Strategic Consultancy Services and SME Growth in Nigeria: Evidence From Marketing and Operational Support Practices

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of the current study is to establish the impact of marketing consultancy services and operational consultancy services on the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Kogi State, Nigeria. The need for the study emanated from the realization that most SMEs lack good market exposure, customer interaction, proper organizational practices, stock control measures, and usage of modern operational facilities. The study employed an exploratory survey research design. The total population comprised 725 registered SMEs' owners/managers in Lokoja metropolis, Kogi State. The Krejcie and Morgan table was applied to arrive at the sampling size which is 254, out of which 230 questionnaires were collected and analyzed. The data collection tool used was a structured questionnaire, and analysis was done through descriptive statistics and multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27.0). The results indicated that marketing consultancy services had a positive impact on SME growth but the contribution was quite minimal. On the other hand, operational consultancy services had the highest impact among all the consultancy variables considered in the study. In conclusion, the study found out that marketing and operational consultancy services positively influence SME growth through customer targeting, pricing, promotion, processes, efficiency, productivity, stock control, and ICT usage. Therefore, it was suggested that SMEs need to improve their marketing and operational consultancy, especially in digital marketing and technology use.

Keywords: Marketing Consultancy, Operational Consultancy, SME Growth, Productivity, Customer Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Smaller and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) have been recognized as key agents in promoting economic development, employment creation, poverty alleviation, and industrialization. In Nigeria, SMEs have played a key role in stimulating production, fostering entrepreneurship, and economic diversification (Oyedokun & Micah, 2019). Notwithstanding the critical role of SMEs, many businesses still suffer from serious limitations related to limited market access, poor systems of operation, weak managerial skills, customer retention issues, and reduced competitiveness in dynamic business environments (Agwu & Emeti, 2021). The challenges mentioned above have hindered the growth and sustainability of many SMEs operating in such economically harsh environment as Kogi state.

Recently, consultancy services have become vital for enhancing SME performance and longevity. Consulting interventions are no longer considered external advisory measures, but rather strategic initiatives helping organizations to become more efficient, competitive, and effective (Akin, 2021; Adewale, 2021). Thanks to consultancy services, many businesses can benefit from the specialized knowledge about business operations, market information, operational expertise, and strategic advice which might be lacking within an organization. In times when the level of competition in different industries increases continuously, businesses are forced to rely on the services of specialists.

Marketing consultancy services have recently played a crucial role in SME growth owing to the fact that many small enterprises lack proper strategies of attracting customers, positioning products, penetrating the market, and establishing brand image. In today's intensely competitive business environment, SMEs should constantly enhance their marketing approaches in order to attract more clients. Thanks to the expertise provided by marketing consultants, businesses can formulate more efficient promotional strategies, manage client relationships, foster brand awareness, and explore new opportunities (Afolabi et al., 2024). As a result of rapid digital transformation in many organizations, marketing consultation has also extended its role to such areas as digital marketing, social media promotion, customer analysis, and online marketing positioning (Ijomah et al., 2024; Babatunde et al., 2024). With the intensification of digitalization in most business operations, the role of marketing consultancy has only grown in importance. At present, organizations are required to possess strong online representation, personalized client interaction, and data-based marketing systems. In these circumstances, the main task of marketing consultants is to assist businesses in using the available tools and technologies in order to promote client-oriented approach (Kedi et al., 2024). Research has proved that SMEs with good marketing abilities are likely to benefit in terms of improved client loyalty, business.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of marketing consultancy services and operational consultancy services on the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

1. examine the effect of marketing consultancy services on the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria;
2. determine the effect of operational consultancy services on the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do marketing consultancy services affect the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do operational consultancy services affect the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses of the Study

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

H_{01}: Marketing consultancy services do not have a significant positive effect on the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria.

H_{02}: Operational consultancy services do not have a significant positive effect on the growth of SMEs in Kogi State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Marketing consultancy services can be defined as professional consultancy that business proprietors or managers receive in order for them to be able to analyze the market in which they operate, target customers appropriately, and increase visibility of their product or service among others. Simply put, it entails the provision of consultancy in terms of market identification, positioning, communication and competition. For small and medium scale enterprises, marketing consultancy becomes quite necessary as most SMEs tend to be created by individuals who are knowledgeable on what they sell but do not possess much information on marketing issues such as market research, customer analysis, market penetration, customer positioning, and even digital marketing strategies among others. It becomes a way through which business knowledge can be obtained (Adewale, 2021; Berisic & Bozicevic, 2022). The concept of marketing consultancy has been addressed differently by various authors. For example, Cicmil et al. (2020) define consultancy generally as professional assistance in identifying and solving practical business problems. This definition can easily apply to marketing problems that a firm experiences like poor customer engagement and product positioning as well as lack of information about the market. Also, Berisic and Bozicevic (2022) state that business management consultation offers SMEs with knowledge that they can use in improving their level of competitiveness. When applied to marketing, this knowledge could involve customer studies, market trends analysis, improved promotion, and development of brand. Therefore, in a similar line, marketing consultancy services will entail advisory that helps businesses identify customer needs, develop marketing strategies, and expand market coverage among others.

In contrast to marketing consultancy, which aims at attracting customers, operational consultancy deals with optimizing the processes through which the business generates its output, serves customers, manages its processes, controls quality, and satisfies the demands of its consumers. In doing so, operational consultancy ensures efficient delivery of services and products. Therefore, operational consultancy is an essential element of SME development since there are numerous cases when small businesses collapse not only because of the lack of sales, but also due to inefficient processes of production, high amounts of wastage, lack of proper inventory management, delays, poor quality, and inefficient business processes. Hence, operational consultancy services can be described as consultancy efforts targeted at enhancing operations of the business and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its functioning through addressing inefficiencies, eliminating bottlenecks, reducing costs, etc. Several authors have looked at operational consultancy as a way to solve the issues related to efficiency and productivity. In this regard, according to Ajmal et al. (2019), business consulting in the area of operations development focuses on the way the organization designs, manages and executes its activities. Therefore, it can be expected that operational consultants do not provide generic information on how to improve the processes of operations; rather, they assist organizations in identifying specific inefficiencies and introduce innovative solutions in this regard. At the same time, Adesina et al. (2024) state that the use of advanced analytics allows for optimizing business processes by improving efficiency and productivity of operations. In the context of SMEs, the application of advanced analytics might include tracking of stock movements, reducing production delays, identifying waste, etc. Operational consultancy might include numerous elements, such as process optimization, quality management, inventory management, procurement, production planning, service delivery, technological changes, performance management, and others. For instance, an SME suffering from delays will require consultancy in terms of process arrangement; a business facing high costs of production will require advice on cutting costs and managing resources properly; a company having trouble with handling customer complaints will require consultation in relation to process improvements. These are practical issues relevant to survival of SMEs. The idea of SME growth has attracted considerable attention of different authors due to the significance of SMEs as agents of economic development. Thus, according to Agwu and Emeti (2021), apart from playing an important role in employment generation and innovation development, SMEs encounter various challenges that hinder their operation.

Marketing Consultancy Services and SME Growth

Increased reliance on marketing consultancy services is evident due to the importance of growing SMEs and increasing their competitiveness. Many small firms find it difficult to retain existing customers, enter new markets, create brand awareness, and respond to changes in consumer behavior. In the current competitive environment, it has become increasingly hard to rely on old tactics to attract customers. Businesses should use marketing consultancy services to gain insights into market trends, improve customer relationships, and position themselves effectively in the marketplace (Akin, 2021; Courtney & Pelta, 2022).

First, marketing consultancy services can facilitate SME growth by increasing customer engagement and market responsiveness. Lack of knowledge about consumer needs and market dynamics results in low customer retention rates and stagnant sales performance. Consultants analyze customer behavior, identify target markets, and recommend approaches to increase their satisfaction and foster brand loyalty. Properly developed and implemented customer engagement strategies allow small businesses to attract more clients and retain them for longer, resulting in improved financial performance and business growth (Afolabi et al., 2024; Ijomah et al., 2024). Additionally, SMEs should consider consulting services to develop better promotional activities and build an effective brand identity. Most SMEs lack efficient communication and branding strategies that could ensure successful competition with other firms. Experts can assist business owners with the development of effective branding strategies, improvement of products' positioning, creation of appealing promotions, implementation of successful communication techniques, and increased brand awareness on and offline channels (Kedi et al., 2024; Babatunde et al., 2024). Effective branding and promotion contribute to customer trust formation, resulting in increased visibility and competitiveness of a company. Finally, the digital revolution has made marketing consultancy services increasingly important. Consumers make decisions based on information they receive online and on social media platforms. SMEs need digital marketing solutions to maintain their competitiveness. Therefore, consultants can assist SMEs to integrate digital technologies, such as social media marketing, artificial intelligence-based customer engagement systems, digital advertising, and customer data analysis (Babatunde et al., 2024; Kedi et al., 2024). Improved digital marketing practices will help enhance communications, increase market visibility, and create better customer experiences.

Operational Consultancy Services and SME Growth

The role played by operational consultancy services in promoting the development and sustainable functioning of SMEs is becoming more prominent in today's environment characterized by competitiveness and dynamic changes. SMEs face a number of problems related to poor work flow management, ineffective resource distribution, deficient coordination of the supply chain, low productivity rates, and increasing operation expenses. The mentioned issues can limit the options available for the firm's further development and growth. Thus, consultancy services are meant to provide the necessary assistance and guidance that will help SMEs optimize the internal business processes, improve the level of efficiency and increase overall performance (Ajmal et al., 2019; Ajmal & Helo, 2021). One of the major impacts of operational consultancy is process improvement that results in increased efficiency. In this regard, consultants are able to identify possible inefficiencies in the company's operation and suggest appropriate actions related to streamlining workflow, production coordination, inventory management, and service delivery. The implementation of such measures can positively affect the performance of an SME because its business systems that function efficiently allow for decreasing waste, increasing productivity rates, and using resources efficiently (Adesina et al., 2024; Paul et al., 2024). It is clear that such improvements in terms of business efficiency result in increased profit.

Moreover, consultants are able to provide assistance in introducing proper management approaches that are aimed at optimizing the coordination process and improving control measures. SMEs operate in the environment characterized by poor management, which is associated with inefficient communication and excessive duplication of effort as well as ineffective supervision. In turn, consultants' assistance can help SMEs establish the operating procedure and improve the process of task coordination and internal controls (Berisic & Bozicevic, 2022; Chinedu et al., 2024). Thus, SMEs are likely to be ready to manage growth without jeopardizing the organizational stability. Furthermore, operational consultancy services can have a positive effect on the management of available resources and business adaptation to changes in the operating environment. Since SMEs usually function in the situation of scarcity of human, financial, and technological resources, it is important for them to manage the available assets properly. Consultants can help in optimizing the resource management procedure, decreasing cost levels, and enhancing operational planning in order to maintain the productivity levels of the firm and ensure its competitive advantages (Aiguobarueghian et al., 2024; Arowosegbe et al., 2024).

Moreover, empirical studies provide sufficient evidence to affirm the role played by consultancy services in promoting growth and organizational performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For example, studies carried out by Bruhn et al. (2018) indicated the existence of positive changes in the practices and increases in productivity among the studied SMEs following consultancy. On the same note, Ogar et al. (2019) observed that the provision of consultancy services acts as a means for SMEs to survive and prosper due to the improvements made in efficiency levels and effectiveness of the management processes. Additionally, Francis and Chakravarty (2025) indicate that the effect of consultancy on organizational performance can be explained through the growth in organizational absorptive capacity and effective application of knowledge gained externally. Furthermore, Egbe et al. (2023) provided evidence of the existence of the relationship between management consultancy and organizational performance as shown in the improvements attained in operational coordination and strategic advancements. Concerning Nigeria specifically, Ayam et al. (2022) revealed that the use of consultancy services helps SMEs to survive and grow due to improvements made in the operational system and management processes. Lastly, according to Chen et al. (2021), the use of consultancy in management contributes positively to organizational performance through operational management and strategic advancements.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded on the Theory of Constraints and the Industrial Network Theory since both theories show how external knowledge and improved business process can contribute to SME growth.

Theory of Constraints

Theory of Constraints has been formulated by Goldratt (1980). It is based on the assumption that every firm is constrained in some way, which affects their total performance. The other assumption is that unless the primary constraint in the firm is resolved, improvements in the other areas will be insignificant. The relevance of this theory lies in the fact that SMEs usually face many constraints in terms of both marketing and operations. Such constraints could range from ineffective targeting, ineffective promotional activities, improper stock management, ineffective quality control, among others. Marketing and operational consultants can therefore help SMEs identify such constraints.

Industrial Network Theory

Industrial Network Theory is linked with the work of Hammarkvist et al. (1982). The assumptions underlying Industrial Network Theory include that organizations do not act as lone entities; rather, they function within networks consisting of various relationships with their clients, suppliers, consultants, regulators, and other business parties.

Organizations are thought to acquire knowledge and other resources through such relationships. The theory holds relevance as consultants represent external sources of knowledge for SMEs. Marketing and operational consultancy allow SMEs to obtain market information, client knowledge, process improvement skills, and technology assistance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Exploratory survey research design was used in this study. The exploratory design was suitable for use in this case since it provided the researcher with an opportunity to gather primary data from SMEs' owners/managers on how marketing/operations consultancy can impact SME development.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 725 registered SMEs operating in Lokoja metropolis, Kogi State. These SMEs were drawn from manufacturing, trade/retail, services, and agro-processing sectors.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. From the population of 725 SMEs, a sample size of 254 SME owners and managers was selected.

Sampling Technique

A proportionate sampling technique was used to ensure fair representation of SME categories. The respondents were selected from both small-scale and medium-scale enterprises.

Instrument of Data Collection

A well-formulated questionnaire was adopted as an instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was subdivided into four different sections: demographic section, marketing consultancy section, operations consultancy section, and small medium enterprise growth section. Data were collected using a five-point Likert scale measuring strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was validated by experts through face and content validity. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha with SPSS version 27.0. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.92, showing that the instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The regression model for this paper is stated as:

$$\mathbf{SMEG = \alpha + \beta_1 MCS + \beta_2 OCS + \varepsilon}$$

Where:

SMEG = SME Growth

MCS = Marketing Consultancy Services

OCS = Operational Consultancy Services

α = Regression constant

β_1 and β_2 = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Category	Number	Percentage
Questionnaires administered	254	100
Questionnaires returned and usable	230	91
Questionnaires not returned/unusable	24	9

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

The table below shows the questionnaire response rate of the study. A total of 230 questionnaires out of 254 were successfully received and filled in completely, resulting in a response rate of 91%. On the other hand, 24 questionnaires were either left unanswered or were not received, amounting to 9% of the total number of questionnaires distributed. The high response rate denotes high respondent participation.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin Watson
1	.932[a]	.869	.867	.462	1.742

a. Predictors: (Constant), Marketing consultancy services, Operational consultancy services
b. Dependent variable: SMEs growth

Table 2: Model Summary

Researcher's Computation, 2025

Model Summary output suggests that Marketing consultancy services and Operational consultancy services both together have a strong association with SMEs growth since the R value is .932. Since the R square value is .869, we can conclude that 86.9% of the variation in SMEs growth is accounted for by the two independent variables while the rest 13.1% is accounted for by other independent variables not included in the model. Similarly, the Adjusted R square value of .867 also suggests that the model possesses good explanatory power. Moreover, Durbin Watson value of 1.742 is considered to be satisfactory since it suggests no problem of autocorrelation in the model.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	318.242	2	159.121	752.212	.000[b]
	Residual	48.019	227	.212		
	Total	366.261	229			

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs growth
b. Predictors: (Constant), Marketing consultancy services, Operational consultancy services

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2025

As shown in the ANOVA table, the regression analysis conducted is statistically significant in predicting SME growth. With an F value of 752.212 and a significance value of 0.000, it means that the two independent variables (marketing consultancy services and operational consultancy services) can predict SME growth. Considering that the significance value obtained is lower than the level of significance, i.e., 0.05, then the regression model is statistically significant in testing the stated hypotheses.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	**Variables**	**Unstandardized Coefficients B**	**Std. Error**	**Standardized Coefficients Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	Constant	.188	.107	—	1.757	.081
	Marketing consultancy services	.766	.070	.066	10.943	.000
	Operational consultancy services	.561	.084	.453	6.679	.000

a. **Dependent Variable:** SMEs growth

Source: Researcher's computation, 2025

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: Marketing consultancy services do not have a significant positive effect on SME growth.

Regression analysis revealed that marketing consultancy had a statistically significant impact on SME growth, with B = .766, β = .066, t = 10.943, and p = .000. As the p value was less than .05, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between marketing consultancy and SME growth.

H_{02}: Operational consultancy services do not have a significant positive effect on SME growth.

From the above result, it is clear that the independent variable, operational consultancy services, is positively correlated with SMEs growth. The values of B, β, t, and p were found to be 0.561, 0.453, 6.679, and 0.000 respectively. As the value of p is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the regression analysis, it was evident that marketing consultancy service plays an essential role in contributing positively and significantly to the SME growth (B= .766, β= .066, t = 10.943, p = .000). This shows that marketing consultancy services have a significant impact on the growth of the SME. The conclusion can be drawn from the fact that because the probability value is lower than the level of significance (0.05), it shows that any improvements in marketing consultancy services will result in improvements in SME growth. In simple terms, if an SME seeks professional advice in the area of market research, target market identification, branding, pricing, promotion, and customer relationship management among others, then the chances of the company being able to sell more, get new customers, improve its visibility in the market, and increase market share increases. Positive coefficient (B=.766) shows that with one unit increase in marketing consultancy, there will be a 0.766 unit increase in SME growth. This clearly shows that marketing is important for the success of SMEs in business especially in a competitive environment. Nevertheless, the standardized beta coefficient of β = .066 indicates that, even though marketing consultancy is significant, its contribution is relatively smaller compared to operational consultancy services. This indicates that marketing consultancy may be able to contribute to SME growth provided that SMEs can effectively use the advisory information obtained, particularly in terms of digital marketing, positioning of brands, pricing, and customer retention. This study result is consistent with some other empirical evidence in related literature. For example, Afolabi et al. (2024) indicate that developing skills for digital marketing enhances SME competitiveness and responsiveness, thus reinforcing the current result that marketing consultancy contributes to SME growth. In addition, Ijomah et al. (2024) pointed out that innovative digital marketing initiatives will enable SMEs to acquire competitive advantages and ensure sustainable growth. Further, Kedi et al. (2024) revealed that integrating AI chatbots in SME digital marketing improves customer interactions, while Babatunde et al. (2024) indicated the significance of artificial intelligence in achieving marketing personalization among consumers. Nonetheless, not all researchers find the notion that business consultancy leads to favorable growth outcomes. For instance, Francis and Chakravarty (2025) assert that the role of business consulting on small business performance hinges on the absorptive capacity of the enterprise. In this regard, this claim slightly contrasts with the current finding in that marketing consultancy might not be useful for fostering SME growth if the company does not possess the necessary capacity to comprehend and implement the offered consultancy. In addition, Sturdy et al. (2020) advise against the demand inflation phenomenon associated with knowledge acquisition through consultancy since consultancy may not lead to the anticipated positive result under such circumstances. Moreover, Lachmi et al. (2025) warn that there could be power imbalances within the consultative relationships, leading to negative client self-efficacy and higher levels of managerial stress in SMEs. Thus, despite establishing the impact of marketing consultancy on growth in the current study, the above-mentioned sources demonstrate that marketing consultancy is effective only when implemented correctly and when the recommendations offered have practical significance.

Additionally, results from the regression analysis indicated that the operational consultancy service positively and significantly influences SME growth, where B = .561, β = .453, t = 6.679, and p = .000. This shows that there exists a positive relationship between the operational consultancy service and SME growth. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. The study results show that SMEs receiving consultancy services on areas such as process improvements, inventory control, quality management, workflow designs, cost cutting, increasing production levels, adopting technology, among others, tend to experience growth. The unstandardized coefficient B = .561 indicates that a one-unit change in operational consultancy will lead to a 0.561 change in SME growth, all things being equal. More significantly, the beta coefficient of $\beta = .453$ indicates that the operational consultancy contributes more to SME growth compared to the marketing consultancy. The implication of this finding is that internal business efficiency remains key in driving growth among SMEs. In other words, while SMEs need to attract customers, they need even more to be efficient in terms of production and delivery of goods and services. This finding is consistent with Ajmal et al. (2019), who established that business consultancy is an effective tool to use when conducting operations development projects. The above-stated study provides support to the assumption that operational consultancy contributes to enhanced processes and performance within organizations. It has been demonstrated by Adesina et al. (2024) that through the use of sophisticated analytics, it is possible to optimize the processes within organizations and enhance their efficiency and productivity.

The result is consistent with Aiguobarueghian et al. (2024) who stressed the significance of resource management and sustainability. For SMEs, operational consultancy plays a role in optimizing resource use and promoting sustainable business practices. Similarly, Paul et al. (2024) established the link between strategic procurement and efficiency as well as cost management. This means that operational consultancy can enhance the process of managing inputs, sources, and other business activities that relate to cost control. Another factor that can influence business operations is the use of new technologies and innovations. For example, according to Anaba et al. (2024), the adoption of technological changes increases efficiency and cuts down expenses. Likewise, Toromade et al. (2024) noted the positive impact of innovations on accounting and supply chain management as tools for improving business performance. These findings can be seen as consistent with those obtained in this research since operational consultancy often includes technology-related issues. In addition, according to Makumi (2022), management consultancy improved the performance of the best SMEs in Kenya, while Ogar et al. (2019) and Ayam et al. (2022) found management consultancy services improved SME survival and growth rates. Thus, the current research result that operational consultancy positively impacts SME performance through increased efficiency and professionalism is confirmed by these works. At the same time, there are researchers who offer a slightly more skeptical perspective. For example, according to Francis and Chakravarty (2025), business consultancy enhances SME performance in cases where SMEs possess sufficient absorptive capacity for applying the received information. In other words, the effectiveness of operational consultancy depends greatly on the readiness of the owner to use operational recommendations in practice. Also, Sturdy et al. (2020) note that poor-quality external information and reliance on consultants from outside the organization can make the consultancy advice ineffective. According to Lachmi et al. (2025), power relations between consultants and their clients can negatively impact managerial stress levels and self-confidence. These studies do not completely contradict the present finding, but they show that the positive effect of operational consultancy is not automatic.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the findings of the study prove that consultancy services play a vital role in enhancing the growth of SMEs. While marketing consultancy services aid in gaining insights about consumers, improving the market performance, and competing in the market, operational consultancy services provide an opportunity for SMEs to become more efficient in managing internal business activities. These findings suggest that SMEs cannot afford to solely rely on experience and traditional methods of doing business for achieving sustainable growth. They need to be guided by professionals who could help them improve the decision-making process in the market and manage business activities more efficiently. As the study reveals positive effects of both marketing and operational consultancy services on SME growth, it follows that consultancy services could be used for increasing competitiveness and productivity of SMEs. This study recommends that:

1. The owners of SME's need to hire marketing consultant to help them enhance their brand, target customers, pricing policies, promotions, and digital marketing activities. This will help them reach out to more clients and gain higher market share.

2. An operation consultant service needs to be seriously considered by SME's due to its high impact on SME's growth. Operation consultants can be hired to assist SME's to enhance their processes, minimize wastage, improve inventory management, and maximize productivity.

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