
MANAGEMENT SKILLS UTILISATION AND BUSINESS GROWTH IN 'SOUTHWEST' NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in 'Southwest' Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. A correlational research design was used in this study. Population comprised 6,206 staff from International Breweries PLC in 'Southwest' and 'Southeast' Nigeria. Using purposive sampling, four plants were selected, and a sample of 1,563 staff participated. Questionnaires used comprised: Management Skills Questionnaire (MSQ) with a reliability coefficient of $r = .71$ and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ) with $r = .72$. Research question 1 was answered using descriptive statistics. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using simple and multiple regression analyses respectively. The findings revealed that creativity skills ($3.09 > 2.50$), effective planning and execution skills ($3.01 > 2.50$), leadership skills ($3.29 > 2.50$), problem solving skills ($2.99 > 2.50$), innovative-strategic skills ($2.97 > 2.50$) and effective decision-making skills ($2.99 > 2.50$) were among the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era. There was significant influence of management skills utilization on business growth ($\beta = .155$, $t = 10.28$, $p < .05$). There was composite contribution of the independent variables (management skills) on business growth ($R = .334$, $p < .05$). It was recommended that the company should prioritize creative thinking and problem-solving skills among its employees. This can be achieved through regular workshops, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative projects that encourage the free exchange of ideas.

Keywords: Management Skills, Utilisation, Business Growth, International Breweries

Introduction

Nowadays, business growth is germane in an economy in promotion of real gross domestic product of the country as well as for direct utilization of local raw materials. No country can achieve meaningful development, without consistent business growth, most especially, in real sector of the economy. Again, the growth of business organizations is crucial for generation of employment opportunities, creation of

wealth, sustainability and the progress of any economy in the recent time. Entrepreneurs and small businesses contribute significantly to radical breakthrough ideas (Oginnet *al.*, 2023). Achieving these goals requires specific skills essential for firms to succeed beyond their initial stages. The success of a business relies significantly on the implementation of effective methods for assessing growth rates and adopting beneficial practices in areas such as business culture, strategy, risk

management, and change management. This approach ultimately fosters outcomes that are profitable, efficient, and sustainable (Oguanobi & Joel, 2024; Chatterjee et al., 2024; Rane et al., 2023).

Appiah et al., (2021) emphasized that business growth is influenced by the nature of the investment portfolio, along with the practices, policies, and strategies employed in planning, prioritization, personnel management, pacing, processes, and controls. This shows that business growth should not be taken for granted but should involve carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages of expanding or remaining small (Okijie & Effiong, 2024; Al Bakri & Kiswani, 2024). It emphasizes the need for a strategic approach that considers factors such as market demand, resource availability, and operational capabilities. Business leaders must engage in thorough analysis and planning to ensure that growth initiatives align with their long-term objectives and sustainability. These roles could be better performance through human resource of the organization; Oginn et al., (2023) supported this claiming that manager or human resource manager needs to have acquired management skills and adopt such in a way that will aid organization success and growth. Management skills in terms of effective management of resources and revenue of the organization.

Management skills mean the ability of a company to efficiently and effectively manage as well as direct its activities towards achieving its goals. For an organization to succeed, it must be creative and possess excellent management skills, focusing on managerial abilities and necessary skills for expansion. The body of research relating to the pattern of skills that

organization must ensue in the face of obstacles is expanding in the recent time. Managers must have different skills to accomplish a wide range of tasks essential for the business's survival. A diverse set of talents is useful for commercializing fresh ideas, bringing innovations to market, and overcoming obstacles (Jolanda et al., 2014). The issue of skills has received significant attention recently due to changes in the global economy. Peterson and Van Fleet (2004) argued that a good manager with managerial skills must have a diverse set of fundamental skills, essential for organizing, leading, and evaluating work. Orieno et al., (2024) noted that talent, which combines innate ability with education and experience, is crucial for performance. Key skills in the formal economy include administrative, leadership, technical, and interpersonal abilities. These skills help individuals adapt to modern technology and cultural norms, innovate, and improve work processes (Tether et al., 2005; Ajayi & Udeh, 2024).

Ajayi and Udeh, (2024) as well as Oguanobi and Joel (2024) no company can experience performance and productivity if management skills such as creativity skills in such organization do not stand. These authors defined creativity skills the capability of thinking ahead goal in form of task oriented or a problem in a new of different way. Ajayi and Udeh, (2024) reiterated that creativity skills entailed capability to develop novel solutions or alternative to product development. However, Hua, Morgan and Kilos (2015) believed that management skills in organization can also take the form planning skills which refers to the abilities that directly contribute to firm productivity, accuracy and effectiveness in the workplace.

Apart planning skills, leadership skills as management skills also played prominent role in organization productivity. Okijie and Effiong (2024) defined leadership skills as the abilities or strengths shown by people in management roles that guide and encourage a group of people and their team toward achieving a common goal or set of goals. According to Gondwe (2020), problem solving skill is another management skill needed for organization productivity. The author further stated that problem-solving skills are categories of skills managers need to possess in determining the cause of the problem, identifying, prioritizing and selecting alternatives for a solution and implementing a solution. Orieno *et al.*, (2024) saw innovative skills as one of management skills that drove organization goal attainment. According to the author, innovative skills generate ideas that create value and improve processes, from inventing a machine to finding a faster route to work while Adeyemo and Bello (2019) believed that management skill such as decision-making skill drove all other skills for goals attainment in any organization. However, the authors defined decision-making skill refers to the qualities that help company make confident choices based on advice, research and experience.

Management skills, surrounding planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling, are crucial for utilizing resources effectively to achieve organizational goals (Rezaeian, 2004). The success of a business often hinges on how well resources are managed, affected by different market price instability as well as management practices (Isaacs & McAllister, 2005). Effective managers are expected to perform diverse roles, from setting goals and organizing activities to leading and

controlling performance (Rue & Byars, 2004). Despite the complexities of human management, which can be the most challenging aspect of production management (Papulova & Mokro, 2007), personal traits such as creativity, goal-setting, confidence, and problem-solving are essential for future managerial success. In addition to management skills, technological skills are also critical to the study's focus.

Despite extensive studies on the achievement of business growth, this study addresses this area not covered by existing studies by investigating how the utilization of management skills in the post-Covid -19 era affect business growth within International Breweries Plc in Southwest Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The emergence of the novel COVID-19 in Nigeria took many business owners, industries, and companies by surprise, forcing them into a survival mode to keep their operations running amidst unprecedented challenges. However, as the pandemic continues to affect global operations, many businesses are still struggling to stabilize their practices, while others are attempting to establish a solid footing with the resources at hand. Government of Nigeria have taken step to help business not to collapse, the government with the support of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) initiated support measures by providing loans to enterprises. However, despite this step taken so far, it seems to have not yielded desirable outcomes as many businesses were reported to have short down within this challenging

period in the global economy. This study is an attempt to examine management skills utilisation influence on business growth in Southwest Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. identify needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era.
- ii. investigate influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in post-covid-19 era;
- iii. determine the composite contribution of management skills utilisation on business growth.

Research Questions

- i. What are the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in post-covid-19 era.

H₀₂: There is no significant composite contribution of management skills utilisation on business growth.

Theoretical Framework

Unicist Theory of Business Growth

The theory was initially proposed by Penrose (1959), is integrated into this study

through the Unicist Theory, which is applied in research to analyze and identify the foundational elements supporting both macroeconomic and microeconomic growth. Consequently, Unicist theories of macroeconomic and microeconomic growth were formulated and merged into a unified framework. This framework facilitates the development of scenarios, future projections, and specific strategies that promote growth. The Unicist Theory of company growth helps identify the necessary conditions and strategies for promoting corporate expansion, considering the constraints posed by available resources and prevailing cultural and institutional perspectives. Elisifa and Gerald (2013) stated that this approach is grounded in conceptual anthropology, conceptual economics, and conceptual management. Growth, defined as an increase in size or improvement in quality, results from a developmental process involving a series of interconnected internal changes leading to size increases and character transformations within a business. Growth is a prevalent corporate strategy, contributing to increased sales, assets, and net profits. Strategists may have different views on whether companies need to define broad strategies, but they generally agree on the importance of growth plans. These growth plans, provides essential direction for different strategical activities and form the foundation for efficient efforts aimed at achieving long-term organizational goals. These strategies are instrumental in a company's expansion, evolution, stability, and success, enabling firms to have a large market share and come up with a new product and services.

Various growth strategies are available to business strategists, particularly those resulting from changes in the product,

market, or both (Pearce, Robinson, & Mital, 2008). Businesses unable to attain the necessary economies of scale for mass production frequently encounter substantial losses unless they identify and excel in a specific, lucrative niche. In such cases, elevated prices can be warranted due to the distinct attributes of their products or services. Growth plans differ across firms and finding the most suitable plan for a business and its specific market demands careful consideration. It is crucial to decide whether to sell a new product or existing one in new or existing markets, as an incorrect strategy can lead to the organization's downfall (Elisifa & Gerald, 2013). The theory points out the necessity of implementing appropriate strategies for organizational growth.

However, the theory states the regulations that must be taken into account while creating expansion strategies. To help a firm flourish, two simultaneous acts must be developed. The theory maintains that speculative activities must be undertaken to take advantage of opportunities. It develops a business's structural growth through structural measures. The idea outlines the prerequisites for both conjectural and structural company growth. We approach the procedure by taking into account: a) The context for growth, b) The critical mass for growth, c) The growth-oriented operation. The pattern of business development integration of a specific context, required critical mass, and functioning are crucial for business growth. When considering the conceptual framework, it can be said that producing a suitable environment is the ultimate goal to be attained, the operational

framework for growth enables it to be completed, and the critical mass facilitates energy savings throughout the process. Since context changes happen extremely slowly and a project cannot be implemented if the context is insufficient, context analysis is essential for firm growth.

Methodology

A correlational research design was used in this study. This design is chosen because it gives 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 consists 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. This population is chosen because it provides 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 1.

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

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 plant was adequately represented. Specifically, 509 (26.4%) respondents were chosen from Plant A (1,929 staff), using purposive sampling technique, 212 (24.3%) 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

Collection of data for this study was carried out using two questionnaires namely Management Skills Questionnaire (MSQ) and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ). Each consisting of two sections. The first section provides questions relating to demographic characteristics of respondents. The second section contained items specifically designed to address research questions for the study. The questionnaire was validated by the panel of experts 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 management 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 any 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 reliability test was

conducted once to ensure the instrument's consistency. To test the reliability, 60 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to employees of other branch of the company that does not take part in this study. After collecting the responses, the data was collated and analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha technique to measure reliability. The results demonstrated satisfactory reliability for each questionnaire: Management Skills Questionnaire (MSQ) with a reliability coefficient of $r = .71$ and Business Growth Questionnaire (BGQ) with $r = .72$.

To administer the instruments to staff members at their respective workplaces, five trained research assistants was used to ensure a smooth and efficient data collection process. Prior to 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). The research assistant helped in the distribution of the questionnaire and collection, who 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. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using simple and multiple regression analyses respectively.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation responses on the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era

S/N	Statements	Mean	STD	Remark
1.	Creativity skills	3.09	.908	Positive
2.	Effective planning and execution skills	3.01	.972	Positive
3.	Leadership skills.	3.29	.497	Positive
4.	Problem solving skills	2.99	.982	Positive
5.	Innovative-strategic skills.	2.97	.982	Positive
6.	Effective decision-making skills.	2.99	.980	Positive

Average Mean = 3.06



Figure 1: Bar-chart showing the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era

Result from Table 3 revealed that average mean was 3.06 and the bench mark value of 2.50. Since, average mean value $3.06 > 2.50$, this implied that creativity skills ($3.09 > 2.50$), effective planning and execution skills ($3.01 > 2.50$), leadership skills ($3.29 > 2.50$), problem solving skills ($2.99 > 2.50$),

innovative-strategic skills ($2.97 > 2.50$) and effective decision-making skills ($2.99 > 2.50$). The implications of this result were that these aforementioned skills were the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era.

H0₁: There is no significant influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in post-covid-19 era

Table 4: Influence of Management Skills Utilisation on Business Growth in Post-Covid-19 Era

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	28.835	.358		80.439	.000
1 Management skills	.233	.023	.155	10.281	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Business growth

Table 4 showed that the sign of the coefficient of management skills were positive which implied that an increase or improvement in management skills will increase business growth. The independent variables were found to be significant and strongly determine business growth with the p-value less than .05 and magnitude of management skills ($\beta = .155$, $t = 10.28$, $p < .05$). This implied that null hypothesis was

rejected and the researcher concluded that there was significant influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in post-covid-19 era.

H0₂: There is no significant composite contribution of management skills utilisation on business growth.

Table 5: Significant Composite Contribution of Management Skills Utilisation on Business Growth

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.334 ^a	.112	.111	3.33611

a. Dependent variable: Business Growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Management skills

Table 5 showed that there was significant composite contribution of management skills utilization on business growth $R = .334$, $p < .05$. The Table further indicated

that {11.1% (Adj. $R^2 = .111$)} that about 11% of the variance in business growth were accounted for by the linear combination of the independent variables.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that creativity skills, effective planning and execution skills, leadership skills, problem solving skills, innovative-strategic skills and effective decision-making skills were the needed management skills for business growth in post-covid-19 era. The findings

align with the studies of Vahdat (2022) and Elenwoet *al.*, (2024), who emphasized the critical role of management skills such as leadership and planning skills particularly in fostering business growth. The findings further corroborated with Chatterjee, Johnson and Cooney (2012) who found that the greatness of management in any

company depend on the skills of the management team as well as Al Bakri and Kisswani (2024) concluded that management skills possessed serious benefits to the growth and development of the organization.

The findings further indicated that there was significant influence of management skills utilisation on business growth in post-covid-19 era, this correlate with Adeyemo and Bello (2019), who identified management skills to directly relate with the business growth in organization. Furthermore, the findings tandem with Ekechi, Chukwurah, Oyeniyi, and Okeke (2024) that argued that no company can experienced growth without strongly management team with viable skills and Adeyemo and Bello (2019) submitted that management skills are the factors driving organization innovative products and services for growth.

Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that there was significant composite contribution of management skills utilisation on business growth. This finding tandem with Ekechi *et al.*, (2024), as well as Popoola *et al.*, (2024) who found that strong management skills are vital for navigating the challenges and opportunities in the business environment. Likewise, Gondwe (2020) found that management skills jointly impacted organization expansion and performance in a market.

Conclusion and Recommendations

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 management skills. Based on that, the study concluded that effective management skills play a positive and significant role in enhancing business growth for breweries. Strong creativity skills, effective planning and execution skills, leadership skills, problem solving skills, innovative-strategic skills and effective decision-making skills are essential components that enable breweries to recover from challenges and capitalize on new opportunities.

Based on the findings, the study recommended as follows:

- I. Considering the strong influence of creativity skills on breweries business growth, the company should prioritize creative thinking and problem-solving skills among its employees. This can be achieved through regular workshops, brainstorming sessions, and collaborative projects that encourage the free exchange of ideas.
- ii. Given the substantial role of management skills in driving breweries business growth, International Breweries (PLC) should enhance its management training programs. This includes leadership development initiatives that focus on strategic planning, decision-making, and interpersonal skills. Mentorship programs can also be established, pairing less experienced managers with seasoned executives to facilitate knowledge transfer and professional growth. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms should be in place to continuously improve management effectiveness.

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