

Competition Challenges and Prospects in the Nigerian E-Commerce Industry

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Chapter One

Introduction

According to Feather (2013), trade constitutes a fundamental facet of human existence, characterised by a continual evolution alongside human progress. Over time, the modalities of exchanging goods and services have progressively refined, rendering the process more intricate and convenient. Significantly, Change Factory (2014) noted that the advent of the internet has emerged as a transformative force, ushering in a novel era of commerce by acquainting individuals with the notion of online buying and selling. Presently, the domain of e-commerce has experienced exponential growth, with a discernible shift in consumer preferences toward the convenience of online procurement. This surge in demand has precipitated the proliferation of numerous online retail establishments worldwide, including Nigeria, all vying to capitalize on the burgeoning e-commerce landscape. As internet penetration rates continue to surge in Nigeria, the e-commerce sector is poised for sustained expansion (Business Day, 2023). Consequently, this research endeavours to scrutinize the prevailing state of the e-commerce industry in Nigeria, delving into an assessment of its extant competitive dynamics, attendant challenges, and future prospects.

Background of Study

In the wake of the emergence of [E-Commerce](#), an annual surge in sales within this industry has been evident. Based on Chevalier's (2022) study, the period spanning from 2014 to 2022 witnessed a remarkable quintupling of sales figures on a global scale, manifesting as a transition from 1.3 billion US dollars in 2014 to a substantial 5.5 billion US dollars in revenue by 2022. Moreover, the onset of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic compelled numerous enterprises to recalibrate their focus towards the digital sphere, given the regulatory constraints that rendered conventional commercial operations untenable. While several of these restrictions have since been rescinded, a considerable number of businesses continue to reap the benefits of their online endeavours, persistently engaging in E-Commerce activities, as expounded upon by (Chevalier, 2021). This serves to underscore the dynamic nature of E-Commerce as an indispensable facet of contemporary corporate functionality. It is noteworthy that while developed nations have seamlessly assimilated E-Commerce into their daily routines, the incorporation of E-Commerce practices remains a challenging endeavour for developing

nations. Presently, UNCTAD (2017) notes that the global populace is disproportionately distributed, with approximately 80 percent residing in developing nations, thereby constituting an expansive market with the potential to encompass billions of consumers. Demonstrating the shift, previously inaccessible markets are now more accessible, thanks to the impacts of globalization and ongoing advancements in information technology. The significant increase in internet usage in developing countries, rising from just 8 percent in 2005 to around 60 percent in 2021, highlights the growing desire for change among their people. This, in turn, boosts their internet access and, consequently, their engagement in E-Commerce. As a result, it's clear that this combination of factors highlights the crucial role played by E-Commerce in contemporary business practices and its potential to drive global economic change.

However, this research focuses on Nigeria because of its distinctive position in the E-Commerce arena. Despite encountering significant challenges in advancing E-Commerce in the region, Nigeria presents significant opportunities for both businesses and its local residents, as reported by Forbes Africa (2022) and Okolie & Ojomo (2020). Many African nations, Nigeria included, struggled to keep pace with recent developments, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of E-Commerce served as a lifeline for numerous businesses, and collaborative efforts and agreements like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2019 and the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States in 1975 were recently formed to promote equitable prosperity in Africa. Nigeria, being one of the most influential nations on the continent, played a central role in these initiatives, as stated by UNCTAD (2021a). According to Ejemeyovwi et al. (2019), conducting research on E-Commerce in Nigeria and offering recommendations to overcome initial obstacles are essential contributions to the ongoing development of the continent. The results of years of transformative actions are becoming increasingly apparent in Nigeria. They are experiencing a steady increase in internet usage due to consistent investments in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector. The expansion of broadband, which is becoming more accessible in Nigeria, represents a substantial investment in ICT. Furthermore, the government's implementation of various e-government services has promoted greater familiarity and regular usage among the population, thus driving the growth of the E-Commerce industry and yielding significant long-term economic benefits. The initial outcomes of these efforts are evident in the notable rise of online marketplaces like Jumia and Konga in recent years, as noted by Ibam et al. (2018). As a result, Nigeria has emerged as a pioneer in E-Commerce innovation on the African continent.

Nonetheless, the transformation of Nigeria's E-Commerce sector is still ongoing at a rapid pace. The majority of E-Commerce users fall into the younger demographic. In 2020, the market was largely dominated by electrical products (17%), travel and hospitality (22%), and health and beauty (23%). This underscores the prevalence of luxury goods in the realm of E-Commerce, while everyday items continue to be primarily sold through offline channels, as reported by Sasu (2022b). In terms of the entire population, Nigeria had approximately 26% of its population engaged in online buying in 2020, according to EcommerceDB (2021). Moreover, about 50% of the population had access to the internet in 2021, as indicated by Sasu (2021). This suggests that slightly over 50% of those with internet access in Nigeria participate in online shopping. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an economic

downturn that had a significant impact on Nigeria's economy, leading to government-imposed restrictions that forced many businesses to temporarily close. According to research conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (2021), only 15% of the surveyed businesses experienced growth during this challenging period. These resilient businesses attributed their ability to weather the storm to the effective utilization of E-Commerce solutions, highlighting the crucial role played by E-Commerce in sustaining Nigeria's economy. This observation is supported by Kemp (2022), who reported a 39% increase in internet speed and a 4.6% rise in internet penetration in the previous year. Additionally, Kemp's (2022) analysis identified two prominent online marketplaces, Konga (ranking 10th with 4.8 million unique visitors) and Jumia (ranking 18th with 1.95 million unique users), among the top 20 most frequently visited websites in Nigeria. Furthermore, Kemp (2022) noted that an increasing number of scholars have directed their research efforts toward exploring the topic of E-Commerce in Nigeria in recent years, underscoring the growing importance of E-Commerce platforms for internet users in the country.

Growth of E-commerce in Nigeria

In July 2022, Nigeria had a population of approximately 218.5 million, thereby establishing itself as the preeminent consumer market in Africa (Oxford Business Group, 2023). This demographic prominence situates Nigeria at the forefront of the e-commerce landscape within the nation. As early as 2014, when Nigeria's population was 160 million, the country already boasted a flourishing e-commerce sector, playing a pivotal role in propelling e-commerce growth throughout the African continent (World Stat, 2014). However, Mordor Intelligence (2023) suggested that the escalation in both Nigeria's population and its e-commerce sector serves as a testament to the heightened adoption of the internet within the country, facilitating convenient and accessible online commerce for the purchase of goods and services. Presently, Nigeria's e-commerce industry is experiencing substantial growth, notably catalysed by the emergence of jumia.com in 2001 (Bananda and Nwagwu, 2021). This expansion has led to the emergence of numerous online retailers such as konga.com, taafao.com.ng, kamdora.com.ng, kaymu.com.ng, cheki.com.ng, sunglasses.com.ng, ladiesshoewarehouse.com.ng, mystor.com.ng, olx.com.ng, nutrotechnologies.com.ng, tradestable.com.ng, dealdey.com.ng, oyoyo.com.ng, and many others. According to Internet World Stat (2014), there were 200,000 internet users in Nigeria in the year 2000. However, by December 31, 2016, the number of internet users had skyrocketed to 86,219,965, representing 46.1% of the total population.

Source: (Research Gate, 2017).

According to the Ministry of Communication Technology (2012), the evolution of e-commerce has exhibited rapid progress in economically developed nations since 1995. In contrast, its initial impact in Nigeria was rather modest. In the year 1999, a mere 0.16% of the Nigerian population, equivalent to approximately 200,000 individuals, had embraced internet usage. The Nigerian government, in response to this nascent digital landscape, instituted a series of strategic measures. Foremost among

these initiatives was the National Technology Policy of 2000, with the ambitious objective of positioning Nigeria as a technologically proficient nation within Africa and a prominent participant in the Information Society by the year 2005. This vision was predicated on the utilization of Information Technology (IT) as a catalyst for long-term growth and international competitiveness. The policy delineated five key domains for IT development, encompassing global competitiveness, wealth generation, poverty alleviation, and educational enhancement. Subsequently, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2001) noted that the onus for realising these objectives was delegated to government-coordinated endeavours such as the State Information Infrastructure (SII). In furtherance of these objectives, the National Information Technology Development Agency was established in 2007, building upon the foundation laid by the National Technology Policy. NITDA (2007) assumed responsibility for shaping internet usage policies and promoting its proliferation throughout the nation.

By 2010, a transformative policy shift had led to a 23.48% increase in internet adoption within Nigeria. This shift was characterized by a concerted effort to promote widespread adoption of automated processes and internet connectivity. The government's implementation of the National Information Communication Technology (ICT) policy in 2012 was a reaction to the swift evolution of the internet during that era. The primary goal of this policy was to establish Nigeria as one of the globe's top 20 economies in the distant future, as articulated by The Ministry of Communication Technology (2012). Nonetheless, Ojiako et al. (2012) noted that despite substantial gains in internet usage, Nigeria still lagged behind other nations in 2010, with internet connectivity not yet attaining the levels observed elsewhere.

Significantly, according to Nigeria Vision 2020, digitalization, including E-Commerce, was in its early stages of development (National Planning Commission, 2009). This observation is supported by data from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which indicated that E-Commerce accounted for less than 1% of in-store retail transactions in 2013. Although Nigeria had a relatively substantial internet user base at 32.9%, surpassing that of many other African countries, it held a modest rank of 101 on the 2014 UNCTAD B2C E-Commerce Index. This index takes into account factors like email accounts, credit card ownership, internet penetration, and secure server infrastructure. UNCTAD (2015) suggested that this ranking might be attributed to the full implementation of the ICT policy only in 2014 and the absence of legislative frameworks related to consumer protection and cybercrime prevention. Despite these quantitative indicators, Nigeria has established itself as a prominent player in the field of ICT on the African continent, second only to South Africa in terms of internet penetration, as reported by Gillwald et al. (2018). However, their study suggested a recent decline or plateau in internet user engagement, with approximately 29% of the younger population mainly using the internet for social interaction and educational purposes rather than for E-Commerce activities. This prevailing pattern has offered limited incentives for small enterprises to establish an online presence, as evidenced by the mere 5% of such enterprises possessing internet access. In response to these dynamics, a report by Igwe et al. (2020) showed that the government introduced the Cybercrime Law in 2015, aimed at combatting online fraud and thereby mitigating apprehensions related to e-commerce, with the overarching goal of bolstering user

participation rates.

Aim

The aim of this research is to attempt an external examination of environment, competition, challenges and prospects in the E-commerce Industry in Nigeria.

Objectives

To understand the origins and growth of Nigeria's e-commerce industry.

To investigate the external environmental elements influencing Nigeria's e-commerce industry.

To explore the challenges confronting the Nigerian e-commerce industry today.

To examine the prospects of the Nigerian E-Commerce Industry.

Research Questions

What is the current competitive landscape of the Nigerian e-commerce industry, and how has it evolved over the past decade?

What is the impact of regulatory policies and technological advancements on the competitive landscape, challenges, and future prospects of the Nigerian E-Commerce industry?

What are the key factors influencing the competitive landscape and growth prospects of the Nigerian E-Commerce industry in the context of evolving digital technologies and [consumer behaviour](#)?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Over the preceding two decades, countries, enterprises, researchers, and scholars have devoted considerable contemplation to the subject of electronic commerce, with its significance progressively amplifying. (Kumar et al., 2021). In recent years, E-Commerce has evolved and undergone varying interpretations. As stated by the OECD (2009), E-Commerce transactions refer to the trading of products or services using computer networks and specialized procedures intended for initiating and managing orders. It's important to emphasize that the use of these procedures for ordering doesn't necessarily require internet-based transactions for payment or final delivery. E-Commerce

transactions are adaptable and can involve transactions between businesses, households, individuals, government entities, and various public or private organizations, as outlined by the OECD (2011).

The OECD's definition of e-commerce aligns with Khan's (2016) perspective of how the concept of e-commerce be described. Khan's work expands the scope by delineating knowledge exchange and price comparison as distinct facets within the E-Commerce industry, a viewpoint corroborated by Müller-Hagedorn (2000), who characterizes e-commerce as a business transaction not necessarily reliant on complete electronic means. A significant milestone in the advancement of E-Commerce occurred in 1993 when the Mosaic web browser was introduced, enabling the delivery of visual content over the internet for the first time (CSI Communications, 2014). Following this, with the commercialization of the internet in 1995, there was a proliferation of E-Commerce businesses, as observed by Riehm et al. (2003). Notably, industry giants like Amazon and eBay (Riehm, 2005) emerged and prospered, largely due to the increasing prevalence of personal computers in households. This trend facilitated the growth of both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) E-Commerce. These companies have seen significant expansion, thanks to the widespread adoption of personal computers in homes, a development that has concurrently driven the growth of both B2B and B2C E-Commerce. Riehm (2005) delineates three principal variables responsible for the meteoric ascent of e-commerce during this period. Firstly, the accessibility of online marketplaces to virtually anyone with internet connectivity has paved the way for individual vendors to engage in commercial transactions. Secondly, the rapid proliferation of internet users has substantially augmented the potential customer base. Thirdly, substantial financial investments have been injected into online ventures, bestowing significant advantages upon the e-commerce sector. This economic phenomenon, as posited by Ferrera and Kessedjian (2019), culminated in online B2C sales surpassing the remarkable threshold of \$1 trillion in 2012. Notably, the expansion of internet connectivity, which in 1995 extended to approximately 45 million households, bears testament to this pervasive transformation, with the user population nearly doubling.

The classification of E-Commerce methods primarily depends on who the seller and buyer are. As explained by Schneider (2016), there are five recognized categories, including "business-to-consumer, business-to-business, transactions and business processes, consumer-to-consumer, and business-to-government" (Schneider, 2016). The most well-known variants are typically business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C), with B2B having a particularly significant impact on total sales (Schneider, 2016). Remarkably, sellers and buyers are often engaged in multifaceted E-Commerce interactions. For instance, following the assembly of products, these commodities may traverse an intricate trajectory from intermediate products in B2B commerce to eventual resale in B2C commerce to end consumers. Subsequent sections will delve into a comprehensive examination of these two principal categories, alongside an exploration of consumer-to-consumer (C2C) trade.

B2B

In this case, after assembly, finished goods may be resold to consumers in business-to-consumer

(B2C) trade after being sold by other companies as intermediate goods in B2B trade.

B2C

Schneider (2016), in a scholarly article expounded that enterprises engage in the trade of products or services directed towards individual consumers, a paradigm commonly referred to as Business-to-Consumer (B2C) commerce. This phenomenon manifests itself conspicuously when a non-commercial entity procures a product from a corporate entity, exemplified by an individual purchasing a product from a renowned entity such as Amazon, as observed in the analysis conducted by Mourya and Gupta in 2015. In the comprehensive delineation of the various categories within the domain of E-Commerce, Santos et al (2017) revealed that Business-to-Consumer (B2C) transactions attain pre-eminence in terms of sheer volume

C2C

In the realm of electronic commerce (E-Commerce), it is noteworthy that among the three primary categories, Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C) transactions represent a comparatively smaller proportion of sales. C2C transactions (Schneider, 2016), encompass the online exchange of products and services, with an exemplar being the German online marketplace "eBay Kleinanzeigen," where individuals can engage in both selling and purchasing activities. According to Schneider (2016), it is worth mentioning that C2C transactions often straddle the boundary between consumer and business interactions, thereby occasionally aligning more closely with the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) category. The contemporary landscape of E-Commerce has evolved beyond prognostications made merely three years ago, primarily catalysed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. This unforeseen event underscored the indispensability and advantages of E-Commerce on a worldwide scale. Significantly, there was a notable increase in European online retail, with a growth rate of 5% between 2019 and 2020, surpassing the average growth rate of 3% as reported by Lone et al. (2021). According to Christian Verschueren, the director of EuroCommerce, the pressure brought about by the pandemic compelled many individuals to start their own E-Commerce ventures (Lone et al., 2021).

The International Trade Administration (2021a) elucidated that COVID-19 compelled businesses to pivot towards online sales, effectively transforming them into auxiliary E-Commerce entities. Consequently, this transformation resulted in a significant 19% upswing in global E-Commerce revenue, which emerged as a lifeline for small and medium-sized enterprises. Concurrently, governments worldwide advocated increased online transactions, thereby minimizing face-to-face interactions (World Trade Organization, 2020). However, Coppola (2022) noted that this accelerated growth trajectory signifies the pandemic's role as a catalyst in the E-Commerce domain, with projections suggesting that the global E-Commerce consumer base could potentially surpass 2 billion individuals by 2020, representing over 25% of the global populace.

Anticipating the E-Commerce landscape in 2025, the German office of statistics (Statista, 2022)

forecasted a staggering 4.87 billion E-Commerce users globally, exceeding 50% of the world's population. Such a substantial presence in the E-Commerce arena significantly contributes to the ongoing expansion of the global economy (Hayakawa et al., 2021). These projections underscore the prevailing trend of E-Commerce's favourability and portend continued growth, a sentiment echoed by the National Intelligence Council, which envisions E-Commerce transcending national borders and playing an increasingly pivotal role in international trade (National Intelligence Council, 2021). Nigeria emerges as a particularly promising arena for E-Commerce growth, buoyed by its rising internet user base and, consequently, an expanding cohort of E-Commerce consumers. The untapped potential in Nigeria presents even more promising opportunities when compared to developed nations. Nnamdi Ekeh, co-CEO of Konga, acknowledges this potential and envisions a substantial growth in African E-Commerce in the coming decades (Forbes Africa, 2022). Projections indicate that Nigeria's internet penetration will steadily increase by more than 1.5% annually, reaching nearly 60% by 2026 (Johnson, 2021).

The Nigerian government has set ambitious objectives, planning to allocate \$75 billion to E-Commerce by 2025, a significant increase from \$12 billion in 2021 (International Trade Administration, 2021b). Nigeria's competitive advantage lies in its superior internet penetration and technological resources compared to other African countries (Zatonatska et al., 2019). This advantage is already evident through Nigeria's pioneering role in the "cashless economic transformation" with its digital currency, E-Naira (Forbes Africa, 2022). This growing influence positions Nigeria as a major player in the continent's economy, especially in the field of E-Commerce, promoting stronger business relationships and stimulating economic growth in neighbouring nations. For instance, as noted by NCC (2021), Nigeria aims to raise ICT standards across all member nations as the leader of the West Africa Telecommunication Regulators Assembly (WATRA), highlighting its leadership in advancing the digital landscape.

PESTLE Analysis

Political Factors

Nigeria's economic growth has encountered formidable constraints stemming from various political factors that exert significant influence upon commercial enterprises. This section undertakes an exploration of the political facets within the political PESTLE analysis framework that bear upon Nigerian firms. Within the ambit of this PESTLE analysis, the foremost political determinant impacting Nigerian firms is the pervasive issue of corruption (Lawal & Ogbu, 2015). Nigeria's endemic corruption has emerged as a formidable impediment to the nation's economic advancement and progress. A report issued by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2022), presented to former Vice President Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, extrapolates that if left unaddressed, corruption in Nigeria could potentially engender economic losses amounting to as much as 37% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the year 2030. According to Kuliya (2015), Nigeria's unfavourable standing in global corruption perception indices has discouraged international investors from channelling capital into Nigerian enterprises.

Consequently, businesses face a daunting challenge in navigating the regulatory landscape, primarily due to the paucity of transparency and governmental accountability stemming from the widespread scourge of corruption (Pestle Analysis, 2023). This, in turn, precipitates a litany of predicaments that have deleterious effects on businesses operating within the nation, including but not limited to power outages, recurrent interruptions in power supply, and mounting concerns regarding inadequate security.

Economic Factors

In 2020, Nigeria's GDP barely exceeded 430 billion US dollars. Between 2000 and 2015, the GDP consistently grew at an average rate of over 6%. However, from 2015 to 2020, factors such as a global energy crisis and the Covid-19 outbreak led to a decline in GDP. Nevertheless, the GDP started to rebound after 2020, and forecasts indicate that this growth will continue in the coming years. It's worth noting that Nigeria boasts the largest GDP on the entire African continent (World Bank, 2020). Nigeria exports more than it imports, with approximately 90% of its exports comprising oil and gas. Nigeria's imports amount to 47 billion US dollars, while its exports reach 53 billion US dollars. Ghana, a neighbouring country, stands out as one of Nigeria's significant export partners, along with India and several European nations. China is the primary trading partner, contributing to over 25% of Nigeria's imports. Additionally, imports come from the USA and India, with several notable European countries like the Netherlands and Belgium playing a role (World Integrated Trade Solution, 2019).

Nigeria's pivotal role in the development of the African continent has been acknowledged and strengthened by international investors, as foreign direct investment (FDI) has steadily increased over the past decade, recently rising from 2.3 billion US dollars in 2019 to 2.4 billion US dollars in 2020 (UNCTAD, 2021b). Despite the positive indicators related to Nigeria's GDP and FDI, inflation and unemployment rates remain relatively high, which is a concern not only for Nigeria but also for other African countries, underscoring the complexities of economic development (MarketLine, 2022). Nigeria's E-Commerce environment presents comparable encouraging data. While online sales increased by 25 to 30 percent annually from 2015 to 2019, the global Covid-19 pandemic increased them by approximately 40 percent in 2020.

Social Factors

According to Michael and Odeyemi (2017), Nigeria is situated in the African continent and stands as the most populous nation, boasting a demographic strength exceeding 218 million individuals. A significant majority of this populace, approximately 17 million people, resides within the metropolis of Lagos. Historically, Lagos held the mantle of Nigeria's capital city until 1991 when the government opted to relocate the administrative centre to Abuja. This decision was primarily motivated by Abuja's central geographic position and its comparatively lower population density. Notably, Nigeria's population exhibits a characteristic youthfulness, with an average age of 18.1 years. Unfortunately,

Nigeria faces persistent social and cultural issues arising from conflicts among various ethnic groups and tensions between Muslim and Christian communities, as reported by the United Nations Population Fund (2022). When assessing Nigeria's global development standing, one can turn to the 2019 Human Development Index (HDI) rankings, an annually compiled metric by the United Nations. The HDI takes into account various aspects of human progress, including life expectancy, educational achievements, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2019), Nigeria's HDI ranking was 161 out of 189 countries in 2019. This ranking highlights the multitude of challenges that the country faces, which serve as obstacles to sustainable development and the flourishing of E-Commerce. This ranking, while situated below those of neighbouring nations such as Niger, Chad, or Togo, serves as a stark reminder of the intricate set of difficulties facing the nation, which warrant focused attention and concerted efforts for amelioration.

Technological Factors

The Federal Ministry of Science and Technology (FMST) serves as the leading institution dedicated to promoting research and development, innovation, and technological advancement. While facing challenges in implementing its research and development initiatives and establishing strong ties with the private sector, Nigeria's technological infrastructure has undergone significant improvements. Much of this progress can be attributed to the liberalization of the telecommunications industry, as noted by FMST (2022). According to a report by MarketLine (2022), branches of the FMST have recently formed strategic partnerships with private sector entities like Huawei Technologies and Tizeti. Their overarching goal is to expand access to 4G and 5G internet services to more than 90% of the population and enhance public awareness about digital literacy. In the context of Nigeria's growing E-Commerce sector, the increasing rates of internet and mobile penetration are of utmost importance. As indicated by a comprehensive study conducted by Kemp (2022), Nigeria had an impressive 109.2 million internet users as of January 2022, accounting for approximately 51% of the total population. This number has been steadily rising in recent years, and forecasts suggest continued growth in the years to come. Additionally, Kemp (2022) opined that the study underscores that approximately 82% of the population enjoys mobile accessibility, further underscoring the nation's robust digital connectivity.

Legal Factors

The primary objective of the prevailing legal framework resides in the establishment of a regulatory council tasked with assuming the roles of mediator, negotiator, and conciliator in mediating disputes between consumers and service providers. Section 6 of the aforementioned legislative Acts delineates specific mandates, including the expeditious resolution of consumer grievances through negotiation, mediation, and conciliation processes, the pursuit of strategies to eliminate hazardous goods from the market while compelling transgressors to substitute these products with safer alternatives, the routine publication of a catalogue detailing products prohibited, withdrawn, subject to multiple

restrictions, or not authorized by governmental authorities, and the imposition of obligations upon offending companies, firms, trade associations, or individuals to indemnify affected consumers or communities against the adverse consequences of inherently perilous or destructive technologies. However, Lawyard (2017) noted that it is worth acknowledging that, notwithstanding the commendable attributes of the Act, it exhibits certain limitations in addressing the intricate challenges inherent in e-commerce transactions.

Environmental Factors

Business enterprises operating within the Nigerian context confront notable implications stemming from the critical environmental dimension of climate change. Furthermore, the nation frequently grapples with extreme meteorological phenomena such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, exerting multifaceted repercussions upon commercial entities. Notably, in the year 2019, it was reported that floods led to the displacement of approximately 1.9 million Nigerian citizens (Future Learn, 2021). Another environmental facet that significantly impacts businesses in Nigeria pertains to pollution, specifically the deleterious effects of the nation's notorious air quality on public health. The ramifications of pollution extend to various aspects of business operations.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Research Philosophy

The significance of research philosophy constitutes an integral component within the realm of research endeavours. Saunders et al. (2009) define this concept as a comprehensive framework encompassing beliefs and assumptions concerning the genesis of knowledge. Similarly, Bauer (2017) characterizes it as the guiding principle guiding the acquisition, analysis, and application of research data. Furthermore, Mauthner (2020) noted that these research philosophies offer theoretical frameworks that delineate the nature of the reality under investigation in research and the methods through which knowledge pertaining to this reality is formulated and substantiated. Since research philosophy inherently encompasses ontological and epistemological dimensions, it holds paramount importance in comprehending business phenomena. Furthermore, the fundamental notions of reality and knowledge have a direct bearing on the methodology employed in a study, dictating the manner in which the subject is explored and suggesting optimal approaches to data collection (Fleetwood, 2005). The fundamental ontological stance of a study elucidates its perspective on reality, the underlying actuality, and the nature of information, as previously expounded. It acknowledges the validity of both realistic and nominalist ontologies, where the latter posits the absence of an objective truth, given that reality is shaped by human perceptions and is contingent on these conceptual

constructs, while the former upholds a singular, fact-based truth. Additionally, Easterby-Smith (2018) presents intermediate ontologies such as internal realism and relativism.

In the context of this research, a relativist ontology is adopted, embracing the multiplicity of interpretations characteristic of a nominalist ontology. However, Easterby-Smith (2018) opined that relativism presupposes that numerous distinct realities and truths exist contingent upon the perspective taken, thereby suggesting the malleability of reality and truth, contingent upon individual experiences and presumptions. This research opts for a relativist ontology, as it facilitates the exploration of diverse perspectives on matters pertaining to Nigerian e-commerce, accommodating various viewpoints and conceptions regarding these issues. However, this choice aligns with social constructionism as an epistemological framework, as it employs a relativist ontological approach (Easterby-Smith, 2018). According to social constructionism, an individual's beliefs and experiences shape their perception of the world, as illustrated by Berger and Luckmann (1967) through the example of differing interpretations of freedom. This perspective underscores the need for researchers to meticulously attend to participants' assertions, preconceptions, and the processes through which these conclusions are reached. In order to fathom the intricacies of reality, it is essential to unveil interconnections, and in drawing inferences, one must conscientiously consider how the respondent's personal history and experiences influence their conception of reality and knowledge.

Furthermore, Easterby-Smith (2018) also noted that the integration of prior literature and secondary data into the acquired data is instrumental in contextualizing information. To achieve this, this research employs surveys as a means to gain more understanding of this research. This approach aims to facilitate the identification of correlations between the perspectives of diverse respondents and the linkages between problems and their potential solutions.

Research Design

In accordance with Charmaz's assertion (2006), the foundation of a robust study lies in the acquisition of rich data characterized by its detail, focus, and comprehensiveness. To elucidate patterns and construct overarching frameworks that elucidate the fundamental causes of issues under investigation, it is imperative that the collected data encapsulate the diverse personal experiences and perspectives of a broad spectrum of survey respondents. In the realm of data collection, researchers are presented with a range of methodological alternatives, including direct observations, questionnaires, and the utilization of secondary data. Charmaz (2006) further noted that the amalgamation of multiple research methodologies facilitates a holistic comprehension of the subject matter, accommodating diverse viewpoints and opinions.

Considering the nature of this research, which aims to obtain in-depth and detailed insights from participants while maintaining a structured framework, surveys have been chosen as the primary method for gathering data in this study. Surveys serve as the primary tool for investigation, thereby

helping to systematically and consistently extract responses from participants (Story and Tait, 2019). The core concept of surveys involves presenting participants with a predetermined set of questions, while also affording them the opportunity to contribute additional comments and perspectives through open-ended response sections. This methodology encourages participants to freely express their viewpoints and offers researchers the chance to delve into specific issues or concerns pertinent to the research. Through the use of structured questions, Ponto (2015) noted that surveys facilitate a thorough exploration of the research topic and facilitate the collection of valuable data that aligns with this study's objectives.

Sampling Strategy

Considering the specific scope of this research investigation, potential participants needed to fulfil specific prerequisites. The primary requirement centred on the chosen respondents' proficiency in the Nigerian E-Commerce market and its competitive environment. Therefore, participants were anticipated to have substantial expertise, which could be gained from employment in consulting firms or from offering services to stakeholders in the Nigerian E-Commerce sector, such as payment or logistics services. Alternatively, candidates could be employees or executives affiliated with prominent entities operating within the market. The study participants encompass employees affiliated with various e-commerce organizations, notably Jumia, Konga, OLX, and Slot, in addition to proprietors of online retail establishments operating on these platforms. The selection criteria are a deliberate choice intended to ensure participants possession of the requisite expertise essential for the effective exploration of this research.

Easterby-Smith (2018) characterizes this approach to participant selection as purposive sampling, highlighting its alignment with specific eligibility criteria. This approach ensures that the ten participants selected maintain direct and substantive connections with the realm of eCommerce, precluding the inclusion of individuals lacking pertinent experience. To bolster the study's validity, two aspects will be rigorously addressed, recognizing that both sampling methodologies employed constitute non-probability sampling designs, thereby precluding the calculation of precise inclusion probabilities. Consequently, it is imperative to mitigate potential sources of bias in the research process.

Data Collection

In this study, the data collection approach employed is the survey research method. A survey tool, in the form of a questionnaire, will be created to gather structured data that are in line with the research goals, as outlined by Ponto (2015). It will include a series of questions addressing key aspects of the Nigerian e-commerce industry, focusing on competition, challenges, and prospects. The questions will be carefully crafted to obtain quantitative responses and insights. A survey will be conducted by distributing online questionnaires through google forms to 10 participants who work or has affiliations within the Nigeria e-commerce sector. This will serve as a sample that represents various standpoints

within the e-commerce industry. The survey questionnaire will be distributed electronically to the selected participants. Furthermore, electronic distribution methods such as email and online survey platforms will be utilised for efficiency and ease of data collection. The collected data will then be reviewed for completeness and accuracy to ensure the quality and reliability of responses. Any missing or inconsistent responses will be addressed during the data validation process.

Data Analysis

According to Gibbs (2015), data analysis is a crucial component of research, shaping how collected data is transformed into meaningful insights. In this study, which focuses on examining the Nigerian E-Commerce sector, the chosen data analysis methodology plays a vital role in unravelling the complex dynamics within this industry. Before delving into the specifics of data analysis, it is essential to highlight the utmost importance of thorough data preparation. This initial phase involves rigorous data cleaning, verification, and addressing any missing values. Preserving data integrity is of paramount significance because any inaccuracies or inconsistencies in the dataset have the potential to undermine the credibility of subsequent analytical efforts.

In this research, data analysis follows a quantitative framework, with statistical techniques serving as the primary methodological approach. The analysis process begins with the application of descriptive statistics, a fundamental step that provides an initial overview of the distribution and characteristics of key variables. Consistent with a report by Sbert et al. (2021), metrics such as mean, median, standard deviation, and range offer a quantitative snapshot of the challenges, competition, and opportunities that define the Nigerian E-Commerce industry.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical considerations inherent in any research underscore the significance of an ethical and respectful approach to all involved parties. Consequently, a set of ethical principles has been carefully integrated into the research design to maintain the highest standards of integrity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Before commencing with data collection, a fundamental ethical step involves explicitly seeking permission from the participants, as emphasized by Holloway and Galvin in 2016. This permission serves as the foundation for promoting open communication and transparent collaboration.

The questionnaire was intentionally crafted to exclude any personal identifiers, such as names or other distinctive information. This deliberate choice ensures the discreet handling of participants' data, serving as a testament to the commitment to preserving participant confidentiality and highlighting the dedication to treating their insights with the utmost respect and discretion.

Chapter Four

Analysis of Data

Through the survey approach, responses were gathered from 10 employees working in the field of E-Commerce. The survey was designed to be semi-structured to align with the research topic. We will utilize quantitative data analysis methods to examine the survey responses. This involves the use of statistical software, such as SPSS, to calculate descriptive statistics and frequency distributions of the data in order to identify any relationships or patterns. The outcomes derived from the survey will be thoroughly documented, presenting key insights into the competitive landscape, challenges, and opportunities within the Nigerian E-Commerce industry. This report will provide valuable data for the research and contribute to a deeper understanding of the current dynamics within the industry.

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Responses

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
1.The Nigerian ecommerce industry has experienced exponential growth so far	10	3.90	1.370	Agree
2.The Nigerian ecommerce industry is faced with many challenges	10	4.40	0.966	Agree
3.The Nigerian Government has played a role in the growth of the Nigerian e-commerce industry so far	10	2.30	0.949	Disagree
4.The Nigerian Government will also play key role in the sustenance of the Nigerian e-commerce industry	10	3.50	1.354	Agree
5.The state of Nigeria economy has an effect on the growth of e-commerce country in Nigeria	10	4.50	0.972	Agree
6.The Nigerian population has had an effect in the growth of its e-commerce industry	10	4.00	1.155	Agree
7. An increase in internet usage will have a positive impact on the e-commerce industry in Nigeria	10	4.60	0.516	Agree

8.The Nigerian ecommerce industry is saturated and thus highly competitive	10	3.00	1.333	Agree
9.The Nigerian ecommerce industry will become more competitive in the future	10	4.20	0.919	Agree
10.Social factors such as tribal and religious tension will have a negative impact on the Nigerian e-commerce industry	10	3.10	1.449	Agree

Discussion of Findings

The table above presents descriptive statistics for each question in the survey, providing valuable insights into the responses of the 10 participants.

The first item on the table displayed a Mean of 3.90, and Std. Deviation of 1.37. On average, participants somewhat agree that the industry has experienced significant growth. The standard deviation also indicates a moderate variability in responses, suggesting some participants strongly agreed while others disagreed.

According to Matthew et al. (2021), Nigeria has a burgeoning population that is also familiar with the use of the internet, smartphones and PC. This is one of the reasons that have facilitated the growth of e-commerce in Nigeria. Hence, based on the survey responses, Nigeria has truly experienced growth in this industry and the future is bright for the Nigerian E-Commerce Industry. As internet usage increases, it is anticipated that the Nigerian e-commerce market would become more competitive. The country's e-commerce business has been significantly fuelled by Nigeria's expanding Internet usage. More Nigerians are now able to make connections to online platforms and take part in different e-commerce activities because of rising smartphone use and internet access. Based on a report by Mordor Intelligence (2023), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) observed that there were 88.3 million 3G/4G mobile broadband subscriptions in Nigeria as at November 2022.

Source: *(Mordor Intelligence, 2023)*

The second item “The Nigerian e-commerce industry is faced with many challenges” has a mean of 4.40 and a standard deviation of 0.966. Participants, on average, strongly agree that the industry faces numerous challenges. However, the low standard deviation suggests that participants generally had consistent responses on this question. This finding aligns with some existing literature, which highlights several key challenges that the Nigerian e-commerce industry has encountered. A study by David-West (2016) emphasizes the inadequate transportation infrastructure and logistics systems in Nigeria as a challenge facing the Nigerian e-commerce industry, which can lead to delays in product deliveries and increased costs for e-commerce companies. Poor road networks and traffic congestion

can hinder the smooth operation of e-commerce businesses. Furthermore, a report by Sorooshian et al. (2022) highlights the challenges associated with last-mile delivery, including navigating Nigeria's diverse terrain, addressing security concerns, and managing delivery costs. These challenges can impact the overall customer experience in the e-commerce sector.

Item 3 on the survey garnered a mean of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 0.949 which shows that participants disagree that the government has played a significant role. The standard deviation indicates variability, with some participants strongly disagreeing while others were neutral or agreed. This reflects a complex relationship between the government and the e-commerce sector in Nigeria. A report by Lawal and Ogbu (2015) points out that the Nigerian e-commerce sector has historically received limited government support and regulatory clarity. The absence of tailored policies and incentives for the industry has hindered its growth. Furthermore, the Nigerian government's taxation policies have been a subject of concern for e-commerce businesses. The imposition of Value Added Tax (VAT) on digital transactions has led to debates about the impact on the sector.

The responses gotten from the fourth item has a Mean of 3.50 and Std. Deviation: 1.354. This statistic demonstrates that, on average, the participants hold a moderately favourable view regarding the government's role in sustaining the industry. Additionally, the standard deviation indicates a range of responses, with some participants strongly agreeing while others disagree. The Nigerian government indeed plays a pivotal role in supporting the Nigerian E-Commerce industry. The government has already taken steps to combat E-Commerce fraud by passing the Cybercrime Bill into law in 2015. Beyond simply criminalizing and addressing online fraud, the Cybercrimes Act of 2015 also specifies penalties and establishes the institutional framework for enforcement. Its aim is to protect electronic commercial transactions, corporate copyrights, domain names, and other electronic signatures within Nigeria. However, it's worth noting that internet fraud remains a significant issue in Nigeria, and these challenges persist (International Trade Administration, 2023).

Regarding Item 5, which states "The condition of Nigeria's economy impacts the expansion of the E-Commerce sector in Nigeria," the data indicates a Mean score of 4.50 and a Standard Deviation of 0.972. Based on this outcome, participants strongly agree that the state of the economy affects industry growth. The standard deviation also indicates relatively consistent responses, with most participants strongly agreeing. Some existing literatures can attest to this. According to Ramya et al. (2016), the state of the economy directly influences consumer spending habits. During periods of economic growth, consumers often have more disposable income to spend online. Conversely, economic downturns can lead to reduced consumer spending, affecting e-commerce sales. Nonetheless, Ajao et al.'s (2019) research emphasizes that income levels also significantly influence the market potential for E-Commerce in Nigeria. Higher income levels are associated with increased online purchasing power. Additionally, the stability of macroeconomic factors, such as inflation and exchange rates, can impact the cost structure and pricing strategies of e-commerce businesses (Thalassinou and Thalassinou, 2018). Economic instability may lead to pricing challenges for both consumers and businesses.

The sixth survey item has a Mean of 4.00 and Std. Deviation of 1.155. This shows that most participants agree that the population has positively influenced industry growth. This finding is supported by relevant literature that underscores the significance of the population in driving e-commerce growth in Nigeria. Nigeria possesses a substantial and swiftly expanding population, a pivotal factor contributing to the expansion of the E-Commerce sector. A study by Ramzy and Eldahan (2016) highlights that the sheer size of the consumer base presents substantial market opportunities for e-commerce businesses. Furthermore, Nigeria has a predominantly youthful population, with a high percentage of tech-savvy young adults. This demographic profile is conducive to the adoption of online shopping and digital payment methods (Benny et al., 2023).

Similarly, the seventh survey item has a Mean of 4.60 and Std. Deviation of 0.516. This shows that participants strongly agree that increased internet usage will benefit the industry. Furthermore, the low standard deviation indicates a high level of agreement among participants. This consensus among participants is supported by existing literature that emphasizes the critical role of internet penetration and usage in driving the growth of the e-commerce sector in Nigeria. Chawla and Kumar (2022) noted that the proliferation of mobile internet access, especially through smartphones, has made it more convenient for consumers to browse e-commerce platforms and make online purchases. This convenience factor has contributed to the growth of the sector. Furthermore, e-commerce transactions heavily rely on digital payment methods. As internet usage increases, more consumers are inclined to use digital payment solutions, further fuelling the e-commerce ecosystem (Costa and Castro, 2021).

Item eight has Mean: 3.00 and Std. Deviation: 1.333 which shows that participants, somewhat agree that the e-commerce industry is highly competitive. The standard deviation further suggests variability, with some participants strongly agreeing while others disagree. The somewhat agreement among survey participants regarding the competitiveness of the Nigerian e-commerce industry acknowledges both the intense competition and the diversity of offerings within the sector. The variability in responses, as indicated by the standard deviation, can be attributed to the multifaceted nature of competition within the industry, with each participants perceiving competitiveness differently based on their experiences and perspectives.

The survey result in item nine, with a mean of 4.20 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.919, suggests that most participants strongly agree that the Nigerian e-commerce industry will become more competitive in the future. This consensus among participants aligns with existing literature that highlights the ongoing and anticipated growth of competition within the sector. The Nigerian e-commerce market is expected to continue expanding, attracting both domestic and international investors (Kuyoro and Olanrewaju, 2020). This influx of capital often leads to increased competition as businesses strive to capture market share. Furthermore, evolving consumer preferences and increasing demand for online shopping are significant drivers of competition (Sima et al., 2020). Consumers are seeking diverse products, better prices, and superior service quality, pushing businesses to compete on these fronts.

The survey result for the tenth item, with a mean of 3.10 and a high standard deviation of 1.449, indicates that participants found it challenging to firmly agree or disagree that social factors, such as tribal and religious tension, will negatively impact the Nigerian e-commerce industry. This finding reflects the complexity and diversity of social factors at play, and it can be further clarified with insights from relevant literature. According to Peña-García et al. (2020), Nigeria is known for its cultural and social diversity, with numerous ethnic groups and religious affiliations. This diversity can lead to various social dynamics, including occasional tensions. These diversities can influence consumer preferences and purchasing decisions in Nigeria. Businesses often need to tailor their offerings to align with local customs. Furthermore, Gu et al. (2021) stated that the e-commerce sector has shown resilience in the face of social challenges. During periods of tension or unrest, consumers may continue to rely on online shopping for convenience and safety.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In the realm of electronic commerce (E-Commerce), annual growth has been nothing short of explosive since its inception. Significantly, from 2014 to 2022, the industry experienced an impressive fivefold growth in sales, resulting in a substantial increase in revenue from 1.3 billion US dollars in 2014 to 5.5 billion US dollars in 2022. This surge can be partially attributed to the global Covid-19 pandemic, which forced many businesses to shift towards online platforms due to regulatory restrictions on traditional commercial activities. While many of these restrictions have since been eased, numerous businesses continue to benefit from their online presence and engagement in E-Commerce. In summary, E-Commerce remains a dynamic and indispensable phenomenon in contemporary corporate operations.

With a population exceeding 218.5 million and a thriving E-Commerce sector, Nigeria has emerged as a crucial player in the African E-Commerce landscape. Additionally, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in Nigeria has seen exponential growth in the past five years. The growth of Nigeria's E-Commerce industry was significantly accelerated by the entry of jumia.com in 2001, paving the way for numerous online retailers such as konga.com, taafoo.com.ng, kamdora.com.ng, kaymu.com.ng, cheki.com.ng, sunglasses.com.ng, ladies shoe warehouse.com.ng, mystor.com.ng, olx.com.ng, nutrotechnologies.com.ng, tradestable.com.ng, dealdey.com.ng, oyoyo.com.ng, and others.

The year 2000 witnessed a modest 200,000 internet users in Nigeria, whereas, by December 31, 2016, the number had surged to 86,219,965, constituting 46.1% of the total population. Nigeria's government has articulated ambitious intentions, earmarking an investment of \$75 billion in E-Commerce by 2025, a substantial escalation from the \$12 billion investment in 2021. The velocity of E-Commerce advancement is notably influenced by a nation's internet penetration and technological

resources, endowing Nigeria with a competitive edge vis-à-vis other African nations in this context. This edge is unmistakably manifest in the "cashless economic transformation" spearheaded by Nigeria, notably through its digital currency, E-Naira. Consequently, Nigeria is poised to exert significant influence over the continent's economy, including the realm of E-Commerce, while simultaneously fortifying business connections and fostering economic progress in neighboring nations. For instance, under Nigeria's leadership, the West Africa Telecommunication Regulators Assembly (WATRA) aims to significantly raise ICT standards across its member nations. In the realm of research methodology, this study adopts a relativist ontology, which permits the exploration of diverse perspectives on matters pertaining to Nigerian E-Commerce, encompassing a plethora of opinions and ideas. Furthermore, the research employs snowball sampling, a method characterized by the acquisition of additional contacts through initial interview participants. This method has proven invaluable, facilitating access to key figures in Nigeria's E-Commerce industry, who, in turn, facilitated the establishment of further connections. The primary source of data for this study consists of semi-structured interviews, selected because they are well-suited for gathering in-depth insights and individual perspectives, which align with the exploratory nature of the research.

Given the study's specific focus, stringent criteria were imposed upon the selection of respondents. Primary emphasis was placed on the interviewees' proficiency in the Nigerian E-Commerce landscape and competitive dynamics. Consequently, interview candidates were either required to possess substantial experience in the field, gained through employment with consulting firms or service provision to Nigerian E-Commerce stakeholders, encompassing aspects such as payments and logistics. Alternatively, they needed to be employees or executives of prominent entities operating within the market.

Anticipating the continued expansion of internet usage, the Nigerian E-Commerce sector is poised to intensify its competitive dynamics. The impetus for this growth can be attributed to the escalating internet accessibility among Nigerians, facilitated by the widespread adoption of smartphones. As of November 2022, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reported a staggering 88.3 million 3G/4G mobile broadband subscriptions, attesting to the nation's increasing connectivity and engagement with online platforms.

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Appendix

Research Questionnaire

Questionnaire Responses

1. The Nigerian e-commerce industry has experienced exponential growth so far	2. The Nigerian e-commerce industry is faced with many challenges	3. The Nigerian Government has played a role in the growth of the Nigerian e-commerce industry so far	4. The Nigerian Government will also play key role in the sustenance of the Nigerian e-commerce industry	5. The state of Nigeria economy has an effect on the growth of e-commerce industry in Nigeria	6. The Nigerian population has had an effect in the growth of its e-commerce industry	7. An increase in internet usage will have a positive impact on the e-commerce industry in Nigeria	8. The Nigerian e-commerce industry is saturated and thus highly competitive	9. The Nigerian e-commerce industry will become more competitive in the future	10. Social factors such as tribal and religious tension will have a negative impact on the Nigerian e-commerce industry
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree
Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree
Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree
Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree
Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree
Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
Disagree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree

Reflective Statement

This research has afforded me the opportunity to learn quite a lot of concepts and techniques I was not familiar with before the research. Hence, it was a learning phase for me. During the course of this research, I learned how to conduct research in the social sciences, how to conduct semi structured interviews, and how to use PESTEL analysis. My findings and discoveries will be discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

One of the key takeaways from this experience was the realization that research in the social sciences adheres to specific guidelines and standards, setting it apart from other research disciplines. While various research approaches like action research, evaluation research, ethnography, and phenomenology exhibit distinct characteristics, they also share certain common elements. Notably, data collection stands out as a fundamental commonality. The process of gathering data encompasses a range of techniques, tools, and methods, such as interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, telephone interviews, fieldnotes, taped social interactions, and questionnaires. Consequently, researchers must carefully select from these available tools to obtain the data necessary for testing hypotheses or achieving the objectives of their research topic (Heaton, 2004; Prabnat & Meenu, 2015).

Based on my personal research and the course works I've attended; I've come to recognise that data collection constitutes a cornerstone of research. It serves as a vital component in the research process, albeit a complex and challenging one. It's important to acknowledge that there is no universally superior method for data collection (O'Leary, 2004). The choice of a data collection method should be contingent upon the specific research objectives and the implications associated with the chosen method. In conjunction with my exploration of social science research methods, I gained insights into various data collection techniques. For effective data collection, researchers must

have the capability to access the relevant data required for their study. Data can be sourced from diverse outlets, including written documents, records, workplace settings, online resources, surveys, and interviews. Interviews have long held a pivotal role in qualitative research, representing the most direct and research-focused interaction between researchers and participants (Doody & Noonman, 2013; Schultze & Avital, 2011). Nonetheless, despite the extensive literature on the use of interviews as a qualitative data collection technique, there exists an intriguing juxtaposition between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences acquired during fieldwork.

I opted to delve into the Nigerian E-Commerce Industry due to its burgeoning presence in recent years. Nigeria has emerged as a prominent centre for E-commerce, making this research highly pertinent in the current landscape. Nigeria specifically serves as the focal point of this study because, despite the numerous challenges facing E-commerce in the region, it also offers significant prospects for both businesses and local residents, as highlighted by sources like Forbes Africa (2022) and research by Okolie & Ojomo (2020). My online research revealed that many African nations, Nigeria included, encountered difficulties in keeping pace with the rapid advancements, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The integration of E-commerce acted as a lifeline for numerous businesses. Moreover, various initiatives and agreements have been established in recent times to promote inclusive growth in Africa, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) in 2019 and the Economic Community of West African States in 1975. Nigeria, being one of the most influential nations across the continent, has played a pivotal role in driving these initiatives. Consequently, conducting research on E-Commerce in Nigeria and offering recommendations for surmounting early challenges stand as vital contributions to the sustained development of the entire African continent.

While I had previously completed a few assignments and readings related to PESTEL analysis, this research opportunity allowed me to gain a profound and comprehensive understanding of the underlying rationale behind its application. Indeed, the research topic itself facilitated a deeper comprehension of PESTEL analysis, which greatly enriched my research process. PESTEL analysis serves as a framework for conducting thorough examinations of an organization's operating environment and for crafting potential business strategies. Its utility extends to research, the development of new products or services, marketing planning, and strategic decision-making (Vasileva, 2018). Consequently, PESTEL analysis scrutinizes environmental factors through the lenses of politics, economics, society, technology, ecology, and law (Kolios & Read, 2013). To perform a PESTEL analysis effectively, it is imperative to define all the elements of the external environment that will be scrutinized, as well as to specify the purpose of the investigation. These environmental influences should be assessed from the perspectives of the entire organizational structure, the products or services offered, and the overarching company strategy. When conducting a PESTEL analysis, it is crucial to frame the topic within the context of the organization's local market, its approach to entering emerging markets, or the introduction of a new product (Matovic, 2020).

Conducting a PESTEL analysis is imperative when considering potential acquisitions, partnerships, or investment opportunities. This analysis becomes especially vital when launching a new startup or

business, particularly when exploring multiple markets and comparing their potential. It is prudent to commence with the understanding that a startup represents a fledgling company that is either developing an existing product or introducing a completely innovative, never-before-seen product, typically rooted in cutting-edge technology, with a high likelihood of success being quite elusive (Matovic, 2020). In order to thoroughly assess the situation and provide guidelines for refining and formulating a growth strategy, PESTEL analysis stands as one of the most critical and indispensable tools for evaluating external influences that every company should utilize (Shtal et al., 2018). Given that the factors examined in this analysis pertain to the broader business environment, it is most fitting for assessing the overall business environment rather than individual corporations within that environment (Mack and Putzschel, 2014).

Combining the PESTEL approach with additional techniques from the engineering or IT domain is advisable because PESTEL analysis assesses individual factors in isolation, without considering their interrelations (Yuksel, 2012). According to Christodoulou and Cullinane (2019), PESTEL analysis serves as a tool for assessing and monitoring external environmental factors that impact an organization. This analysis enables the identification of business opportunities and threats and facilitates swift adaptation to evolving market conditions. Notably, PESTEL analysis indirectly identifies opportunities and threats that are subsequently addressed in SWOT analysis, which stands as one of the fundamental methods for formulating organizational strategies.

As I grew familiar with data collection methods, I discovered my love for the Interview Qualitative Research method. I was particularly excited when my supervisor suggested the use of the Interview method which I had become familiar with in recent times. An interview is a method of gathering information from people as well as facts. Interviews are described by Kvale (1996) as "an exchange of opinions between two or more people on a subject of mutual interest," who emphasises the social situatedness of research information as well as sees human interaction as being essential for knowledge development. Interviewing is a more naturalistic and less organized method of gathering data, hence it is believed to extend the understanding of the phenomena being studied (Hamza, 2014). A spoken chat between two people with the aim of gathering pertinent data for a research project is referred to as an interview. The story underlying the experiences of the participants can be learned through interviews. The interviewer could look into the subject in further detail. The utilization of interviews as a follow-up to some respondents is beneficial. A two-way process called an interview allows for the sharing of thoughts and knowledge (Prabnat & Meenu, 2015).

Moreover, an interview serves as a structured method for engaging in conversations and attentively listening to individuals, serving as an additional avenue for extracting information through dialogues. Researchers or interviewers often employ open-ended inquiries during interviews to draw out information from interviewees. It's crucial for the researcher to acknowledge that the interviewer's viewpoint regarding the subject matter is not the primary focus. The principal source of information for the study resides in the interviewee or respondent. Participants are afforded the opportunity to articulate their perspectives and actively engage in the interview process. Through interviews, interviewees (respondents) can also convey their viewpoints concerning how they perceive and

comprehend a specific situation, offering insights from their distinctive standpoint. Essentially, interviews capture their personal experiences as perceived through their own eyes.

The researcher must be aware of and choose the best strategy for answering the requirements of the research questions or the study's objectives. The researcher must next decide and select the best methodology for that investigation. The demands and complications of data collection exist. Interviewing, which has its own problems and difficulties and necessitates its own kind of rigor and systematic processes, was claimed to be the best data gathering approach in this research, despite criticism to the contrary. But it is the job of the researcher to pose inquiries. The questions should show legitimate answers from the respondents. As stated by Hoyle et al. (2002), questions in interviews should serve a dual purpose: motivating respondents (interviewees) to offer comprehensive and precise responses while also mitigating biases stemming from social desirability, conformity, or perceptions of indifference. Conducting an effective interview hinge on the interviewer's proper training, adherence to the interviewer's designated role, and the use of carefully formulated questions. Therefore, achieving these objectives can be significantly facilitated through adequate training and appropriate interviewer conduct.

In conclusion, this research was a great learning phase and discovery period for me as a university researcher. I became familiar with Qualitative Research methods in the social sciences; data collection methods; Interview Qualitative Research methods and PESTEL analysis.

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