

ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract: *The study investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium enterprises in South East, Nigeria. Specific objectives were to: examine the relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling of Small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria and determine the relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. Survey research was adopted. The population of the study was 368 comprises staff of marketing, production, accounting and sales units of SMEs in South East, Nigeria while sample size was the entire 368 due to small nature of the population. Convenience and simple random sampling techniques was employed. The findings for the study revealed as follows: that innovative had significant positive relationship with waste recycling of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria ($r = .967, p < .000 < 0.05$) and resource allocation had significant positive relationship with energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria ($r = .969, p < .000 < 0.05$). Based on the background, hypotheses and findings, it was recommended thus: SMEs managers shall keep planning ahead by introducing different counseling techniques in order to position the innovative of waste recycling positively within the firm and SMEs managers shall maintain quality good resource allocation that will speak good image of the firm by making sure resource allocation are put in place time to time.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial strategies, Sustainability, Innovativeness, Waste recycling & Resource allocation.*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Entrepreneurial strategy has been touted as one of the fundamental instruments for superior sustainability by simultaneously seeking opportunities and advantages through small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) activities (Dapend, Jin & Songting, 2016). The challenge of globalization has

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led to intense competition in the business world thereby gearing organisations into finding ways by which they can achieve and sustain their performance in the global market (Agarwal & Ashwani, 2018). Thus, entrepreneurial strategy is linked with how firms' strategic intent can facilitate continuous leveraging of opportunities for advantage seeking purposes in order to create wealth (Foss & Lyngsie, 2021). Zafar and Mustafa (2017) opine that commitment from every stakeholders will enable entrepreneurial strategy will ensure the success in the revamping the SMEs as engines of growth in the economy and a viable tool for the development of indigenous technology, rapid industrialization, generation of employment and the pivot for sustainable economic development against opportunity, innovation and mindset of entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurial strategy is potentially a business function which has become a key element of the strategy of every SMEs in their efforts to establish and maintain their competitive edge in the market (Foss & Lyngsie, 2021). By employing entrepreneurial strategy methods, SMEs can gain meaningful direction and the ability to illustrate its success to key stakeholders (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2017). A strategy also needs to be inculcated because without a strategic point, SMEs may lose its direction, unknowingly drift away from its values, and lack the ability in adequate delivery of its services or products to its clients (Majama & Magang, 2017). Thus, entrepreneurial strategy is established with how firms' strategic intent can facilitate continuous leveraging of entrepreneurial opportunities, innovative and mindset for advantage seeking purposes in order to create wealth (Foss & Lyngsie, 2021). In view of Audretsch, Lehmann, Belitski and Cajazza (2018), large companies are more successful than SMEs because the large companies plan strategically, thus, the need for SMEs to also plan strategically to have competitive advantage. With strategic entrepreneurship, firms are able to highlight their development and growth options, look deeply into their opportunities and strategically plan to fully exploit the opportunities presented. Strategic entrepreneurship exceeds hierarchical levels, applies to both small and large firms, established firms as well as new ventures (Agarwal, Audretsch & Sarkar, 2019). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent a great potential for economic development, and are considered the most contributing and important sector in developing countries around the world. For this reason, SMEs are seen as the main factor responsible for the overall development of these countries not only by the private sector, but also by the policymakers, such as the government and other relevant institutions (Schlogl, 2014). This importance can be highlighted through their innovations, creation of new jobs, participation in GDP, independence in action, initiation and stimulation of competition, participation of small businesses in the overall number of businesses (Ramadani & Hisrich, 2015). Based on this, the study deemed it necessary to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Given the importance of small and medium scale enterprises to entrepreneurial strategies, their lack of longevity, is however a cause for concern because the survival of business is critical to the sustainability of entrepreneurship. It has been estimated that, internationally, only 30% of SMEs survive to the second generation, while fewer than 14% make it beyond the third generation (Agarwal & Ashwani, 2018). Furthermore, entrepreneurial strategies have not been fully inculcated in most of SMEs sustainability movement because this can be witnessed through cultivation of seminars, workshops and skills acquisition, training among workers, which has led to lack of entrepreneurial skills of the employees in the areas of resilience, ability to focus, investing for the long-term, self-reflection and self-reliance accordance with growth of economy. Consequently, as a result of that SMEs continue to experience low entrepreneurial innovation of market products, opportunity as a serious threat, entrepreneurial leadership, mindset of individuals have distorted a lot of things within the system, technology, decline in the designing and development of new products and also inevitable competitive advantage in the business environment due to non-attainment of entrepreneurship facilities.

Based on this, the study deemed it necessary to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. Specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the extent of relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling rate of Small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. Determine the degree of relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were asked;

- i. What is the extent of relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling rate of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the degree of relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria?

1.5 Statement of the Hypotheses

Two major hypotheses were formulated;

- i. Innovativeness does not have positive relationship with waste recycling rate of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. Resource allocation does not have positive relationship with energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The results of this study will be useful to the following stakeholders:

Academicians and Researchers: This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria, There is little information on the topic and many sources do not provide current information, so this study will play a key role in providing current information.

Policy Regulators: Policymakers and stakeholders in entrepreneurial strategies such as entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial leadership can use the findings of this research to formulate policies and procedures from the findings of this case study. The findings can also be used in formulating entrepreneurial strategies.

SMEs: The findings of the research will provide crucial information to product unit managers and line managers of the SMEs concerning the best ways of increasing organizational sustainability.

The Researcher: It will help the researcher in expanding the frontiers of knowledge and satisfy the requirements for the award of Master of Science (M.Sc.) in Management.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covered entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on staff of five selected SMEs across South East States. South East had about 252 SMEs registered but the study selected one from each States. In Enugu Aqua Rapha was chosen, in Anambra Joe Ground Nut processing was chosen, in Ebonyi Nwora Rice mill was chosen, in Abia Bue Cashew Nut company plc was chosen and in Imo State Ice Cassava plc was chosen. The study also covered both independent variables and dependent. The independent variables are innovativeness and resource allocation while dependent variables are waste recycling and energy consumption.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Entrepreneurship

From the foregoing, therefore define entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of a person, or a firm or an organization to see environmental change as an opportunity and use the factors of production to produce new goods and services (Ile, 2011). Entrepreneurship can occur when an individual or group of individuals, firm or government starts a new business or it can occur within an existing business organization (Ile, 2011).

2.1.2 Strategies

The concept of strategy is hard to pin down. Michael Porter defines strategy as “the creation of a unique and valuable position, involving a different set of activities” (2019). Nevertheless, some researchers claim that this is only one of the possible views on strategy. For instance, Mintzberg (2020) identifies five different definitions, which mainly see strategy as a plan, ploy, pattern, position as in Porter’s definition- and perspective. These definitions are not mutually exclusive and may even be complementary for instance, a plan detailing several actions that the firm must undertake might be the mean to achieve a particular position in the market, which in turn might have its origin in the firm’s perspective.

2.1.3 Entrepreneurial Strategy

Entrepreneurship Strategy refers to the connection between entrepreneurship and strategic management literature (Kuratko & Audretsch, 2017). It can also be described as the integration of entrepreneurial (opportunity-seeking actions) with strategic (advantage-seeking actions) perspectives to design and implement entrepreneurial strategies that create wealth (Hitt, Duane, Camp & Sexton, 2021).

2.1.4 Components of Entrepreneurial Strategies

2.1.4.1 Innovativeness

Innovativeness is paramount to the survival and growth of small enterprises (Ibidumi et al., 2024). A study by Rosenbusch et al. (2021) identified that innovativeness has strong positive effect on financial growth measures such as return on sales, returns on assets and profitability. Moreover, Rosli and Sidek (2023) recorded a strong positive relationship between innovativeness and nonfinancial performance measures. Innovation has become a key tool for small and medium enterprises which strive to cope with today’s highly competitive environment (Al-Battaineh, 2018). Innovation reflects the tendency of a firm to enhance, appreciate and acquire new ideas, novelty, experimentation and the creative processes that may result in new products, services or technological process (Lumpkin and Dess, 2019). Innovation is a vital way of going after opportunities and so is a vital component of an entrepreneurial orientation (Lumpkin & Dess, 2019).

2.1.4.2 Pro-activeness

Pro-activeness is connected to ideas and first-mover advantages and to “taking initiative by anticipating and pushing for new opportunities” (Lumpkin & Dess, 2019). Lumpkin and Dess (2019) argue that pro - activeness may be “crucial to an entrepreneurial orientation because it suggests a direct-looking viewpoint that is accompanied by innovative” and entrepreneurial bustle. Pro-activeness refers to the actions of any business enterprises that are market opportunity-seeking and forward-looking market demands/needs with the aim of designing befitting products or services mix to serve the market better, influence or shape the business environment ahead of competitors.

2.1.5 Components of Entrepreneurial Strategies that Form Part of the Study

2.1.5.1 Innovativeness

Innovation can mean many things in different situations, but generally speaking, it relates to the creation or improvement of concepts, ideas, goods, procedures, or technology (Barringer & Ireland, 2019). Innovation, defined as the adoption of a novel or idea behavior, is not only a fantastic concept but also a chance to find a solution to a specific issue (Tian et al., 2020). Additionally, businesses that have an innovation focus typically work on value-creation initiatives like creating new goods or services or improving ones that already exist (Deng, Wu & GAO, 2023).

2.1.5.2 Resource Allocation

Resource allocation is a key part of resource management in business processes and entrepreneurial strategy (Cabanillas, 2016). Its goal is assigning a process task to the most appropriate resource(s) among the available resources at runtime or planned for runtime (Kamrani, et al., 2022), Resource allocation can be done manually by a human expert or by an IT system that proposes or enforces a resource allocation, which we call system-initiated resource allocation. Traditionally, entrepreneurial domain, requirements for the needed resources are specified per activity as soon as a process model is planned to be executed (Dumas, et al., 2018).

2.1.6 Sustainability

Carter and Rogers (2018) looked at sustainability from the economic, social and environmental aspects while incorporating the business aspects of risk management, transparency, strategy and culture. The research found differing sustainability definitions depending on the aspects that authors attempted to study. For instance, Business and Sustainable Development: A Global Guide (2019) stated that “sustainability for a business enterprise means adopting business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and stakeholders today, while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future”.

2.1.7 Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

The meaning of SMEs differs across frontiers (Gunasekaran, Forker and Kobu, 2020). However, numbers of persons employed seem to remain a recurring trend (Adams & Hall, 2019). Capital employed, sales turnover, and/ or assets are also used in categorizing firms. In Nigeria, a small scale enterprise is a firm employing a workforce of 11 – 100 persons or capital not exceeding N50 million, including working capital but excluding cost of land. While a medium scale enterprise is one with a workforce of 101 - 300 persons or capital exceeding N50 million but not more than N200 million, including working capital but excluding cost of land. Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) in its definition of what constitutes SMEs accepted the number of staff employed at the above level, but differs on asset value. Thus, firms with asset ranging between N5 million and N500 million, are classed under SMEs.

2.1.8 Sustainable Indicators of SEMs

2.1.8.1 Waste Recycling Rate

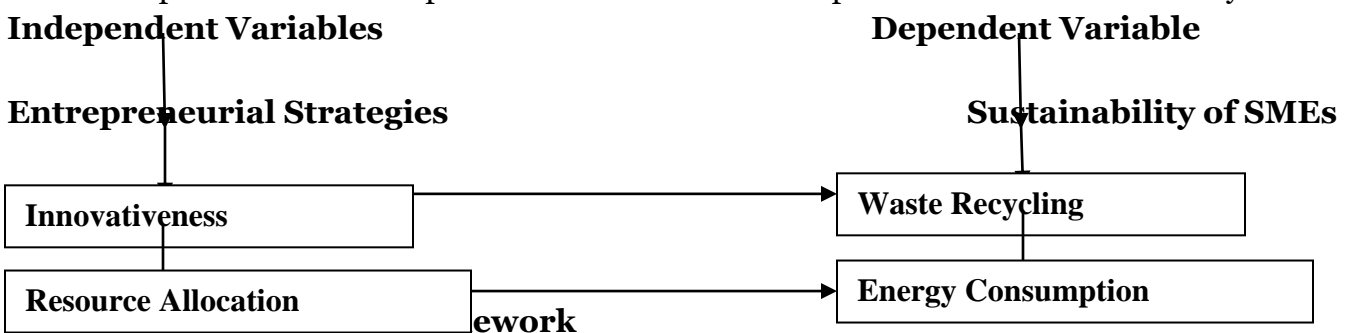
Demirbas (2021) describes waste recycling as a process by which wastes are gathered, transported and processed before disposal of any remaining residues. Similarly, Tchobanoglous et al. (2023) describe waste recycling as the effective supervision and handling, keeping, collection, conveying, treatment and disposal of waste in a manner that safeguard the environment and the public. Tchobanoglous et al added that, solid waste recycling utilizes skills and knowledge from various discipline such as legal, financial, administration among others in the day to day running of waste recycling issues. Demirbas (2021) suggested that the main reason for managing waste is to ensure a safe environment (Becker, 2021).

2.1.8.2 Energy Consumption

Moreover, energy consumption and economic growth income are closely linked concepts. SMEs income refers to the increase in insurance activity within the SMEs sector of an economy, which includes manufacturing, mining, construction, and other related activities. Abalaba, (2018), Energy consumption, on the other hand, refers to the amount of energy used by various sectors, including industrial, residential, commercial, and transportation sectors. SMEs growth requires a significant amount of energy to power machinery, equipment, and production processes. The demand for energy risk also rises. The availability and affordability of energy sources play a crucial role in determining the pace and scale of industrial growth in a country or region (Adams, 2021).

2.1.9 Conceptual Model of the Study

A conceptual framework can be described as a presentation model which conceptualizes or represents the relationship between variables diagrammatically. The main aim of the conceptual framework is to assist the reader to quickly visualize the proposed relationship at a glance. Figure 2.1 shows the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study.



Source: Adopted from Duane, D., Ayoola, B., Alakali, J., Atar, I., Sanni, L., Ngadi, M., & Kok, R. (2018). Technical efficiency among small and medium scale entrepreneurs in high quality cassava flour in four geo-political zones of Nigeria. *European Journal of Physical and Agricultural Sciences*, 3(4), 52-64

Independent variable refers to the variable whose outcome is not dependent on other factors. Innovativeness and resource allocation are the independent variables while dependent variables represent are waste recycling and energy consumption the variables whose outcome is entirely dependent on the independent variable in this case the sustainability of SMEs.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the self-theories of intelligence developed by Dweck (1999; 2000). The theories provide insight into the psychological (motivational) processes essential for achievement, which stated that individuals hold either an entity theory of intelligence, known as a fixed mindset or an incremental theory of intelligence, known as a growth mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that one's intelligence, abilities, talents, and attributes are permanent and unchangeable. They further infer that one's ability comes from talents rather than from their slow development of skills through learning and as such give up or decline in the face of setbacks (Dweck, 2006). The reasoning behind this is because most great business leaders who have been successful had a growth mindset, since building and maintaining excellent organizations in the face of constant change requires it (Dweck, 2006).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Innovativeness and Waste Recycling Rate

Mukasa (2024) carried out a study on the enhancing technological capabilities in the manufacturing industry in developing countries through the exploitation of production strategies in Ugandan firms. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey and the instrument used for collecting data was a questionnaire. The study shows that labour cost reduction strategy is the biggest moderating factor for employee skills among the strategic motivations. Ibiba (2024) examined entrepreneurial innovativeness and business success of small and medium enterprises in Rivers State, Nigeria. This study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial innovativeness and the business success of small and medium enterprises in Rivers State. Through self-administrated questionnaires and interviews with respondents, primary data were produced. With 1,658 owners and managers of small and medium-sized businesses in South-South Nigeria as the study's target group, a cross-sectional survey design was used. The results showed that entrepreneurial inventiveness and the financial success of small and medium-sized businesses in Rivers State are significantly correlated. Arjoun and Boudabbous (2024) studied innovation practices and organizational learning in Nigeria. The organization's ability to innovate is a prerequisite for the successful use of inventive activity of resources and new technologies. Indeed, the introduction of new technologies presents complex opportunities and challenges for organizations, leading to changes in management practices and the emergence of new organizational forms. Thus, innovation is an important source of growth and a determinant of competitive advantage for many organizations.

2.3.2 Resource Allocation and Energy Consumption

Akkemik and Goksal (2023) argue that most panel studies on countries' energy consumption growth nexus usually assume that panels are homogenous when, in reality, this is not always so. Their study, therefore, assumed panel heterogeneity and adopted a more advanced Granger causality technique for fixed coefficient panels. Thus, with a panel of 79 countries and data for the period 1980-2007, their results showed a bi-directional causality in 57 countries, unidirectional causality in 7 countries, and no causality in 15 countries. Ekeocha, Penzin and Ogbuabor (2023) examined energy consumption and economic growth in Nigeria. This paper re-evaluates the relationship between energy consumption and economic growth in Nigeria over the period 1999Q1-2016Q4 using alternative model specifications. Specifically, the study used a nonlinear (or asymmetric) ARDL model and an ARDL-ECM specification which presumes a linear relationship rather than a nonlinear one. The granger causality tests revealed a unidirectional causality running from energy consumption to economic growth, indicating that Nigeria can attain high levels of sustainable growth with improved and stable energy supply. Ikpe and Oyedeji (2023) studied energy consumption and economic growth in Nigeria. This study examines the intricate interplay between electricity consumption and economic growth, specifically Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in Nigeria. The findings highlight the substantial impact of electric power consumption, population, and lending interest rates on Nigeria's GDP, while revealing the relatively minor effects of other predictors.

2.3.3 Entrepreneurial Strategies and Sustainability of SMEs

Karl de and Anna (2019) investigated on defining "social sustainability": towards a sustainable solution to the conceptual confusion in Malaysia. A potential first step towards navigating this conceptual maze is to provide desiderata for a definition of social sustainability. We defend a list of nine desiderata and thereby create a theoretical framework for analyzing and constructing a definition of "social sustainability". The study also finds that it is premature to conclude that the goal of finding a useful definition is hopeless. With the criteria in place, the future debate can proceed by assessing definitions of "social sustainability" in a more structured and transparent manner. Andi (2020) examined social sustainability: theories, concepts, practicability in Nigeria. The objective of this paper is to give a solid scientific definition of sustainability to get past the fuzzy understanding of social sustainability and to suggest real methods and solutions on how to get the concept more operational. Everything can be conceptualized; however there are reasons why, among others, the Global Reporting Initiative struggles with closing on more globally accepted and lasting definitions for social sustainability and ways to promote it. Missimer and Mesquita (2021) investigated social sustainability in business organizations in Ghana. The article identifies ten main challenges and offers five recommendations to move the field forward, namely, a more explicit engagement with and discussion of social systems-science based ideas, and a more explicit determination as a field to

converge on key pieces leading towards a clearer definition of the concept. Survey research design was adopted and t-test was used as method of analysis. Findings revealed that entrepreneurial leadership traits had positive effect on attitude of people. Abd Rashid, et al (2021) studies the key principles of social sustainability from the sustainable development perspective in Malaysia. This matter needs to be addressed promptly as the principal aspirations of sustainable development were triggered by the issues associated with all three pillars of sustainability. The failure to pay attention to the social pillar of sustainability is a real mistake, as this pillar directly impacts the quality of life and well-being of individuals, as compared to environmental issues. To resolve this issue in a systematic approach, this paper explores the principles of social sustainability from the sustainable development perspective.

Maran, et al (2019) examined entrepreneurial leadership: An experimental approach investigating the influence of eye contact on motivation in Ireland. Descriptive research was employed with simple regression tool. Findings support the hypothesis that increased eye contact is a strong nonverbal signal, which in the immediate context of leader-follower interactions, stimulates an increase in performance. Mezeh, Bassey and Adim (2021) examined entrepreneurial leadership in Nigeria. This paper examines conceptually entrepreneurial leadership and its dimensions (that is, responsibility, accountability, analytical thinking, and emotional intelligence). Descriptive research design was used. Some research studies indicated that entrepreneurial behaviour in established firms is associated with superior performance. Makinde and Agu (2018) conducted a study on strategic entrepreneurship and performance of small and medium scale enterprises in Aba Metropolis in Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. The results revealed that strategic entrepreneurship variables have effects on the performance variables. Okonkwo, Onyeze and Ochiaka (2019) studied empowering the uneducated youths in Nigeria through small and medium scale enterprises in Enugu State, Nigeria. Descriptive research design was used. The data collected were presented in tables and analyzed with simple percentage while the hypotheses stated were tested with chi square. The findings revealed that small and medium scale enterprises in youth empowerment in Enugu State. Barinua, Ajuru and Okoro (2020) studied entrepreneurial characteristics and business performance in small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. Correlation method was adopted. The findings revealed that risk has a significant positive relationship with measures of business performance (Profitability, market share and customer satisfaction). Yousef and Muhammed (2021) studied marketing and international entrepreneurial strategies of the SME'S and bricolage role with marketing managers in Turkey. The study employed survey research design. The study findings covered justifications and innovations for development and change on a small and large scale by using the bricolage and the entrepreneurial marketing.

Ogbumbada and Onyemauche (2023) examined entrepreneurial resilience and growth of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt Nigeria. The findings revealed that there is a significant

relationship between entrepreneurial resilience (proactiveness and resourcefulness) and growth (sales growth and business expansion) of small and medium enterprises in Port Harcourt. Enyi, et al (2023) studied green entrepreneurial practices and the sustainability of manufacturing SMES in North Central Nigeria. Findings showed that green entrepreneurial initiatives, green entrepreneurial innovation, green entrepreneurial recruitment and selection, green entrepreneurial inclination and green entrepreneurial marketing have significant and positive effect on sustainability of manufacturing small and medium enterprises in North Central Nigeria.

2.4 Summary and Gap of Empirical Review

The study bridged the gap in knowledge in variation to the scope of the study, year and geographical location of the study as thus: variables of entrepreneurial strategies on sustainability of SMEs were combined such as entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial leadership against environmental and social. The geographical boundary of the study was SMEs in South East, Nigeria, other study reviewed focused on other sectors such as banks, food and manufacturing firms, chemical industries etc. some were carried out in developed economy but this study present study were conducted in developing economy Nigeria specifically in South East. Few of the studies were reviewed in this area but not in details. Some of the study, focused on entrepreneurial strategies and performance while the current study covered various entrepreneurial strategies. This is gap the study deemed necessary to fill.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive design methodology to describe and explain conditions as they are. As noted by Kothari (2019) the rationale of a descriptive research is to examine the events that are occurring at a specific place and time.

3.2 Area of the Study

This study was carried out in South East of Nigeria. The South East is the one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria representing both a geographical and political region of the country's inland southeast. It comprises five states Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. Namely in Enugu Aqua Rapha was chosen, in Anambra Joe Ground Nut processing was chosen, in Ebonyi Nwora Rice mill was chosen, in Abia Bue Cashew Nut company plc was chosen and in Imo Ice Cassava plc was chosen.

3.3 Sources of Data

3.3.1 Primary Sources of Data

Primary data are those data which have been collected for the first time such as questionnaire.

3.3.2 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data are those data that has been collected by someone else and exist somewhere.

3.4 Population of the Study

The target population comprises senior and junior staff of marketing, production, accounting and sales units of those selected SMEs out of 252 registered SMEs in South East, Nigeria. The total population was 368.

Table 3.1 Description of the Population

SMEs	Addresses	Senior	Junior	Total
Aqua Rapha	Enugu	41	89	130
Joe Ground Nut processing	Anambra	15	28	43
Nwora Rice mill	Ebonyi	9	37	46
Bue Cashew Nut company	Abia	21	76	97
Ice Cassava plc	Imo	10	42	52
Total		96	272	368

Source: SMEs Companies Internal Records, 2024

3.5 Sample Size Determination

Sample size determination is the act of choosing from the population the number of respondents to reach for data collection. Since, the population is too small, the researcher used 368 as sample size of the study.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

The study adopted convenience and simple random sampling for selecting the respondents. Conveniently by meeting respondents while simple random sampling gives all the respondents equal opportunity of been selected in the sample. Bowley’s (1976) proportional allocation formula was employed in determining the number of questionnaire issued to staff of the SMEs, the researcher selected for study. The formular is stated below:

$$nh = \frac{n(Nh)}{N}$$

Where:

Nh = Group population from each stratum

n = overall sample size

N = the overall population

nh = sample size from each stratum, in this case each State.

Table 3.2 Proportionate Distribution of Sample Size of Staff

SMEs	Staff	Proportionate
Aqua Rapha	$\frac{130 \times 368}{368 \times 1} = 130$	130
Joe Ground Nut processing	$\frac{43 \times 368}{368 \times 1} = 43$	43

Nwora Rice mill	$\frac{46 \times 368}{368 \times 1} = 46$	46
Bue Cashew Nut company	$\frac{97 \times 368}{368 \times 1} = 97$	97
Ice Cassava plc	$\frac{52 \times 368}{368 \times 1} = 52$	52
Total	368	368

Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.7 Instrument for Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was adopted to collect data from the respondents within the South East, Nigeria. Questionnaire was divided into two different parts, the first part includes questions related to topic under study which covered (innovativeness and resource allocation). The second part of the questionnaire includes bio-demographic information of the respondents such as age, gender, marital status and education level. The questionnaire was made up is 4 points Likert scale strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly agree.

3.8 Validity of the Instrument

Face validity and content validity were used by submitting the questionnaire to my supervisor and one other senior lecturer in the Department of Business Administration, ESUT for vetting and correction. The questionnaire was further issued to potential respondents for completion. This enabled the researcher to detect and correct errors that introduced bias in the data collected.

3.9 Reliability of the Instrument

To ascertain the internal consistency of the measurement items, the instrument was subjected to a test of reliability using the Cronbach’s Alpha test with a threshold of 0.78, which was high enough.

3.10 Methods of Data Analyses

The study employed inferential and descriptive statistics, inferential statistic tool used for the study was correlation analysis, while descriptive cover tables, percentages and frequencies. A correlation analysis was used in testing the hypotheses using Spearman rank co-relation formula. All the hypotheses were tested at 5% error.

Formula for Spearman rank co-relation formula:

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{[n (\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

Coefficient of determination r^2

Decision Rule: If the p-value is less than the significance level ($\alpha=0.05$): Decision: Reject the null hypothesis. Conclusion: "There is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant linear relationship between x and y because the correlation coefficient is significantly different from zero.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Data Presentation

Table 4.1 Distribution and Return of Questionnaire

Names of Organization	Copies	Copies Returned	Copies not Return	Percentage Returned	Percentage not Returned
Aqua Rapha	130	120	10	40%	15%

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Joe Ground Nut processing	43	33	10	11%	15%
Nwora Rice mill	46	35	11	12%	16%
Bue Cashew Nut company	97	70	27	23%	40%
Ice Cassava plc	52	42	10	14%	14%
Total	368	300	68	100%	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.1 shows that 368 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents. Out of which 300 copies representing 82 percent were correctly filled and returned. 68 copies were not returned, this represented 18 percent. Thus, 300 copies returned were used for analyses.

4.2 Data Analysis

Table 4.2 Bio-data of Respondents

Option	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	200	67%
Female	100	33%
Total	300	100
Age		
18-30	104	37%
31-43	100	33%
44-56	50	17%
57-69	30	10%
70 and above	16	5%
Total	300	100
Marital Status		
Single	46	15%
Married	254	85%
Total	300	100
Highest Ed Qualification		
Ph.D	20	7%
Masters	50	17%
First Degree	40	13%
OND/NCE	60	20%
SSCE	90	30%
FSLC	40	13%
Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From table 4.2 above, it was found for staff that 67 percents of the respondents were male, 33 percents were female, in aspect of age 37 percent were between 18-30yrs, 33 percent were between 31-43yrs, 17 percent were between 44-56yrs, 10 percent were between 57-69yrs and 5 percent were between 70yrs and above. In view of marital status, 15 percent were single while 85 percent were married. 7, 17, 13, 20, 30 and 13 percents of Ph.D., Masters, First degrees, OND/NCE, SSCE and FSLC.

Table 4.3: Response on relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling of Small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Options	SA (Freq %) 5	A (Freq %) 4	UD (Freq %) 3	D (Freq %) 2	SD (Freq %) 1	Mean/Remarks
Our staff innovativeness increases SMEs success.	205 1025 (68%)	70 280 (23%)	4 12 (1%)	10 20 (3%)	11 11 (4%)	300 1348(A=4.4) (100%)
Staff innovativeness attracts more development to SMEs.	150 750 (50%)	100 400 (33%)	20 60 (7%)	10 20 (3%)	20 20 (7%)	300 1250(A=4.2) (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.3 above shows that our staff asked whether their innovativeness increases SMEs success, 205(68%) of respondents strongly agreed, 70(23%) of respondents agreed, 4(12%) of respondents were undecided, 10(3%) of respondents disagreed and 11(4%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that their innovativeness increases SMEs success.

Staff were asked if their innovativeness attracts more development to SMEs, 150(50%) of respondents strongly agreed, 100(33%) of respondents agreed, 20(7%) of respondents were undecided, 10(3%) of respondents disagreed and 20(7%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that their innovativeness attracts more development to SMEs. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that their positive innovativeness boosts SMEs idea generation.

Table 4.4: Response of relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Options	SA (Freq %) 5	A (Freq %) 4	UD (Freq %) 3	D (Freq %) 2	SD (Freq %) 1	Mean/Remarks
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Resource allocation boosts the ways we think.	205 1025 (68%)	70 280 (23%)	4 12 (1%)	10 20 (3%)	11 11 (4%)	300 1348(A=4.4) (100%)
Resource allocation increases staff faith.	150 750 (50%)	100 400 (33%)	20 60 (7%)	10 20 (3%)	20 20 (7%)	300 1250(A=4.2) (100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.4 above indicates that respondents were asked if resource allocation boosts the ways they think, 205(68%) of respondents strongly agreed, 70(23%) of respondents agreed, 4(12%) of respondents were undecided, 10(3%) of respondents disagreed and 11(4%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that resource allocation boosts the ways they think.

Respondents were asked if resource allocation increases staff faith, 150(50%) of respondents strongly agreed, 100(33%) of respondents agreed, 20(7%) of respondents were undecided, 10(3%) of respondents disagreed and 20(7%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that resource allocation increases staff faith. Therefore, majority strongly agreed that resource allocation boosts staff intellectual property.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

4.3.1 Test of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Innovativeness does not have positive relationship with waste recycling of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.5 Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients

Our staff innovativeness increases SMEs success.	Pearson Correlation	.919**	.910**	.940**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
Staff innovativeness attracts more development to SMEs.	Pearson Correlation	.948**	.967**	.938**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300

All Coefficients are Significant in 95% Confidence Level.

Table 5 above shows r value of 0.967 at a significance level of 0.000 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H₀₁) which states that there is no significant positive relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling of small and medium enterprises in South East, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a1}) is accepted. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between innovativeness and waste recycling of small and medium enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

4.3.2 Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Resource allocation does not have positive relationship with energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.6 Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients

Resource allocation boosts the ways we think.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.917** .000 300	.913** .000 300	.945** .000 300
Resource allocation increases staff faith.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.949** .000 300	.969** .000 300	.935** .000 300

All Coefficients are Significant in 95% Confidence Level.

Table 6 above shows r value of 0.969 at a significance level of 0.000 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) which states that there is no significant positive relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium enterprises in South East, Nigeria was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (H_{a2}) is accepted. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between resource allocation and energy consumption of small and medium enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

Findings One: innovativeness has significant positive relationship with waste recycling and this rate was significant at 95% confidence level. This is in agreement with similar study of Susilo (2021) who investigate on innovativeness and factors’ effect on entrepreneur’s spirit in Indonesia. The result of the Pearson correlation test for dimension’s variables indicated significant for the benefit of finished business job dimension of innovativeness.

Findings Two: resource allocation has significant positive relationship with energy consumption and this rate was significant at 95% confidence level. This is in line with related study of Sushant (2018) who investigate resource allocation: a review of measures, antecedents, outcomes and moderators in India. Variables dimensions such as strategic factors, communicative factors, personal factors, motivational factors and leadership behaviors contribute to form resource allocation. Findings revealed that resource allocation traits had positive effect on attitude of people.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

- i. Innovativeness had significant positive relationship with waste recycling of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria ($r = .967, pv = .000 < 0.05$). This implies that innovativeness drives every success of sustainability.
- ii. Resource allocation had significant positive relationship with energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria ($r = .969, pv = .000 < 0.05$). This implies that resources is important in every organization because it a means of identity what they have or not.

5.2 Conclusions

In light of the findings, we conclude that entrepreneurial strategies had significant positive relationship with sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. And also conceded that innovativeness had significant positive relationship with waste recycling of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria and resource allocation had significant positive relationship with energy consumption of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

5.3 Recommendations

With combination of findings and conclusion, the study recommended as follows:

- i. SMEs managers shall keep planning ahead by introducing different counseling techniques in order to position the innovativeness of entrepreneurial positively within the firm.
- ii. SMEs managers shall maintain quality good resource allocation that will speak good image of the firm by making sure leadership strategies are put in place time to time.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to existing body of knowledge by providing a model showing the relationship existing between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria. This model can be adopted by future researchers in investing the nexus between entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability in other industries and places. The model is shown in figure 5.1

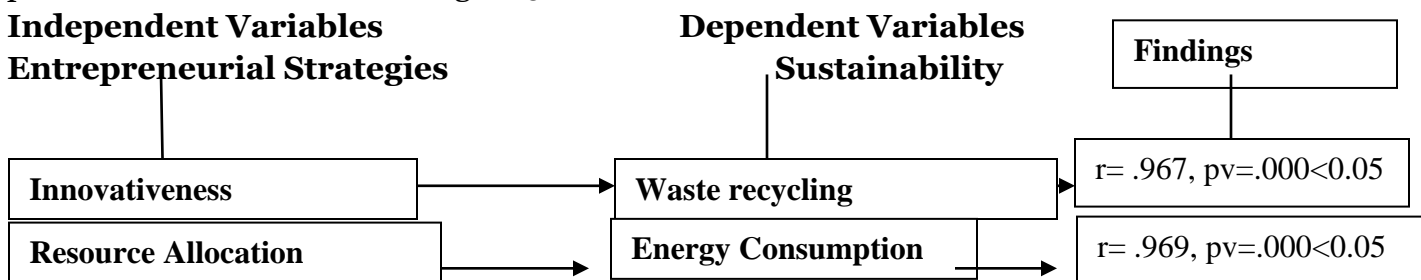


Figure 5.1: Contribution to Knowledge Model of entrepreneurial strategies and sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

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