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Marketing Environment and Business Failure: A Study of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract:
The study identified the relationship between the marketing environment and business failure in Northern Nigeria. The population was identified to be 5409 SMEs as at 2015 to 2018 before the advent of Corona Virus. For fair representation of Northern Nigeria; Sokoto, Kaduna and Gombe were chosen from North West, North Central and North East respectively. The Sampling technique is simple random sampling and snowball method was adopted to determine the sample size of failed SMEs in the respective sampled regions.384 SMEs were identified as sample for the study and structured questionnaire was used as the method of data collection. Regression analysis was used as the method of data analysis, the variables of marketing environment were regressed against each variable of business failure. It was found out there is an insignificant relationship between company's policies and market competition. Hence, it was recommended that Managers of SMEs in Northern Nigeria should align their company's policies for competitive advantages.

Keywords: *Marketing environment, business failure and Northern Nigeria*

1. Introduction

Marketing environment can be seen as those actors and forces that hinder the ability of the marketing manager to achieve competitive advantage. The success of an organization largely depends on how well it defines, understands and faces changes in its marketing environment. The reason for this is that organizations are assumed to be an open system, as interaction between these organizations and their marketing environment is inevitable. Marketing environmental factors include;macro environment otherwise non as the external environment which represents, economic, political, natural, demographic, technology, and culturalenvironments, it is also the large environment that the marketer cannot controllable. The second environment is the micro environment, otherwise non as the small environment that is said to be controllable to the marketer, it is otherwise non as the internal environment, which include; consumers, suppliers, marketing intermediaries/middle men, company, organizational culture, organizational structure and leadership (Anoloui and Karami, 2003). Hence, business growth and survival depend on the marketing environmental factors that are either macro or micro in nature.

However, the operations of SMEs include a possibility of success as well as failure. The success of SMEs can be seen in feeder services to large scale industries; they also open up opportunities for upward social mobility, employment generation, innovation, productivity, job growth and stability, foster economic flexibility and contribute to competition and economic efficiency. SMEs also contribute to income generation through exportations. They represent about 90% of the industrial sector in terms of the number of enterprises. They also account for 70% of national industrial employment if the threshold is set at 10 – 50 employees, and contribute 10% of manufacturing output (Ajayi, 2002). The India SMEs represents 99% of all employers; employ 51% of private sector workers, employ 38% of workers in high-tech occupations, provide about 75% of new jobs in the private sector and represent 96% of all goods exported (Twist, 2000). In USA, SMEs have been responsible for the creation of 80% of all new jobs (Mead &Liedholm, 1998). In Northern Ireland and the UK, it is estimated that SMEs account for about 56% and 48% of employment in the private sector respectively (Buckland, 1997). On the other hand, the failure rate is narrowed down to the Nigerian context because of the focus of the study to Northern Nigeria, scholarly researches like; Abiodum (2010) Basi (2005) and Akwari (2007) observes that the increased rate in business failure, despite all the support and incentives as most business rarely survived their first year in operation. Timmons (1994) shows that over 20% of new ventures fail within one year and 66% within six years. Gangulay (1985) claims that almost 50% of the fits fail in the first four years of their lives.Onugu (2005) reveals that only about 10% of industries run by its members are fully operational. Given that such a large number of SMEs are unsuccessful, the study

intends to investigate the marketing environmental factors militating against business failure with special emphasis on Northern Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Marketing Environment

It is widely recognized that a firmly established and properly managed business sector constitutes an essential catalyst for a country's economic development process. In theory, economic development is contingent to, among other things, the conduciveness of the marketing environment and the existence therein of dynamic business system, the environment at its various level of aggregation (global, regional, sector, enterprise). It is the underlying determinant of the performance of business. Just like it defines and limits the set of opportunities available to individuals, it also does the same for business and business system (Francis, 2000).

However, several scholars Dess and Miller (1993) James et al., (2007) Williams et al., (2005) and Mika (2003) posits various definitions of marketing environment, but the most common can be narrated as the combination of internal and external actors and forces that poses numerous challenges to the management of a firm. The internal environment can be controlled by the marketer; this includes; the company itself, customer, suppliers, special interest groups, the media, labour unions, competitors. While the external environments are uncontrollable; in other words, the environment cannot be controlled by the marketer. This includes economic, political, natural, global business environment, technological, social, legal, etc., environment. On the other hand, Dess and Miller (1993) distinguish between dimensions such as munificence, dynamism and complexity. Munificence refers to the environmental capacity as the extent to which the environment can support sustained growth. Wiklund (1998) also concurrent with Dess and Beard (1984) by adding that small firms that face an environment with increasing dynamism tend to grow faster than other. Researches of CovinandSlevin (1989) tend to distinguish between hostile and benign environment, by emphasizing that hostile environment are characterized by precarious industry settings, intense competition, harsh, overwhelming business climates and the relative lack of exploitable opportunities. Jurkovich (1974) identifies 64 types of environments based on the following dimensions: complex/non-complex, routine/non-routine, organized/non-organized, direct/indirect, low-change/high-change and stable/unstable. Thus, the study concurred with the researches of (Dess& Miller, 1993; James et al., 2007; Williams et al., 2005& Mika, 2003).

Several scholars like; Williams (1987), Gaskill*et al.* (1993),Pretoriums (2009),CarbozoandBorchert (2008), Stokes and Blackburn (2002),Everetand Watson (1998) andBickerdyke et al., (2000) gave numerous definitions of business failure based on their own understand of the phenomenon. However, their definition implicitly means a situation in which a business has to close because of marketing environmental factors that hinders the success of the said entity. The definition of failure has been adopted in this study,as the inability of the owner – manager to continue because of marketing environmental difficulties.Therefore, the study concurred with the above scholarly researches. Other researchers like Murphy (1996) see failure as either voluntary or forced liquidation emphasizes on small business failure and whether or not trends can be defected which will help managers to avoid failure. Rolffe (2000) categorized it as closure or cessation of business activities that result in a loss to its creditors.

The negative effect of external environmental factors causes business failure and consequently leads to an adverse effect on the economy. The failure rate in small and medium business in Nigeria is a matter of concern. A high failure rate is a huge negative for an economy, especially a developing economy with limited capital such as Nigeria (Okpara &Wynn, 2007). This situation however subsides in Nigeria despite relevant government policies and programmes to aid enterprises.

The researches of Wang, Walker and Redman (2008);Abdullah (2000);Abdillahand bin Baker (2006);Storey (1994);CulkinandSmith (2000);KurattoandHodgetts (2001); Kilby (1965);Ogundele (2007);Storey (1994); Frank andLandstorm (1998) agreed that SMEs in general are regardedas important to world economics; they made up the largest business sector in every world economy. They also agreed that SMEs are considered by government as a keystone to regional economic and community regeneration because such firms absorb back into theworkforce the employees that are made redundant by the restructuring, rationalization, downsizing and outsourcing taking place in large firms.
Lebell*et al.* (1974);AkojaandHasret (2010) and Owualah (1987) seems to understand that the general characteristics and nature of less developed regions include unemployed and underemployed labour, a small or negative rate of growth of real per capita income, gross unequal income distribution, low investment rates and scarce capital and political and economic instability. This they agreed gave a vivid picture of Nigeria industrial landscape which like any less developed country is littered with many micro-small and medium enterprises. They are expected to provide the driving force for the industrialization and overall development of the Nigeria economy. This explains the increasing policy attentions by the government, but little or no impact at the grassroots.

2.2. Empirical Evidence on Failed SMEs

On the international scene, research conducted by Egeln et al. (2010) investigated a sample of 3007 young German firms which exited (failed) between 2006 and 2008. They find that more than fifty percent of these firms failed because of severe demand problems. A quite similar pattern holds true for small firms in Japan. Approximately seventy percent out of sample of 701 failed Japanese business closed down due to a decline in sales or orders (Harada, 2007). Williams (1986) took a sample of 5,456 failed business owners to study the critical reasons for failure. He reported that 82% respondents believed that endogenous factors count while 18% owed to exogenous ones. Arasi et al*.* (2012)

identified the individual factors affecting failure in new established small business with a combination of qualitative and quantitative research in a survey of 152 sample unsuccessful entrepreneurs. The results show that two individual factors of 'lack of crisis management skill' and 'lack of marketing, financial human resources and team management skill' are the most important factors affecting failure in Iranian new established small businesses.

Despite the numerous challenges facing SMEs in the Nigerian context, there seems to be little or no research on the marketing environmental factors that causes SMEs failure rate. The researchesof Basil (2005); Sunday (2008); Alarape (2007) and Okpara and Wynn (2007) Abdullah (2000); Abdullah and bin Baker (2006); Ogundele (2007); Frank and Landstorm (1998) seems to be enumerating the challenges rather than empirically researching on the environmental factors responsible for the failure rate of SMEs in Nigeria. This has provided a research gap that this study intends to cover.

3. Methodology

The study investigates the effect of marketing environmental factors on failure of SMEs in Nigeria. The research is descriptive-explanatory in nature as it uses structured questionnaire as the method of data collection. Regression Analysis was adopted as the technique of analysis.For fair representation of SMEs in Northern Nigeria. The region was sub divided in to three (3) major zones; thenorth-west zone, north central zone and north-east zoneof Nigeria. Hence, the population of interest of this study is all SMEs situated in Sokoto, Kaduna and Gombe States respectively, however, those SMEs that failed from 2015 – 2018 before the advent of Coronavirus (Covid-19) are the study target audience. The sampling technique is simple random sampling and the sample size was determined using a formula for determining sample size for unknown and large (infinite) population (Smith, 2013) as follows:

$$n = \frac{C^2 \times S(S)}{E^2}$$

Where, n = Sample size

C= Confidence level (z-score)

S = Standard deviation

E = Margin of error

95% confidence level i.e., 1.96 z-score is used because it is the most common confidence level used in previous studies (Smith, 2013). The safe decision is to use 0.5 (50%) standard deviation; this is the most forgiving number and ensures that the study sample will be large enough (Garg, Napierala&Mensah, 2014). The margin of error or sampling error (E) indicates the level of precision of the estimate that is desirable. It is usually expressed as a percentage. The larger the sample, the smaller the margin of error and the greater the estimate precision on sample will be perfect, so there was need to decide how much error to allow. The most common margin of error allowed in research ranges from 1% to 10% (Smith, 2013), but for the purpose of this, 5% is used in order to ensure greater estimate precision. The sample size was calculated by using 1.96 z-score (95% confidence level), 50% standard deviation and 5% margin of error.

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5(0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$
$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$
$$n = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$
$$n = 384.16$$
$$n = 384$$

The study determined proportion of the sampled SMEs in the respective states using their total number of existing SMEs as reported in NBS/SMEDAN National MSME Collaborative Survey (2012). Thus, the number of SMEs sampled in each state is determined as:

$$r = \frac{x}{Total of SMEs in all the Sample States} \times 384$$

Where,

r = Number of failed SMEs to be chosen from each state

x = Total number of SMEs in a particular state

Hence, the population of the study with accordance to the report of NBS/SMEDAN (2012) are 1202, 3675 and 532 for Sokoto, Kaduna and Gombe States respectively, which gives us a total of 5,409 SMEs in the three states. Therefore, using the above formula, the sample size for the three states is;85, 261 and 38 for the respective sampled states, which gives a total of three hundred and eighty-four (384) failed SMEs sample size for the study. Since there is no record of failed SMEs that will guide us in tracking and locating the owner or managers of failed SMEs in order to make initial contact.The study created a database of failed SMEs in the three target states containing business names and location address using National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) past, previous and present (updated) records of existing SMEs in each state, that is, SMEs that appear in previous record and did not appear in the updated record is considered as failed SMEs which guides us during questionnaire administration. The owners or managers were identified by 'tracing and locating approach' using snowball method. This is done by visiting the physical locations of the failed SMEs to acquire information about owners/managers.

The research adopts snowball sampling technique and generates data from the sampled failed SMEs in each state. This technique is adopted because of the difficulty in identifying members of the desired sample size. It is non-probability

sampling procedure in which subsequent respondents are obtained from information provided by the initial respondents (Cooper & Schindler, 2001; 2008; Peter, 2016). To create a snowball sample, there are two steps:
- Trying to identify one or more units in the desired population and
- Using these units to find further units and so on until the sample size is met.

The choice of this sampling technique also enables the research to purposely identify and select the owners and managers of those SMEs that failed from 2015 to 2018 who are traceable, using tracing and locating approach.

The following variable were measured as follows: Marketing Environment vs Business Failure
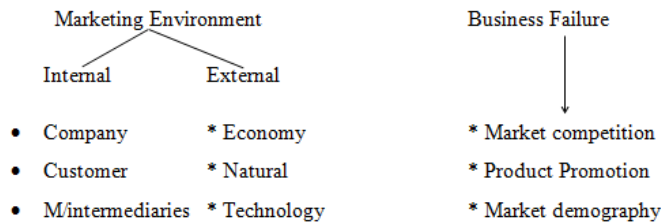
Regression function = $Y = \alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$

Y' is the dependent variable, X' = is the independent variable?

Dependent Variable = Business Failure

Y_1 = Product Promotion (PP)

Y_2 = Market Competition (MC)

Y_3 = Market demography (MD)

X = Independent variables = Marketing Environment

x_1 = Company

x_2 = Customer

x_3 = Marketing Intermediaries

x_4 = Economy

x_5 = Natural

x_6 = Technology

α = Intercept (represents the value of the response variable when all the independent variable are set to be zeros).

β = Constant to be estimated (represent units' contribution of the marketing environment on business failure)

ε = Error term

4. Discussion of Results

The population of SMEs as earlier indicated are 5409 and the assumed sample for the failure SMEs is 384. Therefore 384 questionnaires were produced and distributed in the 3 sample states, but 352 questionnaires were retrieved.Thus, the analysis was based on352 respondents, as follows;

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	103161.956	874871.581		3.18	.003
	X1	129928.402	392596.369	.79	2.31	.02
	X2	19929.340	462029.191	.88	12.3	.001
	X3	145437.255	777569.749	.78	1.87	.035
	X4	227346.320	537177.579	.72	2.36	.01
	X5	187186.170	323627.243	.63	3.21	.02
	X6	381425.068	290193.290	.61	2.12	.019

Table 1: Regression Analysis on Marketing Environmental Factors against Product Promotion
Source: Field Survey, 2020 Data Generated From SPSS

Table 4.1is a regression result depicting marketing environmental factors against product promotion, the table can be interpreted as follows;

Model= the six (6) sets of marketing environmental factors

B= the effect of a unit change in the marketing environment, will bring about the listed changes in product promotion

Std Error= is the standard error associated with the changes in the marketing environment.

Beta= is the correlation between marketing environment and product promotion

t = it is the calculated values of the t – statistics, associated with each marketing environmental factor.

Sig. = this is otherwise known as the probability associated with t- statistics values and is said to be significant only if its value is less than alpha (0.05)

Table1 reveals that, all the set of marketing environmental factors have significant relationship with product promotion, because all the probabilities are said to be less than the value of alpha (0.05).

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	214402.701	179878.915		8.192	0.02
	X1	737.410	36098.679	.15	0.20	0.06
	X2	27053.406	39552.380	.52	6.84	.004
	X3	64083.275	44251.732	.73	8.448	.019
	X4	208853.413	121767.567	.76	7.15	.007
	X5	48397.919	66536.413	.54	7.27	.001
	X6	5330.814	20769.759	.66	5.7	.003

Table 2: Regression Result of Marketing Environmental Factors against Market Competition
Source: Field Survey, 2020 Data Generated From SPSS

Table 2 represents regression results on the relationship between set of marketing environmental factors against Market competition. There exists a significant relationship between the two variables, with the exception of X1, which is 'the company' representing the internal environment, by implication a unit change in the company's policies will bring about 737-unit changes marketing competition and the standard error of that change was about 36098. The coefficient of variation between the two variables 15%. The probability of that strategy occurring is 0.06 which is above 0.05 alpha level. Hence, there is an insignificant relationship between the company's policies and market competition.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	245985.612	194199.485		2.67	.006
	X1	257818.895	162313.601	.71	5.88	.03
	X2	217222.958	151985.638	.67	4.29	.04
	X3	312804.803	134597.332	.78	3.24	.001
	X4	55566.023	94877.990	.52	5.86	.09
	X5	31470.652	75625.190	.63	4.16	.03
	X6	21166.857	74559.185	.64	2.84	.007

Table 3: Regression Result of Marketing Environmental Factors against Market Demography
Source: Field Survey, 2020 Data Generated From SPSS

Table 3 shows that, a significant relationship exists between the two variables, but an insignificant relationship does exist between the external environment factor; 'the economy' and market demography. A unit change in the economy will bring about 55566 changes in the demography of the market and the standard error associated with that change is about 94877. The correlation between the two variables is .52 which implies that, a unit change in the economy will bring about 52% changes in the demography of the market. The probability of occurrence is 0.09 which is more than 0.05 alpha level. Thus, there is an insignificant relationship between the economy and market demography.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusively, it has been identified that there is an insignificant relationship between the company's policies and market competition, by practical implication SMEs that failed are largely as a result of company's policies that may have impacted negatively on competition. Company's policies can be controlled within the internal environment of management of any SMEs, while market competition is inevitable for any company that offers products and services to the market. Secondly, it has also been noticed that economic environment has contributed to a large extend on the market demography to the failure rate of SMEs in Northern Nigeria. By market demography it can be simply the social status of consumers, by implication this can be attributed to the presence of the economic recession in the country which made consumer to have low purchasing power, hence leading to the inability to purchase products offered to the market. This can lead to the failure of SMEs.

However, it is recommended that management of SMEs in Northern Nigeria should align their company's policies for competitive advantages, this can be achieved through identifying competitors and delivering a better value for product and services offered to the market. Consumer is not buying a product but a consumer is buying benefits attached to the use of products and services that will make the SMEs to have a competitive advantage over and above competition. Secondly the economy is a macro environment factor that cannot be controlled by the marketer, hence economic recession is inevitable, so management should re-strategize their marketing activities to suite various economic phases of the market.

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