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Effect of Survival Strategies on Performance of Small Medium Enterprise in South-East Nigeria: Mediating Role of Marketing Principles

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Abstract

The study examined the effect of survival strategies on performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to: examine the effect of product quality strategy on competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria and identify the effect of Service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. Research design was descriptive survey research method. Study Area was South East, Nigeria. The sample size 388 respondent was drawn from population that comprises of 645 registered SMEs in South-East Nigeria with 13,455 total numbers of staff. The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. Research questions were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated were tested using simple regression techniques. The empirical results show that product quality strategy has significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05) and service delivery strategy has significant effect performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05). The study recommended that SMEs operators in South East Nigeria should further device effective marketing strategies such as branding strategy and creative personal selling which will sustain and further enhance smooth and profitable business operations. This will in the long-run increase their employment creation of SMEs in South East Nigeria.

Keywords: Survival strategies; Product quality strategy; Service delivery strategy; SMEs

1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been considered as one of the engines of economic growth, sustainability and industrial development of a nation. Although, SMEs are individually small in size and in economic power; they collectively constitute an important part of GDP; as such they are commonly characterized as the backbone of all economies (Nzei, 2024; Akintan & Mohammed, 2023) ^[16, 9]. However, this has not been the case in most developing countries like Nigeria due to the adverse effect of the volatile business environment amidst other factors. The environment of any business which could either be stable or turbulent determines its success or failure, but in most cases business environments are turbulent. Rapid development in terms of information and communication technologies, competition, constant political changes can make the environment turbulent for business activities (Bamidele, Wale-Oshinowo, Sorbarikor, Ayodotun & Jevwegaga, 2018) ^[11]. In an attempt to survive in this kind of environment, an organization tends to consider the strategic decision that can enhance their sustainability. Survival is crucial in achieving successful entrepreneurship as long as appropriate tactics are employed. Akaeze and Akaeze (2017) ^[7] asserted that the more a company stays in the market, the more successful it becomes and the less likely it is to face involuntary exits. According to Abimbola, Afolabi, Olanrewaju and Abba, (2022) ^[6], strategy entails a series of long-term decisions made by small business owners regarding objectives, services, policies, and action plans. Adam and Alarifi, (2021) ^[3] argued that the concept of strategy is based on the future capacity of a business to act ethically and contribute to economic development while enhancing the quality of life of its employees, local communities, the international community, and future generations. Therefore, to survive in an unfavorable environment, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) must adopt

competitive strategies to thrive in their business environment. Adhering to a single strategy can be detrimental to the sustainability of a business. This implies that an organization must adopt a survival strategy to maintain itself in a turbulent environment (Adebisi & Bakare, 2019) ^[4]. On the other hand, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have been recognized as one of the tools for economic growth, sustainability, and industrial development of a nation because they constitute a significant part of GDP characterized as the backbone of all economies (Ifekwem & Adedamola, 2019) ^[12]. The SMEs subsector has become a good source of job creation, aids in the development of local technology, and source of development to indigenous entrepreneurs and has contributed enormously to nation-building (Aderemi, Olu-Young, Taiwo, and Adejumo, 2019). The SMEs sector accounts for more than 90% of all economic activities and more than 50% of all employment opportunities globally, and also, contributes more than 40% of GDP in developing nations. The SMEs sub-sector in Nigeria plays a significant role in the economic development of the country because it accounts for 90% of all businesses in Nigeria (Abidemi, Bannah, Isah, Umar & Ali, 2022) ^[2]. Thus, this study intends to examine the effect of Survival Strategies on Performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) are important economic boosters and a massive contributor to the industrial employment of any nation. SMEs have occupied a place of pride in the heart of every nation, thus have been regarded as the “production machine” and chemical agent for socio-economic change of any nation”.

Product Quality is vital in all aspects of life. It is imperative in business because poor quality can lead to negative consequences such as customer loss, damaged reputation, increased costs due to returns and repairs, legal liability, decreased market share, reduced customer loyalty, negative brand perception, and potential loss of competitive advantage; essentially, poor quality can significantly harm a company's bottom line and overall business standing.

Poor service quality can lead to several negative consequences including: customer dissatisfaction, decreased loyalty, damaged reputation, lost revenue, difficulty attracting new customers, negative word-of-mouth, low employee morale, increased operational costs, and a decline in brand perception. Owing these backdrops, this study aimed to investigate the effect of survival strategies on performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria: mediating role of managerial principles.

1.2 Objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of survival strategies on performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. Specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. examine the effect of product quality strategy on competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.
- b. identify the effect of Service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for the purpose of this study:

How does product quality strategy influence competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria?

What is the influence of Service delivery strategy on performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested for the study:

H₀₁: Product quality strategy does not have significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

H₀₂: Service delivery strategy does not have significant effect large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Literature

2.1 Survival Strategies

According to Kawira (2021) ^[14] survival strategies refer to some distinct efforts, both psychological and behavioural that are often introduced by individuals or organisations to tolerate, reduce, master, minimize stressful events or manoeuvre their ways out of trying periods. In addition, the survival strategies are not fixated as it were, just like it is for individual personality traits but can be explicitly taught or learnt via modeling.

Ajibola, Afolabi, Olanrewaju & Abba, (2022) ^[6] defined survival strategies as distinctive psychological and behavioral methods employed by individuals or institutions to endure, diminish, conquer, and alleviate stressful situations. Likewise, it can also be described as a diverse array of approaches and maneuvers that entrepreneurs utilize to enhance their businesses' chances of survival according to the prevailing business environment.

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) are faced with limited access to financial resources, strong managerial capabilities, technology, specialized skills and the basic infrastructures, etc they somehow create several opportunities arising from diverse ideas and the available information (Akinbo & Oladeji, 2024) ^[8], in order to accommodate and or deal with their challenges as a form of survival strategies during such hard times.

2.1.1 Product quality strategy

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) need to enhance their products and services to appeal to customers. The quality of a product refers to its ability to perform its intended function, including durability, reliability, compliance, user-friendliness, maintenance, and other valuable features (Akintan & Mohammed, 2023) ^[9]. Product quality has a significant impact on consumer behavior and fosters customer loyalty.

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) cited in Bamidele, Wale-Oshinowo, Sorbarikor, Ayodotun and Jevwegaga, (2018) ^[11] define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. They further define a consumer product as the product bought by the final consumer for personal consumption. Consumers buy products frequently, with careful planning, and by comparing brands based on price, quality and style. Nzei, (2024) ^[16] sees a product as about quality, design, features, brand name and sizes. Mohammad *et al*, (2012) also say that product is the physical appearance of the product, packaging, and labeling information, which can also influence whether consumers notice a product in-store, examine it, and purchase it. Past researchers have clearly suggested that product influences have a significant impact on business performance (Ajibola, Afolabi, Olanrewaju & Abba, 2022) ^[6]. While some studies revealed no association between service product and firm

performance (Nzei, 2024) ^[16].

2.1.2 Service quality strategy

SME need a service quality strategy because it gives them access to customers who are inclined to be satisfied and want to repurchase the product. According to Adam & Alarifi, (2021) ^[3], repeat customers contribute to increased sales and customer loyalty. Therefore, enhancing service quality through attractive promotions and adjustments to appeal to consumers is crucial to consumers. Service quality entails comprehending customers' expectations and delivering them. Akaeze and Akaeze, (2017) ^[7] stated that expected and perceived services are among the factors influencing service quality. If the service exceeds customers' expectations, it is perceived as ideal. This research suggests that an SME should aim to provide ideal service by adopting a suitable strategy to cater to service quality. Adebisi and Bakare, (2019) ^[4] asserted that service quality determinants include tangibility, business responsiveness, assurance to stakeholders, empathy through genuine and interactive personal attention, and delivering of individual customized services to customers.

2.1.3 Performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

Performance is what determine the lifespan of any establishment that ensures its Survival, continuity and growth. SME performance represent a very central fragment of any economy. Performance of SEMs is defined as the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed. In a contract, performance is deemed to be the fulfillment of an obligation, in a manner that releases the performer from all liabilities under the contract (Ifekwem & Adedamola, 2019) ^[12]. It is the completion of a task with application of knowledge, skills and abilities. Performance involves analyzing an organizations performance against SMEs' objectives and goals. In other words, organizational performance comprises real results or outputs compared with intended outputs. Performance is a relation between cost (operation cost the organization) and the value of benefits obtained (Abidemi, Bannah, Isah, Umar & Ali, 2022) ^[2].

The National Council of Industry (2001) defines SMEs as a business enterprise whose total cost including working capital is fifty million or less (N50,000,000) with employees between eleven (11) and one hundred (100). Adeola and Mofoluwake, (2024) ^[5] opine that SMEs are firms with working capital (with the exclusion of the cost of land) of seven hundred and fifty (N750,000) and a maximum number of employees totaling fifty (50).

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Survival base theory

Herbert Spencer introduced the concept of Survival Based Theory (SBT), which posits that an organization must remain viable within its surroundings. Therefore, comprehending the environment is a key component of prosperity, as is the capacity to adapt and execute the appropriate tactics for survival. Failure to do so could result in the organization's demise among its competitors (Gathungu & Ndungi, 2018). Managers must foster innovation in both internal and external environments to ensure the organization's longevity in the face of all forms of uncertainty. It is crucial for organizations to analyze and comprehend the competitive landscape of their environment to thrive, which aids in the development of survival strategies for long-term sustainability.

2.2.2 Resource based view

This study is anchored resource-based view and dynamic capability theory. Resource based view theory has its origin from the work of Penrose (1959), though inadvertently the view was formerly presented by Wernerfelt (1984) (J. Barney, 1991; J. B. Barney, 1986). Resource-Based View (RBV) theory contends that a firm's competitive advantage and superior performance are largely driven by its unique bundle of internal resources and capabilities (Ioannidis, Chalvatzis, Leonidou, & Feng, 2021). According to RBV, organisations should focus on finding, developing, and using resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) (Madhani, 2014). These resources can include real assets like technology and equipment, as well as intangible assets such as intellectual property, brand reputation, and organizational culture (Peng, 2001). By exploiting these resources efficiently, organisations can establish lasting competitive advantages and outperform competitors in the long run (Boyd, Bergh, & Ketchen, 2009). RBV stresses the importance of internal elements rather than external market circumstances, arguing that enterprises should grow and defend their resource base to achieve continuous success (Barney & Arikan, 2006). In this way, the firm product development strategy and price for the product is determined by the resources available and the capability to deploy them in the best way to obtain a good performance.

Empirical Review

Adeola and Mofoluwake, (2024) ^[5] investigated the influence of innovative pricing strategy on the profitability of Agricultural Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Agri-SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study collected data from 190 out of the 253 registered Agri-SMEs in Lagos using a cross-sectional and survey approach. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's technique and modified to include probable attrition. The data demonstrates a strong and statistically significant effect of innovative pricing strategies on the profitability of Agri-SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. The finding indicates that the adoption of novel pricing strategies can enhance the financial performance of these enterprises. The study recommended that Agri-SMEs should gain lasting competitive advantages by implementing creative pricing strategies, reaffirming RBV's emphasis on strategic management of internal resources for long-term success.

Akintan and Mohammed, (2023) ^[9] examined the effect of Survival Strategies on Small and Medium Enterprises in Ogun State. It investigates the relationship between product quality strategy, Service delivery strategy, pricing strategy and income diversification strategy on SMEs Growth in Ogun State Senatorial Districts. A Survey research design was employed, and questionnaire used as an instrument of data collection. A proportional sampling technique was used to select 385 SMEs in Ogun State Senatorial Districts comprising twenty local governments. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics and pooled regression analysis while t-test statistic was used to test hypotheses formulated. The results of the findings revealed that product quality strategy, Service delivery strategy, pricing strategy and income diversification strategy have significant relationships with SMEs' Growth at a significance level of 0.05. The study recommends that SMEs adopt a sustainable survival strategy in order to mitigate changes that manifest in an organisation's environment such as technology, workforce, materials or markets, provide

excellent service delivery with affordable prices for their products and services towards growth.

Abidemi, Bannah, Isah, Umar and Ali, (2022) [2] examined the impact of product and pricing strategy on selected small and medium enterprises in Kaduna State. The specific objective was to; determine the relationship between product strategy and the performances of small and medium enterprises and determine the relationship between pricing strategy on the performance of small and medium enterprises. A total of 75 managers were used in data analysis through a survey questionnaire. The study is cross sectional in nature. Smart PLS 3.0 was used in testing the measurement and structural model. The findings revealed that service price and service product is significantly related to small and medium enterprise performance. The findings of the study is important to researchers and policy makers. It will go a long way in assisting producers that will come up with durable and high-quality product so as to be competitive and gain competitive edge.

The study recommended that customers should be valued and treated as kings as cordial relationship between firm and customers results in the increase of the organizations market base.

Ifekwem and Adedamola, (2019) [12] investigated the survival strategies and sustainability of SMEs using selected small businesses in the Oshodi- Isolo Local Government Area, Lagos State It examines the type of growth strategies that SMEs adopt, ascertains what influences their survival strategies as well as the challenges that hinder their growth Fifty (50) SMEs were randomly sampled Their owners and managers were interviewed using questionnaires Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient statistics Our findings reveal that there is a statistically significant relationship between survival strategies and SMEs' sustainability. The major implication of the findings is that maintaining small but committed and motivated employees is critical in guaranteeing the survival of the SMEs in a volatile economy The study recommends that there be a need for orientation and educational programmes to change the mindset of business owners to enable them to graduate from sole atomistic proprietor devoid of modern scientific business practice and effective succession to corporate status with an apparatus of modern business management practices and corporate vision

Adebisi and Bakare, (2019) [4] ascertained the influence of survival strategies on sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria Volatile Environment. Specifically, the study sought to identify influence of cost leadership, product differentiation and focus on sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in Nigeria. The study adopted quantitative research methods using descriptive research design and purposive sampling procedures. The instrument of data collection was constructed questionnaire. Three hundred and fifty (350) questionnaires were distributed in banks within the Lagos Mainland and Lagos Island axis. Two hundred and ninety-eight questionnaires were retrieved All the questionnaires were retrieved which depicts an 85% response rate. The questionnaire was analyzed with the use of the Structural Equation Model. The results reveal that there is a significant and positive relationship between survival strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. The study recommended that adoption of a combination of strategies has been proven in this research work to have a greater impact on SMEs sustainability, invariably SMEs must combine strategy and avoid the idea of creating a niche in its market to save its head from any form of competition.

3. Methodology

Research design was descriptive survey research method. Study Area was South East, Nigeria. The population of this study comprises of 645 registered SMEs in South-East Nigeria with 13,455 total numbers of staff. The choice for only staff of the SMEs in South-east Nigeria was because of nature of this study, accessibility and availability of data. This study employed purposive and simple random sampling methods to select four SMEs under study namely: Rokana Industries Ltd. Umualum-Nekede, Mikko Plastics Industries Limited, Juhel Nigeria Ltd Nkwubor Rd. Emene, Tiger Foods Limited Onitsha and Markson chemical ind (W.A) Ltd Abakiliki. Taro Yemane sample technique was used to arrow the target population to researchable size of 388 respondents. The study used structured questionnaire to obtain data. Research questions were answered using mean score and standard deviation. The hypotheses stated were tested using simple regression techniques.

4. Data Presentation

Table 1: Comprehensive Demographic distribution of the Respondents

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire Distributed	388	100%
Returned Questionnaire	358	92%
Not Returned Questionnaire	30	08%
Gender		
Female	213	59.5%
Male	145	40.5%
Age Bracket		
20-30 Years	153	42.7%
31-40 Years	111	31.0%
41-50 Years	66	18.4%
51Years – above	28	7.8%
Marital Status		
Married	223	62.3%
Single	125	34.9%
Widow/widower	7	1.9%
Divorce	3	0.8%
Educational Qualification		
HND/B.sc	230	64.2%
MBA/M.sc	125	34.9%
Ph.D	3	1.10%

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

Three hundred and eighty-eight (388) copies of questionnaire were designed and distributed to the respondents. Out of the 388 Questionnaires distributed, 358 (92%) were completed and returned while 30 (08%) were not returned. Therefore, 92 percent respondents were a good representation. The table showed the respondents profile in frequency and percentage distribution of gender, age bracket, marital status and

educational qualification.

4.1 Data Analysis

Question One: How does product quality strategy influence competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of responses on how does product quality strategy influence competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria?

S/N	Question Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	A high-quality product consistently delivers on its promises, fulfilling consumer needs and resulting in a positive experience, leading to satisfaction and loyalty.	900 180 50%	400 100 30%	144 48 13%	46 23 6%	7 7 1%	1497 358 100%	4.18	0.0030
2	When a product consistently performs well, consumers develop trust in the brand, making them more likely to purchase from them again.	630 126 35%	632 158 44%	192 64 18%	40 20 5%	10 10 2%	1504 358 100%	4.20	0.0030
3	Quality products are less likely to malfunction or have defects, minimizing customer complaints and returns.	1000 200 59%	404 101 28%	135 45 13%	18 9 2%	3 3 0.8%	1560 358 100%	4.36	0.0033
4	Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a brand to others, generating organic marketing through positive word-of-mouth.	950 190 53%	444 111 31%	105 35 9%	24 12 3%	10 10 2%	1533 358 100%	4.28	0.0032
Grand Mean								4.255	0.0031

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table showed the opinion of respondents on how does product quality strategy influences competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. The respondents are in agreement with all the items. The study thereby revealed that product quality strategy has significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since satisfied customers are more likely

to recommend a brand to others, generating organic marketing through positive word-of-mouth. (The grand mean 4.255 was greater than the cutoff point 3).

Question Two: What is the influence of service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean rating of responses on what is the influence of service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria

S/N	Question Items	VGE (5)	GE (4)	ME (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Total	Mean	SD
1	Excellent service delivery leads to positive customer experiences, boosting satisfaction and loyalty towards a brand.	630 126 35%	632 158 44%	192 64 18%	40 20 5%	10 10 2%	1504 358 100%	4.20	0.0030
2	• By delivering high-quality service, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and attract more customers.	580 116 32%	632 158 44%	222 74 21%	26 13 3%	17 17 2%	1477 358 100%	4.13	0.0029
3	• Effective service delivery includes addressing customer concerns and resolving issues promptly, enhancing overall experience.	900 180 50%	400 100 30%	144 48 13%	46 23 6%	7 7 1%	1497 358 100%	4.18	0.0030
4	• Service delivery allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet specific customer needs and expectations.	985 197 55%	416 104 29%	111 37 10%	24 12 3%	8 8 2%	1544 358 100%	4.31	0.0032
Grand Mean								4.205	0.0030

Source: Field Survey, 2025

This table showed the opinion of respondents on what is the influence of service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. The respondents are in agreement with all the items. The study thereby revealed that service delivery strategy has significant effect performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since service delivery allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet specific customer needs and expectations (The grand me 4.205 was greater than the cutoff point 3).

4.2 Test of hypotheses

The two hypotheses were formulated for this study and will be tested and a decision taken is based on the rule below.

Decision rule: the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted when P-value is less than significant level at 0.05.

4.2.1 Hypothesis One

H₂ = Product quality strategy does not have significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.931a	.866	.865	.26055

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product quality strategy

Table 5: ANOVA Table

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	57.077	1	57.077	18.604
	Residual	1095.276	357	3.068	
	Total	1152.353	358		

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive advantage of SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), Product quality strategy

Table 6: Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Unstandardized Coefficients (Std. Error)	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.614	0.089		18.111	0.000
Product quality strategy	0.529	0.082	0.931	6.446	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Competitive advantage of SMEs

In testing this hypothesis, product quality strategy was regressed against competitive advantage of SMEs. The result of the single-regression analysis showed the model to examine the effect of product quality strategy on competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. **Competitive advantage of SMEs = 1.614 + 0.529 Competitive advantage of SMEs**

The empirical result showed that the coefficient of product quality strategy has positive effect on competitive advantage of SMEs; it means that product quality strategy has positive and direct effect on competitive advantage of SMEs. The results of the t – statistics denoted that the coefficient of product quality strategy was statistically significance. This is because observed values of t – statistics (6.446) was greater than its P-values (0.000). The results of the F – statistical test

showed that the overall regression of the hypothesis two was statistically significance. This was because observed value of the F – statistics (18.604) was great than its P-value (0.000). Again, our empirical result showed that the Pearson product moment correlation analysis (r) was 0.931. The strength of relationship between the two variables was high. However, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that product quality strategy has positive and significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

4.2.2 Test of hypothesis two

H₂ = Service delivery strategy does not have significant effect large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

Table7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.931a	.866	.865	.26055

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product quality strategy

Table 8: ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	43.789	1	43.789	9.184	.000b
Residual	1702.176	357	4.768		
Total	1745.965	358			

a. Dependent Variable: Large market-share of SMEs

b. Predictors: (Constant), Service delivery strategy

Table 9: Coefficientsa

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.418	.075		5.568	.000
Service delivery strategy	.201	.017	.969	11.826	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Large market-share of SMEs

In testing this hypothesis, service delivery strategy was regressed against large market-share of SMEs. The result of the single-regression analysis showed the model to identify the effect of service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

Large market-share of SMEs = 0.418 + 0.201 Service delivery strategy

The empirical result showed that the coefficient of service delivery strategy has positive effect on large market-share of

SMEs; it means that service delivery strategy has positive and direct effect on large market-share of SMEs. The results of the t – statistics denoted that the coefficient of service delivery strategy was statistically significance. This was because observed values of t – statistics (11.826) was greater than its P-values (0.000). The results of the F – statistical test showed that the overall regression of the hypothesis three was statistically significance. This was because observed value of the F – statistics (9.184) was greater than its P-value (0.000).

Again, our empirical result showed that the Pearson product moment correlation analysis (r) was 0.931. The strength of relationship between the two variables was high. However, we rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that service delivery strategy has positive and significant effect large market-share of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria.

4.3 Discussion of findings

4.3.1 Effect of product quality strategy on competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in south-east Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that product quality strategy has significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a brand to others, generating organic marketing through positive word-of-mouth (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05). The outcome of the study is in line with the study of Adeola and Mofoluwake, (2024)^[5] that investigated the influence of innovative pricing strategy on the profitability of Agricultural Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Agri-SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study collected data from 190 out of the 253 registered Agri-SMEs in Lagos using a cross-sectional and survey approach. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's technique and modified to include probable attrition. The data demonstrates a strong and statistically significant effect of innovative pricing strategies on the profitability of Agri-SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. The finding indicates that the adoption of novel pricing strategies can enhance the financial performance of these enterprises.

4.3.2 Effect of service delivery strategy on large market-share of small medium enterprise in south-east Nigeria.

The findings of the study revealed that service delivery strategy has significant effect performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since service delivery allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet specific customer needs and expectations (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05). The outcome of the study is not in line with the study of Akintan and Mohammed, (2023)^[9] that examined the effect of Survival Strategies on Small and Medium Enterprises in Ogun State. It investigates the relationship between product quality strategy, service strategy, pricing strategy and income diversification strategy on SMEs Growth in Ogun State Senatorial Districts. A Survey research design was employed, and questionnaire used as an instrument of data collection. A proportional sampling technique was used to select 385 SMEs in Ogun State Senatorial Districts comprising twenty local governments. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics and pooled regression analysis while t-test statistic was used to test hypotheses formulated. The results of the findings revealed that product quality strategy, service strategy, pricing strategy and income diversification strategy have significant relationships with SMEs' Growth at a significance level of 0.05.

5. Summary of findings

The following are the major findings of the study:

1. The study revealed that product quality strategy has significant effect competitive advantage of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a brand to others, generating organic marketing through positive word-of-mouth (t-statistic; 6.445; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05).

2. The study revealed that service delivery strategy has significant effect performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria since service delivery allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet specific customer needs and expectations (t-statistic; 11.226; P-value; 0.000 < Sig-value; 0.05).

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that survival strategies has positive and significant on performance of small medium enterprise in South-East Nigeria. A high-quality product consistently delivers on its promises, fulfilling consumer needs and resulting in a positive experience, leading to satisfaction and loyalty. When a product consistently performs well, consumers develop trust in the brand, making them more likely to purchase from them again. Quality products are less likely to malfunction or have defects, minimizing customer complaints and returns.

Satisfied customers are more likely to recommend a brand to others, generating organic marketing through positive word-of-mouth. Excellent service delivery leads to positive customer experiences, boosting satisfaction and loyalty towards a brand. By delivering high-quality service, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and attract more customers. Effective service delivery includes addressing customer concerns and resolving issues promptly, enhancing overall experience. Service delivery allows businesses to tailor their offerings to meet specific customer needs and expectations.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- a. Small scale businesses managers should also have a good understanding of innovative practices and be able to simplify and embed such strategies into their normal business operations, planning and decision-making processes. This is to ensure that the innovative step they take are proper and calculated to enable them out performed their rivals who do not take such strategies
- b. SMEs operators in South East Nigeria should further device effective marketing strategies such as branding strategy and creative personal selling which will sustain and further enhance smooth and profitable business operations. This will in the long-run increase their employment creation of SMEs in South East Nigeria.

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