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# COMPETITIVE AGGRESSIVENESS AND CORPORATE RESILIENCE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES IN RIVERS STATE

By

Priscilla S. Nwachukwu<sup>1</sup> and B. Chima Onuoha<sup>2</sup>

- <sup>1</sup>. Doctoral Student, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt.
- <sup>2</sup>. Professor of Management, Department of Management, University of Port Harcourt

## Abstract

*This study inquired into the relationship between competitive aggressiveness and the corporate resilience of food and beverage firms in Rivers State. A cross-sectional survey was used, and a population of 200 managers and supervisors was covered. A sample size of 132 employees was drawn from the population, and a simple random sampling technique was used. Copies of the questionnaire were the research instrument for the collection of data, and the data was analysed using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation. The outcome revealed that 'risk management and proactiveness, which were the dimensions of competitive aggressiveness, had a positive and significant link with the measures of corporate resilience (agility and robustness)'. The study concluded that 'competitive aggressiveness is a vital tool in enhancing the resilience ability of food and beverage firms. It was recommended that the management of the food and beverage firms properly manage risk, as this will enhance their agility.*

**Keywords:** Competitive Aggressiveness, Corporate Resilience, Agility, Robustness, Risk Management, Proactiveness

## 1.0 Introduction

Organisations are generally operating in a highly dynamic environment that is characterised by a high level of uncertainty. The level of turbulence in the business domain has intensified in recent times owing to the outbreak of coronavirus disease (Covid-19), which crippled the activities of some of the food and beverage firms. Considering the ever-increasing dynamism, it is thus important that organisations possess a high level of resilience if they are to last the test of time in the industry. A corporate firm is said to be resilient when it survives turbulent periods. The constant changes in the food and beverage sector have forced establishments to identify better ways of surviving and attaining their set goals and objectives. Furthermore, resilience means having the strength to survive and thrive during difficult times. Resilience is explained as the capacity of any organisation to endure a disturbing period and recover (Cox & Perry, 2011; Oshi et al., 2020).

Denyer (2017) gave his confirmation that resilience is very important in assisting companies in improving and ascertaining their viability. Considering the rate of failure in the business domain, it is necessary that organisations become more aggressive in their competitiveness, as this will help enhance their fortune. Competitive Aggressiveness refers to how organisations relate to competitors and respond to trends and demand that already exist in the marketplace with regard to competitors' resilience (Chalchissa & Bertrand, 2017; Deakins & Freel, 2012). Several studies have been carried out over the past decade as they relate to organisational resilience. Coleman and Adim (2019) noted in their study the importance of pro-activeness in enhancing organisational resilience. Aroyeun, Adefulu, Adesoga, and Asikhia (2018) stated that an organisation is said to have a high degree of 'competitive aggressiveness' if it forcefully takes a large number and a large variety of actions to outperform its competitors in the marketplace. As a result of high aggressiveness in competition, the current market environment is steadily, increasingly, and competitively challenged. (Derfus, Maggitti, Grimm, & Smith, 2008). ". Zighan, Abualqumboz, Dwaikat, and Alkalha (2019) did a study that investigated operational practises and SMEs' resilience in the face of COVID-19. However, there are scanty studies on how competitive aggressiveness relates to the corporate resilience of food and beverages; this study intends to bridge the gap.

### Statement of Problem

Companies that continuously exhibit the attitude of aggressively monitoring their market or industry to ascertain the type and kind of activities of their competitors do not fall victim to the antics of their competitors that may have an adverse effect on their performance. Some firms are now in extinction; some are performing on a very low scale because they were not resilient enough. The competitive environment is aggressive, and this makes it difficult for the food and beverage sector to operate and also for them to increase their performance level and maintain a stable competitive advantage (Shih, Liu, & Hsu, 2010). The challenge of resilience still lingers, despite several attempts to curb it. Based on this fact, this study seeks to examine how competitive aggressiveness in terms of risk management and pro-activeness relates to the corporate resilience of food and beverage firms in Rivers State.

### Objectives

The specific objectives are to examine the relationship between;

- i. Risk management and agility of food and beverage firms in Rivers state
- ii. Risk management and robustness of food and beverage firms in Rivers state
- iii. Pro-activeness and agility of food and beverage firms in Rivers state
- iv. Pro-activeness and robustness of food and beverage firms in Rivers state

## Hypotheses

The null hypotheses were formulated as a tentative answer to the research questions;

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between risk management and agility of food and beverage firms in Rivers state

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between risk management and robustness of food and beverage firms in Rivers state

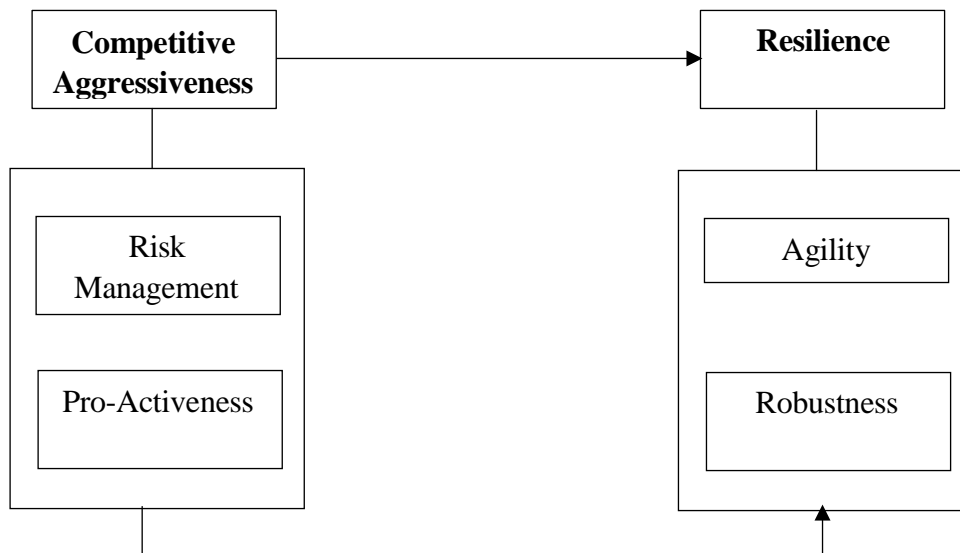
**HO<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between pro-activeness and agility of food and beverage firms in Rivers state

**HO<sub>4</sub>:** There is no relationship between pro-activeness and robustness of food and beverage firms in Rivers state

## 2.0 Literature Review

This work is based on knowledge-base theory'. Knowledge has been frequently identified in recent times as an important factor of production compared to other tangible resources (like machinery or money) in the old industrial economy (Torraco, 2000). Managers, individuals, and employees in general absolutely need to create knowledge because productivity and profit depend on having knowledge to adapt, generate, and learn (Tzortzaki & Mihiotis, 2014). The knowledge-based theory of the firm, written by Professor Robert Grant, has been a widely accepted framework that elucidates the importance of knowledge in reaching the target of organisational goals, which oftentimes aim to achieve and sustain competitive advantage (Grant, 1996). The Knowledge-Based View theory considers firm-specific knowledge to be the most important strategic resource available to firms because of its uniqueness and inimitability and thus recommends its significance in achieving competitive advantage (Imhanzenobe *et al.*, 2021).

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1:** A conceptual framework showing the link between competitive aggressiveness and resilience.

**Source:** Researchers' conceptualization.

## **Competitive Aggressiveness**

Competitive aggressiveness can be regarded as a company's ability to aggressively challenge its competitors to gain a good level of market position and outperform corporate rivals in a similar marketplace (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001). Organisations that carry out competitive actions slower than their competitors often do not succeed in the competition (Derfus et al., 2008). Li, Huang, and Tasai (2010) argued that the performance of any organisation relates to its competitive aggressiveness. Organisations mostly prefer to put lots of effort into competitive actions such as brand launches and strategic business campaigns and rate competition more regularly than others (Sonja, 2017). Competitive aggressiveness refers to "the type of intensity and head-to-head competition that new entrants often need to compete with existing rivals" (Chalchissa & Bertrand, 2017). Mwaura, Gathenya, and Kihoro (2015) discovered that an organisation's aggressiveness in competing is totally achieved by the ability of the managerial team to observe and be attentive to its immediate environment.

Sonja (2017) stated that competitively aggressive companies are those that regularly pay close attention to their competitors' actions and initiate their own. The benefits of being aggressive in competition totally depend on the conditions of the company's environment and the resources of the organisation (Chen et al., 2010). According to Aroyeun et al. (2018) "Competitive Aggressiveness is the firm's strategic response to competition in an effort to protect its competitive market position". Covin and Lumpkin (2011) observed that competitive aggressiveness can be achieved when evaluating management resilience. Furthermore, companies that clearly want to achieve company growth will create a clear and strategic plan to aggressively beat their competitors (Osaze, 2013).

## **Risk Management**

Risk Management (RM) aims to improve the random and positive impact of events (opportunities) while decreasing the negative impact of events (threats) (PMI, 2013). A scholar called Sjöberg et al. (2004) defined risk management as the evaluation of subjective happenings and consideration of the potential consequences by employees. According to Basrowi (2011), risk taking is always associated with the possibility of something happening that will harm or improve the business unexpectedly.

Risk management is a non-stop, evolving process and should look at issues that may compromise or affect critical project objectives (SEI, 2010). Slovic & Peters (2006) explained that risk is sometimes seen by humans in compliance with two main principles: opportunity or threat. Keh, Foo, and Lim (2002) describe risk taking as that key opportunity, which can be a moment in decision-making where a successful entrepreneur turns an idea into an opportunity.

According to Sommerville (2011), risk management is recognised as one of the most important tasks of project management because handling risk is important to managerial decisions. Risk Management has several processes, such as risk management planning, identification, qualitative and quantitative analysis, response planning, and control (SEI, 2010; PMI, 2013). Risk management, according to Mitchell et al. (2004), is a commitment to explore and allow all ideas to start a company or grow an existing business.

## **Pro-activeness**

Pro-activeness is regarded as an opportunity where employees take an active role through their work behaviour in creating a favourable working environment and creating situations (DeVaney, 2015). Pro-activeness can be regarded as the self-starting behaviour of employees in the work environment that extends beyond the work description and aims to bring about changes in view of future problems in the company (Urbach et al., 2019). Proactivity can be

seen as self-starting, change-focused, and future-oriented behaviours (Crant, 2000; Frese& Fay, 2001; Unsworth& Parker, 2003).

Proactive behaviour, as explained by Crant (2000), is compiled by extraordinary cases with different causes that are regarded as reasonably essential to determining the ramifications for the employee and the organisation. Pro-activeness is "to create or control the situation by taking the initiative or predicting events (instead of responding to them)" (Grant et al., 2008). Seibert et al. (2001) have suggested that proactivity in turn increases the workers outcomes, such as their performance in executing a task. Also, employees who have the freedom to think outside the box to execute their task display their initiative and abilities to address a perceived risk within a flexible work environment (Frese& Fay, 2001; Miron-Spektor & Beenen, 2015). Grant and Ashford (2008) define proactiveness "as an anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and/or their environments".

### **Corporate Resilience**

Resilience, according to Gluchshenko (2012), is an organisation's ability to respond to an interruption or breakdown within a time-specific context through commotion, which is temporary. Fundamentally, resilience can be defined as "the ability of an element or a system to return to a stable state after being disrupted or changed" (Gunderson, 2000). As all organisations face unique risk landscapes, "resilience is seen as both an outcome and a fundamental part of the governance of an organisation" (Erika, 2019). According to Hamel and Valikanga (2003) "resilience is the ability to dynamically reinvent business models and strategies as circumstances change". According to Gluchshenko (2012), "the word resilience was initially developed by Horman in 1948 in the realm of mechanics and material testing." In plain words, resilience can be seen as the ability of any company to execute its directives and get back to its current state after extreme difficult periods or stress by considering the before and the during (Cumming et al., 2005; Gunderson, 2000; Hearnshaw& Wilson, 2013).

Organisations that are resilient can recover from being shaken by unforeseen problems (Gallop, 2006). Organisational resilience is any organisation's competence and capacity that ensures organisations get through, handle, recover, and even thrive in the face of unexpected and disastrous events as well as turbulent surroundings (Ma et al., 2018). Resilience can be seen to explain this ability to adjust and return to the firm in hostile surroundings (Kolade et al., 2020). According to Xiao and Cao (2017), organisational resilience is defined as a "firm's ability to successfully absorb, create situation-specific answers to, and eventually participate in transformative activities to capitalise on disruptive surprises that threaten the organisation's existence". "In other words, resilience is about ensuring that an organisation is still able to achieve its core objectives in the face of adversity, before and after" (Erika, 2019). Organisations that have good resilient plans are always ready for unforeseen threats, which could be external or internal to their growth or survival, and put in motion strategies to subvert and come out of the threats on the better side (Giezen, 2013).

### **Agility**

This is the firm's ability to react to changes in uncertainties and a changing environment. The changing nature of global competition necessitates a comprehensive understanding of what factors make an organisation agile. Organisational agility is the manufacturing system for physical and non-physical technology, human resources, educated management, and information in order to meet the rapidly changing needs of the market in a manner that achieves the desires and needs of the customers in time (Park, 2011). The concept of organisational agility is derived from the performance characteristics of an agile organisation and is rooted in two related concepts: "organisational adaptability" and "organisational

flexibility".

### **Robustness**

Robustness has been associated with the maintenance of 'policy strength' and the resistance of a place and its surroundings to constant change (Lowndes & Roberts 2013; Galea et al. 2015). Robustness can also often be used as a measurement tool to carry out analysis in macroeconomic and financial policy (Alichi et al. 2015). Robustness is defined as the "capacity of an organisation to retain its fundamental pattern at its core characteristics under changing conditions" (van Oss & van'tHek 2011). Robust ideals are important for those that are underpinned by strong organisational values and correctly enforced (Galea et al. 2015). Broadly understood, robustness refers to the "ability to withstand or survive external shocks, to be stable in spite of uncertainty" (Bankes 2010).

Robustness can be seen as the extent to which a system is sensitive to external influence (Duchek, 2020; Zhou et al., 2017; Iha, 2000). Robust systems are occasionally required to make changes to their system of operation to maintain functionality (Kitano, 2004). The robust system's primary characteristic is the ability to either withstand or absorb strain (Durach et al., 2015). Carlson and Doyle (2002) stated that a robust systems refers to the maintenance of system performance either when subjected to foreign turbulence or uncertain parameters within the company. Robustness has been described as the 'ability of a system to withstand perturbations in structure without change in function' (Jen 2003). "A system is robust as long as it maintains functionality, even if it transits through a new steady state or if instability actually helps the system cope with perturbations" (Kitano 2007).

### **Empirical Review**

Patrick (2018) carried out research on competitive aggressiveness and organisational profitability in hospitality firms in Port Harcourt, and the target population of his study was 1,764 from fifty (50) indigenous hotels. The cross-sectional survey was adopted for this research in its investigation of the variables and applied both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The result gotten from the findings shows that aggressiveness in competition highlights a significant positive relationship with the organisational profitability of hotels in Port Harcourt. Based on empirical findings, the study concludes that competitive aggressiveness has a huge influence on organisational profitability. The study recommends, based on its findings, that hotels should build on their distinctive competitive advantage to sharpen their competitive aggression in the environment.

Patrick and Kairo (2022) carried out a study that examined the effect of competitive aggressiveness on the profitability of quoted manufacturing companies in Nigeria, with innovation as the mediator. An exact number of 100 copies of questionnaires was distributed, and 100 questionnaires were answered and returned. The data gotten from the questionnaires was subjected to a series of cleansings to ensure its authenticity, reliability, and validity. The authors of this study made the recommendation that there is a need to increase aggressive competitiveness at the employee level and at the company level.

Achebelema and Achebelema (2021) examined the link between collaborative management and organisational resilience in the oil and gas industry in Rivers State. 72 managers, supervisors, and HODs make up the target population of oil and gas companies in Rivers State. The results gotten from this study resulted in the following recommendations: Collaborative management encourages positive behaviours towards robustness. In conclusion, a leadership climate of sound mind can change the direction of any organisation towards achieving its stated accomplishment. They recommended that management on all levels should encourage employees to make personal decisions about the disturbances and

complex problems they face in their job to preserve their position in the industry.

Andrew, Amah, and Eketu (2022) investigated the relationship between dynamic capability and resilience of food and beverage firms in Rivers and Bayelsa States. The positivist philosophical paradigm guided the methodology of the study. A hundred and forty-one (141) managers and supervisors of ten (10) food and beverage firms in the Rivers and Bayelsa States constituted the sample elements. Organisations should strive to develop the capacity to continuously scan the environment so as to be better positioned to remain resilient in the market.

Erika (2019), in the article on organisation resilience, suggested that the discussion about the challenges often forgets the consequences for organisational resilience. The approach of any organisation said to be resilient is an emerging idea to clarify and cope with the modern-day pace of change. The author of this article discovered that an apparent weakness in resilience literature has been its lack of attention to the social and cultural contexts in which disadvantaged individuals and groups work and live. The concept of organisational resilience offers a useful framework for addressing economic, social, and environmental issues in a systemic way. Organisations, governments, and individuals must become stronger partners, and great communication will be needed to help understand the complexity of these challenges.

Imhanzenobe et al. (2021) carried out research on knowledge management and its application in the contemporary business environment. Knowledge management, according to the scholars, involves gathering the right set of information and ensuring it is made available to the right individuals at the appropriate time. When a knowledge management system is put in place adequately, employees are allowed to create, have conversations with other employees, and re-use knowledge. Existing literature is used as a measurement, which will show that knowledge management is still evolving and changing. The knowledge management cycle works hand in hand with effective knowledge management implementation strategies, but individually, it will be regarded as incomplete.

## **2.0 Methodology**

This study used a cross-sectional survey, and the target population was 200 managers and supervisors of 15 food and beverage firms in Rivers State. The sample size of 132 employees was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination. As a result, 132 questionnaires were distributed to the managers and supervisors of fifteen food and beverage firms. A simple random sampling technique was used, and questionnaires were administered to gather information from respondents. Competitive aggressiveness (an independent variable) was measured using risk management and pro-activeness. Five items were used in measuring risk management, and another set of five items were used in measuring pro-activeness. Organisational resilience was measured using agility and robustness, and each construct was measured using a set of five items. The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman rank-order correlation.

### 3.0 Result

A total of 132 questionnaires were distributed to respondent, however, only 115 (87%) copies were completely filled and used.

**Table 1. Risk Management and Agility**

		Correlations		
			Risk Management	Agility
Risk Management	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	.801**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.	.000
Spearman's rho	N		115	115
	Correlation Coefficient		.801**	1.000
Agility	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.
	N		115	115

\*\* .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows a significant level  $p < 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ),  $\rho = 0.801$  between risk management and agility. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that *there is a significant relationship between risk management and agility*.

**Table 2. Risk Management and Robustness**

		Correlations		
			Risk Management	Robustness
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	.712**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.	.000
Risk Management	N		115	115
	Correlation Coefficient		.712**	1.000
Robustness	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000	.
	N		115	115

\*\* .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the analysis in Table 2 shows a significant level  $p < 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ),  $\rho = 0.712$  between risk management and robustness. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that *there is a significant relationship between risk management and robustness*.

**Table 3. Proactiveness and Agility**

		Correlations		
			Proactiveness	Agility
Proactiveness	Correlation Coefficient		1.000	.731**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.	.000
Spearman's rho	N		115	115
	Correlation Coefficient		.731**	1.000
Agility	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.
	N		115	115

\*\* .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



The result of the analysis in Table 3 shows a significant level  $p < 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ),  $\rho = 0.731$  between Pro-activeness and Innovation. This means that there is a significant relationship between Pro-activeness and Innovation. The null hypothesis is rejected, and we restate that *there is a significant relationship between Pro-activeness and Innovation*.

**Table 4. Proactiveness and Robustness**

		Correlations		
			Proactiveness	Robustness
Spearman's rho	Proactiveness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.719**
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	115	115
	Robustness	Correlation Coefficient	.719**	1.000
		Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	115	115

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the analysis in Table 4 shows a significant level  $p < 0.05$  ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ),  $\rho = 0.719$  between Proactiveness and Robustness. The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted.

## 2.0 Discussion of Findings

### 3.0 Risk Management and Agility

The bivariate hypotheses between risk management and agility reveal a remarkable relationship between the two variables. The outcome revealed that the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.0000.05$ ), which implies that risk management has a significant relationship with agility. The result of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.801. This thus reveals that risk management has a strong link to agility. Therefore, increasing risk management will enable agility. This finding agrees with that of Erika (2019), who suggested that organisations, governments, and individuals must become stronger partners in managing risk, and being innovative will be needed to help understand the complexity of these challenges, which will enhance agility.

### Risk Management and Robustness

The bivariate hypotheses between risk management and robustness reveal a remarkable relationship between the two variables. The outcome revealed that the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.0000.05$ ), which implies that risk management has a significant relationship with robustness. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The result of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.712. This thus reveals that risk management strongly correlates with robustness. Therefore, increasing risk management will enable increased robustness. This finding agrees with that of Patrick (2018), who stated that companies should build on their distinctive risk management advantage to sharpen their competitive aggression and robustness in the environment.

### Pro-activeness and Agility

The bivariate hypotheses between Pro-activeness and agility reveal a remarkable relationship between the two variables. The result revealed that the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.0000.05$ ), which implies that Pro-activeness has a significant relationship with agility. The result of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.731, which indicates a strong link among the variables. Therefore, increasing pro-activeness will enable the firm's agility to increase. This finding agrees with that of Andrew, Amah, and Eketu's (2022) conclusion that organisations

should proactively scan the environment and be innovative so as to be better positioned to remain resilient in the market.

### **Pro-activeness and Robustness**

The bivariate hypotheses between proactiveness and Robustness reveal a remarkable relationship between the two variables. The Spearman correlation coefficient revealed that the p-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.0000.05$ ), which implies that proactiveness has a significant relationship with Robustness. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The result of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is 0.719. This thus reveals that pro-activeness accounts for up to 71.9% of robustness. Therefore, increasing Pro-activeness will enable an increase in Robustness. The fourth objective of the study, which sought to examine if Pro-activeness relates to robustness, was achieved. This finding agrees with that of Achebelema and Achebelema (2021), and they recommended that management on all levels should encourage employees' pro-activeness to make personal decisions about the disturbances.

### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the competitive aggressiveness and organisational resilience of food and beverages in Rivers State, Nigeria. The results show that managers who practise competitive aggressiveness will stand a better chance of enhancing the resilience of the organisation. Hence, Corporate resilience is positively and significantly influenced by the proactiveness and risk management of the food and beverage business. Conclusively, competitive aggressiveness is a vital tool in enhancing the resilience abilities of food and beverage firms. Drawing from the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are offered:

- i. The management of the food and beverage firm should properly manage risk, as this will enhance their agility.
- ii. The management should ensure that effective proactive measures are put in place to tackle unforeseen circumstances, as this will help boost the resilience of the firm.
- iii. The management should be proactive and take the necessary steps to handle the environmental dynamism, as this will enhance the firm's robustness.
- iv. The management should ensure competitive aggressiveness, as this will give the firm an edge in the business domain.

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