to measure it and often times, the outcomes of the measurement do not represent a true picture of the organization’s position in the business environment. We believe that it is very crucial for organizations to measure their performances, because, if you don’t measure it, you cannot improve it (Matti, 2006).

There are enormous array of literature on the use of market share, profitability and sales volume as indices of business success. Morgan et al, (2002) opined that customer-focused indicators, (e.g. customer satisfaction and customer retention); competitor-centered indicators (e.g. relative sales growth and relative market share); and internally oriented indicators (e.g. profitability and ROI) are the most effective and efficient indicators of business success.

Despite diverse scholarly debate surrounding financial measures, the research considered it necessary to adopt it as a result of the nature of the study. To this end, it measured organizational performance with Profitability and Relative Sales Volume.

**Profitability (PT)**

This is defined by Kaplan and Norton, (2002) as the total return on organizational investments after all costs have been deducted; it is the short run important factor in the organization’s ability to achieve its long term goals, (Phillips 1999).

Despite its ranking by Ambler, Kokkinaki and Puntoni, (2004) as the most useful parameter to measure performance and firms’ most important objective, it may not be a true guide to ascertain future organizational success. However, profitability that have been properly managed and reinvested can be a very reliable asset to the firm for future expansion plan and growth.

**Relative Sales Volume (RSV)**

In the view of Cavusgil, (1996) the total quantity of sales achieved in units or naira is called sales volume. It is the accumulation of sales achieved by a firm within a given time period. As opined by Nobilis (2010), sales volume is the core interest of every organization that is based on sales and profit. For Jobber and Lancaster, (2000) “sales volume is a type of sales quota, its advantages are that it is easy to calculate and administer, it is also simple to understand”. Sales volume can be viewed as the degree of consumers’ endorsement of a particular product or service offering at the expense of another competing firm. According to Brush and Wanderwerf (1992), sales volume is never an indication of organization’s financial stability.

**Customer Integration and Organizational Success (CI & OS)**

There is enormous scholarly support for co-creation as an important source of competitive advantage especially in current converging business environment (Chung, 2009; Zhang and Chen, 2008). Another research showed that a deeper and more frequent communication and interaction between a firm and its customers, two characters of co-creation, are the determinants for product success and later market success (Kristensson, Gustafsson, and Witell, 2011). Moreover, the strategic importance of customer involvement in value creation with firm’s cross-functional team implies that a new strategy is required to
increase the probability of the product success (Zhang and Chen, 2008).

The identified rapid growth associated with co-creation is driven by the awareness of the central role of cumulative knowledge of key stakeholders such as customers and employees in maintaining competitiveness and information sharing (Chung, 2009; Durugbo, Hutabarat, et al., 2011). The importance of co-creation is considered a strategic one, and in itself can be seen as a strategy such as a learning strategy (Chung, 2009) or business strategy (Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2010; Sawhney, Verona, and Prandelli, 2005).

Crowd-sourcing and Organizational Success (CS & OS)

There are several arguments and counter arguments regarding crowd-sourcing as a source of firms’ success. Going by the line of thought of many authors, crowd-sourcing has made available unlimited access to a very large community of potential workers to firms.

Some multinational companies have actually recorded an outstanding landmark with the aid of ingenuity made available by the crowd. For example, companies like Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Ford, Nestlé or Samsung are all investing in crowd-sourcing (Yeka, 2014). This singular innovative invention has recorded series of mind blowing ideas from the dispersed crowd.

Similarly, it is on record that Google has offered up to ten million dollars for those who developed innovative applications for their new mobile phone operating system, Android. (Trendwatching, 2007). It is assumed that these developers are members of the crowd that received incentives for their creativity. Gatautis and Vitauškaite, (2014) found that crowd-sourcing can generate value for almost all marketing-related activities including product development, promotion and advertising or marketing research. It is especially useful for marketing and market research, (Djelassi and Decoopman, 2013; Whitla, 2009).

Despite the success this invention has recorded over the years of its conception, some scholars are yet to adopt it as a complete tool for idea generation. There are divergent arguments regarding legality of the ideas from the crowd, irrelevance of ideas, and underpayment of incentives to participants. According to Keen (2007), despite the principle that ‘two heads are better than one’, sometimes a crowd can return a vast amount of noise that may be of little relevance.

As opined by Ideaconnection (2012), crowd-sourcing contests can be risky business; when they are poorly designed, too broadly scoped, or badly managed, they can turn out to be unrewarding and expensive and also present risk for intellectual property. In the light of these diverse reasoning, we put forward the following set of hypotheses:

H01: The relationship between crowd-sourcing and profitability is not significant.
H02: The relationship between crowd-sourcing and relative sales volume is not significant.

User Co-Design and Organizational Success (UCD & OS)

Customer co-design is performed with the help of dedicated tools, (Franke and Piller, 2003; Khalid & Helander, 2003). These systems are the primary instrument to reduce cost and to create a positive design experience.

User co-design is a customer oriented collaboration that enhances organizational trust and commitment between the customer and the firm. According to Piller (2003), customer co-design is a distinctive principle of mass customization and the source of competitive advantage to firms. Collaborative co-design can foster creativity and lead to better choices of individual customers which are forced to select from a high variety of choices (Franke and Shaw, 2003; Von Hippel and Tyre, 1995). A study carried out by Kujala, (2003) revealed that customer satisfaction, among other things, is associated with collaborative co-design.

Despite the growing body of literature supporting the adoption of co-design as a strategic tool for organizational success, some authors still believe that co-design has more risk than benefits. Pine coined the term “mass confusion” (in Teresko, 1994) as a metaphor to describe the burdens and drawbacks for the consumer as a result of the mass customization interaction processes. Also, Veryzer Jr. (1998) recognized some negative side effects of collaborative co-design. In his study, some companies complained about dependence on
customers in various forms and loss of know-how. It is in the light of these scholarly differences that we propose the following hypotheses:

\[ H_{04}: \text{The relationship between user co-design and profitability is not significant.} \]

\[ H_{05}: \text{The relationship between user co-design and relative sales volume is not significant.} \]

C. Research Methodology

Scientific tests and quantitative methods were deployed in this work by adopting a quasi-experimental design approach. A field survey was carried out in a non-contrived environment involving top management staff of airline firms as our unit of analysis. According to the Aviation Sector Report (2015), Port Harcourt International Airport had a total of (10) registered and functional commercial airlines and all were used in the study and both primary and secondary data were utilized. The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire. To ensure an even distribution and to avoid bias, we administered six (6) copies of the instrument to each of the participating airline firms with reference to their, Branch Managers, Station Managers, Administrative Officers, Customer Care Officers, Check-in Officers, and Front Desk Officers. In total, this study administered sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire to the management staff of these registered airline firms. Spearman’s rank order correlation co-efficient technique and multiple regressions were used to analyze all the study variables, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) after the questionnaire was subjected to validity and reliability test. The later was conducted using the Cronbach Alpha with an average score of above 0.8 for all dimensions.

Results and Discussion of Findings

A total of sixty copies of questionnaire were distributed, fifty copies representing 83.3% were found usable while four copies representing 6.7% were not retrieved and six copies representing 10% were unusable. Our analyses were based on the responses of these fifty responses.

Crowd-sourcing and Organizational Success

The results revealed that crowd-sourcing strongly influences organizational success. It is important to argue in favour of whether crowd-sourcing has the potential to add to the level of knowledge a firm is exposed to in the industry, which in turn, positively influences profitability. To determine the level of influence crowd-sourcing had on organizational success, two hypotheses were tested. Hypothesis (H_{01}) which ascertained the relationship level between crowd-sourcing and profitability was tested with the aid of Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient and generated a score of \( r = 0.704 \). The coefficient of determination \( r^2 = 0.49 \) indicated that 49% of profitability \( (PT) \) can be influenced by crowd-sourcing \( (CS) \). The significant value of 0.000 \( (p<0.05) \) revealed a significant relationship. Based on that, there is a strong positive relationship between crowd-sourcing \( (CS) \) and profitability \( (PT) \). Thus, the result showed that as crowd-sourcing \( (CS) \) increases, profitability \( (PT) \) increases in an organization.

Hypothesis \( (H_{02}) \) revealed a correlation coefficient of \( r = 0.669 \) between crowd-sourcing \( (CS) \) and relative sales volume \( (RSV) \). The coefficient of determination \( r^2 = 0.45 \) indicated that 45% of relative sales volume \( (RSV) \) can be influenced by crowd-sourcing \( (CS) \). In the light of the glaring positive figures, we are convinced to remark of a strong positive relationship between crowd-sourcing and relative sales volume.

Organizational success is mainly hinged on the rapport created between the firm and the customers who are exposed to arrays of ingenuity and innovative thinking. To increase the level of profitability in any organization requires focus on the external capability the crowd has in terms of information and skills. In the light of this, Howe (2006a) maintained that the community of potential workers has diverse range of skills and expertise and are willing and able to complete activities within a short time-frame and often at a much reduced cost as compared to performing the task in-house.

For example, companies like Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Ford, Nestlé or Samsung are all investing in crowd-sourcing (eYeka, 2014). Similarly, it is on record that Google has offered up to ten million dollars for those who developed innovative applications for their new
mobile phone operating system, Android (Trendwatching, 2007).

Also, Gatautis and Vitauskaite, (2014) found that crowd-sourcing can generate value for almost all marketing-related activities including product development, promotion and advertising or marketing research. This research effort, therefore, concluded that crowd-sourcing influences organizational success of airline firms which is indicated in their profitability and relative sales volume.

**User Co-Design and Organizational Success**

The test result of hypothesis three (H03) was performed using the Spearman’s rank order correlation coefficient. The result showed a correlation coefficient of \( r = 0.609 \) between user co-design (UCD) and profitability (PT). The coefficient of determination \( r^2 = 0.37 \) indicated that 37% of profitability (PT) can be influenced by user co-design (UCD). The significant value of 0.000 \( (p<0.05) \) is an indication of a strong positive relationship. Judging from the result revealed by the analysis, there is a strong positive relationship between user co-design (UCD) and profitability (PT).

Hypothesis (H04) shows the existence of a strong positive relationship between user co-design (UCD) and relative sales volume (RSV) by the correlation coefficient result of \( r = 0.660 \). The coefficient of determination \( r^2 = 0.44 \) indicated that 44% of relative sales volume (RSV) can be influenced by user co-design (UCD). Based on this understanding, there is a strong positive relationship between user co-design (UCD) and relative sales volume (RSV). Hypotheses (H03) and (H04) which revealed a strong positive relationship has support from Mager (2009) who emphasized the importance of involving users in production processes based on the level of acumen they have gathered over time. According to him, co-design can offer benefits to service design both in commercial sectors, such as financial services, and in not-for-profit sectors, such as health care.

User co-design is a customer oriented collaboration that enhances organizational trust and commitment between the customer and the firm. Collaborative co-design can foster creativity and lead to better choices of individual customers who forced to select from a high variety of choices, (Franke and Shaw, 2003; von Hippel and Tyre, 1995). A study carried out by Kujala (2003) revealed that customer satisfaction among other things is associated with collaborative co-design. Based on these arguments, we conclude that user co-design, to a great extent, has a strong positive relationship with organizational success of airline firms which is indicated in their profitability and relative sales volume.

**D. Conclusion**

The influence of customer integration practices on organizational success is through its dimensions, namely: crowd-sourcing and user co-design which is shown in the organization’s profitability and relative sales volume.

User co-design has strong influence on relative sales volume and profitability, just like Crowd-sourcing which has a significant influence on the organization in terms of profitability and relative sales volume.

**Recommendations**

Our findings/conclusion showed that all two dimensions of customer integration practices used in this study were found to have significant relationship with organizational success of airline firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This obviously showed that customer integration practice is an essential marketing strategy that could be used to gain strong competitive advantage in the aviation industry, and therefore, shouldn’t be left to chance. We therefore recommend as follows:

(i) **Airline firms in Port Harcourt that crave competitive dominance in the aviation industry should, as a matter of strategic importance, adopt customer integration as tool for competitive positioning.**

(ii) **To achieve exceptional distinctive competence in the aviation industry, management of airline firms should focus mainly on harnessing information obtained from the ingenuity of the crowd and also, involve the users in production and service delivery processes to maximize customer intelligence and know-how.**
(iii) There should be less concentration of energy on information convergence. However, only information that can be useful for organizational growth should be harnessed.

(iv) Considering the fact that not all information gathered from the crowd are authentic, management of these airline firms should, as a matter of necessity, devise means of filtering only useful information that can be implemented and used for organizational success. Such information should either emanate as feedback from customers or be filtered through them before use.

(v) End user involvement has been identified as a panacea towards the attainment of a competitive edge in the aviation sector. Therefore, customers who are custodians of some vital and competitive insights should be treated with maximum respect and dignity so as to explore their potentials.

(vi) To achieve improved organizational success, airline firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State must be willing to view their passengers as part of the employee.

References


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Normann, R. (2001). Reframing Business: When the Map Changes the Landscape,


**Tables and Figures**

**Analysis of Study Variables**

**Table 1 Result of Correlations Analysis Between Crowd-sourcing and Profitability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
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<td>CS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.704***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
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<td>0.000</td>
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<td><strong>N</strong></td>
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**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017*

**Table 2 Result of Correlation Between Crowd-sourcing and Relative Sales Volume**

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<td>CS</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.669***</td>
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<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
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**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017*

**Table 3 Result Showing Correlation Between User-Co-Design and Profitability**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
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<td><strong>Spearman's rho</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Correlation Coefficient</strong></td>
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<td>0.609***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sig. (2-tailed)</strong></td>
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<td>0.000</td>
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<td><strong>N</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017*
Table 4: Result Showing Correlation Between User Co-Design and Relative Sales Volume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>UCD</th>
<th>RSV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UCD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.660**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.660**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017

Table 5 Result Showing Correlation Between Crowd-sourcing, User Co-Design, and Organizational Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>CS</th>
<th>UCD</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>OS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.697**</td>
<td>.718**</td>
<td>.695**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCD</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.697**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.574**</td>
<td>.664**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.718**</td>
<td>.574**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.596**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.695**</td>
<td>.664**</td>
<td>.596**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017

Table 6 Result Showing Correlation Between Customer Integration Practices and Organizational Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman's rho</th>
<th>Correlation Coefficient</th>
<th>CIP</th>
<th>OS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.786**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>Correlation Coefficient</td>
<td>.786**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output version 21, on Survey Data, April 2017
Figure 1: Operational Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Customer Integration Practices and Organizational Success.