

# **THE IMPACT OF CONSUMER NEEDS ASSESSMENT ON SALES VOLUME OF SMEs IN CALABAR**

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## **Abstract**

The study examined the impact of consumers needs assessment on sales volumes of (SMEs)in calabar. The study intents to investigate the factors mitigating consumer's purchasing power or problems that hinder consumer's contributions to sales volumes of (SMEs) in calabar. The work used questionnaire Survey approach. The scope of study is Calabar Metropolis, covered owners and managers of SMEs. The study sample size was 200 and data was collected with the use of personal interview and structured questionnaire. Some preliminary test was conducted to enable the stability and reliability of the data Such as test-retest method to confirm the reliability. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used for Data analysis and estimation. The following is the findings of the study; consumers needs assessment or factors that mitigate consumers purchasing power has a significant impacts on sales volumes of SMEs in calabar. Hence the  $H_0:1$  will be rejected. The result also shows there is a significant relationship between consumers contribution to SMEs sales volumes if all things being equal. The study recommends that managers of SMEs should be adequately educated on the principles and practice of marketing such as strategic partnership between forward integrated marketing channels. Also, the position of marketer or marketing manager as the case may be, should be occupied by one who is a qualified marketing professional because this would reduce the risks involved in making certain marketing decisions.

Key words: Consumer Needs Assessment, Sales Volume and small, medium Enterprise.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The success of every company is dependent on its ability to create products and services that address unmet customer needs. Despite this fact, in over 95 percent of all companies, marketing and development managers don't agree on what a customer "need" even is. However, they do not agree on what features the need of customers statement should possess, what information it should contain, its purpose, and how it should be structured. The first step in becoming a customer-centric organization is agreeing on a customer needs definition. According to Tony Ulwick "outcome-driven programs bring discipline and predictability to the often random process of innovation," Small scale enterprises are common in many countries today depending on the system of economic in operation. They constitute an important part of a country's business system. Small scale business means different things to different people and has different characteristics in different parts of the world. Onugu (2005) assert that small and medium enterprises is defined by the National Council of Industries in Nigeria as business enterprises whose total costs; excluding land, is not more than two hundred million naira (N200, 000,000.00). In Britain according to Bakare and Babatunde (2014) small scale business is conceived as that industry with annual turnover of 2 million pound or less with fewer than 200 paid employees. According to Darren (2009) they are the businesses that employ up to 9 employees in UK while in Australia; they employ fewer than 5 employees including non-employing businesses. U.S. Census Bureau which tends to categorize micro business as SOHO (meaning small office- home office), non-employer business and non-employee business (including business less than 5 employees). In Nigeria, the National Council of Industry (2003) and Etuk, Etuk and Baghebo (2014) listed enterprises based on three criteria such as micro with size of 1-10 and less than N1 Million capital, small with a size of 11-35 and N1 Million – less than N40 Million capital, Medium with a size of 36-100 and N40Million – less than N200Million.

According to literature review SMEs has numerous contributions to the national economy. Some of the contributions are listed below according Ogechukwu (2001) .they are:

SMEs generate employment for a lot of Nigerians. Many unemployed people and youths have found employment in small scale industries. A lot of retail shops, cottage, restaurant, poultry farms, telecommunication and telephone shops have been established and managed profitably by Nigerians who would have been unemployed till date. The entrepreneurs have in turn, provided jobs for other Nigerians who serve as support, technical and administrative staff for them.

It has encouraged self-employment for many youths both in the rural and urban areas. The spirit of successful entrepreneurship has taken over the mind of Nigerians, who believe in themselves and in the goal of self employment, instead of relying on government jobs. In the telephone, retail and rental jobs, a lot of youths and other Nigerians have remained self-employed. Their businesses have expanded to the level of employing some other unemployed people.

Through the establishment of man-power development support schemes, and their involvement in the training and retraining of entrepreneurs, SMEs have provided a pool of potential entrepreneurs and business people who are well equipped to start and successfully manage industries whether small or large, not only in Nigeria but overseas. Successful business people in Nigeria like the Aliko Dangotes, the Ibrus, Mike Adenuga, the Orji

Kalu etc. started as small and medium scale enterprises, before the growth of their various businesses into conglomerates.

It has reduced the dependence of government and large firm's salaries employment. This is evidenced from the liberalization policy of the government in the telecommunication and education sectors as a lot of companies have been established to provide support to staff and employment for Nigerians.

However this study intended to investigate the impact of consumer needs assessment on sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar while the specific objectives is to examine the factors that mitigate the volumes of sales among the SMEs in Calabar and the contributions of consumers to sales volumes if all things being equal.

### **The Research Hypothesis:**

The research hypotheses are stated below:

**HO1:** There is no significant impact between factors mitigating consumers and the volumes of sales of SMEs in Calabar.

**HO2:** A Consumer's contribution has no significant impact on sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar.

### **Conceptual and Empirical literature review:**

#### **Conceptual Literature Review**

This kind of study would often raise some conceptual issues which require clarification for better understanding and smooth presentation of issues under discussion. The key concepts in this study are, small and medium scale Enterprise(SMEs), the concept of sales volumes, consumers needs assessment, the concept of marketing small and medium Enterprise and marketing problems and (SMEs) in Nigeria.

#### **Concept of Small and Medium Scale(SMEs)**

Onugu (2005) review that small and medium enterprises as defined by the National Council of Industries in Nigeria refers to business enterprises whose total costs; excluding land, is not more than two hundred million naira (N200, 000,000.00). In Britain according to Bakare and Babatunde (2014) small scale business is conceived as that industry with annual turnover of 2 million pound or less with fewer than 200 paid employees. According to Darren (2009) they are the businesses that employ up to 9 employees in UK while in Australia; they employ fewer than 5 employees including non-employing businesses. U.S. Census Bureau which tends to categorize business micro business as SOHO (meaning small office- home office), non-employer business and non-employee business (including business less than 5 employees). In Nigeria, the National Council of Industry (2003) and Etuk, Etuk and Baghebo (2014) listed enterprises based on three criteria such as micro with size of 1-10 and less than N1 Million capital, small with a size of 11-35 and N1 Million – less than N40 Million capital, Medium with a size of 36-100 and N40Million – less than N200Million.

### **Sales Volume**

Tianyu (2013), it is the quantity or number of goods sold or services sold in the normal operations of a company in a specified period. It is the quantity or number of products sold or services provided by a company in a particular period of time (Cambridge dictionary, 2012).

### **Concept of consumers needs assessment:**

The success of every company is dependent on its ability to create products and services that address unmet customer needs. Despite this fact, in over 95 percent of all companies, marketing and development managers don't agree on what a customer "need" even is. More specifically, they do not agree on what characteristics a customer need statement should possess, what information it should contain, its purpose, and how it should be structured. The first step in becoming a customer-centric organization is agreeing on a customer needs definition.

Over the past two decades, we have worked to overcome this fundamental problem by inventing the "perfect" customer need statement. Our work is grounded in the fundamental belief that people buy products and services to get a "job" done. Looking at markets through a jobs-to-be-done lens, we've discovered that a customer need is best defined as a statement that describes how a customer measures success and value when getting a job done. We call these statements "desired outcomes". A desired outcome statement is uniquely structured to detail how customers define value and how a company can help create it. These statements, often totaling more than 100 for a given job, describe the precise dimensions along which customers potentially seek to get the job done better. Take the job of listening to music, for example. Consumers tell us that they seek to (1) minimize the time it takes to find desired songs, (2) minimize the likelihood of choosing unwanted versions of a song, and (3) minimize the time it takes to change the order in which songs are heard. These customer needs examples show they are measures of customer value, actionable and controllable through product design, predictive of success, independent of a solution or technology, and stable over time. These are characteristics that "perfect" customer need statements should possess, as they enable an organization to align itself around the creation of customer value.

### **Marketing and Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**

Marketing is the key reasons of every business. Drucker, (1985) states that because the main objectives of business is to create and keep customers, it has two central functions: marketing and innovation. The basic function of marketing is to attract and retain customers at a profit. Marketing facilitates the exchange process by providing a variety of marketing activities that benefit customers and other stakeholders. It involves adjusting the whole activity of a business to the needs of the consumers and other stakeholders. Marketing is a business philosophy which emphasizes consumer needs, interpretation of those needs for the mutual benefits of both the consumer and the marketer, delivery of want-satisfying goods and/or services, and continued effort to ensure the consumers' satisfaction. Marketing involves creating value to meet customers' needs and managing relationships between the marketer and his target markets (Ebitu, 2012). Building customer relationships and satisfaction

is at the very heart of modern marketing (Kotler and Armstrong, 2004). We therefore define marketing as a set of activities as well as processes responsible for identifying needs, creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging superior values and building mutually beneficial relationships with customers and other stakeholders (Ebitu, 2012:3).

Small and medium scale enterprises are in business to innovate and create new organization or products, services and ideas to the society for profit. Marketing has a crucial role to play in order to make entrepreneurs (those who own and run SMEs and large businesses) succeed in their quest to satisfy their target markets and also make profits. The duty to create customers, inform them of the availability of the enterprise's goods and services and actually get customers to purchase the goods and services or ideas of SMEs in the function of marketing. According to Onah and Allison (2007: 127-8), Marketing also enables the entrepreneur to identify the goods and services the customers' needs before he goes into production. Marketing helps the entrepreneur to determine the size of the market and classify them into segments and then choose the segments to satisfy, and adopt strategies to satisfy the segments chosen.

### **Marketing Problems and SMEs in Nigeria**

Marketing problems are simply those marketing factors that can impede, disrupt or hinder the growth, development and expansion of the firm in its effort to satisfy its target market and also create value for the organization. Small businesses face myriads of problems. Some of the problems which are relative to their size include epileptic power supply, lack of capital, inefficient management, difficulty in employing skilled manpower, fraud, inability to analyze market opportunities, advertising and marketing problems, research and production inefficiencies, problems of standardization, poor quality products, etc.

In particular, the basic marketing problems include inability to apply modern marketing techniques and strategies, difficulty in managing the firm's advertising and other promotional tools, competition from large firms, lack of adequate research, poor and mundane production technology, lack of adequate financing of marketing activities, poor quality products and problems of standardization, warehousing, inventory control, and poor transportation facilities, branding/packaging, financing and credit facilities, risk bearing among others. Stull, Myers and Scott (2008) gave these factors as marketing problems, namely: problem of standardization, competition from large scale businesses, poor sales promotion and poor bargaining power. Walt (2013) is of the opinion that lack of raw materials, scarcity of expertise labour, lack of finance and poor marketing strategies are the basic marketing problems of small scale businesses. He added that with these problems SMEs are placed at a disadvantaged position to face the onslaught of large scale enterprises in terms of quality, cost, research or assess marketing scenarios/changes which are taking place in the market in terms of taste, likes and dislikes, competition, technology etc. He concluded that SMEs do not possess the requisite expertise to adjust their operations to the changed situations. Poor advertising and non-utilization of other promotional tools may not attract the right caliber of customers to patronize the business. Specifically, Scott (2003) in Tom (2014) posits that as a result of the inability of small scale enterprises to advertise appropriately or effectively, they encounter the following problems.

- a) Difficulty in attracting customers
- b) Difficulty in attracting quality employees
- c) Difficulty to growth
- d) Difficulty to compete with bigger companies, and
- e) Difficulty to diversify

### **Empirical Literature Review both Nigeria and Foreign**

Over the years studies have been carried out to examine the impact of consumer needs assessment on sales volumes of SMEs. In what follows, we explore the existing literature both global evidence and Nigerian evidence.

A study according to Daniel Ogechukwu(2013) examine Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMES) in Nigeria the Marketing Interface: the study review the importance of small and medium scale Enterprises in both the developed and developing nation, the reason is because it is a means of economic development and problems solving. It is also a seedbed of innovations, inventions and employment. Nigeria, SMEs help in promoting the growth of the country's economy at all levels of government at different times with different policies which promote the growth and sustenance of SMEs. Small scale industry orientation is part of the Nigerian history. Evidence abound in the communities of what successes our great grandparents, made of their respective trading concerns, yam barns, cottage industries, and the likes.

Junaid Mughal(2012) Assessing the impact of marketing channels on the Sales of Auto mobile parts: A study of Recco Auto Parts. The study intents to investigate the reason of decrease sales volume of auto parts in Pakistan. The specific objectives of the work are improper guidance to distribution channels, strategic partnership and gap in product design and structure with their impact on declining in sales. To achieve the objectives of the study, data has been collected from the 50 respondents consists of 40 Suzuki car users 5 professionals and 5 professors. The research indicates that the firm is facing the problem in the strategic partnership between forward integrated marketing channels. Products For the solution of these problems managerial implications, suggestions for future researches are provided.

A study by Olalekan Asikhia (2010), which investigate Customer Orientation and Firm Performance among Nigerian Small and Medium Scale Businesses: the study aim at examining the relationship between customers orientation and firms performance among Nigeria small and medium scale business. Data was collected using questionnaire survey approach. The sample size of 222 was used for the study. Results of this study indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between customer orientation and firm performance in the context of Nigerian small and medium scale business. The result also shows that marketing information system and managerial attitude moderated the relationship. The outcome of this study provides very important information from a developing country perspective on the need for small and medium scale businesses to adopt customer orientation as a survival and

competitive strategy towards achieving customer advantage in a turbulent business environment.

According to Farah Margaretha(2016),he examine the Factors Affecting Profitability of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Firm Listed in Indonesia Stock Exchange, the research aim at examining factors affecting profitability such as firm size, firm age, growth, lagged profitability, productivity, and industry affiliation of SMEs firm listed in Indonesia Stock Exchange. Secondary data was used and the results showed that firm size, growth, lagged profitability, productivity and industry affiliation Significantly have effect on profitability,while the variable firm age does not significantly influence profitability. The results of the regression coefficient indicates that the variable firm size, growth, lagged profitability have a negative effect on profitability, While the variable productivity and industry affiliation have a positive impact on profitability. Therefore, for further improve company's performance, the manager should define a strategy to increasing profitability with focus on productivity and industry affiliation.

However a study by Amir mozaheb(2015), examine the Effect of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) on Performance of Small-Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) Using Structural Equations Model (SEM). This study aims at investigating the effect of customer relationship management (CRM) on the performance of small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). A sample size of 105 managers were randomly selected from among the managers of industrial park located in marshes city. Library method was used for gathering data. In this research, survey method and questionnaire were used to identify the effect among variables and data analysis was done by AMOS18 and SPSS19 software. Results showed that CRM has significant effect on the performance of enterprises. Technology is a key factor which influences SMEs and leads to superiority on competitors. Besides, for achieving more desired performance, enterprises should pay attention to market and customers.

Base on the study by Zwingina Christy (2017), he examine the Impact of Innovation on the Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprise in Gwagwalada, Abuja. This study aim at investigating how innovation (marketing innovation, process innovation and product innovation) stimulate performance (sales volume) of SMEs Gwagalada Abuja. The study used primary data spanning from 2010 to 2015. The population of this study is 2690 SMEs owners. A sample size was derived using Taro Yamane and the size was 348. Ordinary least Square method of multiple regressions and the result shows that there is significant relationship between innovation and performance of SMEs in Gwagalada Abuja. Other findings show that there is a significant relationship between product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation and performance (sales volume) of SMEs in Gwagwalada, Abuja.

However, a study by Ebitu, Ezekiel Tom(2015),they examine the relationship between Marketing Problems and the Performance of Selected Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. The study aimsto investigate the marketing problems of SMEs and its impact on the profit-margin as well as the sales volume of small and medium enterprises. Questionnaire Survey design was employed. Calabar Metropolis was used as the scope of the study while the study frame was owners and managers of SMEs. The sample size of the study was 150 and data was collected with the use of structured

questionnaire. The instrument was content-validated, while the test-retest method was used to confirm the reliability. Data analysis was done electronically by the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The findings highlighted in the study were; there is a significant relationship between the marketing problems experienced by SMEs and the increase in their profit margin and sales volume.

A study by Gbolagade Adewale(2013),which aim at investigating the Impact of Marketing Strategy on Business Performance A Study of Selected Small and Medium Enterprises (Smes) In Oluyole Local Government, Ibadan, Nigeria. The survey research design method was used in this study which involves using a self-design questionnaire in collecting data from one hundred and three (103) respondents. The instrument used in this study is a close-ended questionnaire that was designed by the researchers. Correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data with the aid of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. The results show that the independent variables (i.e Product, Promotion, Place, Price, Packaging and After sales service) were significant joint predictors of business performance in term of profitability, market share, return on investment, and expansion.(F(6, 97) = 14.040; R2 = 0.465; P< .05). The independent variables jointly explained 46.5% of variance in business performance. Subsequently, recommendation were made to SMEs operators to produce quality products; charge competitive prices, position appropriately, use attractive package for the product, engage in after sales service and provide other distinctive functional benefits to consumers.

**Research Methodology**

The study was carried out in Cross River State. Cross River State is located in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the survey was carried out in Calabar Metropolis. Calabar Metropolis comprises of Calabar South and Calabar Municipality. Calabar Metropolis was chosen as the study area because it harbors many small and medium scale business enterprises. The inhabitants of Calabar Metropolis are hospitable and the local government area are also known for tourism and business-friendliness. This study employed the survey research design. The study employed the convenience sampling design and the sample size was 200Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. This is because the researchers carefully selected business owners who understood the questionnaire and can respond with little or no difficulty. The econometrics technique employed in this study is the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis which will be computed using SPSS version 21.

**Data Analysis and Result of Findings**

Out of 200 questionnaires distributed, 150 were properly completed and returned; 20 questionnaires were discarded because they were not properly completed while 30 questionnaires were not returned.

**Objective One**

Table 1: Correlation of consumers needs assessment or factors mitigating volumes of sales of SMEs in calabar.

	Consumers needs assessment or factors	Sales volumes
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		mitigating sales volumes	
Consumers needs assessment	Pearson Correlation	1	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	150	150
Sales volumes	Pearson correlation	.508**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.002
	N	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant P <0.05

Table 1 represent the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation of consumers needs assessment or factors affecting the volumes of sales of SMEs in Calabar. With probability value (0.002) less than 0.05 significance level, it indicate that there is a significant impact between the consumers needs assessment or factor mitigate the volume of sale of SMEs in Carbar. Thus we will reject the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant impact between factors mitigate consumers and the volumes of sales of SMEs in Calabar and accept the alternative that those factor such as weak demand for products arising from low and dwindling consumer purchasing power, limited access to long-term capital, high cost of even short-term financing, poor partnership spirit, low-level capacity in management, marketing and technical know-how as well as low level knowledge of legal and regulatory practices, policies and accounting practices, illegal levies, street urchins’ harassments, etc which result to reduction in the sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar.

### Objective Two

Table 2: Correlation between the contributions of consumers to sales volumes if all things being equal in SMEs in Calabar.

	Consumers contribution to sales	Sales volumes of SMEs
	Volumes ofSMEs.	

Consumers contribution to sales	Pearson corr.	1	.309**
	Sig.(2-tailed)		0.000
	N	150	150
Sales volumes of SMEs	Pearson corr.	.309**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	150	150

\*\* . Correlation is significant  $P < 0.05$

The second Table shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation of consumer contribution to sales volume of SMEs in Calabar. With probability value (0.000) less than 0.05 significance level, it implies that consumer's contribution has a significant impact on sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar. Hence we will reject the null hypothesis which states that Consumer's contribution has no significant impact on sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar and accept the alternative that consumer's contribution has a significant impact on sales volumes of SMEs in Calabar.

### Results Discussion and Findings

The results of the study indicate that consumers needs assessment or factors that mitigate sales volumes of SMEs has significant impact on volumes of sales of SMEs in calabar. This finding is in line with the study by Ebitu E.Tom(2015) in a study on marketing problems and the performance of selected SMEs in southern senatorial District of cross river state using the sample size of 150. His finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between the marketing problems experienced by SMEs and the increase in their profit margin and sales volume. The study recommends that managers of SMEs should be adequately educated on the principles and practice of marketing also with Basil (2005) in a study of the marketing problems faced by 300 SMEs. His study revealed that "SMEs sector in Nigeria is replete with major marketing problems which have contributed to their poor performance some of which include: weak demand for products arising from low and dwindling consumer purchasing power, limited access to long-term capital, high cost of even short-term financing, poor partnership spirit, low-level capacity in management, marketing and technical know-how as well as low level knowledge of legal and regulatory practices, policies and accounting practices, illegal levies, street urchins' harassments, over-dependence on imported raw materials and

spare parts, incidence of multiplicity of regulatory agencies and taxes that have always resulted in high cost of doing business and poor corporate governance and low level of entrepreneurial skills.”These factors play a crucial role in the increasing sales volumes of Small and medium scale enterprises because they contribute to the high operating cost of the SMEs thereby resulting in low volumes of sales and low profit margins.

The findings of this study also shows that there is a correlation between consumers needs assessment or marketing problems or factors mitigating sales volume of SMEs and their sales volume. Most Nigerian small business owners equate ‘marketing’ to ‘selling’ and this is reflected in their various dysfunctional business behaviour against customer satisfaction and good business and marketing orientation. They lack the knowledge and skills of basic marketing ingredients – marketing research, market segmentation, and marketing planning and control. The outcome of this is poor quality products, unawareness of competition, poor promotion, poor distribution, and poor pricing methods. Again, Ayozie, et. al. (2013) mentioned that only very few Nigerian small manufacturers are aware of the nature of competition facing them. They estimate their success only through sales revenue without considering also their market share. Even, some do not know their market segments on which to focus their operations. This has a tremendous effect on their sales volume.

### **Conclusion, Recommendations**

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises are a common feature in the Nigerian economy. It is believed and even verified that SMEs play very important role in the economic growth of the country. However, there are a plethora of problems or factors mitigate sales volumes faced by SMEs in Nigeria which affect their business performance. Most of these problems or factors are marketing-related some of which include inability to apply modern marketing techniques and strategies, difficulty in managing the firm’s advertising and other promotional tools, competition from large firms, lack of adequate research, poor and sub-standard production technology, lack of adequate financing of marketing activities, poor quality products and problems of standardization, warehousing, inventory control, and poor transportation facilities, branding/packaging, financing and credit facilities, risk bearing among others; These problems are capable of mitigating, impeding, disrupting and hindering the growth, development and expansion of the firms in its effort to satisfy its target market and also create value for the organizations.

This study was an attempt to examine the impact of consumers needs assessment on the volumes of sale performance of SMEs in Calabar of Cross River State. The study proved that marketing problems or factors affect the performance of SMEs negatively in terms of profit and sales volume. It has been observed that most of these problems are due to the fact that most of the managers of the SMEs are not knowledgeable about the principles and practice of marketing. It is therefore recommended that managers of SMEs should be adequately educated on the principles and practice of marketing. Also, the position of marketer or marketing manager as the case may be, should be occupied by one who is a qualified marketing professional because this would reduce the risks involved in making certain marketing decisions and in turn, will lead to impressive business performance of SMEs. The result of this study can be applied to other sectors of the Nigerian economy.

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