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Original Research Article 1 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS EFFECT ON SUPERIOR
2 PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF SMES IN 3 KOGI STATE, NIGERIA
4 Abstract 5 This study focused on strategy implementation and its effect on superior
performance and 6 competitive advantage of SMEs in Kogi State. The study aimed to
determine the effect that 7 implementation of strategy by SMEs has on superior
performance relative to other 8 competitors in Kogi State.

Based on the nature of the study, survey research method was 9 used. The study
focused on some selected SMEs Kogi State, making the population of 1886. 10 Thus, the
study adopted simple random sampling technique, and grouped respondents on the 11
basis of common characteristics. The sample size (330) of the study was determined
through 12 Taro Yamane method. The study analyzed data using descriptive statistics
and regression 13 model.

The study found that strategy implementation of SMEs has significant effect on 14
superior performance relative to other competitors in Kogi State. The study concluded
that 15 when strategy is successfully implemented, it has consequences on
organizational 16 performance. The study therefore recommends that SME owners
should ensure the successful 17 implementation of their business strategy to
outperform other competitors within the same 18 business environment in Kogi State,
Nigeria.

19 Keywords: Strategy Formulation, Strategy Implementation, Competitive Advantage,
Superior 20 Performance, Business game 21 Introduction 22 Today, Small and Medium
Enterprises struggle to survive under tough competition in the 23 business environment
domestically and globally. On this note, Shih, Liu and Hsu (2010) also 24 alarmed that

enterprises are faced with an increasingly competitive environment in which it is difficult to maintain a sustained competitive advantage. Jhingan (2006) was of the tenet that true competition consists of the life of constant struggle and rival against rival.

True competitive situation requires a roadmap to achieve a common goal that brings about struggle among business owners over times. The adoption of effective business strategy appears to have gained credence in Nigeria, as one of the best responses, as many graduates now found themselves largely in the business world.

Recently, the engagement of graduates in entrepreneurial practice (due to entrepreneurship education) has revolutionized the old rule of business game into strategy oriented business game in the Nigerian SME sector. This therefore strengthened business competitiveness (Lin, Hsing and Wang, 2008). At the outset, the SMEs did not yield the proper attention to the foundation of competitive advantage, but things have changed for good (Eniola and Ektebang, 2014).

Most successful business tycoons today are fond of strategic crafting because, strategy is sensed as an excellent limelight for business move (Nafiu et al., 2014). Many recent literatures also indicate that the adoption of strategy is critical to the survival of organizations in this present tough competitive business environment.

Nyamwanza (2013) pinpointed that the very survival of SMEs is under threat and there is need for them to strategize to counter these environmental challenges and increased competition. It is also evident from the success of giant firms that strategy formulation and implementation is one of the main constructs in organization performance.

Thus, the performance of SMEs is really dependent on effective business strategy formulation and implementation. Game theory views strategy and its implementation as a necessity in business competition to achieve desired pay-off (business performance). Porter (1985) theory of competitive advantage also assumes that an offensive strategy, if successful, can open up a competitive advantage over rivals.

However, it is apparent that some SMEs in Nigeria have failed in their strategy implementation effort. Strategy implementation failure has become a scary point for these SMEs as it is erroneously believed that it will cause entropy due to its financial implication. Though, Heracleous (2000) and Noble (1999) pinpointed that failure of strategy implementation efforts causes enormous costs in the organization.

The cost implication stressed by these authors does not imply financial evaluation,

but the overall corporate goal 55 of the organization. It has not occurred to these SME owners that large business firms also 56 witness strategy implementation failure. The study of Zaribaf and Bayrami (2010) revealed 57 that majority of large organizations had problems with strategy implementation in the past.

58 O'Regan and Ghobadian (2004) disclosed that both SMEs and their larger corporate 59 counterparts face many of the same challenges. Meanwhile, the benefits of strategic planning 60 and implementation cannot be overemphasized (Nyamwanza, 2013). 61 62 Objectives of the Study 63 The main objective of the study is to investigate the effect of strategy implementation on 64 SMEs in Kogi State.

The specific objectives of this study are: 65 i. To determine the effect that effective implementation of strategy by SMEs has on 66 superior performance relative to other competitors in Kogi State. 67 ii. To determine the extent at which effective implementation of SMEs' strategy can 68 enhance higher competitive advantage compared to other business firms in the 69 same industry in Kogi State. 70 iii.

To determine the influence of leadership, information, organizational culture, 71 organizational structure and human factor on strategy implementation effort of 72 SMEs in Kogi State. 73 74 Conceptual Framework 75 Today, business firms are faced with environmental dynamism which clearly influences 76 their competitive position and corporate performance.

According to Guarda, Augusto and 77 Silva (2012), competitive advantage can be understood as seeking unique opportunities that 78 will give the enterprise a strong competitive position. Successful achievement of competitive 79 edge and corporate performance require outwitting strategies. These business firms, 80 regardless of their sizes, must be strategically inclined to cope with dynamism in their 81 competitive business environment.

Thus, Small and Medium Enterprises must be able to act 82 quickly in response to opportunities and barriers by way of actively looking for opportunities 83 to exploit their strategic abilities, adopt and seek improvement in every area of their business 84 by building on awareness and understanding of current strategies and successes. Kamau 85 (2014) opined that protecting the competitive position of SMEs requires attention to business 86 strategy and the management of strategy within the SME.

David (2011) upholds that strategic 87 management is all about gaining and maintaining competitive advantage. Similarly, Nafiu et 88 al. (2014) posited that a small scale business firm needs a strategy to fix all odds in the 89 competitive environment to

achieve its goal. Significantly, the rationale behind competitive strategy is to enhance sustainable competitive advantage over other competitors in the business environment.

It is no doubt that strategic management is the focal point of leading and most successful organizations today. Beal (2000) asserted that competitive strategic management is concerned with understanding, choosing and implementing the strategy that an organization follows. Strategy implementation is one of the three distinctive phases of strategy.

According to Lorette (2014), strategy implementation put simply is the process that puts plans and strategies into action to reach goals. Shannon (2015) views it as the process that turns strategies and plans into actions in order to accomplish strategic objectives and goals. A different view, Barnat (2014), opined that strategy implementation is the process of allocating resources to support the chosen strategies.

Strategy implementation defines the manner in which an organization should develop, utilize and amalgamate organizational structures, control systems and culture to follow strategies that lead to competitive advantage and improved performance (Sorroshian et al, 2010). Thus, strategy implementation is the process which involves all action inclined tasks that transform plan into reality, and manage or track performance to enhance corporate objectives.

In the case of SMEs, there is a need for owners to have a rethink towards devising and implementing winning strategies in order to pursue their mission, vision and objectives without compromising the competitive situation in the Nigerian business environment. Previous studies such as Okumus (2001) had concentrated on large business organizations and ignored the SMEs and also assumed that a proper implementation framework will result to better organizational performance.

However, the study conducted by Sorooshian, Norzima, Yusof, and Rosna (2010) revealed that a positive relationships exist between strategy implementation and performance within the small and medium manufacturing firms in Malaysia. They identified structure, leadership style and resources as the fundamental factors in strategy implementation.

Literature contends that for successful strategy implementation, there is need to create a strategic fit between the soft and hard implementation armaments and the organizational strategic variables (Ansoff and McDonnell, 1990; Hussey, 1996; 118

Skivington and Daft, 1991; Stalk and Lachenauer, 2004). These armaments in strategy implementation may be numerous out of which leadership style, information availability and accuracy, organizational structure, organizational culture, human resources, and technology are highly important.

These factors may be proven to be hindering strategy implementation effort failure, and set backdrop in competitiveness and performance achievement. Rajasekar (2014) in his study also emphasized on these factors (leadership style, information availability and accuracy, uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational culture, human resources, and technology) affecting strategy implementation.

Thus, it appears that these factors state the effectiveness of strategy formulation and implementation process; and determine its power in achieving both competitive advantage and performance of any business firm. As Pryor et al. (2007) put it, "when implementing a strategy, it's dangerous to ignore components because strategy implementation requires an integrative point of view", implying that managers and strategy implementers have to keep in mind the interdependency of different factors and should not neglect any.

Figure 1 below shows the framework for this study. Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Strategy Implementation Source : Field Survey, 2016 However, competition strategies implementation needs to be everybody's affair; to ensure that everybody has the clear picture of what the strategy is all about, and the blame or praise connected to the end pay-off (negative pay-off or positive pay-off). The effectiveness and the contribution of each employee and managers are very good requirement.

Leadership Engagement Organizationa l Culture Organizational Structure Human Factor Competitive Advantage Organizational Performance Strategy Implementation Strategy Formulation Theoretical Framework For the purpose of this study, the Game Theory holds clue to this study. According to Sindik and Vidak (2008), Von Neumann's work in game theory culminated in the book "The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour" by von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern.

However, Game theory may be credited to John von Neumann due to a series of papers published in 1928 which outrightly confirmed him as the principal inventor of game theory. Game theory views strategy and its implementation as a rule and necessity in business game. It is a functional description of how rules that a player uses are implemented for the achievement of a desired pay-off.

It is observed that every business firm is involved in inevitable business competition today, striving to achieve a common goal and that makes the situation a game. Sindik and Vidak (2008) expressed that a game is any situation in which the outcomes ('pay-offs') are the product of interaction of more than one rational player.

The units of importance in the game theory are the agents involved in strategic decisions (individuals, companies, social entities) (Manski, 2000; McCain, 2010). The game theory is concerned with at least two involved parties with their focus being on the observation of the decisions makers who are interacting with one another (Space boundary) and their strategic bargaining behaviour (Moss, 2001; Sanfey, 2007).

The interaction that is being observed deals with the process of one decision but can be spread over a longer period of time (time boundary) depending on the nature of the game, if it is a one-shot game or repeatedly performed (Andreoni and Miller, 1993). The term game theory does not only imply games in the ordinary sense, but the awareness of struggles and strategies for the pursuit of common goals among players.

In business game, according to García and Velasco (2002), there is an economic pie of size (pay-off) and each player competes for a partition and tries to maximize his or her self-interest. Realistically, today both SMEs and giant firms are rational players with the intent of achieving similar outcome which are likely to be in the form of competitive advantage and business performance.

The focus of Game theory is the awareness that others are doing exactly what one is doing (strategy implementation) in a better way, in order to achieve what one wants (competitive advantage or business performance). A business firm must try to play out all the reactions to their actions as far ahead as possible (Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1995).

This theory upholds that when strategy is implemented in a zero-sum competitive situation, the achievement of a positive pay-off (business performance or competitive advantage) is feasible. In this respect, researchers (Osborne & Rubinstein, 1994; Myerson, 2013) have supported that game theory can reflect all kinds of situations in order to analyze the outcome in regard to the solution concepts.

Thus, game theory encourages formulation and implementation of strategy; not only to fit in for competitive situations, but to achieve the most desired payoff. It is viewed that strategy and its implementation is a matter of intention to achieve a

desired pay-off (competitive advantage and business performance). 186 Strategy Processes in SMEs 187 Strategy management is every business firm's obligation considering the inevitable 188 opportunities and threats posed by today's dynamic business environment.

Though, the 189 cleavage between SME's and large firms occurs **as a result of** capability to absorb pressure 190 from competition in the dynamic business environment. It is obvious that both SME's and 191 large firms face almost **the same opportunities** and problems nationally or globally. For 192 instance, the study conducted by Meers and Robertson (2007) discovered that firms of all 193 sizes are constantly challenged due to globalization, technology, emerging new markets and 194 deregulation. They advocated that sound **strategy is the** panacea **to overcome these** 195 challenges.

Factually, giant firms have demonstrated **the imperatives of strategy in** the past 196 few decades. Kraus, Harms and Schwarz (2006) reviewed a total of 24 empirical studies 197 **dealing with strategic management issues in** SMEs; and concluded that research into strategic 198 management efforts within **SMEs is still in its infancy.**

Fuglistaller, Frey, and Halter (2003) 199 pinpointed three major objections against the use of strategic processes in SMEs: 200 i. Strategic measures and instruments constrain flexibility and the ability for 201 improvisation; 202 ii. **It makes more sense** to use the limited time resources for operational or sales 203 activities or R&D rather than for strategy-formulation processes; 204 iii.

Strategic management is too bureaucratic. 205 In their study, Meers and Robertson (2007) also discovered that **there was no** evidence 206 pointing towards an effective method for SMEs when engaging **in the process of** strategy.

207 However, the late discovery of the efficacy **of strategic management in** the phase of 208 competition **and organizational performance** has motivated some SME owners into 209 appreciating and adopting outwitting strategies as a best practice **in the Nigerian business** 210 environment. SME owners now observed that effective **strategy formulation and** 211 implementation have significant impact on many large firms' increase in performance and 212 competitive advantage.

Simpson, Padmore, Taylor and Frecknall-Hughes (2006) opined that 213 **the level of strategic awareness of** owner-managers **appears to be strongly influenced by the** 214 personal competence of the owner-managers and the type, **uncertainty and complexity** of the 215 business. In companies that **experienced fast growth and turbulent market conditions the level** 216 **of strategic awareness was uniformly high** and the motivation

for a continually better 217 understanding of the external business environment was strong (Kamau, 2014).

218 Figure 2: Components of Strategic Management Process 219 220 Source: Wheelen T.L., Hunger D. (2002). Strategic Management and Business Policy , 221 Harvard Business School, Prentice Hall. 222 Figure 2 above shows the components of strategic management process. It is obvious 223 that strategy implementation is vital aspect in the pursuit of organizational objectives.

Every 224 strategy stands the chance to be evaluated only when it is implemented. Many business 225 owner-managers are short of adequate knowledge about the handling and imperatives of this 226 particular phase of strategic management process and this often result to the ineffectiveness 227 and failure of strategy. Li et al.

(2008) also observed that strategy implementation is a key 228 challenge for today's organizations. To establish the imperatives of this phase, Lorette (2014) 229 expressed that strategy implementation is critical to a company's success, addressing the 230 who, where, when and how of reaching the desired goals and objectives. Without effective 231 implementation, no business strategy can succeed (Hrebiniak, 2006).

232 Research methodology 233 In order to divorce this study from being bias, multiple-method approach was adopted. 234 This involves gathering data from multiple units within the universe. This method enhances 235 quality and the credibility of this study. The study used the survey research design. The target 236 population for this study is from selected SMEs.

This study concentrated on SMEs across all 237 industries in Kogi State, Nigeria. The population size of the study was 1886. This was 238 derived through pre-study business census by the researchers and their assistants. This 239 approach was considered appropriate for this study because, many small business firms are 240 yet to be registered, and the owners operate hiddenly.

Figure 3 below shows the map of Kogi 241 State. 242 243 244 245 Figure 3: Map of Kogi State, Nigeria. 246 247 Source: Saliu, Ibrahim and Eniojukan (2016) 248 The study adopted simple random sampling technique. The simple random sampling 249 technique involves choosing respondents randomly based on their common characteristics.

A 250 sample size of 330 respondents was drawn from the study population. This study thus 251 determined the sample size by using Taro Yamane sampling method as

demonstrated below: $252.2 \left(1 + \frac{e}{N} \right) \sqrt{\frac{n}{N}}$ where n = sample size; N = population of the study; e = error estimated at 253 5% (0.05). $254.2 \left(0.05 \sqrt{\frac{1886}{1886 + 715}} \right) = 0.025$. $0.025 \sqrt{\frac{1886}{1886 + 715}} = 0.018$.

5 1886 = 330 approximately 255 Data was collected through questionnaire. The choice of structured questionnaires was 256 informed by the need to have a standardized test, and giving respondents flexibility they need 257 to give more information. This study enhanced the validity of instrument through the perusal 258 of panel of experts who reviewed them and made necessary corrections before they were 259 administered to the respondents.

Pilot testing was done at the study area by administering five 260 (5) questionnaires to respondents who were not part of the study sample. Pilot testing reveals 261 weaknesses of the questionnaire; which led to getting rid of ambiguous and unnecessary 262 questions. All data collected were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics, and 263 tested with regression analysis.

Socio-Economic characteristics of SME owners in the study 264 area were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentage 265 while the effect of strategy implementation on superior performance of SMEs relative to 266 other competitors in Kogi State (objectives 1) was analyzed using regression model.

267 Model specification is as stated below 268 $PG = Co + C_1 SI$ 269 PG = Performance of Organization 270 Co , C_1 = Constants 271 SI = Strategy Implementation 272 273 For objective 2, the extent at which effective implementation of SMEs' strategy can enhance 274 higher competitive advantage compared to other business firms in the same industry in Kogi 275 State; the model is stated as follows; 276 $CA = Co + C_1 ESI$ 277 CA = Competitive Advantage 278 Co , C_1 = Constants 279 ESI = Effective Strategy Implementation 280 Objective 3 was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

281 Data Presentation, Result and Discussion 282 283 284 285 Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of SME Owner-managers 286 Socio-economic Characteristics Frequency Percentage Mean/Mode Age (Years) 12-25 86 26.7 26-36 112 34.8 33-47 75 23.3 48-58 49 15.2 Total 322 100 Gender Male 198 61.5 198 Female 124 38.5 Total 322 100 Marital Status Single 58 18.0 Married 162 50.3 162 Divorced 47 14.6 Widow(er) 55 17.1 Total 322 100 Educational Qualification PSLC 5 1.6 SSCE 182 56.5

182 OND/NCE 97 30.1 HND/B.Sc 20 6.2 M.Sc & Above 18 5.6 Total 322 100 Business Experience 0-5 yrs 47 14.6 5-10yrs 145 45.0 9.47 10-15yrs 86 26.7 15-20yrs 44 13.7 Total 322 100 Source: Field survey, 2016 287 The table 1 above shows that 86 SME owners

(26.7%) are within the age bracket of 15 to 28 years; 112 SME owners (34.8%) are within the age bracket of 26 to 36 years; 75 SME owners (23.3%) are within the age bracket of 37 to 47 years; 49 respondents (15.2%) are 290 within the age bracket of 48 to 58 years; and no respondents are 59 years and above.

The 291 average age of the SME owners was about 34 years. 292 The table also shows that 198 SME owners (61.5%) were male; and 124 SME owners 293 (38.5%) was female. It could be deduced from the table that majority of SME owners were 294 male. Furthermore, the table shows that 58 SME owners (18.0%) were single; 162 SME 295 owners (50.3%) were married; 47 SME owners (14.6%) were divorced; and 55 SME owners 296 (17.1%) were widow(er).

Finding revealed that majority of these SME owners are married. 297 This may imply that the financial responsibility of these owners has induced them into 298 owning a venture to cater for the family bills. 299 The table also shows that 5 SME owners (1.6%) held primary school leaving certificate; 300 182 SME owners (56.5%) held secondary school certificate; 97 SME owners (30.1%) held 301 OND/NCE certificate; 20 SME owners (6.2%) held HND and/or B.Sc certificate; and 18 302 SME owners (5.6%) held M.Sc certificate and above.

This finding revealed that majority of 303 the SME owners had attained secondary school certificate. The level of education is moderate 304 for the purpose of this study; following that a reasonable percentage of SME owners possess 305 other higher certificates. 306 The table shows that 47 SME owners (14.6%) expressed that their businesses have been 307 in existence within the range of 0 to 5 years; 145 SME owners (45.0%) expressed that their 308 businesses have been in existence within the range of 5 to 10 years; 86 SME owners (26.7%) 309 expressed that their businesses have been in existence within the range of 10 to 15 years; 44 310 SME owners (13.3%) expressed that their businesses have been in existence within the range 311 of 16 to 20 years; and no business has been in existence within the range of 20 years and 312 above.

The average business experience was 9 years, which shows that the SME owners were 313 quite experienced and should have ideas regarding the business game in their environment, 314 and equally the competitive behaviour of other competitors. 315 Table 2a: Objective One 316 Regression Model Summary Multiple R R Square Adjusted R Square Apparent Prediction Error .991 .983 .983 .017 Dependent Variable: Performance of organization among other competitors Predictor: 317 Strategy implementation 318 Table 2b: Coefficients 319 Variable Coefficient Std. Error t-Statistic Prob. C 0.5523 0.01 55.23234 0.0349 SI 0.9993 0.09 8.926634 0.0000 320 The table 2a above shows that 98.3% of the variation in the performance of SMEs is 321 explained by

strategy implementation phase. This shows a very strong predictor. The presence of 1.7% unexplained variation suggests that there are very limited other predictor variables which affect variations in the performance of SMEs among other competitors in the business environment. Coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) is 98.3% and is statistically significant given the p-value ($p < 0.05$).

The relatively high adjusted R-square of 98.3%, shows that the model fits the data well. The co-efficient for strategy implementation (.9993, $p < 0.05$) in table 2b show a positive relationship with performance of SMEs. This states that changes in the observed behaviour of the independent variable (strategy implementation) will proportional cause changes in the performance of SMEs among other competitors in the business environment. The significant t-statistics value of 8.926634 in table 2b confirms that the high adjusted R-square did not occur by chance. Therefore, the model is robust.

The variable strategy implementation entered the model with positive signs. We therefore deduce that strategy implementation has significantly positive effect on superior performance of SMEs relative to other competitors in Kogi State.

This aligns with the study conducted by Njagi and Kombo (2014) that there is a strong and positive relationship between strategy implementation and organizational performance. The study conducted by Sorooshian et al. (2010) also found that there is positive relationship between strategy implementation and performance. This implies that successful strategy implementation will often result to higher business performance of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria.

The Game theory upholds that strategy must not only be implemented, but implemented in a distinctive way; because all firms are carrying out the same task to achieve similar objective. Thus, better strategy implementation will yield better business performance. Table 3a: Objective Two Regression Model Summary

	Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Apparent Prediction Error
Dependent Variable: Competitive advantage compared to other business firms in the same industry in Nigeria	.960	.921	.920	.079

Predictor: Strategy implementation

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob. > t
Strategy implementation	0.2313	0.017	3.316	0.0001

SI 0.9600 0.015 8.926634 0.0000

The table 3a above shows that 92.1% of the variation in competitive advantage of SMEs compared to other business firms in the same industry in Nigeria is explained by strategy implementation phase. This shows a very strong predictor. The presence of 7.9% unexplained variation suggests that there are very little other predictor variables which affect variations in the competitive advantage of SMEs in the business environment. Coefficient of

determination (Adjusted R Square) is 92.0% and is statistically significant given the value of 355 the t-statistics (i.e. 8.926634) in table 3b. The relatively high adjusted R-square of 92.0% 356 shows that the model fits the data well. The co-efficient for strategy implementation (.9600, p 357 < 0.05) in table 3b show a positive relationship with the competitive advantage of SMEs.

358 This states that changes in the observed behaviour of the independent variable (strategy 359 implementation) will proportional cause changes in the competitive advantage of SMEs 360 compared to other business firms in the same industry in Nigeria. The highly significant t- 361 statistics value of 8.926634 in table 3b confirms that the high adjusted R-square did not occur 362 by chance. Therefore, the model is a good one.

The variable strategy implementation entered 363 the model with positive signs. We therefore deduce that effective implementation of SMEs' 364 strategy has enhanced higher competitive advantage compared to other business firms in the 365 same industry in Kogi State to a reasonable extent.

This implies that some SMEs achieve 366 competitive advantage more than other business firms in the same industry in Kogi State, 367 Nigeria. This finding confirms with the statement of Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2011) that 368 strategic competitiveness is achieved when firms successfully formulate and implement value 369 creating strategies. 370 Table 4: Objective Three 371 Factors affecting business strategy implementation Mean N Std.

Deviation % of Total Sum leadership style 1.1395 86 .34854 13.5% Information 2.0000 53 .00000 14.6% organizational structure 2.6915 94 .46436 34.9% organizational culture 3.0000 28 .00000 11.6% human resources 3.0000 61 .00000 25.3% Total 2.2484 322 .80521 100.0% Source: Field Survey, 2015 372 The results in table 4 show the model summary of the descriptive analysis.

Given the 373 mean scores, the result shows that factors (such as information, organizational structure, 374 organizational culture and human resource) are evident factors affecting strategic 375 management process of SMEs, and have influence on strategy implementation process. 376 Factors such as organizational culture and human resource are viewed to have strong 377 influence; while leadership style is viewed to have weak influence on strategy 378 implementation process. But it appears that the standard deviation of leadership style 379 (.34854) and organizational structure (.46436) show that there is little divergence of these 380 factors among SMEs in the strategy implementation effort in business game in Kogi State.

381 This result implies that though SME owner-managers consider the aforementioned factors in 382 the strategy implementation effort, but little consideration is given to leadership style and 383 organizational structure in strategy implementation process in Kogi State of Nigeria. This 384 study advances the finding of Rajasekar (2014) that all the factors such as leadership style, 385 information availability and accuracy, uncertainty, organizational structure, organizational 386 culture, human resources, and technology affect strategy implementation.

Finding revealed a 387 fair relationship between business structure and strategy implementation process among 388 SMEs in Kogi State. However, the study conducted by Bimani and Longfield-Smith (2007) 389 found that organizational structure influences strategy implementation and makes the process 390 of strategy implementation to be structured and formal.

Sequel to leadership style, the finding 391 of the study conducted by Mapetere, Mavhiki, Tonderai, Sikomwe, and Mhonde (2012) 392 augment that relatively low leadership involvement in strategy implementation led to partial 393 strategy success in the organization studied. 394 395 Conclusions 396 Strategy implementation process remains an inevitable phase in strategic management 397 process.

Since business competition is a matter of all players, regardless of their capacities or 398 sizes, strategy implementation must be given adequate concentration. This is because; the 399 implementation of strategy makes strategy what it is. Thus, all factors (such as leadership, 400 information, organizational structure, organizational culture and human factor) needs to be 401 considered by business owners as they are critical to strategy implementation for SMEs.

402 These individual factors have influence on the implementation process on both large and 403 small business firms. Though, it is ascertained that the relationship between business 404 structure and strategy implementation process is positive. Business structure influences 405 strategy implementation and makes the process of strategy implementation to be structured 406 and formal.

Similarly, communication plays a great role in getting employees engaged in 407 strategy implementation process. Communication in the real sense may be instructional or 408 educating. In a situation where employees are only meant to adhere to instruction, initiatives 409 are rarely taken due to the fact that failure to do so may result into strategy implementation 410 failure.

SME owners need to address communication as a strategic issue because strategy implementation process depends on employees' comprehensive knowledge. Also, SMEs have the opportunity of achieving full strategy success in the long run if they continue to give preference to leadership involvement in strategy implementation in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Having considered the increasing trends in the business competition today, SME owners need to strive on effective implementation of value creating strategy. Strategy implementation will have effect on superior performance of SMEs relative to other competitors in Kogi State, Nigeria. When strategy is successfully implemented, it has consequences on organizational performance at the long run.

Thus, successful strategy implementation will often result to higher business performance of SMEs in Kogi State. In addition, SMEs will also stand the chance to achieve competitive advantage more than other business firms in the same industry in Kogi State. Effective implementation of SMEs' strategy can enhance higher competitive advantage compared to other business firms in the same industry in Kogi State to a reasonable extent. Recommendations Based on the findings above, the study recommends that:

SME owners should concentrate on all factors that affect strategy implementation process. Factors such as leadership, business structure and communication must be taken as strategic issues as they greatly determine the success of the implementation of value creating strategy in the Nigerian business competition.

SME owners should ensure the successful implementation of their business strategy to outperform other competitors within the same business environment in Kogi State, Nigeria. The successful implementation of their business strategy will often result to higher business performance in Kogi State. SME owners should ensure the successful implementation of their business strategy to enable them achieve competitive advantage more than other business firms in the same industry in Kogi State, Nigeria. Competitive advantage is achieved when firms successfully formulate and implement value creating strategies.

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