IMPACT OF TEAM CREATIVITY ON SUSTAINABILITY OF LUBRICANT FIRMS IN ANAMBRA STATE

[1]Okafor, Joy Ndidiamaka & [2]Marcel Chinemeze
[1]Department of Business Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
[2]Business Administration Department. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam.

Abstract: *In the dynamic business landscape of Anambra State, Nigeria, the sustainability of lubricant firms has become a critical imperative. This study examined the profound impact of team creativity on the sustainability of lubricant firms. Anambra State's business ecosystem is characterized by various challenges, including limited resources, regulatory complexities, and environmental concerns. In this context, sustainability is not just a buzzword but a strategic necessity. Additionally, the study explored the influence of leadership and organizational culture in fostering team creativity. The theoretical underpinning of this research lies in the Resource-Based View (RBV), emphasizing the significance of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities for competitive advantage. The study concludes that promoting team creativity can help lubricant firms overcome these challenges and thrive in a dynamic business environment. The findings highlight that team creativity plays a crucial role in driving innovation, problem-solving, enhancing customer experiences, and addressing environmental and social responsibilities. Recommendations included fostering a culture of curiosity and experimentation, creating cross-functional teams, implementing robust feedback mechanisms, and developing comprehensive sustainability strategies.*
Keywords: Team creativity, sustainability, lubricant firms, Anambra State.

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing business landscape, sustainability has emerged as a critical factor for the long-term success and resilience of companies worldwide (Mordi, 2022,). This trend is no different in Anambra State, Nigeria, where businesses operate amidst a complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental challenges. Anambra State, situated in the southeastern region of Nigeria, boasts a rich history of entrepreneurship and a diverse array of business activities. The state's business ecosystem is characterized by its dynamism, with enterprises navigating a range of challenges such as limited access to resources, inadequate infrastructure, and fluctuations in market conditions (Anoke, Nzewi, Eze & Igwebuike, 2022). Amidst these challenges, the need for sustainable business practices has become increasingly urgent. Sustainability is not merely a buzzword but rather a strategic imperative for businesses in Anambra State, as it not only addresses immediate concerns but also fosters long-term viability and competitiveness. Central to the pursuit of sustainability in Anambra's business landscape is the concept of team creativity. Team creativity refers to the collective capacity of a group of individuals to generate innovative ideas, solve complex problems, and adapt to changing circumstances collaboratively (Paulus, Dzindolet,

& Kohn, 2012). This dynamic force has the potential to drive businesses forward by enabling them to find novel solutions that minimize environmental impact, enhance social responsibility, and stimulate economic growth.

The concept of sustainability has gained prominence globally as organizations recognize the need to balance economic growth with social and environmental responsibility (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019). In Nigeria, this concept has taken on even greater significance due to the pressing need to address local challenges while positioning businesses for a prosperous future. Sustainability is not a one-size-fits-all solution; rather, it involves a holistic approach that considers the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of business operations (Purvis, Mao & Robinson, 2019; Hariram, Mekha, Suganthan, & Sudhakar, 2023). Across various sectors within the state, from manufacturing and agriculture to technology, commerce and services, the creative energy harnessed by teams can be a catalyst for ground-breaking sustainable practices. These practices cannot only lead to cost savings and operational efficiencies but also contribute to a more resilient and socially responsible business culture. Our exploration of the impact of team creativity on the sustainability of lubricant firms in Anambra State will encompass a multifaceted analysis.

This study will examine how teams with diverse backgrounds and perspectives can contribute to the development and implementation of sustainable practices that not only benefit their respective companies but also have a positive ripple effect on the broader community and environment. In particular, we will explore the role of cross-functional collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation within teams in driving sustainability initiatives. Furthermore, we will investigate the role of leadership and organizational culture in fostering creativity within teams. Effective leadership that encourages risk-taking, experimentation, and a culture of learning can significantly enhance team creativity. Additionally, the organizational climate, values, and incentives play a crucial role in motivating individuals to channel their creative energies towards sustainable practices.

As we embark on this journey of understanding, it becomes evident that in Anambra state's dynamic business landscape, the synergy between team creativity and sustainability is a pivotal driver of growth, resilience, and positive impact. By unravelling the intricate dynamics at play, we can uncover valuable insights that may inspire businesses, policymakers, and stakeholders to harness the power of creativity in their quest for sustainable and prosperous futures in this unique Nigerian state.

Conceptual Clarifications

Team Creativity:

To explore the impact of team creativity in firms' sustainability in Anambra State, it is essential to establish a clear understanding of the concept of team creativity. Creativity, according to Thornhill-Miller et al., (2023), is defined as the ability to generate novel and valuable ideas, is a multifaceted phenomenon. In the context of business, creativity transcends individual brilliance; it extends to the collaborative efforts of teams. However, team creativity refers to the collective capacity of a group of individuals to generate innovative ideas, solve complex problems, and develop novel solutions through collaborative processes (Paulus et al., 2012).

Team Creativity can be further explained as production of new ideas; a creative employee is one who can come up with new suggestions/ideas for the services to be considered. It is when members of a group, like employees in the same workgroup, collaborate and brainstorm together to generate ideas (Girma & Habtamu, 2019). Team Creativity is explained as a design where employees' makes innovative construction in which the work-related problems are resolved in rightful manner with step by step process. It is the ability of the individuals to understand how they can develop useful solution to meet the challenges and overcome the problems themselves (Nadeem, Naveed, Muhammad & Komal, 2021).A creative employee is one who has the ability to identify, analyze and demonstrate a high degree of competence, being aware of the organizations peculiarities in tackling those sensitive areas of each problem with little or no supervision (Judipat & Okpu, 2021). He must be adaptive to changes and technological advancement prevalent in the society. This is due to globalization which has brought rapid change in the technology as well as the culture. Furthermore, Idegbesor and Ngige (2020) argue that prevailing conditions that hinder growth in an organizations like, lack of picking-up of team creativity, absence of team trust, educational growth, bonuses, job rotation and the use of obsolete technologies, may be the cause of low productivity. So a creative employee is one who is able to adapt to all the changes before time. It has been long observed that employee's creativity is mostly seen by the large organization and team. Team creativity is mostly involved in the generation of change in product, due to working in teams, the employee are constantly engaged in learning new knowledge, skills which are the necessary requirements needed by the organization from the employees, so they can achieve timely goals (Boso, Donbesuur & Bendega, 2017).

Team creativity can be explained as introducing new techniques by individual or group of people in organization for achieving the maximum potential of human labor which will result in achieving goals effectively. If a firm wants to compete with its competitors, they must hire creative employees who are extroverts, feeling easy to work in groups. Employees with proactive personalities are the one which are

mostly admired to make constructive change (Atouks & Orusa, 2019). Employees' creativity can most commonly be referred to an individual who has new ideas for his work and working style. He must be flexible in order to work in team rather than individually completing a project. A creative employee is one who has better skills of understanding and is adaptable anytime new technology is introduced in the firm. All these values indicate that employees are empowered to face any adjustments, changes and ideas that will enable them complete the task. Emerenini, Umeagugesi and Ighodaro, (2021) is of the view that team creativity is adapted by the team to do production with new ideas. The team creativity may depend on the employee or situation the team may want to be in contact at highest or lowest level, although he or she has great potential. However, employee may use his/her capabilities, skills, knowledge and effort to produce creative outcomes.

Team creativity is not limited to a specific sector or industry; it is a universal phenomenon applicable across diverse business domains. In Anambra State, where businesses span agriculture, manufacturing, technology, and services, team creativity takes on various forms and manifestations. It could manifest in a group of farmers developing innovative farming techniques, a team of engineers designing sustainable manufacturing processes, or a group of entrepreneurs brainstorming new business models.

Factors limiting team creativity includes; Lack of training and retraining, unqualified staff, below par team leader competence, poor mentoring and lack of functional organizational structure.

Sustainability

The Brundtland World Commission report, published in 1987, introduced one of the most widely recognized definitions of sustainability. In this definition, sustainability is described as a form of development that strives to fulfil the current generation's needs while ensuring that these actions do not jeopardize the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs. Essentially, it emphasizes the importance of responsible resource management and environmental stewardship to maintain a balanced and equitable world for present and future inhabitants. This definition underscores the intergenerational and long-term perspective that is central to sustainable development efforts. Gladwin, Kennelly, andKrause (cited in Rahman, Wahab andLatiff, 2022) crafted a profound definition of sustainability that remains both timeless and enlightening. They portrayed sustainability as a dynamic tapestry—a living system that is open, weaving together diverse elements into an intricate web. This intricate fabric is characterized by its inclusivity, ensuring that every thread is interwoven equitably, representing a harmonious balance.In their visionary perspective, sustainability is not just a utopian dream but a pragmatic aspiration, marked by reason and practicality. It's a system where growth is not only

nurtured but nurtures in return—a mutual relationship that flourishes within the bounds of security. Thus, this definition invites us to perceive sustainability as a holistic and evolving masterpiece where humanity's progress is intricately connected to the flourishing of our planet.

Theoretical underpinning

This study adopted the Resource-Based View (RBV), which was originally proposed by Birger Wernerfelt in 1984 and later developed and refined by Jay B. Barney in 1991. The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a strategic management framework that focuses on a firm's internal resources and capabilities as the primary drivers of its competitive advantage (Utami & Alamanos, 2023).To achieve and sustain a competitive edge, a firm must possess resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). These resources, which can be tangible or intangible, enable a firm to outperform competitors. Applying RBV to the study of team creativity's impact on the sustainability of lubricant firms in Anambra state (or any industry) reveals its relevance. RBV underscores the need to identify and analyze a firm's key resources and capabilities. For lubricant firms, these may include skilled employees, innovative technology, manufacturing facilities, distribution networks, and market knowledge. Team creativity represents a critical capability, reflecting a firm's ability to generate innovative ideas and solutions.RBV asserts that sustainable competitive advantage arises when a firm possesses resources and capabilities meeting VRIN criteria. In this context, team creativity could be a valuable, potentially rare capability, fostering innovation, efficiency, and competitive differentiation.RBV also stresses the importance of resource appropriation. For team creativity, this means ensuring creative ideas result in tangible benefits enhancing sustainability, such as improved product quality, cost savings, or environmental advantages. RBV recognizes the necessity of firms adapting to changing market conditions. Team creativity can be viewed as a dynamic capability, aiding firms in responding to evolving sustainability challenges. Studying team creativity within Anambra's lubricant firms offers insights into how innovation can drive sustainability. Creative solutions may lead to eco-friendly lubricants or more efficient processes, attracting environmentally-conscious customers. Understanding team creativity's role in sustainability allows Anambra's firms to strategically position themselves. They can showcase their commitment to sustainability through innovative practices, potentially attracting eco-conscious customers and stakeholders.

Factors limitingteam creativity and sustenance of lubricant firms

Promoting team creativity within lubricant firms in Anambra State, or any similar industry, to enhance sustainability involves addressing various challenges. Here are some of the major challenges:

1. Lack of Awareness and Education: Lack of Awareness and Education in the lubricant industry regarding sustainability is a significant issue. Many team members may not grasp the importance of sustainability practices in this sector. This knowledge gap can hinder the adoption of environmentally friendly practices and hinder the organization's ability to make informed decisions. To address this challenge, companies must invest in comprehensive sustainability education and training programs. These initiatives should not only highlight the ecological significance of sustainability but also emphasize its relevance to the business's long-term viability. By fostering awareness and providing the necessary knowledge, organizations can empower their team members to make informed choices that contribute to a more sustainable future in the lubricant industry.

2. Resistance to Change: Resistance to change can be a significant barrier when it comes to implementing sustainable practices within an organization. Such changes typically involve alterations in various aspects, including processes, products, and even the mind-set of individuals within the organization. Both employees and management may exhibit resistance to these changes, which can hinder creative initiatives, aimed at enhancing sustainability. Employees may resist change due to fear of the unknown, concerns about job security, or discomfort with new processes or technologies. Management, on the other hand, might resist change if they perceive it as costly or disruptive to existing operations, or if they are hesitant to deviate from established practices.This resistance to change can be detrimental to sustainability efforts, as it may stifle innovative ideas and deter the organization from embracing more eco-friendly practices. To overcome this challenge, effective change management strategies, clear communication, and engagement with all stakeholders are crucial to help shift mind-sets and facilitate a smoother transition towards sustainability.

3. Regulatory Compliance and Supply Chain Complexity: Regulatory Compliance and Supply Chain Complexity in the context of lubricant firms pose multifaceted challenges. Firstly, the ever-evolving landscape of sustainability standards and environmental regulations requires continuous vigilance. This means dedicating time and resources to stay informed about changes and ensuring that the company complies with these regulations. This can divert attention and resources away from innovative and creative endeavours within the firm. Secondly, lubricant companies often operate within intricate supply chains that may not inherently prioritize sustainability. Suppliers and distributors may not have the same level of commitment to eco-friendly practices, making it challenging to ensure a consistent and sustainable supply chain. Coordinating efforts with various stakeholders in the supply chain to adopt sustainable practices can be logistically complex.

4. Resource Constraints and Market Competition: Resource constraints and market competition pose significant challenges for small to medium-sized lubricant firms when it comes to adopting sustainable practices and investing in research and development. These firms often lack the financial and human resources required to make substantial investments in sustainability initiatives or to develop innovative solutions. Additionally, in a competitive market, businesses may be reluctant to commit to sustainability due to concerns that it could raise their operational costs, potentially making them less competitive in the short term. Convincing stakeholders, including investors, customers, and employees, about the long-term benefits of sustainability can be a complex task for these firms. However, it's crucial to emphasize that sustainable practices can lead to long-term success by improving brand reputation, reducing environmental impact, and appealing to environmentally-conscious consumers. Finding ways to balance sustainability with cost-efficiency and demonstrating the value of these investments over time can be essential for the growth and resilience of small to medium-sized lubricant companies in today's competitive market.

5. Data and Measurement: Data and Measurement are essential components in assessing and improving sustainability efforts within organizations. Reliable data and metrics serve as the foundation for tracking progress and making informed decisions. However, collecting and analysing this data can present challenges, particularly for smaller firms or those with limited resources. These challenges may include the cost of data collection, the complexity of measuring certain sustainability indicators, and the need for specialized expertise in data analysis and reporting. Despite these difficulties, it is crucial for businesses to invest in sustainable data collection and measurement processes to gain insights, set targets, and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability to stakeholders and the broader community. This investment can lead to long-term benefits, including reduced environmental impact, improved social responsibility, and enhanced corporate reputation.

Team creativity on sustainability of Lubricant firms in Anambra state

In Anambra State, there are a total of eight registered lubricant firms. These companies are distributed across various locations within the state, with some of them being situated in key industrial areas such as Nnewi, Ozubulu, and Onitsha. Interestingly, the headquarters of all these lubricant firms are also located within the boundaries of Anambra State. This highlights the state's significance as a hub for the lubricant industry, contributing to its local economy and industrial development.Despite encountering a lack of existing literature pertaining to studies conducted in Anambra, the researchers opted to leverage findings from research conducted in different geographical regions across the globe. This approach allowed for gathering of relevant insights and information, even though there was a scarcity of locally specific data. By drawing from international studies, the researchers were

able to supplement their research and make more informed conclusions, thereby addressing the knowledge gap in this investigation.

1. Driving Innovation: Innovation is a crucial element for the sustainability of businesses. Those that do not prioritize innovation run the risk of stagnation and irrelevance in a rapidly changing world (Boyles, 2022). Team creativity is a key driver of innovation within organizations. When teams are encouraged to think creatively, they are more likely to develop new products, services, and processes that can meet the evolving needs and preferences of customers (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Anambra State's lubricant firms can benefit from emulating the approaches of globally renowned companies such as Apple and Google, which have excelled in cultivating cultures of creativity. These companies prioritize empowering their teams to challenge conventional thinking and explore innovative and unconventional ideas. By fostering an environment that encourages curiosity, risk-taking, and open dialogue, they can potentially unlock new avenues for growth and innovation, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness on both regional and global scales.This approach results in a continuous flow of innovative products and services that not only attract customers but also help them maintain a competitive edge in the market. In essence, embracing a culture of creativity can be a pivotal strategy for businesses in Anambra State to thrive and remain relevant in the dynamic business landscape.

2. Problem Solving and Adaptation: In today's dynamic business landscape, lubricant firms in Anambra state face a multitude of challenges, including economic fluctuations, disruptions in the supply chain, and evolving customer demands. To thrive in such an environment, Rožman, Tominc and Štrukelj (2023) stressed that organizations must foster team creativity as a crucial asset. Encouraging teams to think creatively enables them to tackle complex issues with innovative solutions. Creative problem-solving is a crucial skill that not only helps businesses find cost-effective solutions but also boosts their operational efficiency. This adaptability becomes particularly valuable during turbulent times, as it equips businesses to navigate crises more effectively. When organizations encourage creative problem-solving among their teams, they foster innovation and the ability to think outside the box. This can lead to the development of unique and efficient approaches to challenges, ultimately improving the overall resilience and competitiveness of the business. In times of crisis or uncertainty, these creative problem-solving skills enable companies to quickly adapt to changing circumstances, identify opportunities, and minimize the impact of disruptions. In this way, creative problem-solving is an essential tool for businesses to thrive in a dynamic and unpredictable environment. Prioritizing team creativity makes businesses more agile and resilient. By embracing creative thinking, companies in Anambra State will not only weather

storms but also emerge from adversity stronger and better equipped for future challenges.

3. **Enhancing Customer Experience:** The sustainability of lubricant firms in Anambra State hinges on maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty. To achieve this, Okechukwu (2022) buttressed that businesses should consistently aim to meet and also exceed customer expectations. One crucial factor in this equation is the role of creative teams. Creative teams are endowed with a remarkable capacity to establish a profound connection with customers, gaining a deep understanding of their ever-evolving needs and ever-shifting preferences. This intrinsic talent enables them to decipher the intricacies of the consumer landscape and also to craft ingenious marketing campaigns that strike a chord with the intended audience. These imaginative marketing initiatives are not confined to conventional strategies; instead, they are forged from the crucible of creativity, resulting in campaigns that stand out amidst the noise of the market. They harness the power of storytelling, visual aesthetics, and emotional resonance to captivate and engage consumers on a level that goes beyond mere product or service offerings. Furthermore, creative teams are adept at designing user-friendly interfaces that transcend mere functionality. Their expertise lies in crafting interfaces that are intuitive, elegant, and responsive, enhancing overall usability and providing an exceptional user experience. This user-centric approach is instrumental in ensuring that customers can effortlessly navigate through digital platforms, fostering a sense of ease and satisfaction. Perhaps one of the most extraordinary abilities of creative teams is their capacity to conjure up customer interactions that are not only memorable but also delightful. These interactions extend beyond the transactional realm, creating lasting impressions that leave customers with a sense of joy, satisfaction, and loyalty. Through innovative approaches, they transform routine touch points into opportunities for enchantment, ensuring that every interaction is a memorable one. By infusing creativity into every facet of the customer journey, business can nurture strong brand loyalty and ensure that customers return for repeat business (Srivastava &Rai, 2018). In essence, the synergy between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and the creative input of teams can be the driving force behind the long-term success and sustainability of businesses in Anambra State.

4. Addressing Environmental and Social Responsibility: In today's climate of heightened environmental awareness and a strong focus on social responsibility, businesses are finding themselves increasingly compelled to adopt sustainable practices (Wirba, 2023). Anambra State, like the rest of the world, grapples with pressing environmental issues such as pollution, dwindling resources, and the challenges posed by climate change. Simultaneously, there is a growing expectation for businesses to play an active role in improving their communities and addressing various social issues. Anambra State, much like the rest of the world, finds itself at

the intersection of several pressing environmental challenges that demand immediate attention and action. Pollution, resource depletion, and the ever-escalating threats of climate change have become increasingly prominent concerns in the region. These environmental issues do not only jeopardize the well-being of Anambra's residents, but also have far-reaching consequences for the planet as a whole. One of the most prominent issues confronting Anambra State is pollution. The rapid industrialization and urbanization of the state have led to the release of harmful pollutants into the air, water, and soil. This pollution not only poses significant health risks to the local population but also contributes to global environmental degradation. The contamination of rivers, soil, and air with pollutants from various sources, including industrial activities, transportation, and agricultural practices, has become a cause for alarm. Harnessing the creative potential within a team can be a powerful tool in the pursuit of sustainable business practices that aim to reduce environmental impact (Rosen & Kishawy, 2012).Creative thinking can lead to the development of innovative, eco-friendly products, the optimization of energy usage for efficiency, and the responsible management of waste. Furthermore, creative teams are well-positioned to devise strategies for engaging with the community and implementing corporate social responsibility initiatives that not only benefit the local populace but also foster goodwill and trust. By encouraging and nurturing creativity within their teams, businesses can take significant strides toward achieving both their environmental and social responsibility goals, contributing positively to Anambra State's sustainable development and beyond.

Conclusion

The impact of team creativity on the sustainability of lubricant firms in Anambra State is a multifaceted and vital aspect of business development in the region. This study has shed light on the intricate dynamics at play in this unique Nigerian state, where businesses operate amidst various challenges, both environmental and economic. The pursuit of sustainability in Anambra's business landscape is not only a strategic imperative but also a moral obligation to address local challenges while positioning businesses for a prosperous future. Through a comprehensive exploration of team creativity and its role in sustainability, this study has unveiled several key findings and insights: Firstly, team creativity serves as a powerful driver of innovation, enabling businesses to develop novel products, services, and processes that cater to evolving customer demands. By fostering a culture of creativity, Anambra's lubricant firms can unlock new avenues for growth and competitiveness. Secondly, creative problem-solving skills within teams enhance the adaptability and resilience of lubricant firms, allowing them to navigate turbulent times more effectively. In a dynamic business environment, the ability to think creatively is a crucial asset for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities. Thirdly, teams' creative endeavours play a significant role in enhancing the customer experience. By understanding and responding to customer needs with innovative

marketing campaigns and user-friendly interfaces, lubricant firms can build lasting brand loyalty and customer satisfaction. Lastly, team creativity can contribute to addressing environmental and social responsibility concerns. Creative thinking can lead to eco-friendly product development, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and the implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives that benefit both the community and the environment. Despite the challenges faced by lubricant firms in Anambra State, such as limited resources and supply chain complexity, the cultivation of team creativity remains essential for their long-term sustainability and success. Firms must recognize the value of creativity as a strategic asset and invest in initiatives that promote it.

Recommendations

1. Encourage a culture of curiosity and experimentation within your organization to foster innovation. Allow employees the freedom to explore new ideas and unconventional approaches, providing the necessary resources and support.
2. Create cross-functional teams that bring together individuals with diverse skills and perspectives. These teams can collaboratively tackle complex challenges, adapt to changing circumstances, and develop innovative solutions.
3. Implement a robust feedback mechanism that allows customers to provide input and share their experiences. Use this feedback to make data-driven improvements to products, services, and overall customer interactions.
4. Develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy that includes eco-friendly product development, waste reduction, and community engagement. Prioritize transparency in reporting your environmental and social responsibility efforts to build trust with stakeholders.

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