



Entrepreneurial Marketing and Performance of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

Entrepreneurial marketing has become increasingly popular in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing, as well as among organizations aiming to obtain a competitive edge. In practice, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, generally see entrepreneurial marketing as an appealing and efficient marketing strategy motivated by the desire to make the most of their unique strengths. These SMEs are involved in the sale of products and services. This study aimed to investigate the influence of entrepreneurial marketing on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The sample size for the study was 400, determined using the Taro Yamane formula. The proxies for entrepreneurial marketing were considered jointly as customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation. The researchers adopted a survey research design. A structured questionnaire was designed to obtain data from 400 SME owners. We also adopted a simple random technique for this study. We tested the combined hypothesis using multiple regression analyses. The study revealed a significant influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. In conclusion, this study empirically provides evidence of the influence of entrepreneurial marketing on SME performance. SMEs can improve their performance by embracing the entrepreneurial marketing philosophy. Based on these conclusions and findings, the researchers recommended that SMEs in Akwa Ibom State improve their customer orientation to understand their customers better.

Keywords *Entrepreneurial marketing, Customer orientation, Entrepreneurial orientation, Innovation orientation, Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise*

INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-scale firms have a significant impact on global businesses. They contribute by providing goods and services, creating employment opportunities, enhancing the standard of living, and promoting economic diversification, among other things. The capacity of small and medium-scale organizations (SMEs) to develop suitable marketing strategies has always been considered a crucial factor in determining the approach to be used in order to achieve consistent and exceptional performance. Marketing, a complex network of commercial activities, holds significant importance for corporate organizations, particularly in today's dynamic and fiercely competitive marketplaces. Marketing serves as a means for entrepreneurial endeavours to enhance performance and address competition by effectively implementing strategies (Collison & Shaw, 2001; Zaefarian, 2014).

Entrepreneurial marketing refers to the marketing strategies employed by small and resource-limited enterprises, such as SMEs (Hisrich & Ramadani, 2018). These firms heavily rely on imaginative and often naive marketing approaches that extensively use personal networks (Naelati & SobrotulImti, 2014). Although there is no common definition of entrepreneurial marketing, these researchers agree with the explanation given by Jones and Rowley (2011). They

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conceptualized entrepreneurial marketing as consisting of four primary variables: market orientation, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation. Each of these orientations has a specific focus and consequences for entrepreneurial marketing. The entrepreneurial aspect of market orientation pertains to the use of marketing intelligence to effectively address market dynamics, including responding to rivals' actions, formulating marketing strategies, and integrating business operations.

The customer orientation component aims to provide products and services that offer exceptional value, enabling a business to establish stronger connections with its consumers by offering value (Csordás & Gáti, 2014; Zaefarian, 2014). Innovation orientation focuses on the level of business innovation in the delivery of products and services. These orientations are believed to impact company performance. Organizational performance pertains to the strategic results of organizations, which demonstrate how well these entities are attaining their stated objectives. Therefore, it is a significant domain that has garnered the interest of researchers and management professionals. Effective marketing strategies have a direct impact on the performance of businesses, which is considered to be a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. As a result, it attracts the attention of all businesses (Kelson, 2014).

According to Ediri (2014), the success of small firms is believed to be partially dependent on the quality of their marketing tactics. Small and medium-scale firms encompass various enterprises within a given economy. The business segment facilitates economic development by providing goods and services, generating employment, and assisting large-scale firms, among other functions. These businesses are characterized by a wide range of capabilities, a focus on expansion, ample resources, and other desirable attributes (Eniola et al., 2015). These endeavours can be found in various businesses and can be conducted in diverse marketplaces and social contexts (Ediri, 2014).

In Nigeria, some small and medium-scale enterprises have been dwindling in terms of fortune. As a result, their known roles in national economic development are being threatened. This may suggest that these small and medium-scale businesses may not be knowledgeable and, by extension, may not be applying the concept of entrepreneurial marketing to their businesses; specifically, such businesses may not be paying adequate attention to customer orientation, innovation orientation, and entrepreneurial orientation. While some studies have been conducted in this area, quite a number of them focused on large companies and developed countries worldwide. As of date, not much has been done to capture the small and medium-scale business segment, despite its contributions to national economic development, such as providing goods and services, creating employment opportunities, and supporting large business organizations, among others.

Current experience with SMEs portrays below-expected performance; some are unable to realize their performance goals, while many have ceased operations. This situation threatens their contributions to the mentioned national economic advancement. The inability to pay adequate interest to the philosophy of entrepreneurial marketing through being innovative, deepening knowledge of customers' changing tastes, and being able to take calculated risks may have contributed to a high rate of failure in small businesses, revenue losses, job losses by operators and their assistants, a worsening poverty level, and a heightened crime situation in society. It is thus of great concern that the dwindling fortunes of the SMEs should be re-examined along these critical orientations. Based on this rationale, researching the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Akwa Ibom State was deemed valuable. Therefore, our main purpose in this study was to investigate the collective influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualisation of Entrepreneurial Marketing

Entrepreneurial marketing is a field of marketing that focuses on the interconnectedness between marketing and entrepreneurship, incorporating several concepts and disciplines. This suggests that these two conceptions have the ability to exert an impact on each other. Entrepreneurial marketing has no universal definition (Hills & Hultman, 2013). Nevertheless, other authors have expressed their opinions on the matter. Entrepreneurial marketing, as defined by Ionita (2012), involves actively finding and capitalizing on opportunities to gain and retain lucrative clients. It also involves utilizing new risk management strategies, leveraging resources, and creating value. According to Itodo (2015), entrepreneurial practices should include a systematic approach for organizations to create strategies that enable them to predict and adapt to changes in the business environment in a creative way.

Entrepreneurial marketing activities are a comprehensive process designed to creatively utilize a company's combined knowledge, skills, and resources to meet marketing needs, enhance the value of its products and services, and address competitive pressures. According to Owomoyela (2013), entrepreneurial marketing involves utilizing entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviours to create marketing strategies and methods. Entrepreneurial marketing emerged as a novel marketing framework that enables small companies to effectively structure their marketing initiatives to plan and achieve success in their operations strategically.

Proxies of Entrepreneurial Marketing

Customer Orientation

The customer-oriented aspect of entrepreneurial marketing originates from early literature on service marketing. During this period, businesses recognized that having customer-focused workers clearly indicated the quality and the services they provided (Gronroos, 1982). Subsequently, the notion of client orientation has garnered significant attention from researchers. Experts from various disciplines have thoroughly studied customer orientation as a crucial component of entrepreneurial marketing. Several scholars consider customer orientation to be fundamental to the marketing concept. Narver and Slater (1999) define customer orientation as a culture that emphasizes the primary organizational objective of creating customer value. According to Drucker (1954), customer orientation is a mindset and a series of actions aimed at identifying and comprehending the requirements of the intended customer. It involves adjusting the selling organization's approach to better meet those demands compared to competitors. The entrepreneurial marketing component of customer orientation is based on the client being the firm's central focus. Hence, manufacturing and marketing initiatives must focus on customers, catering to their preferences, and meeting their expectations.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

The components of entrepreneurial orientation should encompass creativity and proactiveness, entrepreneurial inclination, and a tendency for risk-taking. According to Matsuno et al. (2010), entrepreneurial orientation is a combination of being open to new ideas and innovations, being willing to take risks, and actively seeking out and seizing chances. The author's perspective on entrepreneurial orientation aligns with prevailing viewpoints in the literature. An entrepreneurial attitude is crucial, especially for small and medium-scale firms. These firms prioritize personalization, and because of their high volume of operations, they must take significant risks to remain viable despite limited resources. They must continuously develop their business models and operational procedures, as well as adopt a proactive approach to decision-making. By fostering an entrepreneurial perspective, the business is well-equipped to address the

fundamental challenges in entrepreneurship. Hence, in order to effectively confront entrepreneurial tasks and problems, small and medium-scale firms must possess an entrepreneurial attitude.

Innovation Orientation

According to [Kelson \(2014\)](#), an entrepreneur is an individual who identifies and takes advantage of opportunities, transforms them into viable or marketable concepts, enhances them through the investment of time, effort, money, or skills, takes on the risks of the competitive market to implement these ideas, and ultimately reaps the benefits of these endeavours. [Hills and Hultman \(2013\)](#) define the entrepreneurial marketing traits of innovativeness as encompassing a flexible and tailored approach to the market, as well as innovation in products, services, and tactics. From the perspective of these scholars, innovation is a crucial component of entrepreneurial marketing. The authors have laid out a theoretical framework for the research domain of entrepreneurial marketing, emphasizing innovation as a crucial component alongside entrepreneurship and marketing. The entrepreneurial marketing component of innovation orientation refers to the cultural or behavioural orientation of the organization. This framework encompasses a collection of collaborative innovative actions among companies derived from relevant aspects of the innovation process. Entrepreneurs are expected to demonstrate ingenuity. In order to maintain a competitive edge and adapt to evolving circumstances, organizations must prioritize innovation. Innovative businesses have the capacity to modify their operations, offerings, and procedures. Ultimately, they are poised to introduce novelty to both the firm and its customers. Based on the discussion of dimensions above, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Ho₁: There is no combined significant influence between customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.

Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs)

The concept of performance is multifaceted and can have various interpretations, making it imprecise when used as a placeholder in a study ([Sarkar et al., 2001](#)). The absence of agreement over the definition of the idea leads to misunderstanding and significantly restricts the possibility of achieving clear generalizability and comparability in research within this field ([Usani & Sampson, 2023](#)). In order to effectively evaluate the performance of a business, [Usani et al. \(2024\)](#) suggest that it is necessary to establish measurable criteria by identifying areas of the business processes that require enhancement and those that are functioning effectively. Subsequently, this data can be used to assess the company's efficiency within a specific timeframe ([Usani & Eko, 2021](#)). According to [Usani et al. \(2021\)](#), performance is the evaluation of how effectively a system or process fulfils its intended objective.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) significantly contribute to many nations' economic development. However, they face significant challenges due to lacking a globally acknowledged definition. There needs to be a clear definition of small businesses to separate them into different types of production units based on things like the number of employees, the value of fixed assets, the production capacity, the characteristics of inputs, the level of technology used, the amount of capital employed, and the management style ([Eniola et al., 2015](#)). In 2012, SMEDAN introduced an alternative characterization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Cottage/micro firms are businesses that employ no more than ten workers and have a total cost of no more than five million Naira, including working capital but excluding the cost of land.

On the other hand, small-scale firms employ between ten and forty-nine workers and have a total cost of up to fifty million Naira, excluding the cost of land but including working capital. Medium-scale firms fall within the range of fifty to one hundred and ninety-nine workers, and the categorization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Definition and Classification of SMEs

S/N	Size Category	Employment	Asset (N = million) (excluding land and buildings)
1.	Micro Enterprise	Less than 10	Less than 5
2.	Small Enterprise	10 to 49	5 to less than 50
3.	Medium Enterprise	50 to 199	50 to less than 500

Source: [SMEDAN \(2012\)](#).

As a result, there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a small or medium-scale enterprise. The researchers adopted the [SMEDAN \(2012\)](#) definition and classification of SMEs: SMEs are legal small businesses operating full-time in the study area, with staff strength of between 11 and 49 and an asset base ranging from 1 to 50 million naira, excluding land and buildings. On the other hand, medium-scale businesses are legal businesses that operate full-time in the study area, with staff strength of between 49 and 199 and an asset base ranging from 50 to less than 500 million naira, excluding land and buildings.

Theoretical Framework

The Marketing Orientation Theory, which was put forth by [Narver and Slater \(1990\)](#), is the study's anchor theory. This theory was conceived to show how businesses interact with their customers as well as their competitors, or, put differently, how businesses deal with their external environment. [Hills and Hultman \(2013\)](#) established that entrepreneurial marketing processes differed from traditional marketing mix variables. This implied that entrepreneurial marketing was different in its marketing approach, which combines elements of price, place, promotion, and product. However, these authors considered entrepreneurial marketers to live continuously with the market and their vision, with customer preferences in mind, and to think of ways to improve customer value constantly. According to [Jones and Rowley \(2011\)](#), marketing orientation has become a significant factor in business performance.

The authors think an ongoing interaction exists between entrepreneurship, innovation, and marketing, which translates into improved business performance. Marketing orientation is seen as a corporate culture that prioritizes customers' interests. It combines customer and competitor orientation ([Narver & Slater, 1990](#)). It is concerned with effectively utilizing market intelligence in business planning and product delivery ([Kohli & Jaworski, 1990](#)). It deals with the behavioural capacity of businesses to facilitate the development of capabilities such as those needed in obtaining market intelligence and disseminating them in the business; it also deals with responding through the development of products to fulfil customer needs, which can lead to performance.

This theory harmonizes customer focus, product excellence, and assertive marketing. Marketing orientation theory focuses on understanding consumer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination while considering long-term focus and profitability as decision factors ([Narver & Slater, 1990](#)). Customer orientation concerns itself with having adequate knowledge and respect for one's customers' needs to create superior value for them consistently ([Day & Wensley, 1988](#)). Competitor orientation must include, in addition to being

interested in deploying its products to suit customers' needs, how the competition is doing (Saura et al., 2005). According to this theory, businesses are supposed to use both short-term and long-term orientations in their entrepreneurial pursuits.

Such analyses will facilitate analyzing competitors' long-term capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. It should also allow inter-functional coordination to apply business resources to create superior value in favour of target customers. When businesses have a culture that integrates their functional activities into creating value for the customer, they implement marketing concepts (Harrison & Shaw, 2004). The use of market orientation theory in this study was considered proper since it captures critical issues in business performance, particularly those of customers, competitors, and generally the external environment, which account for the performance of businesses. It prioritizes customers' interests as a culture.

A business must necessarily interact with its external environment in its daily operations. By so doing, it interacts continuously with the market and customers to improve customer value. This is a major approach to making positive changes to the business. Accordingly, following this interaction between the business and its environment of operation, the business can bring about some innovation, which may translate into improved business performance.

Empirical Review

Olanye and Edward (2016) investigated entrepreneurial marketing and the business performance of quick service restaurants in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. The method used was a survey research design. The research involved a combination of 160 employees and customers of select restaurants. The primary instrument of use was a questionnaire. Two data analysis methods are used to analyze data obtained from the field, namely correlation and multiple regression. The outcome of the analysis in this study indicated that proactiveness, opportunity recognition, and innovation were significantly related to competitive advantage. It was concluded that entrepreneurial marketing influenced new market development and the development of new processes or products that convey competitive advantage to businesses. Following these findings and conclusions, it was recommended that businesses, especially quick-service restaurants, be innovative and open to newness in their operations to have an edge in their business. In the reviewed study, correlation and regression data analysis methods were used. The present study uses the regression method in data analysis.

Hamali (2015) examined how entrepreneurial marketing affected small businesses in the Indonesian garment sector. We wanted to examine if entrepreneurial marketing features like proactiveness, resource leveraging, value creation, and customer intensity could predict Indonesian garment manufacturers' performance. This study was survey-based. The survey included 90 firms. Questionnaires were given to these firms. The data was analyzed using multi-regression. He studied 90 people. This study found that value generation, resource leveraging, proactiveness, and customer intensity can predict Indonesian clothing industry performance. We concluded that entrepreneurial marketing can predict Indonesia's apparel sector's performance. The surveyed organization should employ entrepreneurial marketing to improve its performance. Both studies analyzed the data using regression. The reviewed study focused on the garment sector, while this one was broader.

Mugambi and Karugu (2017) studied how entrepreneurial marketing affects Kenyan real estate firms. Optiven Limited was the case study organization. This study investigated whether entrepreneurial marketing aspects affect business performance, including innovation orientation, strategy orientation, resource leveraging, and market orientation. They obtained data from respondents via a questionnaire, and the data analysis tool was a correlation. Through the research process, this study found that innovation, strategic planning, resource leveraging, and market

orientation positively impacted Optiven Limited's success. The study found that entrepreneurial marketing affected firm performance. It was suggested that entrepreneurial marketing be employed to boost business. The evaluated case study used correlation analysis. Cross-sectional regression analysis is used in this study.

Other studies related to this topic were discussed by [Rashad \(2018\)](#), which examined the impact of entrepreneurial marketing elements on the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia. This study investigated the impact of entrepreneurial marketing, opportunity orientation, risk assessment, and value generation on Indonesian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Information was gathered from a sample of 50 managers and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who participated in the study by completing an email questionnaire. The data was subjected to regression analysis. The study revealed a positive association between the level of calculated risk taken, the focus on opportunities and value creation, and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia. Entrepreneurial marketing enhanced the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia. In order to enhance their operational performance, Saudi small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should prioritize implementing entrepreneurial marketing strategies. The reviewed study and this one employed regression analysis to examine the data. Their entrepreneurial marketing components were in a state of anticipation.

[Becherer et al. \(2012\)](#) examined how seven entrepreneurial marketing strategies affect qualitative and quantitative performance of Italian SMEs. This research included 174 SMEs. SME owners and managers completed the questionnaire. Regression was used to analyze field data. The study establishes that entrepreneurial marketing affects SME qualitative and quantitative performance. It was found that entrepreneurial marketing could assess Italian SMEs' qualitative and quantitative performance. Italian SMEs were recommended to embrace entrepreneurial marketing completely to improve their qualitative and quantitative performance. Those not doing so should do so since the ideology had great potential. Both the reviewed and current investigations used regression.

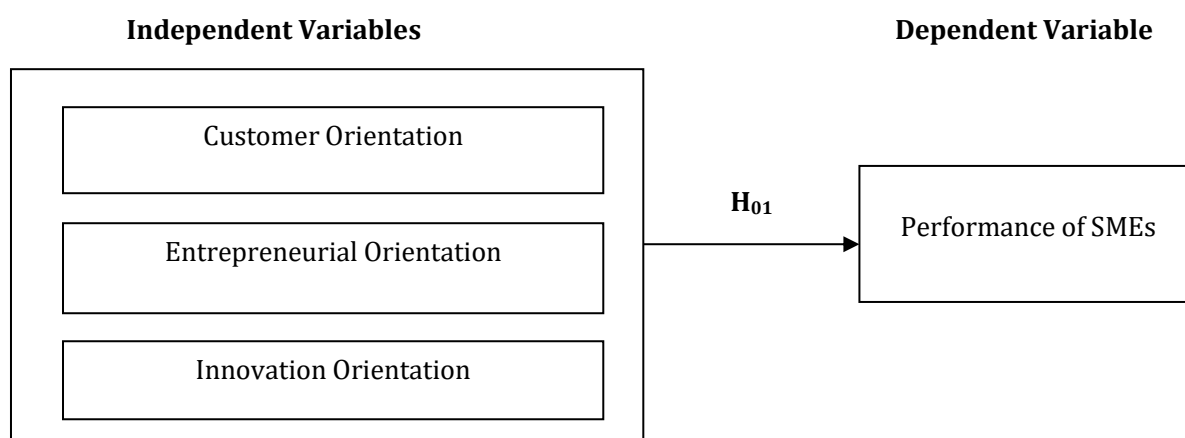


Figure 1. The Research Model
Source: Researcher's Conceptualization

[Hacioglu et al. \(2012\)](#) studied how entrepreneurial marketing affects innovation in Turkish industrial enterprises. This study focused on how entrepreneurial marketing factors such as proactiveness, innovativeness, customer intensity, and resource leveraging affect innovative performance. This study was survey-based. The questionnaire-based survey included 560 Turkish

manufacturing SMEs. Data gathered was analyzed using regression. Analysis showed that pro-activeness, innovativeness, customer intensity, and resource leveraging positively correlated with innovative performance. It was shown that entrepreneurial marketing increased manufacturing innovation in Turkey. The report recommended that Turkish manufacturing enterprises prioritize entrepreneurial marketing to increase performance. The entrepreneurial marketing variables differed between the two regression experiments.

RESEARCH METHOD

In carrying out this research, the researchers considered a survey research design appropriate. We employed the survey design as the most appropriate method to collect honest and reliable responses from the SMEs operating in Akwa Ibom State. We adopted a sample size of 400 for this study. The justification for this adoption was that [Yamane \(1973\)](#) suggested that if the total population of a sample is more than 100,000, 400 samples are enough to represent that population. In this case, there were 447,903 registered small businesses in Akwa Ibom State ([Directorate of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises, 2020](#)). The researchers created a research instrument for this study after thoroughly reviewing the body of existing literature on the topic. The researchers adapted questions from past studies and modified them to fit the context of this study ([Hisrich & Ramadani, 2018](#)). The researchers divided the instrument into two parts. The first part sought demographic information, while the second part collected data on entrepreneurial marketing variables and SME performance. Given the sample size, we used the census method of statistical enumeration to distribute copies of the questionnaire to every member of the population. The instruments in the study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with four items, ranging from "strongly agree" (1), "agree" (2), "undecided" (3), "strongly disagree" (4), and "disagree" (5). In order to establish the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used to test the instrument (See Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Table

Variable	Number of Items	(Cronbach Alpha)
Customer Orientation	4	0.771
Entrepreneurial Orientation	4	0.735
Innovation Orientation	4	0.826
Performance	3	0.709
Overall	15	0.760

Source: Researcher's Computation

The test analysis yielded an overall result of 0.760. This outcome indicated the reliability of the instrument. The percentage method and mean were used to analyze descriptive statistics. Furthermore, we used multiple regression analysis using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 23) to test the combined hypothesis at the 0.05 significance level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**Data Presentation***Questionnaire Administered and Retrieved***Table 3.** Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

	Questionnaire Administered	Questionnaire Returned	Percentage Returned
	400	312	78.
Total	400	276	Average 78%

Source: Researcher's Compilation

Table 3 displays the number of copies of the questionnaire distributed and collected. The study distributed 400 questionnaires to business owners across the state. 312 copies, out of the total, were returned. This figure signifies a response rate of 78%.

Table 4. Sex Distribution of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	181	58.01%
Female	131	41.99%
Total	312	100%

Source: Fieldwork

Table 4 reveals the sex distribution of men and women: out of the 312 respondents, 181 were male, representing 58.01%, while 131 were female, representing 41.99%. The analysis suggests that more males responded to the questionnaire instrument than females.

Table 5. Age Range of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 25	35	11.22
26 – 35	101	32.37
36 – 45	131	41.99
46 and above	45	14.42
Total	312	100

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Table 5 indicates the age distribution of the respondents. In the analysis, 35 respondents fell between 18 and 25 years old, representing 11.22%; 101 of the respondents fell between 26 and 35 years old, representing 32.27%; 131 respondents fell between 36 and 45 years old, representing 41.99%; and 45 of the people were between the ages of 46 and above, representing 14.42%. This analysis indicated that most respondents in this study were from the 36–45 age bracket.

Table 6. Educational Background of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSCE	40	12.82
OND/NCE	105	33.65

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
HND/BSc	122	39.11
Masters	45	14.42
Total	312	100

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Table 6 reveals the educational background of the respondents, with 40 holding a secondary certificate, representing 12.82%; 105 holding an OND or NCE, representing 33.65%; 122 holding an HND or BSc, representing 39.11%; and 45 holding a master's degree, representing 14.42%. The analysis shows that respondents in the HND/BSc holders category constituted the highest number of respondents in this study.

Table 7. Years of Experience of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1year	21	6.73
1-3 years	72	23.08
4-7 years	118	37.82
8-11 years	71	22.75
12 years and above	30	9.62
Total	312	100

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Table 7 shows that the number of respondents who had less than one year of experience was 21, representing 6.73%; 72 out of the respondents fell between 1-3 years of experience, representing 23.08%; and 118 fell between 4-7 years of experience, representing 37.82%. 71 respondents fall between 8 and 11 years of experience, representing 22.75%. The analysis also indicated that 30 respondents had up to 12 years' experience and above. This analysis suggests that most respondents in this study had a minimum of four years of experience, indicating that they were knowledgeable in their field of study.

Descriptive Analysis

Research Question: What is the joint influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 8. Respondent response

Statements on Questionnaire	SA	A	D	SD	UN	Total
Having information on developments in the market can make a business to do well in its performance	116 (37.18%)	146 (46.79%)	23 (7.37%)	19 (6.09%)	8 (2.56%)	312 (100%)
Relating well with customers and Linking Company products/services with	103 (33.01%)	131 (41.99%)	46 (14.74%)	26 (8.33%)	6 (1.92%)	312 (100%)

Statements on Questionnaire	SA	A	D	SD	UN	Total
customer values enhances improved business performance						
As businesses take risks in opportunities and develop their businesses, they achieve better results	94 (30.13%)	141 (45.19%)	51 (16.35%)	22 (7.05%)	4 (1.28%)	312 (100%)
Innovativeness in business operations sustains and facilitates business profitability	111 (35.58%)	125 (40.06%)	40 (12.82%)	29 (9.29%)	7 (2.24%)	312 (100%)
Mean	106	136	40	24	6	312

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 8 displays the responses to the joint influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. In the table, 116 (37.18%) respondents strongly agreed that having information on developments in the market can make a business do well in its performance; 146 (46.79%) agreed; 23 (7.37%) disagreed; 19 (6.09%) strongly disagreed; and 8 (2.56%) were undecided. Furthermore, 103 (33.11%) respondents strongly agreed that communicating well with customers and linking company products and services with customer values improves business performance; 131 (41.999%) agreed, 46 (14.74%) disagreed, 26 (8.33%) strongly disagreed, and 6 (1.92%) were undecided. Again, 94 (30.13%) respondents strongly agreed that they achieve better results as businesses take risks and develop their businesses. 141 (45.19%) agreed, 51 (16.35%) disagreed, 22 (7.05%) strongly disagreed, and 4 (1.28%) were undecided. Also, 111 (35.58%) respondents strongly agreed that innovativeness in business operations sustains and facilitates business profitability; 125 (40.06%) agreed; 40 (12.82%) disagreed; 29 (9.29%) strongly disagreed; and 7 (2.24%) were undecided. The analysis indicates that the majority of the respondents, 242 (77.56%), were of the opinion that customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation have a joint influence on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.

Test of Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant joint influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 9. Multiple-Regression Analysis Result

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.886 ^a	.785	.707	1.91143		
Goodness of Fit^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	216.221	4	261.324	82.137	.000 ^b

Model Summary						
	Residual	331.034	310	.309		
	Total	547,255	311			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.163	.352		1.033	.000
	CO	1.003	.468	1.413	2.143	.000
	EO	3.138	1.040	3.381	3.017	.001
	IO	1.064	.529	.096	2.011	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, innovation orientation

Source: Researcher's Computation

Table 2 presents the combined influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The analysis at $R=.886$ indicates a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial marketing elements and SMEs' performance in Akwa Ibom State. The generalized model summary showed an adjusted R^2 of 0.707. This implies that when combined, about 70.7% of the variables studied in entrepreneurial marketing (customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation) will result in about 70.7% changes in the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. A further implication is that other variables not studied in the current research would contribute about 29.3% to the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The model also showed significant goodness of fit (p -value <0.05). This shows that when combined, there would be a linear relationship, as stated in the model. Customer orientation (CO), entrepreneurial orientation (EO), and innovation orientation (IO) were all significant.

It was also revealed that, in terms of relative importance, among entrepreneurial marketing variables studied, entrepreneurial orientation (Beta =3.138, $t = 3.017$, $p<0.05$) would have the greatest influence on the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State; customer orientation (Beta 1.003, $t = 2.143$, $p<0.05$) would be second; and innovation orientation (Beta =1.064, $t = 2.011$, $p<0.05$) would have the third important influence on the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. These results led to rejecting the null hypothesis, which suggested that customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation did not significantly influence the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. This outcome implies that, when combined, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation can predict the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion

Every business expects an impressive performance. Thus, performance is important to any business. Particularly for SMEs to sustain their performance and continue to play their role as engines of economic development, it becomes essential that they are able to achieve their set performance goals. This study significantly influences entrepreneurial marketing and the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Akwa Ibom State. The specific goal

of this study was to investigate the collective influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. However, the test of hypothesis revealed a significant joint influence between customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. These findings are in support of some earlier studies conducted by [Olannye and Edward \(2016\)](#), [Hanmaikyur \(2016\)](#), [Becherer et al. \(2012\)](#), [Hacioglu et al. \(2012\)](#), [Hamali \(2015\)](#), [Rashad \(2018\)](#), and [Mugambi and Karugu \(2017\)](#), who, in their studies at different locations and years, found that entrepreneurial marketing variables had a strong effect on the performance of small enterprises.

Furthermore, this study's findings align with the study's theories. For instance, marketing orientation theory stresses customers' interests and customer preferences. Market orientation theory captures critical issues in business performance, particularly those of customers, competitors, and generally the external environment, which account for the performance of businesses. Thus, when SMEs pay attention to these issues, their performance may be positively influenced.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the influence of entrepreneurial marketing on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, to determine the combined influence of customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and innovation orientation on the performance of small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State. The findings of the study are: Entrepreneurial orientation has the strongest influence on the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State; customer orientation has the second most important relationship with the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State; innovation orientation has the third most important relationship with the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State; and entrepreneurial marketing has a significant relationship with the performance of SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. Accordingly, SMEs can improve their performance by embracing the philosophy of entrepreneurial marketing.

Several SMEs fail within their first few years of operation because of poor performance, which cannot sustain their operations. In this study, it has been shown that entrepreneurial marketing variables can be good predictors of SMEs' performance in Akwa Ibom State. Given that the findings of this study are considered and used in the management of SMEs, their performance can greatly improve. Specifically, for SMEs that may be having difficulty achieving their performance goals, this study has shown that the position of the extant literature on treating entrepreneurial marketing and its influence as a focus on orientations is valid in the context of a developing economy such as Nigeria. It is in this area that this study has made contributions to knowledge.

Recommendations

Based on this investigation's findings, we propose the following recommendations: Firstly, we advise small and medium-scale enterprises in Akwa Ibom State to enhance their customer orientation to gain a deeper understanding of their customers. To effectively devise suitable tactics, SMEs must interact more with their customers and closely monitor developments in their corporate environment. This suggests that SMEs can improve their performance by gaining a deeper understanding of their customers through customer orientation. SME operators should enhance their entrepreneurial mindset by taking calculated risks, fostering innovation, and adopting a proactive approach to their business operations to enhance their performance. Lastly, SME operators should strive to enhance their innovative orientation by consistently pursuing

innovation. This will introduce novelty to their business and customers, ultimately leading to improved performance.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study limited its scope to Akwa Ibom State. In the future, it is necessary to expand its coverage to encompass additional states in Nigeria. Furthermore, it is recommended that studies be conducted to determine whether there is a correlation between business experience and enhancement in the entrepreneurial marketing of organizations. Studies that might explore the longitudinal method in evaluating the influence of entrepreneurial marketing and SME performance are suggested, as the present study could not take this approach. Also, further studies should endeavour to adopt other variables of entrepreneurial marketing (independent) and SME performance (dependent) jointly or separately to ascertain if the results will vary from the current study.

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