Entrepreneurial Orientation and Growth of Small and Medium Scale Businesses in Delta State

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ABSTRACT

The study focused on the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on the growth of small and medium scale businesses. The specific objectives of the study are to examine the effect of innovativeness on growth of small and medium scale businesses, to assess the effect of risk taking on growth of small and medium scale businesses, to ascertain the effect of proactiveness on growth of small and medium scale businesses. Primary data were used for the study. The data were collected the structured questionnaire. Descriptive survey research was adopted in the study. Basically, the population for the study was 1632 registered SMBs based on information obtained from Delta State ministry of commerce and industry, Asaba. Sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan Table which resulted to three hundred and thirteen (313). A stratified sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The data were analyzed and hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficient Findings revealed that the study revealed that entrepreneurial orientation have significant relationship on growth of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State. The result showed that innovativeness ,risk taking and proactiveness have significant relationship with growth of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State. The study concludes that Entrepreneurial orientation significantly influences SMBs growth in Delta State, as businesses that embrace innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness tend to perform better in terms of revenue, market expansion, and sustainability. The study recommends that SMBs should adopt new technologies, improve product development, and embrace digital transformation to remain competitive, Business owners should develop risk management strategies that allow them to explore new markets and investment opportunities while minimizing potential losses and Entrepreneurs should actively seek market trends, customer preferences, and emerging opportunities to maintain a competitive edge.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Orientation, Innovativeness, Risk-taking and Proa-ctiveness

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium-Scale Businesses (SMBs) play a critical role in the economic development of nations, serving as engines of job creation, innovation, and poverty reduction. In Nigeria, and particularly in Delta State, SMBs contribute significantly to local economies by providing employment opportunities and fostering economic diversification. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is a critical concept in understanding the strategic posture of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs). It encompasses dimensions such as innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness, and autonomy. These dimensions collectively influence how businesses identify and exploit opportunities, navigate uncertainties, and outperform competitors. SMEs that exhibit high levels of EO are more likely to seize business opportunities, adapt to changing market conditions, and enhance their competitive advantage. In Delta State, where the business environment is characterized by economic volatility, government policy fluctuations, and infrastructural challenges, understanding the impact of EO on SMB growth is crucial. While some SMBs have demonstrated resilience and expansion, others have stagnated or failed. The role of entrepreneurial orientation in determining these outcomes remains an area that requires empirical investigation.

As noted by Cares (2023), for small and Medium Businesses (SMBs), the capability to employ appropriate and relevant entrepreneurial orientations in the production and positioning of products or services in the market has long been deemed a key strategic differentiator and means of achieving leverage over competitors. Besides, through the proactive pursuit of creative solutions, organizations attempt to increase (or at least preserve) their competitive position as Rogers (2022), suggests entrepreneurial orientations fuel corporate growth. However, the pace of change in the global economy has led to these advantages being somewhat temporary. In contrast, the adoption of more flexible entrepreneurial orientations particularly in the current dynamic environment of technological progress can result in an improved ability to respond to market pressures in an imaginative and timely manner. This is documented in the works of many researchers (Hanano, 2023).

Entrepreneurial orientations encompass a combination of skills, traits, and strategies that enable entrepreneurs to innovate, take calculated risks, and adapt to changing environments (Diandra & Azmy, 2020). These orientations include developing a free and imaginative mind to identify numerous possibilities and opportunities, fostering innovative thinking and creativity; understanding the emotions, circumstances, intentions, thoughts, and needs of others to build strong relationships and create value; unleashing creative abilities to create new opportunities, solve problems, and find innovative solutions; acting to learn, trying new approaches, and refining them based on feedback and results to achieve continuous improvement; codifying learning from these orientations, making sense of actions, and refining strategies to ensure effective entrepreneurship; engaging in purposeful searches for innovative opportunities, analyzing changes, and exploiting them for economic or social innovation; managing organizations to respond to and exploit change, focusing on innovation, and adapting to new opportunities; identifying and capitalizing on opportunities, often involving calculated risks and strategic decision-making; and leading organizations in a way that empowers employees, fosters innovation, and drives growth (Ratten, 2023). These orientations are essential for entrepreneurs to create value, innovate, and succeed in various contexts (Diandra and Azmy, 2020).

Entrepreneurial orientations involve an integrative process that innovatively applies the collective knowledge, skills, and resources of small businesses to address market-related needs, enabling them to add value to their goods and services and meet competitive demands (Hanmaikyur, 2022). Entrepreneurial orientations have been identified as one of the most important key ingredients for superior growth and global competitiveness in SMBs (Abaver, 2022). Firm growth (the strategic outcomes that organizations use to realize their goals) has therefore been established as a focal phenomenon in business studies. SMB growth is therefore a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that has been established to directly depend on efficient marketing orientations. Enhancing business growth through appropriate marketing orientations is of increasing interest to all businesses (Abaver, 2022). The success or non-growth of SMBs rests in part on the nature and types of entrepreneurial orientations they put in place for their businesses (Hanano, 2023).

This study examines the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and the growth of SMBs in Delta State..

Statement of the Problem

Small and Medium Scale Businesses (SMBs) play a crucial role in economic development, yet many in Delta State struggle to achieve sustainable growth. Despite government interventions and entrepreneurial support programs, numerous SMBs face challenges such as low competitiveness, limited access to funding, and an unpredictable business environment. One critical factor influencing SMB growth is entrepreneurial orientation, which encompasses key dimensions such as innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness. However, the extent to which these dimensions drive SMB growth in Delta State remains underexplored.

Innovativeness, the ability to introduce new products, services, or processes, is essential for maintaining a competitive edge. However, many SMBs in Delta State lack the resources and strategic capabilities to foster innovation, resulting in stagnation and reduced market share. Similarly, risk-taking, which involves making bold investment decisions in uncertain conditions, is often constrained by financial insecurity and a lack of institutional support. Entrepreneurs who are unwilling or unable to take calculated risks may struggle to expand their businesses.

Proactiveness, the ability to anticipate and respond to market opportunities ahead of competitors, is another crucial determinant of SMB growth. However, many business owners in Delta State operate reactively rather than proactively, limiting their potential for expansion. This lack of strategic foresight, combined with an unstable economic environment, further hampers business performance. Despite the recognized importance of these entrepreneurial traits, there is insufficient empirical evidence on their collective impact on SMB growth in Delta State.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation specifically innovativeness, risk-taking, and pro-activeness and the growth of SMBs in Delta State. Understanding these dynamics will provide insights into how entrepreneurs can enhance their business strategies and contribute more effectively to the region's economic development.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

i. Examine The Effect of Innovativeness on Growth of Small and Medium Scale Businesses in Delta State.
ii. Assess The Effect of Risk Taking on Growth of Small and Medium Scale Businesses in Delta State.
iii. Ascertain The Effect of Pro-Activeness on Growth of Small and Medium Scale Businesses in Delta State.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Innovativeness has no significant effect with growth of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State.
2. There is no significant effect between risk taking and growth of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State.
3. Pro-activeness has no significant effect with growth of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

ntrepreneurial Orientations

Entrepreneurial orientations encompass the principles of entrepreneurship that are consistent, appropriate, and feasibly carried out in a sustained reasonable period (Lesi, 2021). For Such orientations to be effective, they must adopt and utilize philosophies, strategies, and activities associated with the entrepreneurship concept capable of winning competition and enhancing high growth. They must also represent a broad range of orientations that must be based on marketing principles. According to Hisrich, et al, (2021), entrepreneurship orientations encompass the dynamic processes and behaviors through which individuals or teams identify, evaluate, and exploit opportunities to create new value or enhance existing products, services, or processes. Their definition emphasizes the entrepreneurial journey as a continuous process of opportunity recognition, assessment, and exploitation. It underscores the role of innovation in driving entrepreneurial endeavors, whether through the introduction of novel products or services, improvements in operational efficiency, or the adaptation of new technologies to meet market demands. These orientations are included in the study because they are the most frequently enumerated as entrepreneurial orientations in the literature and evidence indicating an association between them and entrepreneurship has been widely documented (Koh, 2016). However, according to the current study entrepreneurial orientation is defined as the process by which entrepreneurs identify business possibilities and existing gaps, develop means of closing the gaps, and get rewarded.

Innovativeness

Innovativeness refers to an organization's capacity to introduce new products, services, or processes, thereby achieving a competitive edge in the market. This concept is rooted in the Resource-Based View (RBV), which posits that a firm's unique resources and capabilities are central to its sustained competitive advantage. According to Zawawi et al. (2016), innovativeness encompasses various dimensions, including product, process, and managerial innovations, all of which contribute to enhanced firm performance.

Several antecedents influence a firm's innovativeness. Entrepreneurial orientation, characterized by proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovativeness, fosters an environment conducive to innovation. Market orientation, which involves understanding and responding to customer needs, also plays a crucial role. Additionally, learning orientation, where organizations prioritize knowledge acquisition and dissemination, significantly impacts their innovative capabilities. Songsom (2019) proposes a conceptual model highlighting these antecedents and their relationship to competitive advantage. The measurement of innovativeness presents challenges due to its multifaceted nature. Panfiluk and Szymańska (2017) suggest a comprehensive set of measures, including both innovation actions and their outcomes. These measures range from the formulation of development strategies and R&D expenditures to tangible results like increased revenues and market share. Such metrics provide a holistic view of an organization's innovative efforts and their effectiveness. External factors also significantly influence a firm's innovativeness. Government support, through favorable policies and funding, can enhance innovation capabilities. Networks and collaborations with other firms and institutions facilitate knowledge exchange, leading to innovative outcomes. Furthermore, an organizational culture that embraces change and encourages new ideas is pivotal for fostering innovation. Makanyeza (2023) emphasizes these factors in his study on manufacturing SMEs in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Understanding the diffusion of innovations is essential for comprehending how new ideas and technologies spread within industries and markets. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory outlines the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among participants in a social system. This theory identifies factors such as the innovation itself, communication channels, time, and the social system as critical to the adoption process. Recognizing these elements aids organizations in effectively implementing and promoting innovations.

In conclusion, innovativeness is a multifaceted construct influenced by internal capabilities and external factors. Organizations aiming to enhance their innovativeness should focus on strengthening their entrepreneurial, market, and learning orientations, while also leveraging external support and fostering a culture that embraces innovation. By doing so, they can achieve sustained competitive advantage in today's dynamic market environment.

Risk taking

Risk-taking is a multifaceted concept integral to various domains, including business, education, and personal development. It involves engaging in behaviors or decisions where the outcomes are uncertain, potentially leading to both positive and negative consequences. Understanding the dynamics of risk-taking is essential for fostering innovation, growth, and adaptability in an ever-changing environment. In the business context, managerial risk-taking is pivotal for strategic decision-making and organizational success. Nobre et al. (2018) propose a conceptual model that integrates both objective organizational characteristics and subjective managerial profiles to explain risk-taking behaviors. This model emphasizes the interplay between an organization's risk capacity and a manager's risk perception and tolerance, suggesting that a balanced alignment between these factors can enhance decision-making processes and outcomes. Educational settings also recognize the importance of risk-taking, particularly in fostering creativity and innovation among students and educators. Cooke (2024) discusses the role of risk-taking in developing pedagogies of courage, highlighting that embracing uncertainty and potential failure can lead to significant learning experiences. This perspective encourages educators to create environments where students feel safe to take intellectual risks, thereby promoting deeper engagement and critical thinking.

Furthermore, the relationship between risk-taking and creativity has been extensively studied. Research indicates that individuals who exhibit a higher propensity for risk-taking are more likely to engage in creative behaviors. This is because creative endeavors often require stepping into the unknown and challenging existing paradigms, actions inherently associated with risk. Understanding this relationship can inform strategies to cultivate creativity in various settings, from educational institutions to corporate environments. In summary, risk-taking is a complex and essential component of human behavior that influences decision-making, creativity, and learning across multiple domains. Contemporary research underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of risk-taking, considering both individual dispositions and contextual factors, to effectively harness its potential benefits while mitigating associated drawbacks.

Pro-activeness

Pro-activeness is a forward-looking, opportunity-seeking behavior that involves anticipating and acting on future needs or changes in the environment. In organizational contexts, it is characterized by taking initiative, anticipating market trends, and leading in the development of new products or services ahead of competitors. This proactive stance enables firms to shape their environments rather than merely react to them, fostering a competitive edge in dynamic markets. Yang & Meyer (2019) emphasize that proactiveness reflects a firm's inclination to anticipate and act on future needs, thereby creating a first-mover advantage.

Research indicates that proactiveness significantly contributes to organizational capability building. Rua et al. (2018) posit that firms with high responsiveness consider proactiveness as a core input, engaging in forward-looking activities to seize first-mover advantages. Such firms are committed to opportunity-seeking behaviors, enabling them to generate robust knowledge about market trends and predict customer preferences. By doing so, they enhance their ability to align resources effectively to deliver value that meets anticipated market demands. This proactive approach not only satisfies immediate market needs but also fosters the development of dynamic capabilities, allowing firms to integrate and reconfigure resources to match technological advancements and evolving market conditions. In the context of small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), pro-activeness plays a pivotal role in achieving competitive advantage and enhancing performance. A study focusing on Nigerian SMEs found that proactiveness, along with competitor orientation, significantly affects firm performance. By adopting a proactive mindset, SMBs can establish and maintain a competitive edge over rivals, ultimately promoting superior performance. The research suggests that SMB owners and managers should consider proactiveness seriously, as it contributes to increased performance and long-term sustainability (Ogundare, & van der Merwe, 2024). Furthermore, proactiveness is relationshiped to organizational sustainability through its impact on learning and resilience. A study examining manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria, revealed that proactiveness significantly influences organizational learning and resilience, which are critical components of sustainability. By actively seeking and exploiting business opportunities through well-planned risk assessment processes, proactive organizations can remain competitive and ensure the sustainability of their operations. This underscores the importance of fostering a proactive culture within organizations to navigate the complexities of today's dynamic business environments effectively.

Growth of Small and Medium Businesses

Small and medium-sized businesses or small and medium-sized businesses are businesses whose personnel numbers fall below certain limits. The abbreviation "SME" is used by international organizations such as the World Bank, the European Union, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization (Robert, 2014). Posts that Growth can be seen as a resultant effort in the form of activities of the business enterprise which includes its strategy and operational activities, management of all segments of business enterprise such as the human resources, finance, production, and marketing (Mark & Nwaiwu, 2015). Small and Medium Business (SMB) growth can be judged by many different constituencies, resulting in many different interpretations of successful growth. Each of these perspectives of SMB growth can be argued to be unique (Robert, 2014). Growth management can take many forms from dealing with issues internal to the organization to catering to stakeholders or handling issues in its environment.

Empirical Review

Goja et al. (2024) examined the effect of entrepreneurial practices on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to determine the effect of innovativeness, risk taking, proactiveness and competitive aggressiveness on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis, Benue State. Study adopted survey design where a sample of 223 was drawn from a population of 502 using the Taro Yamane (1969) formula. While adopting a simple random probability sampling technique, 223 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the respondents, however, only 208 copies were completed and returned. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, simple percentage and the relationship between the variables of the model was tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The result of the regression analysis shows that innovativeness has a positive effect on performance of SMEs and the relationship is statistically significant (β=0.569; p=0.0370.05) but in line with a priori expectation. Competitive Aggressiveness was negatively related to performance of SMEs and the relationship is not statistically significant (β=- 0.420; p=0.072>0.05) but in line with a priori expectation. It was concluded that, entrepreneurs believe that they can offer the great services and products through innovation and creativity, if they utilize the entrepreneurial practices used in this study. It was also recommended among others that competitive aggressiveness if not properly done will have a negative effect on the performance of small and medium scale enterprises just like the result of this study has shown. Management therefore is enjoined to strategically ensure that they chose the most appropriate competitive aggressive strategy that will not be detrimental to the growth and performance of the small and medium scale enterprises under study.

Jalali and Jaafar (2024), examined the mediating role of innovativeness between extra-industry network and performance. The study used the proportionate stratified random sampling method to select the study sample and the questionnaire survey approach to 580 SMEs. A total of 150 completed questionnaires were returned. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was administered to analyze data via Smart PLS 3.0 software. The results showed that proactiveness is mediated by the relationship between the extra-industry network and the performance of Iranian SMEs. In addition, the results illustrated that proactiveness is mediated by the relationship between innovativeness and the performance. The findings also address the limitation of previous studies on Iranian SMEs through the independent examination of the mediating role of innovativeness between firm extra-industry network and performance. This study examined the mediating role of innovativeness between firm extra-industry network and performance, whereas, the current study will examine the effect of innovativeness and other dimensions of entrepreneurial practices on the performance of SMEs in Makurdi metropolis.

Lesi (2021) examined Entrepreneurial Practices and Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The study investigated Entrepreneurial Practices and Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The main purpose of the study was to find out how entrepreneurial practices affect performance of small and medium sized businesses. The study adopted four research questions and four null hypotheses. A survey research design was adopted; the population of the study was 200 employees and owner of small and medium enterprises. The sample size was 144 participants selected from four types of businesses. Questionnaires were instruments for data collection which were validated by experts and went through reliability test to come out with high results of 0.92. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment coefficient. The four hypotheses accepted the alternate that there is significant relationship between the independent variables: entrepreneur risk taking, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness and competency, and the dependent variables profitability, market share, growth and customer satisfaction. The study concluded that entrepreneurial practices affect positively and significantly performance of small and medium enterprises. It was recommended that Risk taking practices of entrepreneurs in Port Harcourt should be well managed and integrated with the objective of increasing performance. Innovation and innovative practices should be considered as a culture among the entrepreneurs and training and conferences on small and medium sized businesses should be adopted to increase entrepreneur competencies and competitive strategies. However, the study was in Port Harcourt Metropolis. While the current study is conducted in Makurdi metropolis.

Mugambi and Karugu (2021) on their recently conducted study on Effect of entrepreneurial marketing on performance of real estate enterprises: a case of Optiven limited in Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives of the study were to examine how entrepreneurial marketing dimensions of strategic, innovation, market, and resource leverage orientations, affect the performance of Optiven real estate in Nairobi. Descriptive survey design was adopted and primary data collected through the use of questionnaire. From population of 522 clients, they derived sample size of 227. Statistical techniques were correlation and regression analysis. The findings revealed that all the four entrepreneurial marketing dimensions in the objectives, significantly affect the performance of Optiven real estate in Nairobi, Kenya.

Ibrahim et al. (2020) examine entrepreneurial practices and performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kwara State. This research x-rays the effects of entrepreneurial practices on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kwara State. It is aimed at finding out the extent to which entrepreneurial practices helps SMEs performance in Kwara State. In an attempt to establish the thrust of this research, primary and secondary data were generated. Secondary data were sourced from articles textbook and journals and primary data was generated through self-administered questionnaire. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized for data analysis with the aid of statistics package for social science. Descriptive data was analyzed using simple percentage table and regression analytical tools were to test the hypothesis. From the empirical result obtained, it was discovered that that entrepreneurial practices (risk taking propensity, innovativeness and self-confidence) considered in this study were predictors of SME performance. The result also showed that there was a significant relationship between risk taking and sales growth. Based on the findings from the study, it was recommended that Entrepreneurial practices should be enhanced as a means of nurturing SMEs performance and long- term growth and survival. The merit of the study however includes the study of entrepreneurial practitioners in the sector of interest of the current study, the use of expert who are knowledgeable in the subject matter and the use of the right statistical tool in establishing the nexus between the variables of the study.

Hulya (2020) carried out a study, titled entrepreneurial marketing: the interface between marketing and entrepreneurship in boutique hotels in Turkey. The broad objective of the study was to determine the dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing approach suitable for boutique hotels. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The major motivation of the study was steamed from the fact that the empirical examination of the notion of entrepreneurial marketing from the view point of boutique hotels, has received scanty attention in the relevant literature. The research was conducted with semi-structured interview method, in nine boutique hotels located in Izmir province, Turkey. Based on seven dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing concept examined, the findings revealed that they all reflect significant great importance on the performance of boutique hotels. The findings are now being well adopted and put into effective use by boutique hotels in Turkey.

Adamu (2018), examined the effect of entrepreneurial practices on business performance in Jos North. A survey method was used for this study. The population of the entire business entrepreneur in Ahmadu Bello Way Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Out of 1050 persons 180 persons were selected as the sample size. A questionnaire developed in five Likert scale was used to obtain data. Mean scores were used to analyze the data obtained from the field. The result of the analysis indicates that entrepreneurial practices in an entrepreneur facilitate effective management and creativity required to survive in the competitive business world today. The practices of an entrepreneur are basically risk taking, creativity, goal oriented and need for achievement, strong leadership quality and forecasting in to the future enhances the performance of an entrepreneur. In spite of this, entrepreneurship in Jos North is constraint with problems arising from inability to access loan, poor infrastructural facilities as well as unconducive environment sequel to political crisis. The strength of the study lies in the use of more entrepreneurial practices in the study area for the study. This will give the result of the study a robust outlook.

Michael et al. (2018) examined the influence of entrepreneurial marketing on the performance of the selected small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Enugu and its conurbation, especially, the effects of the various dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing (Innovativeness, Resource Leveraging, Proactiveness, Calculated risk taking, Customer Intensity, Value creation, Opportunity Focus) on the performance of the selected SMEs in Enugu State. Arguably, Entrepreneurial marketing encompasses marketing for small and medium enterprises, coupled with other components of marketing strategy. It entails innovative marketing strategy with limited resources. In this study, 405 questionnaires were distribute to different entrepreneurs of the 15 selected SMEs in Enugu, Nsukka, and Awkunanaw. 370 questionnaires were duly completed and suitable for the analysis. We adopted descriptive research design and primary source of data was used. Data gathered were analyzed using a computerized data analysis technique. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of this study revealed that entrepreneurial innovativeness and proactiveness, have positive significant influences on the performance of the selected SMEs in Enugu state, while other entrepreneurial marketing variables have no effect. The recommendations of this study, among others, are that entrepreneurs in the study area, should revisit and modify their product delivery processes, through the identified dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing strategies, geared towards improving Calculated risk taking, Resource Leveraging, Customer Intensity, Opportunity Focus and Value Creation for, enhanced and sustainable performance of SMEs in Enugu state in particular and Nigeria in general.

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Isah (2017), examined the effect of entrepreneurial practices on small and medium enterprises performance in Benue State, Nigeria. The study focused on selected SMEs in Makurdi Metropolis. A survey design was adopted for the study and data was collected through administration of questionnaires. The population of the study was 1,250 registered SMEs in Benue State and a sample size of 300 was arrived at using Yamane's formula. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used for reliability of instrument and factor analysis was employed to test the validity of the instrument. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as tables and simple percentages and regression was used in testing of hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 21). The findings of this study indicated positive significant effect of need for achievement on the performance of SMEs in Benue State. It also revealed a significant effect of self-confidence on performance of selected SMEs in Benue State. Finally, the study revealed a positive significant effect of risk taking on the performance of selected SMEs in Benue State. The weakness of this empirical review is in the sample sized used for the study. With the population of 1,250 respondents, the appropriate sample size for the study is 316 when scientifically calculated using sample size determination techniques. But the strength of the study is that it brings perspective of entrepreneurial practices from a different sector other than the banking sector which will enrich the understanding about entrepreneurial practices

METHODOLOGY

The design method employed for this study is the descriptive survey research design.The target population for this study are owners and managers of small and medium scale businesses in Delta State across various sectors, including manufacturing, retail, agriculture and services. The population of the study comprised of 1632. The 1632 registered SMBs in Delta State were used as sample. However, in determining the sample size for this study, Krejcie and Morgan Table for sample size determination was adopted to arrive at 313. The stratified random sampling method technique was used, data were collected through primary sources. Data were analysed using correlation model, specifically the Pearson's correlation was applied to test the hypotheses and determine the degree of association between different variables under consideration. The Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 25.0), software was used to aid the analysis.

Test of Hypotheses

Decision Rule

The null hypotheses will be rejected if the probability value (PV) < (0.05) Significance level. The null hypotheses will be accepted if the probability value (PV) > (0.05) Significance level.

Hypothesis One

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between innovativeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta State.

Table .: Correlation Analysis of Innovativeness and Growth of SMBs

Correlations			
		Innovativeness	Growth of SMBs
Innovativeness	Pearson Correlation	1	.697**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Growth of SMBs	Pearson Correlation	.697**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: (SPSS Output 2025).

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According to Table 4, Pearson's correlation (r) = 0. 697** is high, indicating strength, and the correlation coefficient's positive sign denotes a positive relationship. This suggests that there is a substantial and positive correlation between the variables. In other words, in the SMSE under study, innovativeness is related to improved growth. The null hypothesis was rejected because the PV is (0.000), and this value is less than the significance level of 0.05. The researchers concludes that there is a substantial correlation between the innovativeness and growth of small and medium-sized businesses in Asaba.

Hypothesis Two

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between risk-taking and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta

Table 4.: Correlation Analysis of Risk-Taking and Growth

Correlations			
		Risk-Taking	Growth of SMBs
Risk-Taking	Pearson Correlation	1	.0. 797**,
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Growth of SMBs	Pearson Correlation	0. 797**,	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: (SPSS Output 2025).

The Pearson correlation between risk-taking and growth, as shown in the above illustration, is 0. 797**. Based on the classification in Table 4., the evaluation is high, suggesting that there is a strong relationship between risk-taking and growth. In other words, the studied SMBs in Asaba's risk-taking is associated with increase in growth. Since the PV is (0.000), as seen above, this value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the researchers concludes that there is a substantial correlation between the risk-taking and the growth of small and medium-sized businesses in Asaba.

Hypothesis Three

Ho_3: There is no significant interplay between pro-activeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta

Table 4.: Correlation Analysis of Pro-Activeness and Growth

Correlations			
		Pro-Activeness	Growth of SMBs
Pro-activeness	Pearson Correlation	1	.797**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
Growth of SMBs	Pearson Correlation	.797**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: (SPSS Output 2025).

According to Table 4.6, Pearson's correlation (r) = 0. 797** is high, indicating strength, and the correlation coefficient's positive sign denotes a positive interplay. This suggests that there is a substantial and positive correlation between the variables. In other words, in the SMBs under study, pro-activeness is associated to improved growth of the SMBs in Asaba. The null hypothesis was rejected because, the PV is (0.000), and this value is less than the significance level of 0.05. The researchers concludes that there is a substantial correlation between the pro-activeness and growth of small and medium-sized businesses in Asaba.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study's hypothesis was that there is no significant relationship between innovativeness and growth. Nonetheless, the investigated hypothesis demonstrated a robust positive correlation between growth and innovativeness. The results of earlier research on innovativeness are consistent with this finding. For example, Jalali and Jaafar (2024), examined the mediating role of innovativeness between extra-industry network and growth. The results showed that proactiveness is mediated by the relationship between the extra-industry network and the growth of Iranian SMBs. In addition, the results illustrated that the relationship mediates proactiveness between innovativeness and growth. The findings also address the limitation of previous studies on Iranian SMBs through the independent examination of the mediating role of innovativeness between firm extra-industry network and growth. Also, Lesi (2021) determined entrepreneurial orientations and growth of Small and Medium Businesses in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The findings revealed that, there is a significant relationship between the independent variables: entrepreneur risk-taking, innovativeness, competitive aggressiveness, and competency, and the dependent variables profitability, market share, growth, and customer satisfaction.

The study also postulated that there is no significant relationship between risk-taking and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta. However, the investigated hypotheses demonstrated a robust positive correlation between risk-taking and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta. This outcome is consistent with the reviewed literature. Adamu (2018), examined the effect of entrepreneurial orientations on business growth in Jos North. The result of the analysis indicates that entrepreneurial orientations in an entrepreneur facilitate effective management and creativity required to survive in the competitive business world today. The orientations of an entrepreneur are risk-taking, creativity, goal-oriented and need for achievement, strong leadership quality, and forecasting into the future enhances the growth of an entrepreneur.

The study also hypothesized that, there is no significant relationship between pro-activeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta. But the result of the analysis revealed a significant relationship between the variable. The result validates previous findings. For instant, Jalali and Jaafar (2024), examined the mediating role of innovativeness between extra-industry network and growth. The results showed that proactiveness is mediated by the relationship between the extra-industry network and the growth of Iranian SMBs. In addition, the results illustrated that the relationship mediates proactiveness between innovativeness and growth. The findings also address the limitation of previous studies on Iranian SMBs through the independent examination of the mediating role of innovativeness between firm extra-industry network and growth.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial orientations and the growth of small and medium businesses in Asaba, Delta State. The findings revealed the following

1. There is a significant relationship between innovativeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta State.
2. There is a significant relationship between risk-taking and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta
3. There is a significant interplay between pro-activeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientations and the growth of small and medium businesses in Asaba, Delta State. Also, there is a significant relationship between innovativeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta State. There is a significant relationship between risk-taking and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta. There is a significant interplay between pro-activeness and the growth of SMBs in Asaba, Delta

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and conclusion, the researcher recommends that:

The SMBs should be innovative in new idea in other to grow the business

The SMBs should be risk-takers and optimistic in face of uncertainty for effectiveness and efficiency

The SMBs should be pro-active in harnessing opportunities in the business environment in order to enhance productivity.

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