

PRODUCTION ALLIANCE AND MARKETING SUCCESS OF UPSTREAM OIL AND GAS COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between production alliance and marketing success of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State. The treated production alliance unidimensional, while cost reduction, increased sales and profitability measured the dependent variable. This study adopted an explanatory research design with a correlational method of investigation. The population of this study comprised eleven (11) quoted upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State. A census approach was adopted to administer three copies of questionnaire to Marketing Managers, Operations Managers, and Production Managers of the eleven (11) quoted upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State, making a total of thirty-three (33) respondents. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the data set, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) was adopted to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of statistical packages for social science version 25.0. The findings of the study revealed statistically positive and significant relationships between production alliance and marketing success. Based on the findings, the study concluded that production alliance has a positive significant relationship with marketing success of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State. The study recommended that managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should deepen production alliances to achieve cost efficiency; managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should collaborate in production to increase sales performance; managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should enhance production partnerships to boost profitability.

Keywords: Cost advantage, cost reduction, marketing success, product alliance, profitability

Introduction

The upstream oil and gas industry in Nigeria is a major driver of economic growth, with Rivers State serving as a critical hub for petroleum exploration and production (Akpan et al., 2024). The oil and gas industry contribute significantly to growth in gross domestic product (GDP), revenue generation, job creation, improved standard of living, and many more (Chukwuemeka, & Poi, 2023; Mondesir & Yebrou, 2024). This sector is characterized by high capital investment, advanced technological requirements, and volatile market conditions. Additionally, high production costs limit firms' ability to price competitively, making it difficult to effectively and efficiently achieve its marketing goals and objectives in a price-sensitive market (Adewuyi & Oyejide, 2012).

Furthermore, oil and gas sector is constrained by high capital intensity, fluctuating global oil prices, a weak technological base, and operational inefficiencies (Adewuyi & Oyejide, 2012). These challenges are exacerbated by the region's socio-political complexities, including insecurity, community restiveness, pipeline vandalism, and environmental degradation (Ottih et al. 2023). Such conditions severely undermine firms' ability to meet their marketing objectives, leading to inconsistent production volumes, high operating costs, and diminished

profitability. This necessitates the adoption of more resilient business models and collaborative strategies such as production alliances (Olujobi et al., 2024).

Production alliance is a crucial dimension of strategic alliance that is defined as a strategic collaboration between two or more firms designed to enhance production efficiency and reduce operational risks (Khisa & Kariuki, 2022). These alliances facilitate cost-sharing mechanisms, infrastructure development, and knowledge transfer, which contribute to a firm's overall marketing success (Talebi et al., 2017). Scholars have attested to the fact that production alliance is a strategic tool to enhance marketing success (Emami et al., 2022). Marketing success which refers to the measure of the extent to which a firm achieves its marketing objectives based on its marketing programmes (Nwokolo & Onuoha, 2021; Chuku et al., 2025).

Despite the important role that production alliance plays in improving marketing success there is a noticeable research gap in examining the relationship between production alliance and marketing success, particularly within the context of upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

This study sought to fill the gap in literature by providing valuable insights into both academic scholarship and industry practices in the field of marketing. By clarifying the relationship production alliance and marketing success, stakeholders can have valuable insights into how to leverage strategic collaboration to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency. The study was conceptualized in fig. 1.

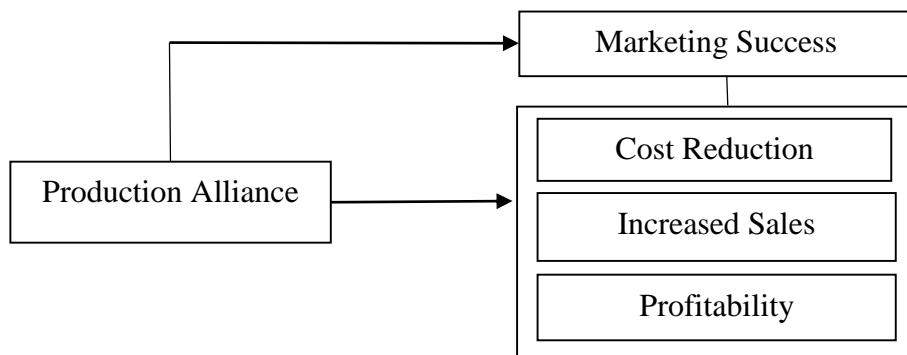


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of relationship between product alliance and marketing success of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State.

Theoretical Foundation of the Study: Resource Dependency Theory (RDT)

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) in RDT argue that firms are not self-sufficient and must form strategic relationships to access essential resources, reduce uncertainty, and enhance their competitive advantage. Later studies expanded on this theory by emphasizing how firms engage in alliances, joint ventures, and partnerships to secure vital inputs, reduce operational risks, and improve market positioning (Hillman et al., 2009). In industries characterized by high resource requirements, such as upstream oil and gas, RDT provides a useful framework for analyzing why firms form production alliances to achieve marketing success.

Applying RDT to this study, production alliances serve as a resource acquisition strategy that directly impacts marketing success in the upstream oil and gas sector. Firms that form alliances with established players or technologically advanced partners can leverage these relationships to optimize production efficiency, reduce operational costs, and penetrate new markets (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Additionally, by securing reliable access to capital, supply chains, and regulatory backing, firms can improve their sales performance and brand reputation. In the Nigerian oil and gas industry, where market volatility, regulatory uncertainties, and high

Concept of Production Alliance

In the high-stakes and capital-intensive domain of upstream oil and gas operations, firms are persistently confronted with immense geological uncertainties, infrastructural limitations, environmental sensitivities, and high breakeven costs (Zu-Xin et al., 2021). These challenges often make it unfeasible for a single company to independently undertake exploration, drilling, and production activities, especially in marginal or technically complex fields. To overcome these operational constraints and to maximize resource recovery, many upstream firms establish production alliances, wherein firms share physical assets, technical expertise, and operational responsibilities to jointly carry out exploration and production (E&P) tasks (Oladimeji & Adewale, 2023; Dosunmu & Okwu, 2020).

A production alliance is a non-equity or equity-based cooperative arrangement in which two or more independent firms collaborate on the planning, execution and management with a view to reduce costs, mitigate risks, and enhance productivity (Talebi et al., 2017). According to Khisa and Kariuki (2022), a production alliance involves pooling technological capabilities, physical infrastructure, and human resources to facilitate efficient development and resource extraction. Gonçalves et al. (2015) emphasize that such alliances foster collective innovation and value creation by enabling firms to jointly develop or optimize production technologies, reservoir management techniques, and safety systems.

Inkpen and Moffett (2011) conceptualize production alliances as strategic co-development arrangements where firms access each other's technical competencies, shared capital resources, and production infrastructure. This model is particularly suited to resource-abundant but infrastructure-deficient regions, where no single firm can shoulder the technical, regulatory, and financial responsibilities of production alone. In the context of Nigeria's upstream sector, where marginal fields and deepwater assets require substantial capital injection, alliances provide a mechanism for optimizing resource utilization and sharing environmental risks (Obioma & Anyanwu, 2020; Adewuyi & Oyejide, 2012).

Concept of Marketing Success

Marketing success is a measure of the extent to which a firm achieves its marketing objectives based on its marketing programmes and activities and the constraints of the operating environment (Ateke & Nwulu 2018). It is a fundamental measure of a firm's ability to effectively promote its products, attract customers and achieve sustainable profitability. In highly competitive industries such as the upstream oil and gas sector, marketing success encompass cost efficiency, market penetration, customer satisfaction, and revenue growth (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Firms that achieve marketing success can enhance their brand positioning, strengthen customer retention, and improve overall business performance success is often determined by a firm's capacity to minimize costs, optimize sales performance, manage risks, and maintain consistent profitability (Obioma & Anyanwu, 2020).

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), marketing success refers to the extent to which a firm achieves its sales, customer engagement, and profitability. Similarly, Zhou (2022) defines marketing success as the realization of market-related goals such as customer satisfaction, revenue expansion, and market share growth through optimal resource deployment. Ateke and Kalu (2016) frame marketing success as the measure of how well a firm accomplishes its marketing objectives, often evaluated through output metrics such as sales volume, market

share, and brand equity. For Hamilton-Ibama and Ogonu (2021), marketing success is evident when a firm's marketing activities result in favorable outcomes like increased demand, positive brand perception, and improved competitiveness.

As observed in the reviewed literature, marketing success is a key determinant of organizational growth and competitiveness, especially in dynamic industries. Various scholarly definitions emphasize its role in customer value creation, financial performance, and market positioning, all of which contribute to sustainable business success. Its importance cannot be overstated, as firms that effectively manage their marketing strategies achieve stronger brand loyalty, increased sales, and higher profitability. In the oil and gas industry, achieving marketing success is critical for business resilience and long-term sustainability.

In line with Nwokolo and Onuoha (2021), this study adopts cost reduction, increased sales, and profitability as measures of marketing success.

Cost reduction

Ability to control costs is an imperative to business survival and growth; just as high cost of operation is harmful to profitability; and may lead to business mortality (Ateke et al., 2025). Also, cost reduction is an essential to financial stability. Cost reduction involve identifying areas where expenses can be minimized without compromising quality (Horngren et al., 2018). Firms implement cost-reduction strategies to optimize resource utilization, eliminate inefficiencies, and improve profitability.

In the face of rising production costs, fluctuating global oil prices, and increasing regulatory pressures, cost reduction has become a critical priority for firms striving for long-term growth (Obioma & Anyanwu, 2020). Effective cost management empowers businesses to achieve better pricing flexibility, enhance market competitiveness, and maximize shareholder value (Nwokolo & Onuoha, 2021).

Cost reduction constitutes a crucial measure of marketing success (Nwokolo & Onuoha, 2021). The primary objective within any organization is to ascertain the potential for realizing savings on incurred costs, including materials, labor, overheads, and related expenditures (Agburum & Adiele, 2022). According to Horngren et al. (2012), cost reduction systematically lowers expenses by improving operational processes, optimizing resource allocation, and eliminating waste. The importance of cost reduction extends across all of business performance.

Increased sales

Increased sales refer to the growth in the volume or value of goods and services sold by a business over a specific period (Sinaga et al., 2024). It is a critical measure of a firm's market performance and a key indicator of business growth and sustainability. In the upstream oil and gas sector, increased sales are particularly significant as firms operate in a highly competitive and capital-intensive environment where revenue generation depends on market demand, production efficiency, and strategic partnerships (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Sales growth is influenced by several factors, including pricing strategies, customer acquisition, product quality, and distribution channels. Firms that achieve increased sales can enhance their market share, profitability, and long-term sustainability (Zhang et al., 2024).

Scholars have defined increased sales in various ways, emphasizing its role in business success. Kotler and Armstrong (2018) define increased sales as the expansion of a firm's revenue through higher product demand, effective marketing strategies, and improved customer engagement. According to Churchill and Peter (2010), increased sales refer to a sustained

upward trend in the volume of goods or services sold, driven by customer retention and acquisition strategies. The importance of increased sales lies in its ability to drive business expansion, financial stability, and competitive advantage. Higher sales enable firms to generate more revenue, reinvest in operations, and expand market reach (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Profitability

Profitability is a fundamental goal of business ventures because the long-term survival of a business concern is closely tied to its ability and capacity to make a profit. Profit is the monetary earnings a business firm achieves after all costs associated with the operations of the firm have been deducted (Ateke & Kalu, 2016). Profitability is a fundamental measure of a firm's financial performance, reflecting its ability to generate earnings relative to its costs and expenses. It serves as a key indicator of business sustainability, growth potential, and competitive advantage in any industry (Brigham & Ehrhardt, 2019). In capital-intensive sectors such as the upstream oil and gas industry, profitability is influenced by production efficiency, market demand, cost management, and pricing strategies (Obioma & Anyanwu, 2020).

Scholars define profitability from various perspectives, focusing on financial performance metrics and strategic outcomes. Gitman and Zutter (2015) define profitability as a firm's ability to generate returns above its total costs through effective resource utilization and revenue optimization. According to Ross et al. (2021), it refers to the financial gain realized when revenues exceed operating expenses, depreciation, and taxes, thereby increasing shareholder wealth. The importance of profitability extends beyond financial gains to encompass business expansion, investment potential, and economic resilience. A highly profitable firm can reinvest in innovation, infrastructure, and market expansion, ensuring long-term competitiveness (Brigham & Ehrhardt, 2019).

Production Alliance and Marketing Success

Several empirical studies attest to the relationship between production alliance and marketing success. Khisa and Kariuki (2022) investigated effect of strategic alliances on performance of firms in the motor vehicle industry in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study established that production alliances and logistics alliances positively and significantly affect the performance of motor vehicle industry.

Likewise, Emami et al. (2022) examined the impact of strategic alliance on firm performance among small entrepreneurial firms in the telecommunications industry. The study found that strategic alliances significantly and positively impact partners' performance in terms of financial, operational, and organizational effectiveness among small entrepreneurial firms in the telecommunication sector.

Similarly, Musa (2022) looked at the roles of the partner-to-customer alliances, innovation capability, and cost reduction toward customer loyalty and competitive advantage. Data was collected from 335 respondents from the firms that have entered into alliances. The study found that strategic alliances have the highest association with cost reduction, followed by their association with innovation capability.

In addition, Ferreira et al. (2020) studied effect of strategic alliances and exploration and exploitation capabilities on innovation and new product development. The results showed that strategic alliances have a positive direct influence on innovation and new product development, mediating the exploration and exploitation by the moderating role of knowledge sharing. The

Based on the forgoing, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant correlation between production alliance and cost reduction of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant correlation between production alliance and increased sales of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant correlation between production alliance and profitability of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted an explanatory research design with a correlational method of investigation. The population of the study comprised 11 quoted upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Due to the relatively small and manageable size of the population, a census approach was adopted. Within each company, 3 respondents were purposively selected, resulting in a total 33 participants. The study utilized primary source of data, using questionnaires to gather data from respondent. To validate the research instrument, the research instrument was given to 2 professionals a department of marketing to certify that the items on the questionnaire suit the study variables. A pilot study was also conducted to assess the reliability of the instrument. The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient (see Table 1 for result). Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was adopted to test the formulated hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 25.0

Table 1: Reliability Test - Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
1.	Production Alliance	4	0.851
2.	Cost Reduction	4	0.810
3.	Increased Sales	4	0.799
4.	Profitability	4	0.834

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Analysis and Results

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Production Alliance

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Your firm utilize shared production infrastructure.	30	104	3.47	.937	.878
Your company participate in joint exploration or drilling activities with partner firms.	30	100	3.33	.844	.713
Your firm collaborate on technical operation such as well monitoring and maintenance with alliance firms.	30	102	3.40	.968	.938
Your Production timelines are aligned with partners to ensure synchronized output and resource utilization.	30	105	3.50	1.075	1.155
Valid N (listwise)	30				

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Table 2 revealed that most of the responses with respect to production alliance are on the moderate side of the Likert scale which ranges from 1 to 5. As a result of this concentration, the mean scores are all greater than 3.00. Specifically, the item "Your production timelines are aligned with partners to ensure synchronized output and resource utilization" has the highest sum of 105 and therefore the highest mean score of 3.50. This indicates that this item has the

strongest influence on the Production Alliance variable. Also, this item has the highest standard deviation of 1.075 and variance of 1.155, indicating that responses spread most in this item compared to the others.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Cost Reduction

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Your firm has experiences cost reduction in operations.	30	98	3.27	1.285	1.651
Your firm experience reduces cost of transportation and delivery.	30	99	3.30	1.343	1.803
Strategic alliances help minimize inventory holding and warehousing costs.	30	111	3.70	1.317	1.734
Marketing collaboration with other firms reduces overhead expenses.	30	109	3.63	1.474	2.171
Valid N (listwise)		30			

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Table 3 revealed that most of the responses with respect to cost reduction are on the moderate side of the Likert scale which ranges from 1 to 5. As a result of this concentration, the mean scores are all greater than 3.00. Specifically, the item “strategic alliances help minimize inventory holding and warehousing costs” has the highest sum of 111 and therefore the highest mean score of 3.70. This indicates that this item has the strongest influence on the cost reduction variable. Also, this item has a standard deviation of 1.317 and variance of 1.734, indicating that responses spread most in this item compared to the others.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Increased Sales

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Your firm achieves expanded market access through distribution and production alliances.	30	116	3.87	1.332	1.775
Resource sharing allow access to partner firm’s customer base, enhancing sales opportunities.	30	117	3.90	1.242	1.541
Your company alliances, help products reach across multiple regions for increased sales.	30	112	3.73	1.311	1.720
Collaborative branding and distribution improve product visibility and recognition.	30	110	3.67	1.348	1.816
Valid N (listwise)		30			

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Table 4 revealed that most of the responses with respect to Increased Sales are on the moderate to high side of the Likert scale, which ranges from 1 to 5. As a result of this concentration, the mean scores are all greater than 3.60. Specifically, the item “Resource sharing allow access to partner firms customer base, enhancing sales opportunities” has the highest sum of 117 and therefore the highest mean score of 3.90. This indicates that this item has the strongest influence on the Increased Sales variable. Also, this item has a standard deviation of 1.242 and variance of 1.541, indicating that responses spread most in this item compared to the others.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Profitability

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Your firm alliances directly contribute to increased net income over the past fiscal year.	30	97	3.23	.774	.599
Your firm collaborative production and marketing help firm record positive returns on investment (ROI).	30	99	3.30	.794	.631
Your firm cost-efficient marketing with partner firms helps improve your profit margins.	30	96	3.20	.887	.786
Strategic alliances ensured steady and sustainable profit growth for our firm.	30	93	3.08	.786	.618
Valid N (listwise)		30			

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Results of the analysis from the SPSS output in Table 5 revealed that most of the responses with respect to profitability are on the moderate side of the Likert scale which ranges from 1 to 5. As a result of this concentration, the mean scores are all greater than 3.00. Specifically, the item “Your firm collaborative production and marketing help firm record positive returns on investment (ROI)” has the highest sum of 99 and therefore the highest mean score of 3.30. This indicates that this item has the strongest influence on the Increased Sales variable. Also, this item has the highest standard deviation of 0.794 and variance of 0.631, indicating that responses spread most in this item compared to the others.

Table 6: Relationship between Production Alliance and Cost Reduction

		Production Alliance	Cost Reduction
Production Alliance	Pearson Correlation	1	.620**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Cost Reduction	Pearson Correlation	.620**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

Table 6 displays a correlation coefficient of 0.620 between production alliance and cost reduction, indicating a strong positive relationship between the variables. More so, the probability value (0.000) is less than the critical value (0.05), this shows that there is a significant relationship between production alliance and cost reduction. This further implies that production alliance can be used to achieve cost reduction among upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between production alliance and cost reduction of upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Table 7: Relationship between Production Alliance and Increased Sales

		Production Alliance	Increased Sales
Production Alliance	Pearson Correlation	1	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Increased Sales	Pearson Correlation	.675**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

The SPSS output on Table 7 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.675 between production alliance and increased sales, indicating a strong positive relationship between production alliance and increased sales. More so, the probability value (0.000) is less than the critical value (0.05), this shows that there is a significant relationship between production alliance and increased sales. This further implies that production alliance can be used to achieve increased sales among upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between production alliance and increased sales of upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Table 8: Relationship between Production Alliance and Profitability

		Production Alliance	Profitability
Production Alliance	Pearson Correlation	1	.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	30	30
Profitability	Pearson Correlation	.708**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	30	30

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

Source: SPSS Output of data analyses on production alliance and marketing success (2025)

The facts on Table 8 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.708 between production alliance and profitability, indicating a strong and positive relationship between production alliance and profitability. More so, the probability value (0.000) is less than the critical value (0.05), this shows that there is a significant relationship between production alliance and profitability. This further implies that production alliance can be used to improve profitability among upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State. Based on this, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between production alliance and profitability of upstream oil and gas firms in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the study a significant relationship between production alliance and cost reduction; a significant relationship between production alliance and increased sales; and a strong and positive relationship between production alliance and profitability. These results support the findings of similar studies. For instance, the findings are in alignment with the study findings of Emami et al. (2022), which found that strategic alliances significantly and positively impact partners' performance in terms of financial, operational, and organizational effectiveness among small entrepreneurial firms in the telecommunication sector.

The findings align with that of Musa (2022) that strategic alliances have the highest association with cost reduction, followed by their association with innovation capability. Furthermore, the study findings agree with the study findings of Ferreira et al. (2020) that strategic alliances have a positive direct influence on innovation and new product development, mediating the exploration and exploitation by the moderating role of knowledge sharing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the analysis and to the extent of its consistency with results of similar previous studies, we conclude that there is significant positive relationship between production alliances and marketing success of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State. Thus, production alliance contributes significantly to reducing costs, increasing sales and enhancing profitability. Consequently, we recommend that:

1. Managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should deepen production alliances to achieve cost efficiency.

2. Managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should collaborate in production to increase sales performance.
3. Managers of upstream oil and gas companies in Rivers State should enhance production partnerships to boost profitability.

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