

ELECTRONIC SOURCING AND COMPETITIVENESS OF MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION FIRMS IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between electronic sourcing (e-sourcing) and competitiveness of Mobile Telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the extent to which components of e-sourcing relates to measures competitiveness (operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and market share) of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional research design. The population of the study comprised 4 mobile telecommunication firms operating in Nigeria. The sample size was the same as the population. The study respondents were 8 top management staff from each of the companies making, it a total of 32. Primary data were collected from respondents through semi-structured questionnaire designed in the Likert 5-point scale. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to test hypotheses, relying on Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 26.0. The results of the test of hypotheses showed that e-sourcing has positive and statistically significant correlation with competitiveness of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria. Thus, the study concludes that e-sourcing significantly relates to competitiveness of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria; and recommends that mobile telecommunication firms that seek to improve their competitiveness should adopt e-sourcing as a core component of their procurement operations.

Keywords: Competitiveness, customer satisfaction, e-sourcing, market share, operational efficiency

Introduction

The mobile telecommunication industry has witnessed significant evolution, primarily driven by rapid advances in technology. This evolution is particularly evident in developing regions such as Nigeria, where mobile communication has become pivotal to economic and social interactions (Adeleye, 2018). Nigeria's telecommunication industry has experienced substantial growth, influenced by various external and internal factors, including regulatory policies, market dynamics and the adoption of innovative business practices; and has seen firms struggle to achieve and maintain competitiveness in the face of rapidly changing consumer preferences and need for adaptability and resilience (Owolabi & Adebayo, 2021).

Competitiveness in the telecommunications industry is influenced by various factors, including market share, service quality, innovation and customer satisfaction (Ogbu, 2020). The dynamic nature of the telecommunications landscape, combined with increasing demand for seamless connectivity, requires firms to incorporate effective strategies that leverage technology. As telecommunications firms strive to maintain competitive edge, the role of e-sourcing becomes critical, as it not only impacts operational efficiency but also affects overall strategic positioning in the market.

The relationship between e-sourcing and competitiveness can be framed within the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, which posits that firms achieve sustained competitive advantage by leveraging their unique resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991). E-sourcing can be seen as a capability that enhances a firm's procurement function and leading to better cost management, improved supplier relationships. Studies have indicated that firms that effectively utilize e-sourcing experience improved performance metrics, including faster response times, greater agility and enhanced customer satisfaction (Kumar & Soni, 2020).

The integration of e-sourcing could provide a strategic advantage by optimizing supply chain processes, reducing operational bottlenecks, and enabling firms to respond swiftly to market demands. This study aims to explore the relationship between e-sourcing and competitiveness of mobile telecommunications firms in South-South Nigeria. By examining how e-sourcing contribute to various aspects of competitiveness, the research seeks to provide insights that may inform strategic decision-making for telecommunications firms operating in this burgeoning market.

Concept of Electronic Sourcing

E-sourcing refers to the procedure of locating possible suppliers and gathering information about their products, prices and sales conditions (Munubi et al., 2017). It also represent the practice of utilizing the internet to make informed judgments and develop strategies for acquiring products. Rai andTang (2019) view e-sourcing refers as the process of identifying, acquiring and engaging suppliers through electronic means, often leveraging online technologies to enhance procurement processes.

Madzimure et al. (2020) states that e-sourcing utilizes internet technology to identify possible suppliers, with the aim of reducing search costs associated with requesting and authorizing purchases. It is thus a robust procurement management system that offers secure sourcing solutions for enterprises. Wu et al. (2017) found that e-sourcing has both direct and indirect impact on efficiency improvements. It also guarantees transparency, broader geographical coverage, reduced transaction time, and improved pricing.

E-sourcing strategy is broadly described as a process that directs all sourcing activities toward opportunities that enable an organization achieve its long-term performance goals (Shahin & Balouei, 2022). It includes a wide range of activities involved in creating an overall strategy for sourcing, evaluating and selecting suppliers, procuring materials and managing supplier relationships. If properly structured, e-sourcing can effectively combine the core competencies of a given firm with the skills and capabilities of its suppliers (Catana et al., 2022).

E-sourcing has transformed the procurement landscape by leveraging technology to enhance efficiency, transparency and competitiveness. Organizations that effectively implement e-sourcing achieve significant cost savings and improve supplier relationships. However, overcoming inherent challenges requires careful planning, training, and investment in technology to maximize the benefits of e-sourcing.

Concept of Competitiveness

Competitiveness is the ability of an organization to perform better than its competitors and withstand competitive challenges. Competitiveness is a result of the performance of 5 factors: dependability, costs, flexibility, quality and speed in achieving superior performance over competitors in market (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2019; Slack et al., 1997). Competitiveness leads to a competitive position through the set of resources a company has (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000) based on a firm's ability to offer products that meet the quality, price and delivery requirements of customers over time (Harrigan, 2018).

Competitiveness is a critical factor for business success, as firms continuously evaluate and adapt their marketing strategies to maintain a competitive edge, staying abreast with industry trends and consumer changing preferences (Grant, 2016). Ateke and Nwiepe (2017) suggests that competitiveness guarantee renewed or entirely new approaches to achieving objectives, hence,

has been a recurring subject of discourse as business environments become increasingly complex and turbulent.

The concept competitive advantage has been analyzed from different perspectives, but in general, studies can be divided into two major literature streams, the industry based perspective or the resource based approach (Zuñiga-Collazos et al., 2019). Thus, competitiveness is a dynamic construct that is influenced by several controllable and non-controllable factors (Camison & Fores, 2015).

Hussain et al. (2015) argued that competitiveness depends on a firm's ability to perform well in relation to innovation, cost, flexibility, process, delivery and quality. In the view of Hussain, et al (2015), Thompson and Shaker (2020) conceptualize organizational competitiveness as profitability, service quality, market share. While Alexander et al (2019) posts that competitiveness can be measured through operational efficiency, cost reduction, customer satisfaction and market focus. This study adopt operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and market share.

Operational efficiency

In today's world, businesses strive to operate in some of the most efficient and productive manner possible to meet the changes in these dynamic and unstable situations to enhance their operational performance (Al- Quran et al., 2020). Kalluru and Bhat (2020) views operational efficiency as capacity of an organization to boost asset capabilities so as to convey quality goods and services to clients. Operational efficiency often depend of skilled employees and their innovativeness, and may be seen in the few methods and techniques used to achieve the essential goal of conveying quality products to clients within the most cost-effective and opportune way (Neil, 2019).

Seth et al. (2020) found that a firm's efficiency positively impacts its performance. Improvements in operational efficiency generally result in cost reduction, thereby strengthening a company's financial stability (Zhang & Huo, 2012). Operational efficiency can be assessed by comparing operational outcomes to five fundamental performance indicators: quality, flexibility, speed (delivery), reliability, and cost (Birkie et al., 2017). Operational efficiency is frequently accomplished by streamlining operations to align with changing market forces in a more cost-effective way.

Kumar and Harms (2014) narrates that if an organization maintain high levels of efficiency, then it should be able to generate greater profit per project with the same resources. Operational efficiency is critical to firms as it enable them offer competitive prices to customers (Forsund, 2017). Efficiency in an organization's operation relates to optimum utilization of resources. Firms with high operational efficiency will likely perform better in today's competitive markets (Lee et al., 2019). According to Habib et al. (2022) and Wu et al. (2014), inefficient use of resources can cause poor performance in industries.

Customer satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction is about the relationship between the customers, products and the providers of the market offering(s) (Cengzi, 2010). Satisfaction is consumer's judgment that a product provided or is providing a pleasurable experience (Paul et al., 2016). Regardless of the type of business, industry, or products and services being sold, customers remain the most vital assets of any organization. Kabu and Soniya, (2017) submit that fulfilled customers are

scarce resources because they purchase more and network to reach other prospects by sharing positive experiences

Nwikinaka and Ofori (2024) see customer satisfaction as a personal feeling of either pleasure or disappointment resulting from the evaluation of services provided by an organization to an individual's expectations. Kotler and Armstrong (2013) indicate that customer satisfaction is a product's perceived performance relative to customers' expectations. In other words, when the product perform below customers' expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. However, Nwikinaka and Poi (2024) argue that customer satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors, including resource constraints, management perceptions of consumer expectations and the firm's service quality specifications.

Customer satisfaction is a critical aspect of any business that aims to build and maintain a loyal customer base. It is a widely researched topic in marketing and business. Customer satisfaction is typically viewed from a disconfirmation perspective, where customer satisfaction is a function of expected and perceived quality. However, this conceptualization must account for many factors affecting customer satisfaction, including customer attributes, behaviors, and expectations

Market share

Didia and Nwokah, (2015) define market share as the percentage of the entire available market that a firm serves. It expresses the firm's revenue made from customers. It is calculated by taking the company's sales over the period and dividing it by the industry sales over the same period market share. Increase in market share allow a company to achieve greater scale with its operations and improve profitability. A company can try to expand its share of the market, either by lowering prices, using advertising, or introducing new or different products. In addition, it can also grow the size of its market share by appealing to other audiences or demographics.

Changes in market share have a larger impact on the performance of companies in mature or cyclical industries where there is low growth (Hayes, 2016). Companies use market share to ascertain the performance of the organization and struggles involved. Market share is the sales of the company relative to other competitors in the market. Market share represents the percentage of a market's total sales that is earned by a particular company over a stipulated time period. Market share is the comparison of a company's total sales in relation to the total industry sales, usually in a particular country or region over a specific period (Denis, 2017).

Market share represents the percentage of an industry or market's total sales that is earned by a particular company over a specified time period. The firm's performance relative to competitions can be measured by the proportion of the market that the firm is able to capture. Market share is the percentage of proportion of the total available market or the market segment that is being served by a company.

E-Sourcing and Competitiveness

Singh and Malhotra (2023) assessed the impact of e-sourcing on competitiveness and found that e-sourcing directly correlates with enhanced overall competitiveness, driven by cost efficiency and improved supplier integration. Choudhury and Wu (2023) studied e-sourcing and its role in enhancing supplier relationships. The study concludes that e-sourcing fosters better supplier relationships, which are crucial to competitive advantage in supply chain management.

Similarly, Ozturk and Dutton (2022) studied the impact of e-sourcing on procurement efficiency found that e-sourcing cut procurement cycle time by 40% and reduce procurement cost by 30%.

The study concluded that by improving procurement efficiency, e-sourcing enhances overall firm competitiveness by allowing more resources to be allocated to strategic initiatives. Likewise, Rehman and Ali (2021) examined e-sourcing impact on firm performance using a qualitative approach. The research indicated that e-sourcing leads to increased cost savings, improved supplier relationships, and enhanced decision-making capabilities.

In addition, Gunasekaran and Ngai (2021) examined e-sourcing in supply chain management and found that e-sourcing enhances agility of business processes, leading to improved responsiveness to market changes and customer demands. The study concludes that firms that effectively leverage e-sourcing technologies can maintain a competitive edge by adapting swiftly to new challenges and opportunities. More so, Isaac and Robert (2015) investigated the function of strategic sourcing on performance of Kenya public procurement. The study established strategic sourcing as a tool of supply management which delivers effective reductions of cost as well as other benefits.

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- HO₁: E-sourcing does not significantly relate to operational efficiency of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria.
- HO₂: E-sourcing does not significantly relate to customer satisfaction of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria.
- HO₃: E-sourcing does not significantly relate to market share of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria.

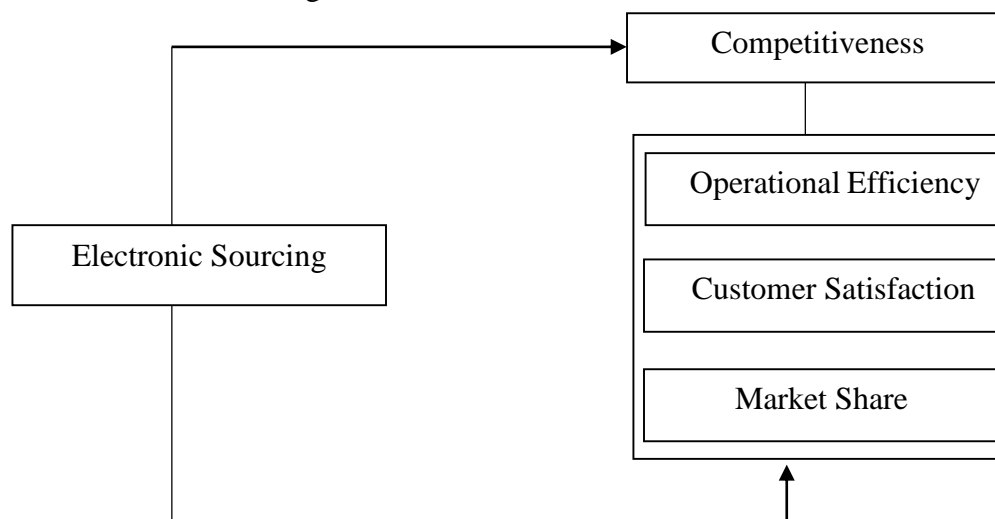


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework on relationship between electronic sourcing and competitiveness of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria.

Source: Pan, W., & Li, X. (2016).

Theoretical Foundation

This study is founded on dynamic capability theory (DCT) which seeks to explain how organizations can leverage internal and external resources to adapt to rapidly changing environments and sustain competitive advantage (Teece, 2007). DCT emphasizes the importance of adaptability in response to market changes. Mobile telecommunications firms operating in South-South Nigeria must be capable of swiftly reacting to shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancements and regulatory changes. The implementation of e-sourcing processes enhances firms' understanding of market dynamics and consumers behaviour, allowing them to adjust their strategies accordingly. Firms that can develop capabilities to conduct electronic auctions more effectively could better align their service offerings with market demands.

DCT emphasizes forming collaborative partnerships to enhance competitive advantage. Firms might establish partnerships with local content providers and technology firms through e-sourcing platforms. Such collaborations can lead to the co-creation of value and improved service offerings tailored to local consumers, thus fostering greater customer loyalty (Gulati, 1998). As firms share resources and knowledge, they enhance their collective dynamic capabilities, enabling them to respond better to market opportunities.

Methodology

This study investigated the relationship between e-sourcing and competitiveness of mobile telecommunication firms in South-South Nigeria. The study adopted cross-sectional research design. The population of the study comprised 4 mobile telecommunication firms operating in South-South Nigeria as enlisted in Finelib.com (Nigeria Directory and Search Engine, 2025). The sample size was 4 mobile telecommunication firms. The study respondents were 8 top management staff from each of the companies, making it a total of 32 management staff of the mobile telecommunication firms. Primary data were collected from the respondents through semi-structured questionnaire designed in the Likert 5-point scale. The primary data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses. The analysis were done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 26.0. Table 1 presents a summary of the result of test of reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis of Items on All Variables

Variables	Cronbach coefficient alpha	Number of items
Electronic sourcing	0.766	3
Operational efficiency	0.829	3
Customer satisfaction	0.846	3
Market share	0.853	3

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The Cronbach coefficient alpha is a measure of the average inter-item correlation within a scale with Nunally (1977) recommending a correlation threshold of 0.7 as sufficient to show reliability.

Data Analysis and Results

Electronic Sourcing and Firm's Competitiveness

The relationship between e-sourcing and competitiveness is shown in this section. Three correlation analyses were conducted to assess the relationship between e-sourcing and measures of competitiveness - operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and market share.

Table 2: Correlation between e-sourcing and operational efficiency

		E-sourcing	Operational Efficiency
E-sourcing	Pearson Correlation	1	.559**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	30	30
Operational Efficiency	Pearson Correlation	.559**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	30	30

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

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.559 and the coefficient is significance (p = 0.001) means that e-sourcing significantly relates to operational efficiency. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3: Correlation between e-sourcing and customer satisfaction

		E-Sourcing	Customer Satisfaction
E-Sourcing	Pearson Correlation	1	.775**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	30	30
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.775**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	30	30

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

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The correlation coefficient (r) is 0.775 and the coefficient is significance (p = 0.001) means that e-sourcing significantly relates to customer satisfaction. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4: Correlation between e-sourcing and market share.

		E-Sourcing	Market Share
E-Sourcing	Pearson Correlation	1	.545**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	30	30
Market Share	Pearson Correlation	.545**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	30	30

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

Source: Survey Data, 2025

The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.545 and coefficient significance of (p = 0.002) means that e-sourcing significantly relates to market share. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The summary of the result of correlation tests that assessed the relationship between e-sourcing and measures of firm competitiveness shows that e-sourcing has statistically significant correlation with all the measures of competitiveness. This results support the position of Wu et al. (2017) that e-sourcing has both direct and indirect impacts on efficiency improvements. The results also align with the argument that e-sourcing enable organizations reduce spending, as well as manage procurement risk and supply market character (Costa et al., 2013).

The results of this study corroborate the report of Cao et al. (2021) that e- procurement enable organizations to encourage suppliers to compete for contracts in real-time, which can lead to reduced prices for goods and services. Additionally, automation of various procurement tasks reduces manual efforts, thus increasing the efficiency of processes (Paulraj & Chen, 2021). This is especially tenable because most e-sourcing platforms offer collaboration tools that facilitate communication between buyers and suppliers, enabling them to clarify requirements and negotiate terms more effectively (Knudsen & Svarstad, 2020).

Similarly, our findings support that of Singh and Malhotra (2023) who found that e-sourcing improve financial performance metrics; Choudhury and Wu (2023) who found that firms reported improved collaboration and communication with suppliers, translating to faster negotiations and reduced lead times and Ozturk and Dutton (2022) who found that e-sourcing cut procurement cycle times by 40% and reduce procurement costs by 30%. More so, our findings cohere with that of Rehman and Ali (2021) that e-sourcing leads to increased cost savings, improved supplier

relationships, and enhanced decision-making capabilities and Gunasekaran and Ngai (2021) that e-sourcing enhances the agility of business processes, leading to improved responsiveness to market changes and customer demands.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we conclude that e-sourcing has significant correlation with competitiveness of firms, by improving operational efficiency, raising customer satisfaction levels and enhancing market share. Thus, we recommends that mobile telecommunications companies that seek competitiveness in terms of operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and market share, should adopt e-sourcing when scouting for suppliers of required products, since e-sourcing creates not just cost-effective processes but makes the procurement more transparent and leads to more accountability.

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