MARKETING ORIENTATION MANAGEMENT APPROACHES REQUIRED BY BUSINESS PROMOTERS FOR BETTER OPERATION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES IN ANAMBRA STATE

Chisom Blessing Kamdi-Okenwa
enukachi@gmail.com
Department of Business Education
Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State
&
Chika Madu Ile
cm.ile@unizik.edu.ng
Department of Business Education
Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State

Abstract
This paper investigated marketing orientation management approaches adopted by business promoters for better operations of small and medium-scale enterprises in Anambra State. One research question guided the study, and two null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 1053 small and medium-scale enterprise promoters in Anambra State. A stratified random sampling technique was used. In the process, two strata were formed based on the two sectors used. Based on this, the researcher deemed the sample size of 351 respondents appropriate for this study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha method, and the reliability coefficient of marketing orientation was 0.84. The study utilized the direct method of questionnaire administration. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data related to the research question. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the Null hypotheses. Based on the findings, the study concluded that business promoters in Anambra State adopted marketing orientation management approaches to enhance the effectiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability of small and medium enterprises.

Keywords: Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs), Marketing Orientation, Business Promoters, and Better Operations.

Introduction

In Nigeria, small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development, serving as a driving force for employment and poverty reduction. As

a vital component of the Nigerian economy, SMEs account for over 90% of businesses in the country and enhance the national economy. Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of economies in the world, contributing significantly to economic growth, job creation, and innovation. They also play an essential role in the economic development of many countries across the world by generating more employment opportunities (Oduro, in Zamani, 2022), enhancing competition, entrepreneurship, and increasing productivity (Jin and Choi in Zamani, 2022). The Nigeria Bank for Commerce and Industry (NBCI) in Ibeneme and Udemba (2021) defined small and medium scale enterprises as businesses with total capital not exceeding ₦750,000 (excluding cost of land but including working capital). They also cited the Federal Ministry of Industry's guidelines, which defined small and medium-scale enterprises as businesses with a total cost not exceeding ₦500,000 (excluding cost of land but including working capital). The importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in a developing economy like Nigeria can be enormous, because they dominate the Nigerian economy in agricultural, construction, manufacturing, commerce, industry, services, trading, and so on (Eyanuku, 2021). Anambra State in particular has a high number of SMEs, with many entrepreneurs and small business owners operating in various sectors such as manufacturing, retail, and services.

Despite the potentials of SMEs for economic growth and development, SMEs in Anambra State and Nigeria generally seem to face numerous challenges bordering on financial problems, irregular power supply, management problems, inadequate basic infrastructure (water, roads among others.), inadequate market research, inexperience, poor educational background of promoters, lack of proper book keeping, inability to separate business and family or personal finances, lack of business strategy, inability to distinguish between revenue and profit, inability to procure the right plant and machinery, among others. According to Agwu and Emeti (2015) these challenges are classified into internal and external challenges. The internal challenges of SMEs in Nigeria include inadequate working capital, stiff competition from larger companies, difficulties in sourcing raw materials, low-capacity utilization, lack of management strategies, poor educational background of operators, and huge financial problems, while the external problems include policy inconsistencies, multiple taxation, harsh regulatory requirements and trade groups. It is also important to note that SMEs in Anambra State are not immune to the challenges in their day-to-day operations, and these challenges contribute to the failure of most SMEs and hinder the effective performance and competitiveness of the promoters of SMEs in Anambra State.

Most of these challenges come up due to failure to adopt the appropriate strategic management approaches suitable for small and medium-scale businesses. Many SMEs promoters in Anambra State lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to adopt and implement effective strategic management approaches. Kehinde in Ukabam (2021) opined that several SMEs in Nigeria fail shortly after they commence operations. This can be attributed to poor adoption of appropriate strategic management approaches, which include financial management, entrepreneurial orientation, marketing orientation, total quality management, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and human resource management strategies, among others. This study will focus only on marketing orientation management strategies.

Marketing orientation is a business approach that focuses on understanding and meeting customer needs and wants. According to Mourad (2023), marketing management orientation is a business philosophy that places emphasis on comprehending customer needs and wants, as well as creating goods and services to satisfy those needs. Mourad opined that marketing orientation also emphasizes establishing rapport with clients and delivering a satisfying customer experience. Grewal, Kumar and Krishnan (2017) defined marketing orientation as a business approach that focuses on customer satisfaction, loyalty, and

retention. It aims to build strong customer relationships, drive customer loyalty and retention, inform product development and innovation, enhance brand reputation and awareness, and support business growth and success. By adopting a marketing orientation in strategic management, businesses can create a customer-focused culture that drives long-term success. This approach helps organizations to build a competitive advantage, increase customer loyalty, and drive business success.

Marketing orientation strategies are critical for the successful operation of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs). These strategies help SMEs align their operations with market demands, increase their competitive advantage, and ensure business sustainability. Marketing orientation is a business approach that focuses on understanding and meeting customer needs to achieve organizational goals. It emphasizes the importance of innovation in marketing orientation, highlighting the need for businesses to develop new products, services, and experiences that meet evolving customer needs (Dess and Lumpkin, 2020). Kumar, Dixit, and Javalgi (2018) described marketing orientation as a strategy that involves gathering and analyzing market data to identify trends, opportunities, and threats. Marketing orientation strategy involves a customer-centric approach, market intelligence, innovation, branding and digital marketing to achieve business goals. Marketing orientation focuses on understanding customer needs and preferences to develop products and services that meet their requirements. For Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs), adopting a marketing orientation strategy can lead to better operations, improved customer satisfaction, and increased competitiveness. Marketing orientation management approaches if properly adopted by SMEs business promoters in Anambra State and Nigeria, generally will effectively improve business operations for good.

Business promoters or corporate promoters are firms or people who do the preliminary work, which involves the formation of a company, including its promotion, incorporation, and floatation, and solicit people to invest money in the company, usually when it is being formed. An investment banker, an underwriter, or a stock promoter may, wholly or in part, perform the role of a promoter (Ukabam, 2021). Promoters generally owe a duty of utmost good faith, so as not to mislead potential investors and disclose all material facts about the company's business. A promoter refers to a person, group, or organization responsible for forming and setting up a company. They are in charge of defining business ideas, organizing the team, planning the business model, and raising the necessary capital for the company. Section 85 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) in Okara, (2021) held that promoters are persons who undertake to take part in forming a company with reference to a given object and to set it going and who take the necessary steps to accomplish that purpose or who, about a proposed or newly formed company, take part in raising capital for it. They play crucial roles in creating awareness, generating interest, and driving sales. Business promoters put in their best for effective or better operations of their businesses.

Better operation also refers to improved decision-making, making informed data-driven decisions to drive business growth and success, enhancing customer satisfaction by delivering high-quality products and services that meet or exceed customer expectations, increasing competitiveness by differentiating the business from competitors and establishing a unique market position, improving adaptability by responding quickly to changes in the market, industry or economy to stay ahead of competition. By adopting marketing orientation management approaches, business promoters can engage in better operations and drive success in SMEs. It has been proven in literature that marketing orientation as a strategic management is a skill that can be developed, and as one gains experience, one begins to gain a strategic mindset that will help one to do better. Adoption of marketing orientation management approaches by business promoters for better operations of SMEs could be influenced by the educational qualifications and number of years of business experience.

It therefore becomes imperative, judging from the strategic position of Anambra State as one of the economic vibrant states in Nigeria that a study is conducted to determine the marketing orientation management approaches to be adopted by SMEs promoters in Anambra State for better operations.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State are often faced with significant challenges in their operations, despite their potential for economic growth and development. The promoters of these SMEs often seem to lack the strategic management approaches necessary to improve their performance and competitiveness. This appears to have resulted in business failures. The seemingly inadequate skills and knowledge among business promoters to effectively implement strategic management approaches lead to a high failure rate of SMEs in Anambra State. Poor management practices could also bring about low productivity and inefficiency among SMEs in the state. Consequently, it is against this backdrop that the need to determine marketing orientation management approaches adopted by business promoters for better operation of Small and Medium Enterprises in Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to identify marketing orientation management approaches adopted by business promoters for better operations of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. Marketing orientation management approaches adopted by SME promoters for better operation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State, based on their educational qualification and years of experience.

Research Question

1. What are the marketing orientation management approaches adopted by SME promoters for better operation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Anambra State based on their educational qualifications and years of experience?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

$H0_1$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on educational qualification.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on years of experience.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. It was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria using 1053 small and medium scale enterprise promoters registered with the State Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Technology (SMEs unit) as at October, 2024. The promoters of the SMEs were used for the study because they assume control of the SMEs and are involved in the daily activities of the businesses. The sample of the study comprised 351 small and medium-scale enterprise promoters. The sample was drawn from 1053 registered SMEs in Anambra State using proportionate stratified

random sampling. In the process, two strata were formed based on two business activities (construction and general business services). The number of elements were drawn from each stratum using the same sampling fraction. Based on this, the researcher deemed the sample size of 351 respondents appropriate for this study.

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on reviewed literature, research questions and the specific purposes of the study, with two main sections: A and B. Section A contained two items covering the years of business experience and educational qualification of the respondents, while Section B contained 14 items in line with the research questions and specific purposes of the study. This was used to evaluate marketing orientation management approaches adopted by business promoters for effective operation of SMEs on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with values of 4, 3, 2, and 1. The questionnaire was validated by three experts: two in the Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education and one in the Educational Foundation from the Faculty of Education, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The experts were requested to validate the instrument to check whether the items in the instrument were appropriate, adequate, and suitable for eliciting the desired responses. From their suggestions, slight modifications were made to the items, and the instrument was amended thereafter to reflect the suggestions of the validators.

The reliability of the instrument was administered on 20 small and medium-scale enterprise promoters in Enugu State who were not part of the sample used for the present study in a trial test. Thereafter, Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of the instrument. The coefficient's alpha value provided reliability, which yielded marketing orientation ($\alpha = .84$).

The researcher administered 351 copies of the questionnaire with the aid of three research assistants who were briefed by the researcher on the purpose of the research, the response pattern, and the subject of the study. The administration and retrieval of the instrument lasted for six weeks. Out of the 351 copies administered, 337 copies of the instrument, representing 96.01%, were filled in correctly and used for data analysis.

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. The mean value was used to answer the research questions, while the standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' mean ratings. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The justification for the Analysis of Variance was to test variables that had more than two groups, which were the year of experience and the academic qualification of the promoters. A null hypothesis was rejected, where the calculated p-value was less than the 0.05 alpha level. However, where the calculated p-value was greater than or equal to the alpha level (0.05), it meant that there was no significant difference, and the null hypothesis was accepted. Data analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

Results

Research Question: What are the marketing orientation management approaches adopted by SME promoters for better operation of small and medium enterprises in Anambra State based on their educational qualification and years of experience?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on the Marketing Orientation Management Approaches Adopted by SME Promoters

N:337

SN	Marketing orientation management approaches	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks

1	My business strategy is focused on understanding customer needs.	2.92	0.78	Agree
2	I frequently gather feedback from customers to improve my offerings.	3.02	0.78	Agree
3	I monitor competitor activities to refine my marketing strategies.	2.99	0.76	Agree
4	My business tailors its products/services to meet specific customer preferences.	3.14	0.69	Agree
5	I use digital platforms (e.g., social media) for marketing my business.	3.05	0.71	Agree
6	Advertising plays a significant role in my marketing approach.	3.07	0.70	Agree
7	I regularly analyze market trends to guide my business decisions.	3.15	0.67	Agree
8	My business builds strong relationships with customers.	3.20	0.64	Agree
9	Customer satisfaction is a top priority in my marketing strategy.	3.57	0.51	Strongly Agree
10	My pricing strategy reflects both customer value and market dynamics.	3.38	0.57	Agree
11	I use customer loyalty programmes to enhance retention.	3.48	0.62	Agree
12	I invest in branding to strengthen my market presence.	3.46	0.58	Agree
13	My marketing team regularly collaborates with other departments for unified strategies.	3.40	0.58	Agree
14	My business responds quickly to changes in customer preferences.	3.33	0.63	Agree
	Grand Mean	**3.23**	**0.66**	Agree

Data in Table 1 indicate that business promoters in Anambra State adopt market orientation in managing their small and medium enterprises. The highest-rated approach is prioritizing customer satisfaction in marketing strategy ($\bar{x}$ = 3.58), followed by using customer loyalty programmes to enhance retention ($\bar{x}$ = 3.49), investing in branding to strengthen market presence ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47), and building strong customer relationships ($\bar{x}$ = 3.20). Other practices rated relatively high include regularly analyzing market trends to guide business decisions ($\bar{x}$ = 3.15), tailoring products and services to meet specific customer preferences ($\bar{x}$ = 3.14), and using digital platforms for marketing ($\bar{x}$ = 3.05).

In contrast, the lowest-rated items focus on business strategy on understanding customer needs ($\bar{x}$ = 2.92), monitoring competitor activities to refine marketing strategies ($\bar{x}$ = 2.99), and frequently gathering customer feedback to improve offerings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.02). These lower scores suggest that while SMEs emphasize customer satisfaction and brand strength, they may need to strengthen systematic feedback mechanisms, competitor analysis, and customer insight strategies to enhance competitiveness.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on educational qualification.

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA Analysis of Mean Ratings of SME Promoters Regarding the Marketing Orientation Management Approaches Adopted for Better Operation of SMEs in Anambra State Based on Educational Qualification.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.186	6	.364	3.285	.004
Within Groups	36.596	330	.111		
Total	38.782	336			

Table 2 reveals a **significant difference** in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on educational qualification: F (6, 330) = 3.285, p = 0.004. Since the significance value (0.004) is less than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that SME promoters with different educational qualifications vary in how they apply marketing orientation strategies such as customer focus, competitor analysis, market research, and value delivery. The result suggests that educational background may influence the extent to which promoters adopt and implement marketing-driven management practices in SMEs.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State, based on years of experience.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA Analysis of Mean Ratings of SME Promoters Regarding the Marketing Orientation Management Approaches Adopted for Better Operation of SMEs in Anambra State Based on Years of Experience

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.010	4	.252	2.219	.067
Within Groups	37.772	332	.114		
Total	38.782	336			

Table 3 shows **no significant difference** in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the marketing orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on years of experience: F (4, 332) = 2.219, p = 0.067. Since the significance value (0.067) is greater than the 0.05 alpha level, the null hypothesis is retained. This implies that SME promoters, regardless of their years of experience, have relatively similar views and practices concerning marketing orientation.

Discussion of Findings

Market orientation approaches

The study revealed that business promoters in Anambra State adopted market orientation in managing their small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This market orientation is evident in customer focus, competitor awareness, and inter-functional coordination aimed at improving market responsiveness and firm survival. Furthermore, the ANOVA result indicated that there was a significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the market-orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State based on educational qualifications. The ANOVA result also showed no significant difference in the mean ratings of SME promoters regarding the market-orientation management approaches adopted for better operation of SMEs in Anambra State, based on years of experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in their mean responses based on years of experience was retained, while the null hypothesis for educational qualification was rejected.

This finding aligns with the results of several recent studies. For instance, Nwankwo and Kanyangale (2020) found that SMEs in Nigeria widely adopted market orientation strategies such as customer satisfaction, competitor analysis, and coordinated departmental efforts, with adoption levels influenced by the owners' level of education. Similarly,

Ighomereho, Afolabi, Agada and Ojo (2022) reported that SME performance is positively associated with market orientation and that owners with higher educational qualifications were more likely to implement structured marketing practices. In the same vein, a recent study by Adegbuyi, Ogunnaike, and Akinbode (2024) highlighted that managerial skills and educational attainment significantly predicted the adoption of market orientation practices among SME operators. Conversely, Keelson, Cúg and Amoah (2024) observed that years of business experience had no significant impact on the degree of market orientation adopted, suggesting that experience alone does not necessarily translate into more market-focused strategies.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that business promoters in Anambra State embrace market orientation to enhance the effectiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability of small and medium enterprises. The study further indicated that educational qualification significantly influences the adoption of market orientation management practices but years of experience, on the other hand, shows no significant effect on market orientation management. This suggests that while both educational background and practical experience contribute to shaping SME management practices, their influence varies across different functional areas, highlighting the need for tailored capacity-building initiatives that will address both formal knowledge and experiential learning to strengthen SME operations in Anambra State.

Recommendation

1. Government agencies, SME support centers, and business associations in Anambra State should create advanced entrepreneurship training programmes that focus on scaling up existing innovative practices, strengthening risk management skills, and fostering adaptability to market changes because scaling up requires higher-level skills in risk management, adaptability, and market responsiveness. Advanced training will equip promoters of SMEs to expand beyond survival mode; they will be able to compete nationally/internationally and create more jobs, which will directly contribute to the economic growth of the nation.

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