Utilization of Technological Innovations and Breweries Business Growth in Post Covid 19 Era in South Western Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the utilization of technological innovations and breweries business growth in post COVID 19 era in Southwestern Nigeria. One research question and two hypotheses guided the study. A descriptive research design was used in the study. Population comprised 6,206 staff from International Breweries PLC in Southwest Nigeria. Using purposive sampling, four plants were selected, and a sample of 1,563 staff participated. Questionnaires used comprised: Technology Skills Questionnaire (TSQ) with a reliability coefficient of r = .93 and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ) with r = .95. Research question was answered using descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics were used in testing hypotheses. The findings indicated that Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, internet, networking, analytics and machine learning skills were among required technological innovations for Breweries business growth. The findings showed a positive and significant relationship between technological innovations utilization and breweries business growth ($r = 0.692^{***}$, N=1563, $\rho < 0.05$). There was composite contribution of technological innovations utilization to breweries business growth. International Breweries (PLC) should continuously invest in technological innovations. This could involve establishing dedicated innovation teams or departments, providing training programs focused on new technologies, and fostering a corporate culture that encourages experimentation and the development of new ideas.

Keywords: Technological Innovations, Utilization, Business Growth, International Breweries

Introduction

Every government and stakeholders in the business sector today are looking for antidotes that can engender their growth. Business growths represent one of the economic factors for economic prosperity. That is, economic prosperity does not take-place in a vacuum, but when there is consistence business growth, it can propel economic prosperity in terms of expansion of existing businesses, employment creation, poverty reduction and peaceful coexistence (Obunike & Udu, 2019). We can say that business growth is a function of the business lifecycle, industry growth trends, and the owners desire for equity value creation. The growth of business organizations is crucial for generation of employment (Oguanobi & Joel, 2024). Businesses are fundamentally built on satisfying customer demands, and failure to meet essential needs can lead to diminished demand and low growth (Sidek & Mohamad, 2014).

In year 2019, both large and small businesses were vulnerable with the emergence the disruption posed by the pandemic, with smaller businesses being more severely affected due to fewer resources (Obiakor, 2020). The International Trade Centre (ITC) in 2019 found that 55% of 4,467 surveyed enterprises in 132 countries experienced significant impacts arsing as a result of the pandemic. Small and medium scale as well as micro enterprise in this period faced substantial

operational challenges, with about 20% at risk of permanent closure within three months. Two-thirds of African businesses reported negative impacts, including decreased sales (75%) and supply chain disruptions (54%) (Gondwe, 2020). The service sector, particularly lodging and food services, faced severe disruptions, with 76% of enterprises reporting significant operational impacts due to lockdowns International Trade Centre (2020), highlighting the urgent need for adaptive strategies to enhance resilience in future crises.

The pandemic (Covid-19) was first reported in China, and as the pandemic swept across the globe, nations engaged in discussions about strategies to curb the virus's transmission and lessen its effects (Obiakor, 2020). In Nigeria, the government implemented measures including airports closure, shut down of markets, schools, worship places as well as areas for any social gatherings with the information of the dangerous pandemic and with the recorded case in the country by March, 2020, businesses and other relevant aspect of the economy were drained (Oyewale *et al*, 2020). Although these closures were necessary, they negatively affected businesses nationwide (Obiakor, 2020). The pandemic prompted widespread changes, including technological advancements that altered business management and facilitated their dissemination. These shifts impacted nearly all aspects of human activity, including socio-economic, health, and relationships. The virus had a massive socioeconomic impact globally, primarily due to preventive measures adopted by governments. While the health effects of COVID-19 were immediate, the economic consequences arose from measures like border restrictions and economic lockdowns, which led to the shutdown of some businesses and social services for extended periods (Gondwe, 2020), highlighting the critical need for comprehensive recovery strategies to support affected sectors.

Obunike and Udu (2019) stress the vital significance of entrepreneurs, shareholders, management, and workers in driving company success and growth. Effective business outcomes largely depend on individual leadership and innovative capabilities, which must adapt to internal and external challenges, particularly those exacerbated as a result of different pandemic such as COVID-19 (Hua *et al*., 2015). Stakeholders in business sector begin to look for ways to continue operation despite short down of the economy. Technology comprised the equipment, methods, materials, and processes businesses use to in creating a new product and ensuring that the product is well improved in their processes. It plays a crucial part in ensuring the growth of company pattern of innovation across various functions, including manufacturing, logistics, customer service, and finance (Oyeku *et al*., 2014). Technological innovation can manifest as either product-oriented, involving changes to product already existing or the introduction of another new product, as well as process-oriented, which involves improving production techniques to lower costs or increase quality (Obunike & Udu, 2019). For small firms, embracing technological advancements is vital for growth, employment, and competitiveness, necessitating their participation in global tech collaborations and adoption of cutting-edge technologies.

The impact of modern technology has transformed the business landscape, altering how companies operate, and affecting product lifecycles and consumer preferences. Digital technologies have become especially significant during when the issue of the pandemic occurred, offering good avenue for business resilience and recovery through digital transformation. This shift stresses the need for businesses, particularly SMEs, to build tech literacy and leverage digital tools for growth. Governments in developing countries can facilitate this by expanding ICT infrastructure and fostering tech-driven innovation, as seen in countries like Bangladesh, Kenya, and Nigeria (Ajmal *et al.,* 2023; Ebuka *et al.,* 2020).

International Breweries Plc, a prominent player in Nigeria's beverage industry, contributes significantly to the nation's economy through its production and distribution of various alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Established as one of Nigeria's leading breweries, Ajmal *et al.,* (2023) reiterated that it supports economic growth by creating job opportunities, fostering local sourcing of raw materials, and driving investment in infrastructure. Its operations not only bolster the manufacturing sector but also enhance the country's tax revenues and export potentials. International Breweries is known to have a substantial impact by establishing regional production facilities and distribution networks. This presence has spurred economic activity in the area, promoting regional development through job creation, skill development, and local business partnerships. Additionally, the company's investments in the South-West have facilitated community development projects and supported local economies by improving supply chain linkages and providing reliable employment (Adeosun & Shittu, 2022). Thus, International Breweries PLC's role extends beyond mere production; it is a catalyst for regional and national economic advancement in Nigeria.

Despite extensive research on business growth and innovation, including studies by Absanto and Nnko (2013) on growth strategies, Adeyeye (2014) on technological innovation, and Sutrisno *et al* (2023), Adeosun and Shittu (2022) on issue regarding Pandemic, there remains a noteworthy gap in literature regarding the combined influence of technological skills on business growth, particularly in the post-pandemic context. Other significant contributions include Afriyie, Du, and Ibn Musah (2019) on SME marketing performance, Agbim (2013) on management skills and entrepreneurial success, and Obunike and Udu (2018) on technological innovativeness in small-scale manufacturing. While these studies address various facets of business performance, they often focus separately on management skills, technological advancements, or pandemic impacts without exploring their combined influence. Additionally, research by Ebrahim *et al,* (2020) as well as the work by Jorda *et al* (2020) have worked on the long-term economic consequences of COVID-19 while Lakuma *et al* (2020) studies on MSME challenges in Uganda have all failed to look at both the management and technological skills impact on growth of business thereby highlighting the need for more integrated approaches.

COVID-19 pandemic changes the landscape of global business environments, making innovation a critical driver of recovery and growth. Businesses that previously thrived on traditional models have been forced to pivot and adapt rapidly to new conditions. Technological skills have become indispensable as businesses accelerate their digital transformation in their effort to responds to the emergence of the novel coronavirus. The ability to effectively use and integrate technology can significantly impact a company's operational efficiency, customer engagement, and overall growth. Despite this, the pattern through which technological skills relate to growth of business during the post-Covid -19 recovery phase is not well-documented. Understanding how technological skills such as proficiency in digital tools, data analysis, and cyber security affect business performance is crucial for guiding companies in their technology adoption strategies. Hence, the need to know how technological skills affect business growth in the post-COVID-19 era becomes necessary. Hence, it becomes imperative to investigate the influence of technological innovations on the business growth of Breweries after the pandemic.

The main objective of the study is to investigate how management and technological innovations utilization influence Breweries business growth in the post-Covid era. The specific objectives are to:

i. identify the required technological innovations for Breweries business growth;
ii. assess the relationship between Technological innovations utilisation and Breweries business growth;
iii. determine the composite contribution of Technological innovations utilisation to Breweries business growth

Research Question

i. What are the required technological innovations for Breweries business growth?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Technological innovations utilisation and Breweries Business growth.

H_{02}: There is no significant composite contribution of technological innovations utilisation to breweries business growth.

Methodology

Geographically, the study was confined to International Breweries Plc, in Nigeria, covering four plants in Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States which are predominantly Yoruba and serve as significant economic hubs. A descriptive research design was used in the study. This design was chosen because it gave a better and detailed systematic investigation relating to current practices and outcomes inside the company, providing a clear picture of how these skills are being applied and their impact on breweries business growth. The study consisted of 6,206 staff members from various plants of International Breweries (IB). Specifically, Plant A (Lawrence Omole Way, Omi-Asoro, Ilesa, Osun State) has 1,929 staff, Plant B (Niger Bridge Head, Onitsha, Anambra State) has 874 staff, Plant C located at 186/187 Trans Amadi Industrial Layout in Oginigba, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State has 651 staff, and Plant D (Km3 Flowergate Industrial Scheme, Sagamu-Abeokuta Motorway) has 2,752 staff (Human Resource and Staff Development Department, 2024). This population was chosen because it provided a comprehensive representation of the company's diverse operational contexts and management teams, making it possible to make a thorough investigation of the impact of management and technological skills and breweries business growth across different settings within the same organization. The compilation of the industries is reported in Table

Table 1: Representation of Population

Location/Plant	Total (N)
Plant A (Omi-Asoro, Ilesa, Osun State)	1,929
Plant B (Onitsha, Anambra State)	874
Plant C (Oginigba, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State)	651
Plant D (Sagamu-Abeokuta Expressway)	2,752
Total	**6,206**

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024.

A total of 1,563 staff members of International Breweries in Nigeria, representing 25% of the population (1,563 out of 6,206) was used as the sample size. The sample size was selected using proportional random sampling so as to ensure that selected plants were adequately represented. Specifically, 509 respondents were chosen from Plant A (1,929 staff), 212 from Plant B (874 staff), 166 from Plant C (679 staff), and 826 from Plant D (2,752 staff). Within each plant, respondents were drawn from seven divisions: management, packaging, brewing, energy and fluid, marketing,

logistics, and finance/accounts. This approach ensured a comprehensive and representative sample, facilitating reliable and valid conclusions on how management skills affect the breweries business growth across different operational contexts within the company.

Table 2: Sample Representation

Departments	Plant A (Omi-Asoro, Ilesa, Osun State) (N = 1,929)	Plant B (Onitsha, Anambra State) (N = 874)	Plant C (Oginigba, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State) (N = 651)	Plant D (Sagamu-Abeokuta Expressway) (N = 2,752)	Total
Management level	36	9	5	39	89
Packaging department	90	63	46	122	321
Brewing department	135	33	33	156	357
Energy & Fluid department	51	12	15	76	154
Marketing department	92	66	35	175	368
Logistics department	66	5	12	69	152
Finance/Accounts department	39	24	20	39	122
Total	509	212	166	676	1563

(Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024).

Collection of data for this study was carried out using two questionnaire namely Technology Skills Questionnaire (TSQ) and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ). Each consisting of two sections. The first section provided questions relating to demographic characteristics of respondents. The second section contained items specifically designed to address research questions for the study. Instruments used was validated by a panel of experts in the Departments of Business Education, Technical Education, and Educational Management as well as by several lecturers from related departments within the university. These experts conducted a thorough review after which the items included in the study were directly related to the study's objectives. They assessed the content to guarantee that it effectively covered all necessary aspects of technology skills as they relate to business growth in the post-COVID-19 era.

In addition to content relevance, the experts ensured that the instrument adhered to a structured format, which is crucial for consistency and clarity in responses. They scrutinized the instrument for grammatical errors and ambiguities that could potentially affect the respondents' understanding of the questions. It is believed that by incorporating their extensive feedback and suggestions, the instrument was refined to enhance its clarity, coherence, and overall effectiveness. Their rigorous validation process not only confirmed the instrument's relevance and appropriateness but also bolstered its credibility and reliability. This comprehensive validation ensured that the instrument was well-equipped to gather accurate and meaningful data for the study. The test-retest approach was employed to ensure the instrument's consistency. To test the reliability, sixty (60) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to employees of Frigo Glass Industries Nigeria Limited, a company not included in the current study. The questionnaire was administered twice, with a one-week interval between the two administrations. After collecting the responses, the data were collated and analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha technique to measure reliability. The results demonstrated satisfactory reliability for each questionnaire: Technology Skills Questionnaire

(TSQ) with a reliability coefficient of r = .93 and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ) with r = .95.

To administer the instrument to staff members at their respective workplaces five trained research assistants were used to ensure a smooth and efficient data collection process. Prior to the administration, the necessary approvals were obtained from the relevant International Breweries offices at the selected plants: Plant A (Omi-Asoro, Ilesa, Osun State), Plant B (Onitsha, Anambra State), Plant C (Oginigba, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State), and Plant D (Sagamu-Abeokuta Motorway). To facilitate access to these plants and their staff, letter of introduction was collected from the Head of Department of Business Education from the University. The research assistants helped in the distribution of the questionnaire and collection, they also ensured that the respondents filled them out and returned them promptly. Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent. Measures were taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, minimize potential harm, and communicate the results transparently. This careful approach guaranteed that the data collection process was conducted ethically and professionally, enhancing the reliability and integrity of the study's findings. Mean, standard deviation and bar-chart were used in presenting answers to the research question 1. Pearson Moment Correlation Technique was used for testing hypothesis 1 and 2 was tested using multiple regression analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Rigorous ethical standards were used in the process of data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, with respondents providing their consent before taking part in the study. This consent ensured that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, their role, and any potential risks involved. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly upheld, with personal information kept secured and used solely for the purpose of the research. Measures were taken to minimize any potential harm or discomfort to the participant and they were assured of utmost confidential and had right to withdraw at will without any negative consequences. Additionally, the results of the study were communicated transparently, and findings were shared with the participants and relevant stakeholders in a manner that maintained their privacy. These ethical practices not only safeguarded the participants' rights but also enhanced the reliability and validity of the research outcomes.

Result of the Findings

Research Question 1: What are the required technological innovations for Breweries business growth?

Table 3: Responses on the required technological innovations for Breweries business

S/N	Statements	Mean	STD	Remark
1.	Artificial intelligence innovations	3.12	.726	Positive
2.	Cloud computing innovations	3.23	.799	Positive
3.	Internet innovations	3.33	.802	Positive
4.	Networking innovations	3.19	.772	Positive
5.	Analytics innovations	3.28	.774	Positive
6.	Machine learning innovations l	3.15	.732	Positive

Average Mean 3.22

Table 3, average mean was found to be 3.22 which was greater than the bench mark mean value 2.50. This implied that Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, internet, networking, analytics and machine learning skills were among required technological innovations for Breweries business growth.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Technological innovations utilization and Breweries Business growth

Table 4: PPMC results on the relationship between Technological innovations utilization and Breweries Business growth

Variable	Mean	Min	Max	N	R	p
Technological Innovations	1.807	1.00	3.17			
Breweries Business Growth	1.413	1.00	3.90	1563	0.692***	0.00

Source: researcher, 2024

Table 4 presents the result from the Pearson Product moment correlation analysis investigating the relationship between technological innovations utilization and breweries business growth. The result shows a positive and significant relationship exists between technological innovations utilization and breweries business growth with correlation value revealing as follows (r = 0.692***, N=1563, $\rho < 0.05$). This shows that as technological innovations and breweries business growth move in the same direction.

H_{02}: There is no significant composite contribution of technological innovations utilisation to breweries business growth.

Table 5: Composite contribution of Technological innovations on breweries business growth

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-square	F-Value	Sig. of F	Decision
0.801	0.794	0.728	19.779***	0.000	Sig.

Source: Researcher computation, 2024

The results indicate a high correlation coefficient (R = 0.801) and a substantial proportion of variance explained by the model (R-Square = 0.794, Adjusted R-Square = 0.728). Additionally, the F-value of 19.779, significant at 0.000 level, confirms the model's significance. Consequently, the researcher concluded that there was composite contribution of technological innovations utilization to breweries business growth.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, internet, networking, analytics and machine learning skills were among required technological innovations for Breweries business growth. These findings were in support of Johnson and Smith (2020), who demonstrated that comprehensive technological skills are essential for achieving sustained business growth and adapting to changing market conditions.

It was also indicated that there is a relationship between technological skills and breweries business growth in the post-COVID-19 era. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed, and the results demonstrated that technological skills have positive relationship with Breweries business growth. This indicates that technological skills are crucial in driving the growth of breweries in the post-pandemic era. This position aligns with the study of Ojenike (2023) and Kim *et al* (2023), who underscored the importance of technological proficiency in enhancing business performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

There was composite contribution of technological skills to business growth. This conclusion is supported by the work of Ekechi *et al* (2024), as well as Popoola *et al* (2024) who found that strong technological and management skills are vital for navigating the challenges and opportunities in the business environment.

Conclusion

The landscape of the brewing industry has undergone significant changes in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating a reassessment of the skills that drive business growth. In this context, it becomes crucial for breweries to harness a combination of technological skills, alongside Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, internet, networking, analytics and machine learning skills to navigate the evolving market dynamics for business growth.

Recommendations

International Breweries (PLC) should continuously invest in innovation. This could involve establishing dedicated innovation teams or departments, providing training programs focused on new technologies, and fostering a corporate culture that encourages experimentation and the development of new ideas.

The positive impact of technological skills on breweries business growth stresses the need for ongoing technological training and development. The company should ensure that all employees are proficient in essential computing tools and software relevant to their roles. Investing in advanced IT infrastructure and adopting cutting-edge technologies such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing will further enhance operational efficiency and innovation. Additionally, establishing a dedicated IT support team can help address technological challenges promptly and effectively.

A comprehensive training programs that cover multiple skill areas, cross-functional team projects that encourage collaboration across different departments and creating an organizational environment that values continuous learning and professional development. This integrated approach will ensure that the company remains agile and competitive in the ever-evolving post-COVID-19 business landscape.

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