International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences (IJHSS)

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International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences

ISSN: 3005-5407 (Online)

Vol. 4, Issue No. 3, pp. 33 – 50, 2025 www.carijournals.org

Strategic Responsiveness and Service Delivery: A Critical Review of Literature

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***Accepted:** 1st July, 2025, **Received in Revised Form:** 17th July, 2025, **Published:** 25th July, 2025*

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The main objective of the study was to review conceptual, theoretical and empirical literature on the relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery with the view of highlighting the knowledge gaps suitable to form basis for future research work.

Methodology: A comprehensive literature review was conducted, focusing on both theoretical and empirical studies on strategic responsiveness and service delivery. The study synthesizes findings from past research, emphasizing the gaps in existing literature and the need for integrated approaches. Theoretical models such as the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Service Quality Gap Model are applied to understand how strategic responsiveness impacts service delivery in diverse organizational contexts.

Findings: The study identified a direct relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery, where organizations that effectively respond to market changes can enhance service quality, customer satisfaction, and organizational resilience. The key dimensions of strategic responsiveness were found to influence service delivery outcomes such as customer satisfaction, first call resolution, and service cost efficiency. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of aligning organizational strategies with stakeholder expectations and leveraging technology to streamline service processes.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: This research contributes to the theory by extending the understanding of strategic responsiveness beyond traditional operational agility to include the technological, human resource, and market perspectives. Practically, it provides organizations with actionable insights on how to integrate strategic responsiveness into service delivery models to enhance customer experiences and reduce operational inefficiencies. Policy implications include encouraging businesses to adopt a holistic approach to strategy formulation that considers dynamic market factors and service quality standards, ensuring that organizations remain competitive and resilient in a rapidly evolving global environment.

Keywords: *Strategic Responsiveness, Service Delivery, Customer Satisfaction*

JEL: *O18, M10, L32, L33*

1.0 Introduction

The modern-day business environment is dynamic, complex, and replete with uncertainties. These uncertainties arise from various sources such as technological advancements, competitive pressures, changing customer preferences, socio-political events, and the globalized nature of business operations (Silverman, 2021). Given these uncertainties, firms are continually challenged to adapt their strategies and operations in response to changing conditions. This backdrop sets the stage for understanding the intricate relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery.

Strategic responsiveness refers to an organization's ability to sense and respond to environmental changes rapidly and effectively. The essence of strategic responsiveness is about "agility" and "adaptability." Firms that demonstrate a high level of strategic responsiveness can swiftly adjust their strategies and operations to counter threats and exploit opportunities in their business environments. For instance, companies like Netflix, which initially started as a DVD rental service, showed strategic responsiveness by quickly pivoting to online streaming in response to changing consumer preferences and technological advancements (Kaur & Singh, 2019).

Service delivery pertains to the ways through which a service is provided to customers. Effective service delivery ensures that customers receive the intended benefits of a service promptly and efficiently. This, in turn, influences their perceptions of service quality. For instance, a delay in delivering an online order can tarnish the customer's perception of the service quality, regardless of the product's actual quality (Pepinsky, Pierskalla & Sacks, 2017).

The manner in which services are delivered can shape customer expectations about quality. Quick and efficient delivery might set a precedent for high quality, while delays and inefficiencies can lower expectations. High service quality can often streamline service delivery. When services are of high quality, there might be fewer complaints or issues to address, leading to smoother delivery processes. Conversely, efficient service delivery can enhance the perception of quality. If a product is delivered promptly, customers might perceive the overall service (including the product) as being of higher quality. This study delves deep into the interrelationships between these concepts, attempting to unravel how they collectively shape business outcomes. By understanding these relationships, organizations can better position themselves to deliver exceptional value to their customers, ensuring long-term business success amidst the whirlwind of market changes.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

In today's dynamic and competitive business landscape, organizations face relentless pressures to adapt and thrive amidst rapid environmental changes. Service delivery is a critical aspect of an organization's success, as it directly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. Organizations that fail to respond strategically to environmental shifts risk becoming obsolete or losing market share to competitors. However, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the complexities of service delivery, which can lead to inefficiencies, potential revenue losses, and damaged reputations (Silverman, 2021).

Similarly, lacking the strategic capabilities to actualize such responses can lead to missed opportunities or inefficient operations. This gap in understanding the relationship between strategic capabilities and their impact on an organization's ability to respond to environmental changes is another pressing issue that needs attention. Furthermore, the quality of service provided by an organization plays a pivotal role in customer satisfaction and loyalty. Despite the critical role of service quality, there is a lack of comprehensive studies examining its interplay with strategic responsiveness and capabilities. This gap in knowledge hinders our understanding of how these elements collectively affect an organization's success.

Lastly, many organizations operate with a compartmentalized view, treating each of these areas as separate entities rather than interwoven strands of a comprehensive strategy. This siloed approach can lead to misaligned objectives, resource misallocation, and missed opportunities for synergy. This problem permeates across the entire business spectrum, impacting stakeholders ranging from CEOs and strategists to frontline employees. The lack of guidance on how to integrate these elements cohesively creates a gap between academic knowledge and practical implementation. In summary, the gaps in our understanding of service delivery and strategic responsiveness, and their interconnectedness hinder organizations from crafting synergistic strategies in an ever-evolving marketplace.

Though most of the extensive empirical research on strategic responsiveness has been done in developed economies (Sheng, 2019; Andersen, Torp, and Linder, 2019), a few recent empirical studies have also been done in emerging economies (Hussain et al., 2019; Linder and Sax, 2020). There is pronounced disagreement in the operationalization and measurement of the concept of strategic responsiveness, according to a study of the empirical literature that is currently available (Sheng, 2019). Furthermore, the body of empirical research on strategic responsiveness is not uniform across contexts, suggesting that the conclusions drawn from one empirical context must be confirmed in other contexts (Sheng, 2019; Andersen, Torp, and Linder, 2019; Hussain et al., 2019; Linder and Sax, 2020). Similarly, there is a need to focus future research efforts and attention on this study construct in the field of strategic management due to the evident methodological gaps in the ways that the numerous empirical studies on strategic responsiveness were conducted. With a focus on empirical research and real-world scenario analysis, this study aims to fill these gaps and provide practical insights that will improve consumer experiences and company outcomes.

3.0 Conceptual Literature

3.1 Concept of Strategic Responsiveness

The concept of strategic responsiveness is deeply rooted in the annals of business and military history, emphasizing the capacity to adapt and respond to changing conditions rapidly. Its origins can be traced back to ancient military treatises, like Sun Tzu's "The Art of War", where flexibility in strategies and tactics was prized. In the context of business, its development gained prominence with the rapid economic changes and industrial revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. As businesses expanded and competition intensified, there was an increasing recognition that organizations needed to be agile to seize new opportunities and respond to threats (Andersen, Torp, & Linder, 2019). In the early 20th century, as the field of business management began to formalize, pioneers like Alfred Chandler emphasized the importance of structure following strategy (Chandler, 1969). However, by mid-century, with the rise of multinational corporations and increasingly unpredictable global markets, there was a growing realization that strategies needed to be more fluid. Theories like the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) emerged, emphasizing the need to continuously evaluate both internal and external environments.

The latter half of the 20th century saw the rise of Japanese corporations, bringing forth concepts like "Kaizen" (continuous improvement) and "Just-in-Time" (JIT) manufacturing. These philosophies highlighted the necessity of being nimble and adjusting to real-time changes. Furthermore, the tech boom of the late 20th and early 21st centuries underscored the imperative of strategic responsiveness even more. Companies like Apple, Google, and Amazon became emblematic of a new era where speed, innovation, and adaptability were keys to success. The development of strategic responsiveness was further propelled by the advent of big data and advanced analytics in the 21st century. These tools allowed businesses to monitor market dynamics in real-time, making it possible to adjust strategies almost instantaneously. Moreover, the increasing unpredictability of global events, from financial crises to pandemics, made strategic responsiveness not just an advantage but a necessity for survival. Today, strategic responsiveness is considered paramount in a world characterized by VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity). It's not just about reacting quickly but doing so in a manner that's aligned with an organization's overarching goals and values. The continuous evolution of technology, global geopolitics, and consumer behavior ensures that strategic responsiveness remains at the forefront of successful organizational management.

3.1.1 Perspectives of Strategic Responsiveness

Strategic responsiveness is explored through various perspectives, for instance the organizational perspective. Organizations that embed strategic responsiveness into their DNA are often structured to be agile. These organizations have flat hierarchies, empowered teams, and flexible processes that allow rapid decision-making and implementation. They value adaptability and often possess a proactive culture that encourages foresight and nimbleness.

Another perspective is the technological perspective. With the digital revolution, strategic responsiveness has become closely tied to an organization's technological agility. Firms that invest in state-of-the-art IT infrastructure, data analytics, and digital tools can quickly gather, process, and act upon information. Technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) further enhance a firm's ability to predict, adapt, and respond to market changes in real-time. Studies by scholars like John M. Bryson and Gardner have examined how technology, including IT infrastructure, data analytics, and digital tools, can enhance an organization's responsiveness to market changes (Gardner & Bryson, 2022).

From a market perspective, strategic responsiveness implies understanding customer needs, competitor moves, and market trends. Organizations employ tools like real-time analytics, social listening, and customer feedback loops to keep their fingers on the pulse of the market. By doing so, they can swiftly pivot their offerings, adjust pricing, or modify marketing strategies based on the latest market insights. The importance of market orientation, as discussed by scholars like Narver and Slater (1990), highlights the significance of being customer-focused and market-responsive in crafting effective strategies.

From the human resource perspective, organizations that prioritize continuous learning, upskilling, and talent development ensure that their workforce is equipped to handle change. Moreover, a culture that values feedback, open communication, and collaborative problem-solving enhances an organization's responsiveness quotient. Strategic responsiveness also encompasses an organization's interactions with its stakeholders, be it shareholders, suppliers, or the community. Responsiveness in this context means aligning organizational strategies with stakeholder expectations, ensuring transparency, and establishing robust communication channels for timely feedback and engagement. This perspective aligns with studies on organizational learning and development, such as the work of Peter Senge and his concept of the "learning organization" (Senge, 1990). It also draws on research by scholars like David Lepak and Susan Snell, who have explored the importance of human resource practices in enhancing an organization's capacity to adapt (Lepak & Snell, 1999).

3.1.2 Dimensions of Strategic Responsiveness

Strategic responsiveness encompasses the ability of an organization to adapt to both anticipated and unforeseen changes in the environment (Kaur & Singh, 2019). Strategic responsiveness is classified market environmental scanning, stakeholder interactions, technological adaptability and agility and rapid adaptation. While this overarching definition provides a general understanding, it's beneficial to break down the concept into its primary dimensions to appreciate its depth and breadth. The anticipatory responsiveness dimension focuses on foresight. Organizations, through market research, trend analysis, and predictive modeling, try to anticipate potential shifts in their environment i.e., market or industry. By doing so, they can formulate proactive strategies that position them advantageously for future scenarios. This dimension, focusing on foresight and proactive strategies, aligns with the concept of "strategic foresight." Scholars like Day and Schoemaker (2005) have contributed to the study of strategic foresight, emphasizing the importance of anticipating changes in the business environment. In contrast to the anticipatory approach, reactive responsiveness is about how quickly and effectively an organization can adapt once a change has occurred. This dimension emphasizes agility in decision-making, rapid execution, and the ability to pivot strategies based on real-time insights. The concept of agility and rapid adaptation is supported by the works of researchers like O'Reilly and Tushman (2008), who discuss the need for organizational ambidexterity to effectively balance exploration and exploitation in response to changes.

Operational responsiveness pertains to the day-to-day operations of a firm. It deals with the ability to adjust workflows, processes, and systems swiftly in response to immediate demands, ensuring seamless service delivery and minimal disruptions. The notion of adjusting daily operations swiftly draws from theories of operational excellence and lean management. Scholars such as Womack and Jones (1996) have extensively studied these principles, emphasizing efficiency and flexibility in operations. Beyond immediate reactions, strategic flexibility is a longer-term approach. It involves creating strategies that have built-in flexibility. This means that the strategies are robust enough to stand firm, yet flexible enough to adapt to changing scenarios without needing a complete overhaul. The concept of building flexibility into strategies is consistent with the idea of "real options" in strategic management. Researchers like Amram and Kulatilaka (1999) have explored how organizations can create strategic flexibility by valuing options to adapt in uncertain environments.

The cultural responsiveness dimension underscores the importance of organizational culture in driving strategic responsiveness. A culture that promotes agility, values innovation, and encourages open communication is better poised to respond to external changes. The importance of organizational culture in promoting agility and responsiveness is supported by various studies on organizational culture and innovation. Scholars like Schein (2010) have discussed the role of culture in shaping an organization's ability to adapt. In the digital age, the capacity of an organization to harness technology in response to change is vital. Whether it's leveraging data analytics for insights, utilizing AI for improved customer service, or adopting cloud solutions for scalable infrastructure, technological adaptability is a key dimension of strategic responsiveness. The integration of technology into responsiveness aligns with the broader field of digital transformation. Various studies in this domain, such as those by Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), highlight the impact of technology on organizations' ability to adapt and innovate.

Strategic responsiveness also requires organizations to be in sync with their stakeholders, from customers and employees to shareholders and regulators. Engaging with them ensures that the organization can understand and swiftly address their evolving needs and concerns. Engaging with stakeholders is a fundamental aspect of stakeholder theory. Freeman (1984) work on stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of considering and engaging with various stakeholder groups to achieve organizational success.

3.1.3 Adoption of Strategic Responsiveness in Strategic Management and Outcomes

Strategic responsiveness can be achieved through various strategic planning practices, such as scenario planning, risk management, project management, and open strategy (Andersen et al., 2019). These practices enable organizations to anticipate and prepare for multiple future scenarios, assess and manage potential risks, execute and monitor strategic initiatives, and involve multiple stakeholders in the strategy-making process (Andersen et al., 2019). Additionally, strategic responsiveness can be enhanced by using interactive controls, such as feedback mechanisms, performance indicators, and dialogue sessions, to facilitate learning and communication among organizational members and align their actions with the strategic goals (Simons, 1995).

The adoption of strategic responsiveness in strategic management can lead to various positive outcomes, such as improved firm performance, resilience, innovation, and reputation. For instance, Andersen et al. (2019) found that strategic responsiveness was positively associated with organizational performance, measured by sales growth, profitability, and market share. Similarly, APQC (2016) reported that strategic responsiveness was positively correlated with resilience, defined as the ability to recover from adverse events and maintain or restore normal operations. Moreover, strategic responsiveness can foster innovation, as it enables organizations to explore new possibilities and create novel solutions in response to changing customer needs and preferences. Furthermore, strategic responsiveness can enhance reputation, as it demonstrates the organization's ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity and deliver value to its stakeholders (Daria & Massel, 2018).

3.2 The Concept of Service Delivery

Service delivery is a term that encompasses the various processes and activities involved in providing a service to a customer, from the initial contact to the final outcome (Maleyeff & Campus, 2007). Service delivery can be applied to any sector or industry that offers services, such as health care, education, transportation, telecommunications, etc. The quality and effectiveness of service delivery depend on several factors, such as the customer's needs and expectations, the provider's capabilities and resources, the service design and delivery model, the external environment and context, and the feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

Service delivery can be seen as a complex system of interrelated components, such as the service provider, the customer, the suppliers, the technology, the processes, the policies, the regulations, and the outcomes. Each component has its own role and function, and interacts with other components in various ways. The service delivery system can be influenced by both internal and external factors, such as the organizational culture, the customer behavior, the market conditions, the social norms, the political situation, etc. (Alford & O'flynn, 2012).

Service delivery can also be viewed as a dynamic and adaptive process, which evolves and changes over time in response to the changing needs and demands of the customers and the providers.

Service delivery can be improved and enhanced by adopting innovative and creative approaches, such as co-creation, personalization, digitalization, automation, etc. Service delivery can also be challenged and disrupted by various risks and uncertainties, such as natural disasters, pandemics, cyberattacks, etc. Therefore, service delivery requires constant monitoring, evaluation, and learning to ensure its quality, efficiency, and sustainability.

3.2.1 Measuring Service Delivery

Within the intricate landscape of service delivery, the establishment of appropriate measurements plays a pivotal role in evaluating performance, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring customer satisfaction. Over the years, a plethora of metrics and indicators have been developed to provide a comprehensive view of the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. One foundational metric that stands out is the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI). This critical indicator serves as a barometer for the overall contentment of customers with the services they receive. Typically derived from surveys and feedback forms, the CSI offers direct insights into how customers perceive the quality, reliability, and value of the services (Kano et al., 1984). The CSI is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, which suggests that satisfaction is the result of the discrepancy between expected and perceived performance (Oliver, 1980). This theory is applied in the CSI to assess how services meet or exceed customer expectations.

Another indispensable metric is the Net Promoter Score (NPS). This measurement captures customers' willingness to recommend a service to others, signifying their overall satisfaction and loyalty. A high NPS not only suggests that customers are pleased with the service but also indicates their inclination to advocate for it, thereby driving organic growth for the service provider (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). The NPS is grounded in the theory of relational exchange and customer loyalty (Reichheld, 2003). It measures the likelihood of customers to recommend a service, reflecting their loyalty and satisfaction.

In the realm of services with a support or helpline component, First Call Resolution (FCR) takes center stage. FCR measures the percentage of issues or inquiries that are successfully resolved during the customer's initial contact, underscoring the efficiency and competence of the service team. Higher FCR rates signal effective problem-solving and significantly contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction. FCR is based on service quality and efficiency theories. It measures the ability of a service system to resolve customer queries or problems in the first interaction, indicating efficiency and effectiveness (Heskett, Sasser & Schlesinger, 2010).

Two interconnected metrics, Average Response Time and Average Resolution Time, are pivotal in assessing the speed and efficacy of service delivery. While the former evaluates the time taken to acknowledge or respond to a customer request or complaint, the latter measures the time required to fully address and resolve the issue. In today's fast-paced digital environment, these metrics are of paramount importance, as customers increasingly expect swift responses and resolutions. These metrics are derived from theories of timeliness and responsiveness in service delivery (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). They measure the promptness of a service provider in addressing customer needs. The Service Utilization Rate provides valuable insights by assessing the frequency or volume at which a particular service is utilized, offering a gauge of its relevance and demand. A higher utilization rate may indicate a popular or essential service, but it can also raise concerns about potential capacity issues if demand consistently surpasses supply.

From a financial perspective, the Cost-of-Service Delivery is a pivotal metric that evaluates the overall expenditure involved in providing a service. This encompasses direct costs such as labor and materials, as well as indirect costs like overheads. By juxtaposing this metric with revenue or profit figures, service providers can critically assess the financial viability and efficiency of their operations. This metric is anchored in cost accounting and financial management theories. It evaluates the total expenditure involved in delivering a service, reflecting its financial efficiency (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In the realm of digital services, Service Uptime emerges as a significant measurement. It signifies the percentage of time a service remains available and operational. Particularly critical for online platforms and cloud services, a higher uptime percentage underscores reliability and robustness.

To comprehensively assess the environmental impact, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for service delivery is gaining prominence. This metric delves into the ecological implications of a service, encompassing aspects from resource consumption to waste generation. It assists service providers in transitioning towards more sustainable practices, aligning their operations with environmental stewardship (Oliver, 1980). EIA for services is based on theories of sustainable development and environmental management (Brundtland, 1987). It assesses the environmental impact of service delivery processes.

4.0 Literature Review

An extensive review of the vast body of relevant theoretical and empirical literature was carried out as guided by the key construct in this conceptual review. This section therefore, presents the theories that underpin the construct of strategic responsiveness and service delivery as well as related empirical literature.

4.1 Theoretical Review

Two theories namely, Resource-Based View Theory and Service Quality Gap Model were reviewed as presented in the preceding section.

4.1.1 Resource-Based View Theory

Resource-Based View (RBV) is a managerial framework that sees resources as the key to superior firm performance and sustainable competitive advantage. RBV was first proposed by Barney (1991) and later developed by Penrose (2009). RBV assumes that firms are heterogeneous because they possess different bundles of resources, and that some resources are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized (VRIO), which enable the firms to exploit opportunities and neutralize threats in

International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences
ISSN: 3005-5407 (Online)
Vol. 4, Issue No. 3, pp. 33 – 50, 2025 www.carijournals.org

the environment. Strategic responsiveness is one component of organizational agility, which involves identifying opportunities and threats, assessing their value to an organization, and developing a plan to respond to them quickly. Strategic responsiveness is closely related to strategic planning practices and the internal and external inputs that support those planning activities. According to APQC and SCIP (2016), strategic responsiveness is driven by factors such as environmental scanning, scenario planning, risk management, project management, and strategic reward systems.

RBV can be applied in the context of strategic responsiveness by helping firms to identify and leverage their VRIO resources to achieve organizational agility. For example, a firm can use environmental scanning to monitor the changes and trends in its external environment, and then assess its internal resources to determine which ones are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized. Based on this assessment, the firm can then develop a strategic plan that exploits its VRIO resources to seize the opportunities and mitigate the threats in the environment. The firm can also use scenario planning to anticipate different future situations and test the robustness of its VRIO resources under various conditions. Furthermore, the firm can use risk management to identify and manage the potential sources of uncertainty and volatility that may affect its VRIO resources. Additionally, the firm can use project management to implement its strategic plan effectively and efficiently, and ensure that its VRIO resources are aligned with its strategic objectives. Finally, the firm can use strategic reward systems to motivate and incentivize its employees to contribute to the development and utilization of its VRIO resources.

One of the assumptions of RBV is that resources are heterogeneously distributed among firms, and that some resources are difficult or costly to imitate or substitute. However, some scholars have challenged this assumption and argued that resources are not static, but dynamic and evolving over time. Therefore, firms need to constantly develop and renew their resources to maintain their competitive advantage. This implies that firms need to adopt a dynamic capability perspective, which focuses on the ability of firms to integrate, build, and reconfigure their resources to match the changing environment. A dynamic capability perspective can complement RBV and enhance strategic responsiveness by emphasizing the importance of learning, innovation, and adaptation.

In conclusion, RBV is a useful framework to understand how firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantage by exploiting their VRIO resources. RBV can also be applied in the context of strategic responsiveness by helping firms to identify and leverage their VRIO resources to respond to the opportunities and threats in the environment. However, RBV also has some limitations and assumptions that need to be considered and addressed. Therefore, RBV can be combined with other perspectives, such as dynamic capability, to provide a more comprehensive and holistic view of strategic management.

4.1.2 Service Quality Gap Model

The Service Quality Gap Model is a framework that helps to analyze and improve customer satisfaction by identifying the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions of service delivery. The model was first proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985), and has been widely used in various service industries, such as retail, hospitality, health care, and education. The model suggests that there are five main gaps that can occur in the service delivery process, and that these gaps can negatively affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. The five gaps are; the gap between customer expectations and management perceptions. This gap occurs when management does not understand what customers expect from the service, or when they have inaccurate or outdated information about customer needs and preferences. For example, a hotel manager may think that customers want a hot breakfast, but customers may actually prefer a continental breakfast or no breakfast at all.

The second gap is the gap between management perceptions and service quality specifications. This gap occurs when management has a clear understanding of customer expectations, but fails to translate them into service standards and policies that guide employee behavior. For example, a restaurant manager may know that customers expect fast and friendly service, but does not set specific time limits or training programs for staff to achieve this goal. Thirdly, there's the gap between service quality specifications and service delivery. This gap occurs when employees do not perform according to the service standards and policies set by management, or when there are inconsistencies or errors in service delivery. For example, a bank teller may not greet customers with a smile, or may make mistakes in processing transactions.

The fourth gap is that between service delivery and external communication. This gap occurs when the service delivered to customers does not match the promises or expectations created by the company's marketing or advertising campaigns. For example, an airline may advertise low fares and on-time flights, but customers may experience high fees and frequent delays. Finally, there's the gap between customer expectations and customer perceptions. This gap occurs when customers perceive the service delivered as different from what they expected, or when they are dissatisfied with the service outcome or experience. For example, a customer may expect a hair salon to provide a professional and stylish haircut, but may perceive the result as unflattering or poorly done (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990).

The Service Quality Gap Model can help managers and employees to identify the sources and causes of customer dissatisfaction, and to take corrective actions to close the gaps and improve customer satisfaction. The model can also help managers and employees to understand the customer's perspective and expectations, and to align the service delivery with the customer's needs and preferences.

Some of the principles and techniques that can be drawn from the model are; Conducting regular market research and customer feedback to understand customer expectations and perceptions, and to monitor changes in customer preferences and behavior; Establishing clear and measurable service standards and policies that reflect customer expectations and that are communicated and enforced throughout the organization; Providing adequate training and motivation for employees to perform according to the service standards and policies, and to deliver consistent and error-free service; Developing effective marketing and communication strategies that convey realistic and accurate information about the service features and benefits, and that manage customer expectations and perceptions; Measuring and evaluating customer satisfaction and loyalty, and using the results to identify areas for improvement and to reward excellent service performance.

The Service Quality Gap Model is based on several assumptions that may limit its applicability and validity in some contexts. Some of the assumptions are; Customer expectations and perceptions are stable and consistent, and can be easily measured and compared; Customer satisfaction and loyalty are solely determined by the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions, and not by other factors, such as personal preferences, emotions, or situational variables; The gaps between customer expectations and perceptions are linear and additive, and not influenced by interactions or trade-offs among different service dimensions or attributes; The gaps between customer expectations and perceptions are symmetrical and proportional, and not affected by asymmetries or disproportionality in customer responses or evaluations (Oliver, 1980).

Therefore, the Service Quality Gap Model should be used with caution and discretion, and should be adapted and modified according to the specific characteristics and conditions of the service industry and the service context. The model should also be complemented and triangulated by other models and theories that can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of customer satisfaction and service quality. For example, the SERVQUAL model, which is based on the Service Quality Gap Model, can help to measure the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions along five service quality dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985). The Kano model, which is based on the theory of attractive quality, can help to classify customer needs and preferences into three categories: basic, performance, and excitement, and to understand how they affect customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kano et al., 1984). The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, which is based on the theory of cognitive dissonance, can help to explain how customer satisfaction is influenced by the discrepancy between customer expectations and perceptions, and how customers cope with the discrepancy by adjusting their expectations or perceptions.

4.2 Empirical Literature Review

In his study, Sheng (2019) explores how a company's online activity affects customer engagement in word-of-mouth discussions. Leveraging a comprehensive dataset from hotel reviews and managerial feedback, the study evaluates the impact of company responsiveness on community involvement in online review submissions. The research unveils that the quantity and promptness of responses are crucial for enhancing company-customer interactions. This underscores the company's pivotal role in guiding customer word-of-mouth actions, positioning company engagement as a key motivator for customer participation. The findings provide insights for both researchers and industry professionals concerning social media marketing, emphasizing the importance of companies actively and swiftly participating in online communication networks. The research design employed in this study was primarily descriptive and correlational, utilizing quantitative data analysis techniques. Sheng (2019) might have considered mixed-methods research, incorporating qualitative data to gain deeper insights into customer perceptions and behaviors related to online interactions with companies. This approach could have addressed methodological limitations related to solely relying on quantitative data.

Andersen, Torp, and Linder (2019) in the study of strategic responsiveness and adaptive organizations, curate articles from the EURAM 2018 conference, highlighting strategies to navigate today's unpredictable global business climate. Aimed at introducing solutions to strategic challenges posed by global business turbulence, the study employs diverse methodological stances, enriching the discourse in this evolving research arena. Key findings include exploring the effect of CEO characteristics on a firm's strategic flexibility, open strategy's role in strategy formulation in medium-sized manufacturing enterprises, and the significance of autonomy and supportive leadership in driving entrepreneurial behavior and strategic adaptability. It also sheds light on the interplay between strategy-making processes, leadership styles, interactive control systems, strategic responsiveness in Spanish medium-sized enterprises, strategic insights gleaned from corporate archives, and temporary incorporation as a strategic response mechanism. The concluding note underscores the imperative for adaptive strategies in today's fluctuating business environments. While the study highlighted key findings from the selected articles, it could have gone a step further by identifying overarching patterns or trends in the literature and suggesting potential avenues for future research. This would have underscored the knowledge gaps that exist within the domain of strategic responsiveness and adaptive organizations.

Linder and Sax (2020) conduct a study on fostering strategic responsiveness focusing on the role of middle manager involvement and strategic planning. Drawing on data from Denmark’s 500 largest firms, they show that participation of middle managers in decision-making about new products and markets to serve, in-deed, increases firms’ strategic responsiveness as assessed by a reduction in firms’ downside risk. However, this effect is not a direct one. Nor does it interact positively or negatively with the emphasis put on formal planning as submitted in literature. Their evidence suggests that emphasis on planning mediates the relation between stronger participation of middle managers in decision-making and the increase in firms’ strategic responsiveness. This has implications for ongoing theory building and practice. To enhance their study's contribution, they could have provided a more robust theoretical framework, offered greater methodological transparency, and offered practical recommendations for organizations seeking to apply these insights. These enhancements would have further enriched the understanding of the role of middle managers in fostering strategic responsiveness.

Hussain et al., (2019) in their study aimed to assess how doctor services, nurses' services, and waiting time predict patient satisfaction (PS) with the service delivery of healthcare in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The study used an exploratory research method, in which 1000 participants were selected, and used a random technique, in which 850 responses were received. Multiple regression analysis and a confirmatory factor were employed to analyze the collected data. The findings showed that doctor services ($\beta = 0.232$; $p = 0.01$), nurses services ($\beta = 0.256$; $p = 0.01$), and waiting time ($\beta = 0.091$; $p = 0.03$) had positive significant impacts on PS, while registration services ($\beta = 0.028$; $p = 0.390$) had an insignificant association with PS. While the study successfully identified factors influencing patient satisfaction, it could have expanded on the theoretical framework underpinning patient satisfaction in healthcare settings. A more detailed discussion of relevant theoretical models or frameworks would have provided a stronger foundation for the research and helped readers understand the conceptual basis for their findings.

4.3 Proposed Theoretical Model

Theoretical model is imperative in helping to reveal the relationship between independent variables, moderating variables, mediating variables and dependent variable. In the case of this independent study, a theoretical model was proposed that illustrated the relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery. This relationship is demonstrated in a chart marked as Figure 1.

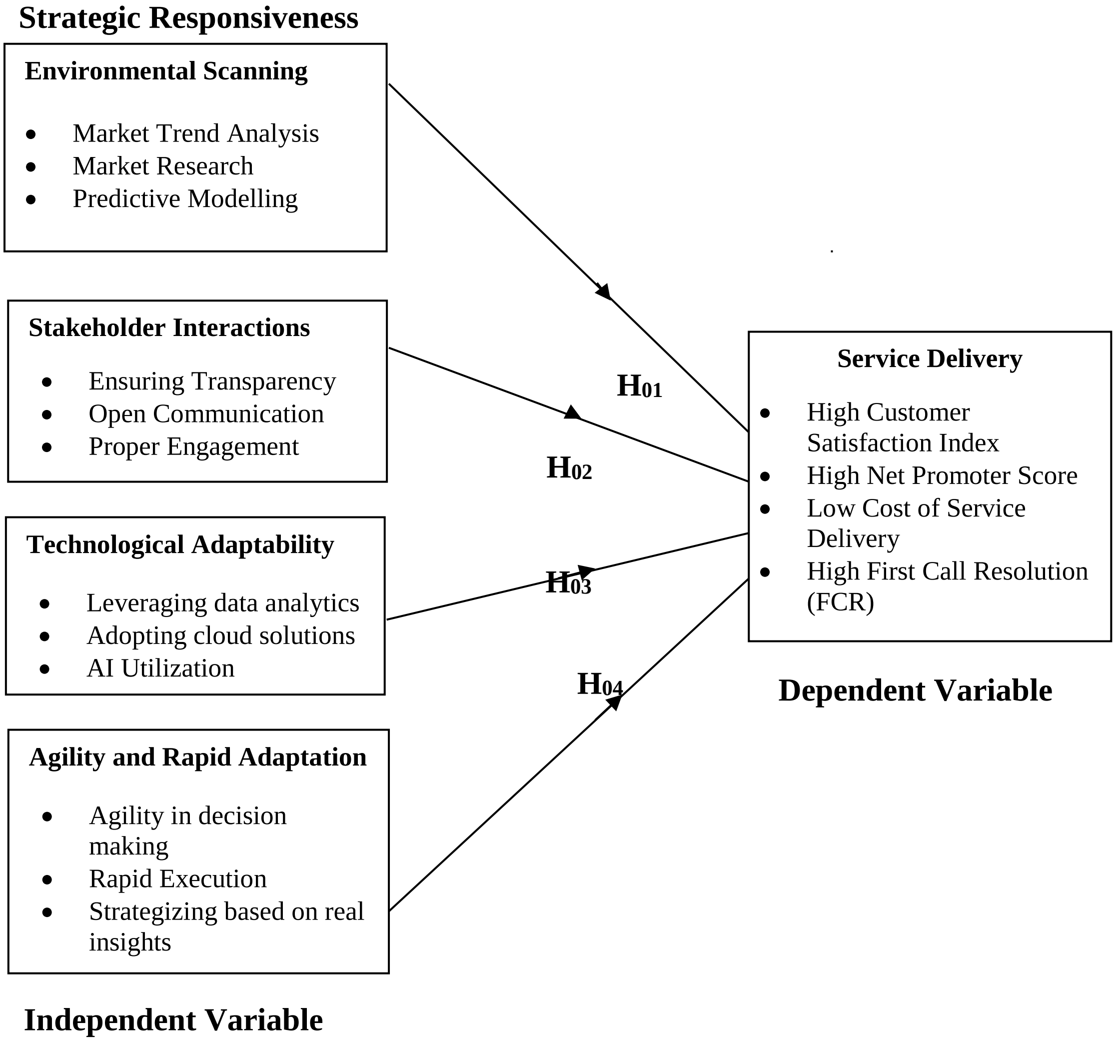

Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Model

Source: Author (2023)

The proposed theoretical model shows that strategic responsiveness and service delivery were the study constructs. From the study constructs, strategic responsiveness is the independent variable while service delivery is the dependent variable. In this study, strategic responsiveness is conceptualized by environment scanning, stakeholder interactions, technological adaptability and agility and rapid adaptation.

Stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and partners, have a significant impact on service delivery. Organizations practicing strategic responsiveness engage with stakeholders to gather insights, build relationships, and adapt their service delivery models based on stakeholder feedback and collaboration. Technological adaptability refers to an organization's ability to quickly adopt and integrate new technologies into its service delivery processes. Embracing technological advancements allows organizations to streamline operations, enhance customer experiences, and stay competitive.

In this study, service delivery is measured as high Customer Satisfaction Index, high Net Promoter Score, low Cost of Service Delivery and high First call Resolution. CSI is a metric that measures customer satisfaction with a company's products or services. It is typically based on surveys and feedback from customers, asking them to rate their overall satisfaction with the service received. NPS is a metric used to gauge customer loyalty and willingness to recommend a company's products or services to others. A high NPS suggests strong customer advocacy, which can lead to organic growth through referrals. The cost-of-service delivery measures the expenses associated with providing a particular service to customers. Organizations aim to optimize the cost-of-service delivery to maintain a healthy balance between delivering high-quality service and managing operational expenses.

5.0 Conclusion

The relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery is determined in this study. The main goal of the study was to suggest the most appropriate theoretical model that illustrates the relationship between strategic responsiveness and service delivery. Through reviewing of theoretical and empirical literature, this study assessed the characteristics of strategic responsiveness including its parameters and understands how they influence service delivery. The study's principles were guided by the following theories; Resource-Based View (RBV) and Service Quality Gap Model.

In this study, an appropriate theoretical model is proposed and it helps in illustrating the relationship between independent variable (strategic responsiveness) with its concepts (marketing, stakeholder interactions and technological agility) and service delivery (customer satisfaction index, net promoter score and cost of service delivery). The study reveals that strategic responsiveness plays a significant role in influencing service delivery within a community or organization. The findings of this study have enriched the theoretical and empirical literature on the fields of service delivery and strategic responsiveness.

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