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The Influence of Strategic Silence on Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Oyeinkorikiye, Stephan Isaiah, PhD
Department of Management
Faculty of Management Sciences
Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State.
Corresponding Author: Oyeinkorikiye Stephan Isaiah, PhD
Email: isaiahedu@ndu.edu.ng, WhatsApp: 234(0)8036823391

Rowland Bodiseowei Akpolo, PhD
Department of Management
Faculty of Management Sciences
Niger Delta University Wilberforce Island.
Email: roland.akpolo@gmail.com, WhatsApp: 234(0)8036671631

Abstract

This study examined the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. A total of 85 branch-level managerial staff from 17 commercial banks in Bayelsa State were surveyed for the research, which used a cross-sectional survey design. A structured, validated, and reliable questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to gather data. Four hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, and the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage was examined through multiple regression analysis. From the analysis, the dimensions of strategic silence such as; information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, and strategic listening were shown to be positively and significantly related to competitive advantage. The results of the multiple regression showed that strategic silence has strong positive and significant influence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State. The study concludes that strategic silence has a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State. However, it was recommended that the branch-level executives of the commercial banks in Bayelsa State should be intentional and deliberate about information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing and strategic listening as corporate-wide strategies to sustain bank's competitive advantage.

Keywords:

Strategic silence, information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, strategic listening, competitive advantage.

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1. Introduction

The banking industry across the world is undergoing unprecedented transformation driven by digitalization, financial innovation, regulatory reforms, and increasing customer expectations. As a result of these changes, competition among banks has heated up, and banks are under constant pressure to find new ways to gain and keep an edge. Banks in developing nations like Nigeria are under growing pressure to build competencies outside their conventional financial and technical strengths in response to financial sector liberalisation, the rise of financial technology companies, and rising market instability (1). Consequently, scholars and practitioners increasingly recognize that intangible organizational capabilities, particularly those associated with communication and information management, are critical determinants of long-term competitiveness.

Competitive advantage in this context can be seen as an organization's ability to create superior value and achieve performance outcomes that enable it to outperform its competitors in the marketplace (2), (3). As per the resource-based view, companies that have valuable, uncommon, unique, and non-replaceable resources and competencies are able to maintain a competitive edge. Recent studies have shown that strategic capabilities, absorptive capacity, and organizational ambidexterity significantly influence competitiveness in financial institutions, suggesting that intangible resources increasingly shape organizational success in the banking sector. One intangible capability that has recently attracted scholarly attention is strategic silence.

Traditionally, silence in organizations was viewed as a negative phenomenon associated with fear, disengagement, or communication failure. However, contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes silence as a purposeful and strategic behaviour that can facilitate learning, improve decision-making, protect organizational interests, and support leadership effectiveness (4), (5). Rather than representing the mere absence of communication, strategic silence involves the deliberate management of information through withholding, selective disclosure, attentive listening, and calculated non-response in pursuit of organizational objectives. Silence, according to recent research, may have a profound influence and even serve as a strategic capacity that helps organisations deal with complexity and ambiguity (5). According to (5), strategic silence manifests in several dimensions that are particularly relevant to organizational competitiveness. These dimensions are; information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing and strategic listening. Information withholding involves the intentional restriction of sensitive information to safeguard proprietary knowledge and strategic initiatives from competitors. Non-reactive silence refers to the deliberate decision not to respond immediately to environmental pressures or competitive actions, thereby creating room for careful analysis and strategic decision-making. Disclosure timing concerns the strategic release of information at moments that maximize organizational benefits and minimize associated risks. Strategic listening, on the other hand, involves attentive information gathering and deliberate restraint in communication, enabling organizations to better understand stakeholder expectations and environmental changes. Collectively, these dimensions provide organizations with mechanisms for managing information asymmetry and maintaining strategic flexibility in highly competitive environments.

Due to the information-intensive nature of banking and the high value that customers place on banks' expertise, confidentiality, and reputation, the strategic importance of silence is especially apparent in this industry. Commercial banks continuously manage confidential information concerning customers, financial transactions, investments, risk management strategies, and technological innovations. The premature or inappropriate disclosure of such information can undermine organizational reputation, weaken strategic positioning, and expose institutions to competitive threats. Conversely, the effective management of information through strategic silence may improve decision quality, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and enhance organizational competitiveness. Emerging studies in the banking sector indicate that communication restraint and purposeful silence can contribute significantly to leadership effectiveness and organizational adaptability in complex and highly regulated environments. These realities are particularly relevant in Bayelsa State, where commercial banks operate in a business environment characterized by economic volatility, increasing customer expectations, and intense competition for market share. To survive and remain competitive, banks in the state must not only develop innovative products and services but also manage information strategically by determining what information should be disclosed, when it should be disclosed, and what information should remain confidential. In this context, strategic silence may constitute an important organizational capability capable of generating competitive advantage.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in silence and communication management, the extant literature remains fragmented in several respects. Much of the existing research has focused on organizational silence and employee silence as dysfunctional phenomena that suppress creativity, employee engagement, and organizational learning (6). More recent studies continue to examine silence primarily from behavioral and psychological perspectives, emphasizing its negative implications for employee outcomes and organizational effectiveness. Fundamentally, there seems to be limited empirical studies of strategic silence as a deliberate managerial capability that can be deployed to protect organizational interests and generate competitive advantage. Even the emerging literature that recognizes silence as a strategic resource has concentrated largely on leadership effectiveness and organizational learning, with little attention given to its implications for competitive advantage in financial institutions.

Furthermore, studies on competitive advantage in the Nigerian banking sector have predominantly examined technological innovation, service quality, strategic agility, organizational culture, and customer relationship management while paying little attention to strategic silence and information management practices as potential determinants of competitiveness. Empirical evidence linking information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, and strategic listening to competitive advantage remains scarce, particularly within developing economies and sub-national contexts. The dearth of studies conducted in Bayelsa State leaves important questions unanswered regarding whether strategic silence contributes to the competitive advantage of commercial banks and the extent to which its dimensions influence organizational competitiveness. The present study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by examining the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of strategic silence on the competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between information withholding and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.
2. Examine the relationship between non-reactive silence and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.
3. investigate the relationship between disclosure timing and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.
4. Find out relationship between strategic listening and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How does information withholding relate with competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State?
2. What is the relationship between non-reactive silence and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State?
3. How does disclosure timing relate with competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State?
4. What is the relationship between strategic listening and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised to guide this study:

H01: There is no relationship between information withholding and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

H02: There is no relationship between non-reactive silence and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

H03: There is no relationship between disclosure timing and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

H04: There is no relationship between strategic listening and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

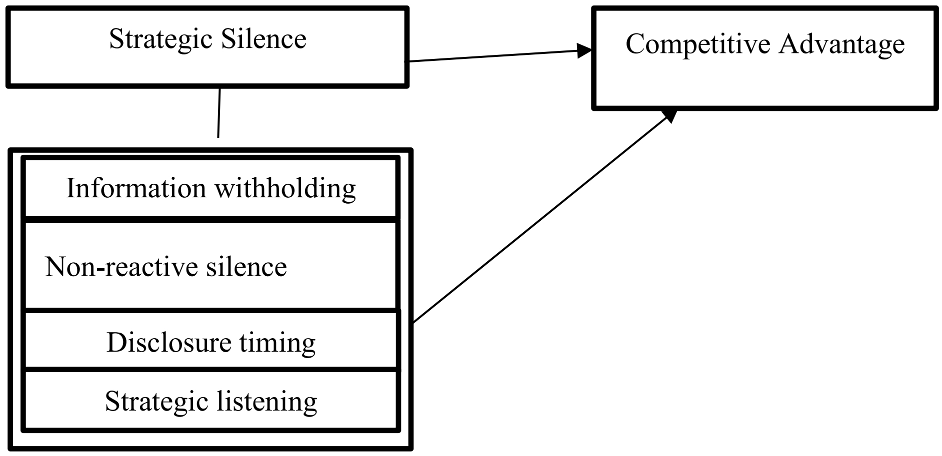
2. Literature Review

In this section, existing literature that is pertinent to the topic is reviewed. The strategic silence and competitive advantage of Bayelsa State's commercial banks are the key themes of this article. It covers conceptual review, theoretical framework and empirical review.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Conceptual Framework

The study adopted four dimensions of Strategic silence and competitive advantage was adopted as a mono-construct.



Sources: (5) the concept of strategic silence and its implication for organisation communication. *ISIR Journal of Business and Management Studies,*2026:3(2), 46-54.

Fig.1: Conceptual framework showing the connection between strategic silence and competitive advantage.

2.1.2 Concept of Strategic Silence

Strategic silence refers to the intentional and calculated decision by individuals or organizations to withhold, delay, or control information disclosure in order to achieve specific strategic objectives. In organizational contexts, silence is no longer seen only as a negative behavior but also as a potential communication strategy that can influence decision-making and organizational performance (6). Organizations sometimes deliberately choose silence as a strategy to manage uncertainty, avoid premature commitments, or protect confidential information. According to (7), silence in organizations may occur when individuals intentionally choose not to share ideas, concerns, or information. However, when this silence is guided by strategic intent and organizational goals, it becomes strategic silence. Strategic silence may be particularly important in industries where information sensitivity is high, such as banking. Commercial banks must carefully manage financial data, customer information, and business strategies. Therefore, strategic silence can serve as a useful tool for protecting sensitive information, managing communication risks, and strengthening organizational competitiveness.

2.1.3 Dimensions of Strategic Silence

The dimensions of strategic silence reviewed in this study are; information withholding, non-reactive Silence, disclosure Timing and strategic listening

1. Information Withholding

Information withholding refers to the deliberate restriction of certain organizational information in order to protect strategic interests. Organizations sometimes limit access to sensitive information to prevent competitors from gaining advantage or to protect confidential data. In the banking sector, information withholding may involve limiting the disclosure of investment plans, internal financial strategies, or customer data. According to Morrison (6), controlling information flow is an important managerial practice that helps organizations protect valuable resources and maintain competitive positioning. However, excessive information withholding may also create challenges such as reduced transparency and limited collaboration (5). Therefore, organizations must balance confidentiality with effective communication.

2. Nonreactive Silence

Nonreactive silence refers to the deliberate decision to avoid immediate responses to situations or discussions. Instead of reacting quickly, organizations may choose to remain silent temporarily in order to gather more information and carefully evaluate available options. This approach allows managers to make more informed decisions and avoid impulsive reactions that could negatively affect organizational performance (8). In highly competitive industries such as banking, nonreactive silence can provide time for strategic analysis and careful planning. According to Brinsfield, et al. (9), silence can sometimes function as a protective mechanism that allows organizations to manage complex situations more effectively.

3. Disclosure Timing

Disclosure timing can be seen as the strategic decision regarding when to release information to stakeholders (5). The timing of communication can significantly influence how information is received and interpreted by stakeholder (4). Organizations often delay the disclosure of certain information until they are confident about its accuracy or until the timing is most beneficial. For example, banks may delay the announcement of new products or strategic initiatives until they are fully prepared for implementation (10) Effective disclosure timing can enhance organizational credibility, reduce uncertainty, and improve stakeholder relationships (11).

4. Strategic Listening

Strategic listening involves actively listening to stakeholders in order to gather valuable information while minimizing immediate responses. This communication strategy allows organizations to better understand stakeholder expectations, market trends, and competitive pressures (4). Strategic listening enables organizations to collect information that can inform decision-making processes. In the banking sector, strategic listening may involve gathering customer feedback, monitoring competitor behavior, and understanding regulatory expectations. Organizations that practice strategic listening are often better positioned to identify opportunities and respond effectively to challenges (12; 4).

2.1.4 Competitive Advantage

The capacity of an organisation to outperform its rivals by providing customers with more value is known as competitive advantage (13). According to Porter (3), organizations achieve competitive advantage when they implement strategies that create value beyond what competitors can offer. Competitive advantage may be achieved through various factors including innovation, service quality, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and effective management practices (13). In the banking sector, competitive advantage may involve providing better financial services, developing innovative banking products, or improving customer relationships. In Nigeria, commercial banks operate under the supervision of the Central Bank of Nigeria, which regulates banking activities and promotes financial stability. Within regions such as Bayelsa State, banks compete to attract customers, improve service delivery, and increase market share.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two major theories:

1. Resource-Based View (RBV)

Competitive advantage is achieved by the efficient use of internal resources and capabilities that are valuable, unusual, and difficult for rivals imitate, according to the RBV (2). Strategic silence can be viewed as a communication capability that allows organizations to manage information strategically. However, this could be achieved by controlling information flow, organizations can protect valuable knowledge and strengthen their competitive position.

2. Information Asymmetry Theory

Information asymmetry theory explains situations where one party possesses more information than another (14). In business environments, organizations that control information effectively may gain advantages during negotiations and strategic decision-making. Strategic silence contributes to information asymmetry by allowing organizations to control the amount and timing of information shared with stakeholders.

2.3 Empirical Review

Several studies have examined silence and communication within organizations. This paper has clearly reviewed current articles on strategic silence to scholarly strengthen the researcher's assertions

Some scholars examined the relationship between strategic silence and politicized public discourse. The authors argued that in public environments where factual information is frequently intertwined with ideological positions, directly challenging misleading narratives may unintentionally amplify harmful messages, particularly those affecting marginalized groups. They contended that, under such circumstances, strategic silence may serve as a more effective communication approach by limiting unnecessary attention and reducing societal polarization. The study therefore emphasized that carefully chosen silence can function as a deliberate strategy for minimizing conflict escalation in highly politicized communication environments (4).

In a recent study, the researchers explored the concept of strategic silence and its implications for organizational communication using an exploratory research design. The study described strategic silence as a deliberate communication behaviour capable of producing both beneficial and adverse organizational outcomes depending on how it is applied. Four key dimensions of strategic silence were identified, namely information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, and strategic listening. According to the authors, these dimensions enable employees and organizational leaders to regulate communication, protect confidential information, improve decision-making, and strengthen workplace relationships. The study concluded that a better understanding of strategic silence provides valuable insights into leadership effectiveness, employee interaction, organizational communication, and knowledge management (5)

Strategic silence and discursive repair were also examined by another researcher in relation to unfavourable safety disclosures in CSR reports. The researcher used Critical Genre Analysis to investigate through safety disclosure parts of twenty Fortune 500 corporations in five different sectors. The findings showed that organizations carefully balance transparency with reputation management by limiting detailed discussion of safety incidents while consistently emphasizing their commitment to workplace safety and future improvements. The study concluded that strategic silence represents a sophisticated communication strategy that enables organizations to satisfy stakeholder expectations while simultaneously protecting their corporate image and competitive position (11).

A researcher also examined the role of strategic silence among highly skilled professionals whose expertise is often overlooked or undervalued within organizations The research used a narrative review methodology to compile evidence from published peer-reviewed articles on organisational psychology, conflict management, workplace dynamics, employment law, and other related topics from 2015 to 2025. The findings indicated that employees who intentionally practice strategic silence often create opportunities for others to recognize the significance of their contributions independently. Additionally, the research found that these people had better professional boundaries, higher career mobility, and better psychological well-being. It concluded that strategic silence serves as an intentional boundary-management strategy that benefits both individual career development and organizational effectiveness (8).

Another study investigated the effectiveness of silence as a crisis communication strategy from the perspective of South African public relations consultants. Guided by an expanded version of Image Repair Theory, which recognizes silence as a distinct crisis response strategy, the study employed semi-structured interviews with twelve experienced public relations practitioners. The findings revealed that organizations frequently use silence to allow time for legal consultation, verification of facts, and coordination of internal communication before making public statements. However, silence became damaging when it was employed to avoid stakeholders or conceal important developments during a crisis. To explain these communication dynamics, the researcher introduced the "Three-Clock Model," which highlights the importance of aligning legal, organizational, and media timelines in protecting organizational credibility and reputation (15).

Another research used Sociometer Theory to look at protective silence as a reaction to being teased at work. According to the research, defensive silence is more of a proactive tactic for maintaining connections inside organisations than just an avoidance practice. Workplace ostracism lowers organization-based self-esteem, which in turn increases the propensity to stay quiet to avoid further relationship injury, according to data obtained from 345 workers and 82 supervisors. Workers who had a higher opinion of themselves were also less affected by these unfavourable outcomes, according to the study. The study concluded that strategic silence can function as an adaptive interpersonal strategy and offers valuable implications for organizational leaders seeking to build supportive work environments (12)

Some scholars further explored the conditions under which silence becomes an effective crisis communication strategy. Using an exploratory research design, the authors analyzed eight international crisis cases to understand how silence is adopted, maintained, and eventually broken during organizational crises. Their findings identified three forms of strategic silence—delaying, avoiding, and hiding silence. Delaying silence was found to be beneficial when organizations required additional time to gather facts and prepare an appropriate response before communicating with stakeholders. In contrast, avoiding and hiding silence generally intensified crises and damaged organizational reputation when the truth eventually emerged. The authors therefore proposed a practical framework to guide organizations in the effective use of delaying silence during crisis situations (16)

(17) investigated why organizations sometimes deliberately choose not to publicize prestigious certifications that they have legitimately earned. The researchers used impression management theory to examine longitudinal data from Dow Jones Sustainability Index firms. The findings showed that organizations facing reputational threats often withhold information about their sustainability certifications when such recognition could expose them to accusations of hypocrisy. This tendency was particularly evident among organizations with well-established reputations and where stakeholders possessed substantial knowledge of the certification. The study concluded that strategic silence can serve as an effective communication strategy for managing stakeholder perceptions and protecting organizational reputation.

(18) researched the interpersonal communication strategies used by people of Enugu Metropolis, Enugu State, Nigeria. The explanatory mixed-method research collected quantitative and qualitative data via questionnaires and interviews. Depending on the communication situation, the results showed that strategic silence is actively used for both advantageous and detrimental reasons during interpersonal encounters. In light of these results, the authors argue that people should actively use strategic silence to foster healthy relationships and improve communication.

(7) explored different forms of silence in organizations and identified multiple dimensions of silence behavior. Although these studies provide valuable insights into silence within organizations, most of them focus on employee silence rather than strategic silence as a competitive tool. Furthermore, limited studies have examined the relationship between strategic silence and competitive advantage in the banking sector, particularly within Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how the dimensions of strategic silence influence competitive advantage among commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

3. Methodology

The methodology involves the research procedures adopted to carry out this study. It includes the research design, population, sample size/sampling technique, data collection method, research instrument, validity, reliability, and data analysis. The research design used in this study is a cross-sectional survey. The survey design is suitable as it enables the researcher to utilise a questionnaire to get data from respondents. The research includes all managerial level staff from the seventeen commercial banks in Bayelsa State. The sample size was determined to be 85 participants, with 5 management-level staff members from each bank making up the total. The data was retrieved by a standardised questionnaire that used a 5-point Likert scale, including: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and highly agree. To guarantee that the questionnaire adequately measures the research variables, it was validated by having experts in management and banking studies assess it. The consistency of the questionnaire items was checked for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha. Statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v. 26.0). Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation and regression analysis, were used to analyse the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

The results of the research are detailed in this part. At the 5% level of significance, four null hypotheses about strategic quiet and competitive advantage were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. To investigate the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage, multiple regression analysis was used. The R^2 coefficient, F-statistic, and p-value for the overall model are all part of the regression findings.

H_{01}: Information withholding does not relate with competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Table 1: Correlation between Information Withholding and Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State.

		Information Withholding	Competitive Advantage
Information Withholding	Pearson Correlation	1	.674*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.674*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Author's Computation from Survey Data (2026).

Table 1 displays the correlation between commercial banks in Bayelsa State's competitive advantage and information withholding. The two variables are highly correlated with each other (Pearson's value = 0.674). With $p < .001$, which is less than the 0.05 threshold, the association is considered statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The finding indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between information withholding and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

H_{02}: There is no relationship between non-reactive silence and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Table 2: Correlation between Non-Reactive Silence and Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State.

		Non-reactive Silence	Competitive Advantage
Non-reactive Silence	Pearson Correlation	1	.731*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.731*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Author's Computation from Survey Data (2026).

Table 2 displays the correlation between commercial banks in Bayelsa State's competitive advantage and non-reactive silence. The two variables are strongly related to one another, as shown by the high Pearson correlation value (r = 0.731). The correlation is statistically significant at $p < .001$, which is less than the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H02) and accept the alternative hypothesis. A positive and statistically significant correlation between commercial banks in Bayelsa State's competitive advantage and non-reactive silence was found.

H_{03}: Disclosure timing does not relate with competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: Correlation between Disclosure Timing and Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State.

		Disclosure Timing	Competitive Advantage
Disclosure Timing	Pearson Correlation	1	.618*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.618*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Author's Computation from Survey Data (2026).

The correlation between the disclosure timing and the competitive advantage of Bayelsa State's commercial banks is shown in Table 3. Two variables are strongly related to one another, according to the Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.618). Since the $p < .001$ is less than 0.05, the link is statistically significant. As a result, we accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis (H03). It is determined that there is positive and significant relationship between strategic silence and disclosure timing of commercial banks in Bayelsa State

H_{04}: There is no relationship between strategic listening and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Table 4: Correlation between Strategic Listening and Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State.

		Strategic Listening	Competitive Advantage
Strategic Listening	Pearson Correlation	1	.769*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	85	85
Competitive Advantage	Pearson Correlation	.769*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	85	85

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Author's Computation from Survey Data (2026).

The association between Bayelsa State commercial banks' competitive advantage and strategic listening is seen in Table 4. The two variables have a significant positive association, as shown by the Pearson correlation coefficient (r = 0.769). The link is statistically significant since the $p < .001$ is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. As a result, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis (H04) is rejected. The finding shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between strategic listening and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Ho5: Strategic silence has no significant influence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

Table 5: Model Summary on the Influence of Strategic Silence on the Competitive Advantage of Commercial Banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

					Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.874[a]	.764	.763	1.00130	.764	64.75	4	80	p < .001

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive Advantage

a. Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Listening, Non-reactive Silence, Information Withholding, Disclosure Timing

Source: Author's Computation from Survey Data (2026).

The regression results indicate that the four dimensions of strategic silence jointly have a strong positive relationship with the competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State ($R = .874$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .764$) indicates that approximately 76.4% of the variance in competitive advantage is explained jointly by information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing and strategic listening. The remaining 23.6% may be attributable to other factors not included in the model. The adjusted R^2 of .763 indicates that the explanatory power of the model remains relatively stable after adjusting for the number of predictors included in the analysis. Furthermore, the regression model is statistically significant, $F(4, 80) = 64.75$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis that strategic silence has no significant influence on competitive advantage is rejected. The study consequently concludes that the dimensions of strategic silence jointly and significantly influence the competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State.

4.2 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that all four dimensions of strategic silence—information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing and strategic listening—have positive and statistically significant relationships with the competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State. Strategic listening recorded the strongest correlation ($r = .769$), followed by non-reactive silence ($r = .731$), information withholding ($r = .674$) and disclosure timing ($r = .618$). This suggests that the manner in which banks listen to stakeholders while managing the timing and content of information disclosure may play an important role in shaping their competitive position. The findings are consistent with (6), who demonstrated the importance of silence in organisational decision-making and performance, and (9), who established that silence can influence workplace relationships and organisational outcomes. However, unlike earlier studies that largely conceptualised silence as passive employee behaviour with potentially negative consequences, the present study extends the literature by demonstrating that, when silence is deliberately and strategically deployed rather than driven by fear, disengagement or avoidance, it can function as a competitive capability for banks operating in a highly regulated and information-sensitive industry.

The regression results further demonstrate that information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing and strategic listening jointly explain a substantial proportion of the variance in competitive advantage. The R^2 of .764 indicates that the four dimensions collectively account for approximately 76.4% of the variation in competitive advantage. The statistically significant overall regression model further suggests that strategic silence, considered as a multidimensional construct, provides meaningful explanatory power for competitive advantage among commercial banks in Bayelsa State. The findings have important theoretical, practical and policy implications. Theoretically, the study extends the literature on organisational silence, which has traditionally emphasised employee voice and silence within intra-organisational contexts, by repositioning strategic silence as a deliberate organisational capability with potential implications for competitive advantage in the banking sector. The study therefore contributes to addressing the limited empirical attention given to strategic silence as a competitive resource.

Practically, managers of commercial banks in Bayelsa State should develop deliberate approaches to managing sensitive information, responding to competitive pressures, timing strategic disclosures and listening to customers and other stakeholders. These practices can improve managerial judgement, protect strategically important information and strengthen the banks' capacity to respond to competitive pressures. From a policy perspective, bank executives should recognise that strategic silence, particularly with respect to disclosure timing and information withholding, must be carefully balanced against requirements for transparency, regulatory compliance and stakeholder trust. Strategic silence should therefore not be interpreted as a justification for concealing information that banks are legally or ethically required to disclose.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, focusing specifically on information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, and strategic listening. It was indicative that all four dimensions of strategic silence have positive and statistically significant relationships with competitive advantage. The multiple regression results further confirmed that these four dimensions, when combined, jointly and significantly explain a substantial proportion of the variance in competitive advantage, underscoring that strategic silence is not merely a passive organizational behaviour but a deliberate and measurable strategic resource. The study concludes that strategic silence has a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage of commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in light of the findings:

1. Commercial banks in Bayelsa State should develop and consistently enforce policies that guide the strategic handling of sensitive organizational information to prevent unnecessary disclosure while protecting valuable knowledge that supports their competitive position.
2. Management of commercial banks in Bayelsa State should provide a work culture to equip employees with the right behaviour when responding to workplace challenges, customer complaints, and competitive pressures, thereby promoting better judgement and more effective decision-making.

3. Commercial banks in Bayelsa State should adopt clear procedures for determining when strategic information should be communicated to internal and external stakeholders so that important disclosures are made at the most beneficial time for the organization.
4. Commercial banks in Bayelsa State should strengthen strategic listening by creating structured channels for obtaining and acting on feedback from customers and employees, enabling the organization to anticipate market changes and respond more effectively to emerging opportunities and challenges.

7. Contribution to Knowledge

By demonstrating that strategic silence is more than just a lack of communication or an indication of employee disengagement, this research adds significantly to the body of knowledge already in existence. Rather, it shows that strategic silence can be intentionally applied through information withholding, non-reactive silence, disclosure timing, and strategic listening to support organizational goals and improve competitiveness.

8. Suggestions for Further Studies

This study focused on commercial banks in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, however the following suggestions are made;

1. Future research could replicate the study in other states or geopolitical zones to determine whether the influence of strategic silence on competitive advantage holds across different regional and cultural contexts.
2. Further studies could also extend this research to other financial institutions, such as microfinance banks, insurance companies, or fintech firms, to establish whether the findings apply beyond the traditional commercial banking sector.

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