

## **AWARENESS LEVEL OF THE INFLUENCE OF MACRO-ENVIRONMENTAL FORCES ON THE OPERATIONS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISE IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*Business enterprise and its environment are mutually interdependent. One of the ways through which SMEs attain success in their business operations is through effective handling of macro environmental forces. The study sought to determine the awareness level of SMEs managers' on the influence of macro-environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State. Two research questions and four null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The research population comprise of 811 managers of small and medium enterprises registered with the Anambra State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. A sample size of 243 SMEs managers was selected for the study using proportionate stratified random sampling. A structured and validated five point rating scale questionnaire containing 18 items was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yielded coefficients of 0.73 and 0.85 for the different two clusters with an overall coefficient of 0.79. The researcher administered the instrument with the help of three research assistants in the state. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that SMEs managers' in Anambra State were highly aware of the influence of technological and political environmental forces on their business operations. The researchers recommended among others that, SMEs managers' should liaise with government at all levels for steady allocation of funds geared towards improving various infrastructural systems of the nation for stress free business operations, SME managers should lobby the government through legal legislation to have business incentives in terms of tax breaks to a certain level of profitability in order to encourage their financial status to access loans from financial institutions.*

## **Introduction**

The new environment reality affecting the operations and performance of business organizations across the globe is being characterized by continuous and often unpredictable change. As a result, there have been calls for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to build the ability to respond and adapt to changing and uncertain environmental conditions in order to sustain their competitive advantages (Chung in Ala'Eddin, 2012). This is as a result of the fact that, small and medium enterprises are integral part of their environment where the environment plays the role of providing the resources and opportunities for their existence while they in turn, offer their goods and services to the people living in the environment for survival and enlightenment (Ajala, 2005).

Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) are self-generated ventures operating in small capacity within any economy. Hatten (2011) stated that SMEs are defined by adjectives indicating size, thus economists tend to divide them into classes according to some quantitative measurable indicators. The most common criterion to distinguish between large and small businesses is the number of employees. Sokoto and Abdullahi (2013) defined SMEs as business enterprises with total capital employed of not less than ₦ 1.5 million but not above ₦ 200 million, including working capital but excluding the cost of land with less than 10 staff not exceeding 300. Ebiringa (2012) asserted that SMEs are capable of making positive impacts on the economy of a nation and the quality of life of the people. SMEs stimulate economic growth, generate employment and empower the disadvantaged segment of the population, which include women and the poor. SMEs are established to achieve and accomplish certain profitable objectives. Thus, the success of every small and medium scale enterprise depends on how well it adapts to its environmental within which it operates.

Environment is the sum total of the external forces that influence individuals, businesses and communities (Oginni & Faseyiku, 2012). An environment consists of micro and macro-environmental forces. Macro (general) environmental forces consist of larger societal forces that affect all the actors in a company's micro environment (Nnamani & Ajagu, 2014, Armstrong & Kotler, 2011). Hall in Owaya (2013) defined macro-environmental forces as all those elements, situations and events existing beyond the limits of the organization that may influence the organization directly or indirectly. Macro-environmental forces provide strength, weakness, opportunities, threats and information that can affect the commercial activities of SME owners within the immediate environment. They are dynamic in nature and therefore keep on changing, having powerful impact on the firm's

functioning. These environmental factors include economic, socio-cultural, technological, political and legal forces, demographic forces and competitive forces among others.

Technology is the systematic application of scientific knowledge to practical task. Technological environmental forces consist of innovation and discovery that affect people's consumption patterns because as new products are introduced, old ones are withdrawn. In any society, the level of technology plays a significant role in determining what products and services will be produced, what equipment will be used, and how various operations will be managed. Hence, Muhammed (2011) averred that technological environmental forces constitute the fastest changing factors in the macro-environment because of the dramatic pace at which technology affects the lifestyle and buying patterns of consumers. Dauda and Akingbade (2011) reported that employee performance have significant relationship with technological change.

Political environmental forces consist of the laws, regulations and procedures of a country which SMEs must comply with in the course of their business operations. These laws may facilitate successful business operations or act as major handicaps to their successful performance. Nnamani and Ajagu (2014) averred that the political environmental forces consist of the political belief of government, political strength of the country, its relation with other countries, defense and military policies and their impacts on business enterprises. Owners of SMEs must take cognizance of these constraints and potentials, and seek out their implications on the business enterprise from legal advisers (Ogundele, 2005). Hadjikhani, Pourmand and Thilenius (2012) study on the effect of political factors on small firms' business relationships and performance disclosed that a firm's business relationships is affected by coercive actions by political organizations and also in receiving the full benefit from their supportive actions. Hashem and Irshaidat (2014) found that political environmental factors have an effect on the business performances.

Business enterprises are organizations established to achieve and accomplish certain profitable objectives. Thus, the success of every small and medium scale enterprise depends on how well it adapts to the technological and political environmental forces within which it operates. These macro-environmental factors must be closely monitored to ensure that measures are taken at the right time to either take advantage of the opportunities or combat the threats found in the environment. Presently, owners of SMEs in Nigeria both male and female are faced with a number of macro-environmental forces compelling them to re-think and re-shape their approach to their various business operations.

Male and female managers of SMEs according to William and McCarthy (2002), must watch the effects of macro-environmental forces because they influence the totality of their business environment. Nnamani and Ajagu (2013) agreed that managers of SMEs irrespective of their gender must be conscious of the influence of macro-environmental forces so as to achieve business goals. Gender refers to the varied socially and culturally constructed roles, qualities, behaviour that is ascribed to women and men of different societies (Ozioko, 2015). Gender as a variable could play an important role in the management of SMEs' operations as well as their experiences.

Years of experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years and above 10 years) could influence awareness of small enterprise managers on the influence of macro-environmental forces on organizations business operations. Managers with above 10 years experience could have a higher level of awareness than those with 6-10 years experience while the managers with 6-10 years of experience could be more aware of the influence of macro-environmental forces on business operations than those with 0-5 years experience. This could be as a result of having been in the business for long and acquiring more knowledge of the significance of technological and political environmental forces on business dealings.

In spite of the SMEs' crucial roles in the economic development of Nigeria, many of them that enter the business world in Nigeria every year fail rather than succeed. Ogundele (2010) regretted that only about ten percent of SMEs in Nigeria survive the first few years of operation. This means that 90 percent are either ailing or have closed down. Their high failure rate could be attributed to insufficient awareness of managers on the influence of technological and political environmental forces on SMEs' operational activities. There is therefore the need for managers of SMEs to be aware of the changes that constantly occur in the business environment because the survival of business enterprise can be determined by how cognizant managers of SMEs are on macro- environmental forces which are regarded as a pivot upon which profitable operational activities rotate. Therefore, this study determined the awareness level of SMEs managers on the influences of macro-environmental forces on the operational activities of SMEs in Anambra State.

A business enterprise and its environment are mutually inter-dependent. One of the ways through which SMEs attain success in their business operations is through effective handling of macro-environmental forces because owners of business enterprises operate in a dynamic environment. The dynamic environment in which managers of SMEs compete have macro-environment forces such as political and technological among

others that play important roles in the survival and success of their enterprises. These roles include among others, determining the total amount of money available to customers and businesses to make purchases, enhancing the ability and willingness of individuals and SMEs to perform transactions to acquire goods and services they want and influencing customers' behaviour which affect sales volume and profit.

Thus, SMEs must pay increased attention to their environment by conducting and embarking on periodic environmental scanning. Hence, a manager of SME who wants to succeed must develop a clear understanding and awareness of macro-environmental forces that can positively or negatively affect their business operations. This awareness will enable managers to adopt appropriate environmental strategies that will ensure long-term sustainability of their business enterprise. The problem of this study is that despite the importance of SMEs in any economy, their failure level in Nigeria has remained consistently high while the awareness level of managers of SMEs on the influence of macro-environmental forces on their operational activities in Anambra is not overly known. Hence, the study became imperative as it revealed the level of awareness of SMEs managers on the influence of macro-environmental forces to guide them in taking object actions to remedy any difficulties.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the awareness level of managers of SMEs on the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State?
2. What is the awareness level of managers of SMEs on the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State?

While the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State.
2. Managers of SMEs do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State as a result of years of experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years and above 10 years).

3. Male and female respondents do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State.
4. Managers of SMEs do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on their operations in Anambra State as a result of years of experience (0-5 years, 6-10 years and above 10 years).

### Method

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study consisted of 811 male and female owners of small and medium enterprises registered with the Anambra State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The sample size of 243 male and female owners of SMEs in Anambra State was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

The data for the study was collected through questionnaire titled “Influence of Macro-Environmental Forces on SMEs Questionnaire (IMEFSMEQ)”. The questionnaire contained 18 items in two sections, A and B. Section A contained items on demographic information of the respondents such as gender and years of experience while section B was divided into two clusters of B1 to B2 covering 9 and 9 items respectively and structured on a 5 points rating scale of: Very Highly Aware (VHA), Highly Aware (HA), Moderately Aware (MA), Slightly Aware (SA) and Not Aware (NA).

The Cronbach Alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficients obtained for the two clusters (B1 and B2) are 0.73 and 0.85 respectively with an overall coefficient value of 0.79. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions to determine the closeness or otherwise of the respondents’ responses to the mean, and t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the four hypotheses.

### Results

**Table 1: Respondents’ mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on business operations in Anambra State**

**N = 192**

S/N	Items on technological environmental forces	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Use of web-based search engines have influence on SMEs ability to discover potential clients	3.72	0.84	Highly Aware
2	Use of computers in record keeping have influence on the efficiency of SMEs operations	3.81	0.74	Highly Aware

3	Use of social media platforms for advertising of products influence sales of SMEs products	3.72	0.85	Highly Aware
4	Adoption of automated machine has influence on the business operations of SMEs	3.88	0.89	Highly Aware
5	Use of data management system to secure SMEs vital data have influence on their operations	3.76	0.86	Highly Aware
6	Use of mobile phones to improve sales of SMEs products have influence on their operational capabilities	3.88	0.90	Highly Aware
7	SMEs technological competence has influence on their modes of products advertisements	3.86	0.85	Highly Aware
8	Technology has influence on the competitive ability of SMEs	3.79	0.87	Highly Aware
9	Technology has influence on the mode of product packaging of SMEs	3.86	0.91	Highly Aware
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.81</b>		<b>Highly Aware</b>

Data in Table 1 show that the nine items have mean ratings ranging from 3.72 to 3.88 with a cluster mean of 3.81. This means that SMEs managers were highly aware of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

**Table 2: Respondents' mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on the business operations in Anambra State**  
N= 192

S/N	Items on political environmental forces	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
10	Political changes have influence on the operations of SMEs	3.74	0.66	Highly Aware
11	Terrorism have influence on expansion capabilities of SMEs	3.85	0.62	Highly Aware
12	Kidnapping in the society have influence on the sales of SMEs products	3.79	0.70	Highly Aware
13	Civil war has influence on the marketing activities of SMEs	3.76	0.68	Highly Aware
14	Government regulations have influence on the sales of contaminated products by SMEs	3.82	0.64	Highly Aware
55	Extortion by government has influence on the capabilities of SMEs to break even	3.74	0.66	Highly Aware

16	Implementation of price control system has influence on the product sales of SMEs	3.86	0.71	Highly Aware
17	Government ban of foreign products has influence on the growth and expansion of SMEs	3.76	0.63	Highly Aware
18	Currency devaluation by government has influence on the ability of SMEs to import raw materials from abroad	3.86	0.65	Highly Aware
<b>Cluster Mean</b>		<b>3.80</b>		<b>Highly Aware</b>

Data in Table 2 show that the nine items have mean ratings ranging from 3.74 to 3.86 with a cluster mean of 3.80. This means that SMEs managers were highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State. The standard deviations for all the items are within the same range showing that the respondents are not wide apart in their ratings.

**Table 3: t-test summary analysis of awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces by male and female managers of SMEs**

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Male	103	4.01	0.86	190	1	1.96	Not Significant
Female	89	3.88	0.88				

The result in Table 3 shows that male respondents (103) had a mean response of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 0.86 while the female respondents (89) had mean response of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.88. The calculated t-value of 1 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 190 degree of freedom. This revealed no significant difference and therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State.

**Table 4:**  
**One – way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the mean of SMEs managers with 0-5, 6-10 and above 10 years of experience on their awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations**

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Inference
Between Groups	0.36	2	0.18	2	3.40	Accepted
Within Groups	2.26	24	0.09			
Total	2.62					

Data on Table 4 shows that F-cal of 2 is less than the F-crit of 3.40 ( $2 < 3.40$ ) at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 24 degree of freedom therefore the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State as a result of years of experience.

**Table 5**  
**t-test summary analysis of awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces by male and female managers of SMEs**

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remark
Male	103	4.04	0.77	190	0.73	1.96	ot Significant
Female	89	3.96	0.79				

The result in Table 5 shows that male respondents (103) had a mean response of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 0.77 while the female respondents (89) had mean response of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 0.79. The calculated t-value of 0.73 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance and 190 degree of freedom. This revealed no significant difference and therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State.

**Table 6**  
**One – way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the mean of SMEs managers with 0-5, 6-10 and above 10 years of experience on their awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations**

Sources of Variance	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-cal	F-crit	Inference
Between Groups	0.27	2	0.14	2	3.40	Accepted
Within Groups	1.57	24	0.07			
Total	1.84					

Data on Table 6 shows that F-cal of 2 is less than the F-crit of 3.40 ( $2 < 3.40$ ) at 0.05 level of significance with 2 and 24 degree of freedom therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that respondents did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on their awareness level of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations in Anambra State as a result of years of experience.

### Discussion

Findings of the study revealed that managers of small and medium scale enterprise in Anambra State are highly aware of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations: use of web-based search engines, use of computer in record keeping, use of social media platforms for advertising of products, adoption of automated machines, use of data management system to secure SMEs vital data, use of mobile phones to improve sales of products, technological competence; technology on the competitive ability of SMEs and technology on the mode of product packaging. This finding is in consonance with that of Wynarczyk (2007) who reported that managers of small and medium scale enterprises are highly aware of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations. Small and medium scale enterprises that are able to create sustainable technology or depend on emerging sustainable technologies do have a better chance of surviving the rough terrain of SMEs business environment, since most SMEs do fold up within five years of start-up. Technological environmental forces, therefore, enhance SMEs managers' competitive advantage over other players in the same market (Sheu, 2007). The finding that managers of SMEs are highly aware of the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations was reported by Lin and Chen (2007) on the premise that technology breeds innovation in

the SME sector that can increase growth and competitive advantage in the marketplace.

More so, gender and experience does not significantly affect the respondents mean ratings on their awareness level on the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations. This findings is in consonance with Nasser et al, (2011) that there is no significant difference in respondents awareness level on the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations as a result of gender and experience on the premise that the influence of technology has on a society can boost a SME sales performance while also undermining traditional ways of doing business, forcing SMEs managers to adapt or give way to more progressive competitors in the marketplace. In agreement, Samuel (2016) discovered that gender and experience of managers of small and medium scale enterprise share same view on their awareness level on the influence of technological environmental forces on their business operations due to the fact that SMEs that adopted technology are experiencing faster and better annual revenues than companies with lower levels of technology adoption.

Findings of the study revealed that managers of SMEs in Anambra State are highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations. Political changes, Terrorism, Civil war, government regulations, extortion, implementation of price control system, ban of foreign products and currency devaluation. This finding is in consonance with that of Samuel (2016) who reported that managers of small and medium scale enterprises are highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations. The finding is in line with the assertion of Bubou, Siyanbola, Ekperiware, and Gumus (2014) that managers of small and medium scale enterprises are highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations. The finding that managers of small and medium scale enterprises are highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations was reported by Onwukwe and Ifeanacho (2011) on the premise that the red-tape or costs for complying with government regulations are extremely high in Nigeria.

The study also found no significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on their awareness level on the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations as a result of gender and experience. This findings is in consonance with Akinbogun (2008) that there is no significant difference in respondents awareness level on the influence of political environmental forces on their business operations as a result of gender and experience on the premise that the political environmental forces in Nigeria have not been favorable to the business operation SMEs as well

Themba, Phambuka and Makgosa (2009) which reported that the political climate and legal requirements of doing business in a country can be a possible enhancer or a major stumbling block to the development of SMEs irrespective of gender and experience of managers of small and medium scale enterprises. The challenge facing most governments is to provide a business environment that supports and promotes a vibrant entrepreneurial culture through SMEs due to the fact that SMEs have the capability to produce sufficient levels of skilled and semi-skilled employment (Bubou et al., 2014).

### **Conclusion**

In the light of the findings of this study, the researchers concluded that managers of SMEs are highly aware of the influence of technological environmental forces on the operation of their business enterprise. Gender and years of experience do not significantly affect their opinion on the level of awareness of their influence of technological environmental forces and their business operation.

Managers of SMEs in Anambra State are highly aware of the influence of political environmental forces on their business operation. No significant difference existed in their mean ratings on the level of awareness of the influence of political environmental forces based on gender and years of business experience. Based on this findings, the researchers concludes that the majority of the owners of SMEs in Anambra State understands the important, the environmental forces and play in the success of their business operation and are conscious of the changes in the business that could result as a result of changes in these environmental forces.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. SME managers should lobby the government through legal legislation to have business incentives in terms of tax breaks to a certain level of profitability in order to encourage their financial status to access loans from financial institutions.
2. Managers of SMEs should engage in market research in order to recognize current needs, value, taste and preference of the type of goods consumers are looking for in the marketplace.
3. Government should set up an industrial bank strictly for assisting the development of SMEs in the country.
4. SME managers need to continuously monitor the impact of the environmental forces on their business operations in the marketplace.

5. The teaching of environmental forces should be integrated into the curriculum of business education in order to expose students with the complex nature of the business environment upon graduation.

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