



## The Impact of Accountek on the Performance of the Top Ten Accounting Firms In Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Over the years, the professional accountant writes up books, balances books, prepares final accounts, conduct investigations, audit accounts and prepare tax returns among many other services. These accounting services by the accountants were traditionally based on clerical reliance systems without any interactions with the computer systems. In order to facilitate prompt and accurate delivery of appropriate services to business enterprises, accounting firms require dynamism to keep abreast of the development in their profession because it is assumed that the accounting industry is far behind in adopting new technologies. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of Accountek on the performance of the top ten accounting firms in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research designed method was adopted. Data were collected through a survey, using a structured questionnaire validated by experts and yielding 0.771 cronbach alpha. The confirmed top ten accounting firms were selected for the study and a non-probabilistic sample included 200 respondents of which 102 copies of the structured questionnaire were completed and returned. The data analysis was carried out to determine the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the variables with the aid of SPSS. Findings revealed that Accountek significantly affects the performance of the top ten accounting firms in Nigeria. It was concluded that IT strengthened the firms and improved the quality and reporting standard of the accounting firms while accounting firms should be more efficient and timely in their responsibilities with a view to meet up with the needs of their clients.

**Keywords:** Accountek, Technological Innovation, Top 10 accounting firms, Information technology.

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### 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The services of accounting professional and especially audit to business enterprise are of importance to their continued survival and growth of the economy. It is assumed that the accounting industry is far behind in adopting new technologies and is stubbornly resisting change. However, the opposite is the case, because the entire accountancy industry is rapidly being transformed, primarily due to productivity optimization brought about by the ever-growing revolution in technology. To facilitate delivery of appropriate service to enterprise, audit firms require dynamism to keep abreast of development in their profession and other aspect of pecuniary activities of the economy.



The advent of computer usage for conducting financial transactions brought about the use of computer assisted audit technique (CAAT) being employed by accounting firms in auditing through the computers in 1980s. Since then till date other technological innovations are being invented and many other innovative tools have been developed. As technological innovation increases so was the business environment changes progressively in greater diversity, increased complexity and requiring expedited stewardship. With technological innovation accountants are no more burdened with repetitive, time-sucking tasks and can now spend more time focusing on helping their clients grow their companies through better business strategies.

Reichert and Zawislak (2014) believed that technological capability will engender improved economic performance. It follows that accounting firms with technological capability to innovate, has the tendency to compete favourably in the industry, impact positively on their client's performance and in turn bring about development to the economy. In order to profitably improve performance, firms need to invest in their technological capability to keep abreast of changes in their operational environment. In a related development, Laeven, Levine and Michalopoulos (2015) in Chipeta and Muthinja (2018) stated that the successful introduction of technological innovations in the banking sector witnessed new financial arrangement. They stated further that following this developments new varieties of financial institutions or applications which requires new reporting techniques evolved. The expedited stewardship accounting of business enterprise with complex financial transactions placed on the financial professionals a duty to employ means that will effectively satisfy their clients' demand.

The analytical and problem-solving skills of accounting practitioners should be deployed to evaluate the challenges of new and emerging technologies, the opportunities therefrom and assess the potential influence on accounting practice in general. The outcome of their analysis will help to improve on their services to client and as well guide them in strategic decision making. Apart from being prompt by technological innovation, accounting professionals are expected to be innovative in their service delivery for a continued survival in a competitive environment. It is intended in this study to evaluate the impact of technological innovations on accounting practices by Nigerian accounting firms. The significance of this study is to broaden the knowledge of accounting students and create awareness to professionals in accounting and the implications of technological innovations for service delivery of accounting practice. Therefore, this study investigates the impact of Accounttek on the performance of the top ten accounting firms in Nigeria.

Based on the Naira-metrics data of 2018 from some of the biggest quoted companies by market capitalization in Nigeria, as confirmed by Manly (2018); it was revealed that the big 4 audit firms namely PwC, KPMG, Deloitte and Ernst & Young earned N6.4 billion last year. According to their research, PwC was the highest earner with N2.5 billion closely followed by KPMG's 2 billion. EY and Deloitte earned 1.1 billion and 500million respectively. Manly, (2018) stated that the best accounting firms in Nigeria are known for their prestige, international reputation and their continual competition for supremacy.

From their superior software, a thirst for excellence, strong leadership and a culture of investment in human capital, it is no wonder a lot of Nigerians want to work with them. Apart from the big 4 accounting firms that are apparently leading in Nigeria, there is an enormous slew of accounting firms cropping up in the country. The question, therefore, is not- "What are the top 4" as people already know them. The question then is who are the other accounting firms in the country that are giving these top guys a run for their money? Take a look at the top 10 leading accounting firms in Nigeria. They are: PwC, KPMG, Deloitte, KPMG International, Deloitte & Touche (formerly Akintola Williams Deloitte), McKinsey & Company, Accenture Inc., Horwath Dafinone, Grand Thornton, and Ashford & McGuire.



## Hypothesis

**H0:-** that accounting technology does not significantly affects the performance of the top ten accounting firms in Nigeria.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is anchored on the auditing theory and the technological innovation audit model has included the audit stakeholders, the audit object, the audit team and the audit content and other environmental factors. The study was based on the concepts of information technology, audit performance, technical innovation audit, audit methodology, generally accepted audit procedures and generally accepted auditing standards. The study reviewed the following literatures : according to Lemos, Pastor and Oliveira (2012), as cited in Adir and Tiago (2014) that the social networks support communication among organizations, offering benefits to the users. On the other hand, Mondini, Domingues, Correia and Mondini (2012) underline the companies' difficulty to control their use by the staff, reducing their employees' productivity. According to Scott (2009), for example, technology has definitely changed the face of accounting over the years, but it is not easy to identify if its impacts were negative or positive. In addition, according to that author, some of the impacts of technology are neither negative nor positive, but mere alterations that raise demands for the profession.

In his study about the impacts of technology on information systems in some types of accounting organization, Alsharayri (2011) observed only positive relations between the level of technology and the amount of information the information system management produced. In accordance with Alsarayreh, Jewabreh, Jaradat and Alamro (2011), technology has caused great impacts, mainly in the agility and reliability of the information systems used in accounting firms. The developments in information and communication technology have moved the communication between individuals to very advanced levels beyond standard phone communication and correspondence. Now, employees have to have knowledge on computer and telecommunication tools as well as software. Nowadays, hardware is not sufficient solely for communication; communication and correspondence software consonant with this hardware is needed (Acar & Gürsoy, 2008). Metin, Serdar and Mehmet (2015) confirmed that information technologies are employed increasingly in public service submission in recent years all over the World. As informatics develop and become cheaper, frequency and usage scale of these technologies in public services will also soar. (Fu, Farn & Chau, 2006). Internet has become basic information communication and sharing area of the future in recent years. (Seyal, Noa & Rahim, 2002). As information technologies bring important cost saving and service increase, it is substantial to know why stakeholders use these technologies and more importantly, to know why they do not use it. One of the most significant reasons of audit with computer is that computer based accounting information systems become complicated in rapidly increasing manner.

In line with Acevedo (2012), if communication in accounting firms is fast, they can help to increase the productivity, permit better commercial decision making and facilitate the expansion of the company into new territories or countries, as the adoption of IT resources allow the companies to keep up a competitive advantage over their rivals. Accounting firms can use information technology to create new services or improve the services delivered to their clients. Orkun, Özlem, Adnan, and Ali (2013) in their study confirmed that innovation and technology tactics, strategies and management style are important elements for success of companies in the market today. They, however, claimed in the study as well that firm size and firm age play an important role in the innovative performance of firms. The forces of shorter product and technological life cycle engender continuous innovative strategies in today's competitive market (Nijssen, VanReekum & Hulshoff, 2001). Evidence abounds in recent times technological advancement in offerings to the market by many organisations spurring them to adopt the numerous innovative technique in order to be profitably relevant. Orkun, Özlem, Adnan, and Ali (2013) concluded that there is strong relationship between technological



investments and innovative performance of firms.

Metin, Serdar and Mehmet (2015) opined that in technology acceptance model, basic one governs usage facility and perception of usage benefit, usage intention, and so affects usage behaviour and causes acceptance of technology. According to the model, the belief regarding that usage of technology will not require much effort, perception of ease of use defines the expectation of individual for increase of performance in its job through information technologies, and usage intention means positive and negative feelings and thoughts in order to use information technologies by individual. Farida, Thurasamy, and Noor (2018) in their study on information technology governance on audit technology performance among Malaysian Public Sector Auditors concluded that IT governance is a mechanism to stimulate anticipated behavior in the use of technology among the employees of an organisation. Surveys using closed-ended questionnaire were distributed to approximately 309 Malaysia public sector auditors.

The results showed that IT governance mechanisms such as IT strategy and management support significantly influence the audit technology performance. IT governance does play a significant role in assuring the successful utilisation of audit technology. Aribaba, Asaolut and Olaopa (2011), in turn, highlight the importance of IT for society, mainly in small service companies, leading to a better performance and greater corporate development. Adir and Tiago (2014) in their study cited Grande, Estébanez and Colomina (2011) and stated that a well-defined strategy, based on investments in IT and in staff qualification, will offer the accounting firms productive advantages and favorable changes when compared to the clients and to their competitors.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research designed method was adopted. The target population consisted of all accounting firms in Nigeria while the confirmed top ten accounting firms were selected for the study. Manly (2018) confirmed that these are the top 10 accounting firms in Nigeria. They have been tried, trusted and have remained consistent; they are: PwC, KPMG, Deloitte, KPMG International, Deloitte & Touche (formerly Akintola Williams Deloitte), McKinsey & Company, Accenture Inc., Horwath Dafinone, Grand Thornton, and Ashford & McGuire. A non-probabilistic sample included 200 respondents from these accounting firms, of which 102 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned. Data were collected through a survey, using a structured questionnaire. The researcher used a 6 point Likert-type scale with options ranging from 6= strongly agree, 5= agree, 4= fairly agree, 3=fairly disagree, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree.

In order to establish the validity of the data, the researcher sought opinions of experts in the field of accounting which facilitated the revision and modification of the research instrument thereby enhancing its validity and the two aspects considered most important for this study are the face and contents validity. Furthermore, the content validity was determined through the use of content validity index which was obtained by summing items rated 3 or 4 by experts and dividing by the total number of items in the questionnaire yielding a content validity index of 0.813 while the reliability was enhanced through a pilot study of 20 respondents (10% of the non-probabilistic sample size) but not part of the final sample while the reliability result shows an overall coefficient of 0.771 cronbach alpha. The scale was consistent and reliable since the alpha coefficient was greater than 0.7 according to Waitthaka, Ngugi, Aiyabel, Itunga and Kirago (2012).

The data analysis was carried out to determine the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of the variables with the aid of SPSS.



### Model Specification /Simple Linear Regression Analysis

It is precisely expressed as follows:

$$PF = f(IT) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Thus, our performance function becomes:

$$PF = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (IT) + e \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where:

PF=Performance

IT=Accountek

$\beta_0$ = Constant

e =error term

e is the error term assumed to be normally and independently distributed with zero mean and constant variance, which captures all other explanatory variables which influence performance but are not captured in the model.  $\beta_1$  is the partial elasticity of PF.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The descriptive analysis of the data is divided into two distinct parts. First, is the presentation of descriptive statistics while the second part is the presentation of correlation analysis and the discussion of the results.

### 4.1 Description of Respondents' Profile, Accountek and Performance Scale

There were 102 respondents in this study. The respondents' profile is as per Table 1 above. The majority of respondents were above 30 years (77.5%) while others (22.5%) were 30 years below. Almost 77.5% respondents were male and the remainder were females (22.5%). Most of the respondents were middle level managers (65.7%) who were involved in supervising and monitoring the work of support staff and others (34.3%) were senior managers and above who led and gave directions on the audit job function. Only (37.3%) of the respondents were staff of the audit departments who are the field auditors who performed the technology-enabled auditing directly while (15.7%) were IT staff and others (47%) were from other units / departments. Few respondents (6.9%) were not having first degree while the majority of the respondents (93.1%) had first and second degrees and one of them had a Ph.D in the relevant field. (11.8%) had AAT while (83.4%) of the respondents are professional chartered accountants and (4.8%) who worked in the IT or yet to complete their professional examinations were not professionally qualified as chartered accountants.

Almost 86.3% of the respondents had auditing experiences of 6 years and more which displays that they have the necessary knowledge to respond well. Additionally, about 99.9% of the respondents had IT experience using audit technology as this was a requisite for any staff to be employed into any of these top ten accounting firms in Nigeria. The 7.8% of the respondents disagreed that client get information they needed promptly through remote access, 39.2% agreed, 32.4% fairly agreed while the remaining 20.6% strongly agreed. Only 1% of the respondent's fairly disagreed that IT enhanced the integration of information between the firms and the clients, 2.9% disagreed, 36.3% agreed, 43.1% fairly agreed while the remaining 16.7% of the respondent's strongly agreed. About 5.9% of the respondents disagreed that IT strengthened the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm, 48% agreed, 30.4% fairly agreed while the remaining 15.7% of the respondents strongly agreed while 4.9% of the respondents disagreed that the use of IT improved the management of the firm, 42.2% agreed, 37.3% fairly agreed, while the remaining 15.7% of



the respondents strongly agreed.

There were about 5.9% of the respondents who disagreed that IT resulted to more training of the staff, 53.9% agreed, 32.4% fairly agreed, while the remaining 7.8% of the respondent's strongly agreed. Also, 7.8% of the respondents disagreed that IT improves the quality and reporting standard of the firm, 50% agreed, 34.3% fairly agreed while the remaining 7.8% of the respondent strongly agreed. Again, 5.9% of the respondents disagreed that IT has led to increase in the number of the clients, 50% agreed, 40.2% fairly agreed, while the remaining 3.9% of the respondents strongly agreed. However, 4.9% of the respondents disagreed that IT has led to reduction in personnel cost, 48% agreed, 35.3% fairly agreed, while the remaining 11.8% of the respondents strongly agreed. Only 1% of the respondents disagreed that IT has led to high staff turnover, 55.9% agreed, 31.4% fairly agreed, while the remaining 11.8% strongly agreed. 1% of the respondents fairly disagreed that IT has led to improvement in staff welfare, 3.9% disagreed, 47.1% agreed, 36.3% fairly agreed, while the remaining 11.8% of the respondents strongly agreed.

**Table 1**

Correlations			
		IT improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm	IT strengthened the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm
IT improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm	Pearson Correlation	1	.908**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
IT strengthen the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm	Pearson Correlation	.908**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2**

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.908 <sup>a</sup>	.825	.824		.31519	.507

a. Predictors: (Constant), IT strengthened the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm

b. Dependent Variable: IT improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm

**Table 3**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	46.938	1	46.938	472.492	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	9.934	100	.099		
	Total	56.873	101			

a. Dependent Variable: IT improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm

b. Predictors: (Constant), IT strengthened the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm



**Table 4**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.567	.098		5.808	.000
	IT strengthened the firm and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm	.824	.038	.908	21.737	.000

a. Dependent Variable: IT improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm

**4.2 Discussion of Results**

Table 1 shows the Pearson’s correlation coefficient between the variables, Accountek and performance. Pearson’s correlation is used to test the level of relationship between the two variables. The Pearson’s correlation, from the correlation table above shows that accountek has a positive correlation with the performance of accounting firms in Nigeria with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.908. Table 2 shows the R which is the correlation between the predicted values and the observed values of the dependent variable given as 0.908 in the table above, which implies that 90.8%. R- Squared statistic which is given as 0.825 and most importantly the Adjusted R- square shows 0.824 meaning that only

82.5% (R- Square) and 82.4% (Adjusted R Square) of the total variation in the performance of the firms can be explained by the use of IT in improving the quality and reporting standard of the firm, while the remaining percentage can be explained by other variables. Moreover, the standard error of the estimate is 0.31519 while the Durbin - Watson statistic is given as 0.507 which is interpreted to have a positive auto- correlation as the figure presented is less than 2 which implies that variables are not in good shape. Therefore, it is suggested that other researchers should deploy more robust econometric model such as General linear model (GLM) to eliminate the auto- correlation problem. Table 3 shows the analysis of variance of the regression as it presents the sum of squares, the degree of freedom which is one less than the total number of the variables (n-1) also the mean square is given and most importantly the F- value is given as 472.492 with the P- value of 0.000, which implies that the model derived is statistically significant. Table 4 shows the coefficient of the regression model both standardized and unstandardized, the t- cal and the probability value.

The  $\beta$  which implies the intercepts of the model equation can be used to rewrite the model 1 as:

$$PF = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (IT) + e$$

$$PF = 0.567 + 0.824 + e$$

From the above equation, it is obvious that accountek (independent variable) has a positive relationship with the dependent variable performance (PF). It therefore means that, if IT increases by one unit, performance will increase by 0.824. The t-cal of the variable is also shown as 21.737. These values are greater than the t- tab of 2 with their probability value shown as 0.000 which is said to be significant at significant level of 0.05.



## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It could be seen that accounting technology significantly affects the performance of the top ten accounting firms in Nigeria. A unit increase in accountek will trigger 82.4% in the performance of the firms which is statistically significant at 0.05 sig. level. This simply means that the researcher thereby rejects the null hypothesis, and concludes that accounting technology significantly affects the performance of top ten accounting firms in Nigeria. It is concluded that Information Technology (IT) strengthened the firms and resulted to the growth and expansion of the firm and improved the quality and reporting standard of the firm. Accountek also enhances the integration of information between the firms and the clients. It is hereby recommended that accounting firms should be more efficient and timely in their responsibilities with a view to meet up with the needs of their clients.





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