

EFFECT OF FOCUS STRAEGY ON SALES PERFORMANCE OF SLECTED SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRIESE IN ABIA AND IMO STATES, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper studied the effect of market focus strategy on the sales performance of selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria. Market focus strategy of the study concentrated on geographical focus, product and service focus. And more importantly, how these segment strategies were used to achieve sales performance. Multi-stage probability sampling method was adopted for the study. The State was divided into three geo-political zones namely Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South. From each of these zones, 50 respondents were selected which gave us a sample size of 150. From here, 150 copies of questionnaire were designed and distributed for collection of primary data for the study. Cronbach Alpha model was used to determine the reliability of the research instrument. And a result of 0.76 and 0.74 were adopted for test and re-test reliability of the instrument. The study revealed that market focus strategy has significant effect on the sales performance of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo State. Specifically, geographical market focus strategy was significant than differentiation strategy on the sales performance of the selected SMEs. Further findings revealed that majority of the selected SMEs concentrated their limited resources to small customer group they can control. This led to increase in their sales volume over time. It was recommended that selected SMEs should adopt market focus strategy by focusing on specific group of customers in a particular market segment. Especially by those ones in table water who have little resources to compete with larger firms like Coca-Cola that and Pepsi that produce Eva Water and Aquafina respectively.

Key Words: Market Focus, Sales Volume, Differentiation, Narrow Segments, Strategy

Introduction

The performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) forms a very important part of the economy of any nation like Nigeria. This is because the performance and growth of these SMEs are major drivers and indices the level of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, gainful and meaningful employment for all those who are able and willing to work (Albiodun & Harry, 2023). They are also significant in equitable distribution of income, bettering the welfare, increase in income per capita and quality of life enjoyed by the citizens. The essence of the study of the marketing performance of SMEs is because they contribute to economic growth, especially in the area of employment and income redistribution than larger firms. Therefore, governments around the world are developing, supporting and promoting SMEs growth as part of their overall national development strategy (Abdullah & Bin-Daka, 2020).

Focus strategy concentrates on a narrow segment and within that segment attempts to achieve either cost advantage or differentiation. The premise is that the needs of the target market can be better serviced by focusing entirely on it to gain market advantage (Robert, 2025). An enterprise using focus strategy often enjoys a high degree of customer loyalty and this enhanced loyalty discourages other firms from competing directly. Market focus can be either by geographical limit or by customer group. And whichever way it is and because of their narrow market focus, firms pursuing a focus strategy have lower volumes and therefore less bargaining power with their suppliers (Simeon, 2019). However, firms pursuing the combination of focus and differentiation strategy called focus-differentiation may be able to pass higher costs onto customer's service, when close substitute products do not exist (Robert, 2025).

Successful focus enterprise are the ones that are able to tailor a broad range of product development strengths to a relatively narrow market segment that they know very well. Further, it may be fairly easy for a broad-market cost leader to adapt its product in order to compete directly. This can be possible because some risks of focus strategies like imitation and changes in the target market segments will be leveraged by minor differentiation. This will make easier for enterprises adopting focus strategies to be able to carry out sub-segments that they can serve even better (Ghemawat, 2020). In the focus strategy, small scale enterprises target specific segments of the market (Davidson, 2018). The firm can choose to focus on a selected group, product range, geographical area or service line. This is for the purpose of adopting a narrow competitive scope within an industry. This is aimed at grouping market share through operating in a niche market or in markets either not attractive to, or overlooked by, large competitors. These niches arise from a number of factors including geography, buyer characteristics and product specifications or requirement (Davidson, 2019).

Statement of Problem

The adoption of competitive strategies in Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, as in many other countries of the world as this would facilitate sales performance and sustainable competitive advantage is the primary concern for this study. As a consequence, this research was motivated, because various studies were noted to have given attention to large (oligopolistic) firms in other countries with paucity of literature specifically to Nigeria; and

particularly the SMEs. For example, a study by Malburg, (2020). focused on the competitive strategies in the petroleum industries in Kenya; a study by Gakuya, & Xljue,, (2021), featured in Asara & Gathinji, focused on the competitive strategies by commercial banks in Australia; all geared towards the adoption of Porter's generic competitive strategies in achieving organizational performance (Asara & Gathinji, 2024). Coming down to the Nigerian environment, Adeniyi (2023) carried out a research on how competitive strategies improved the performance of selected Nigerian Telecommunication Companies. In the area of SMEs, Sije, & Oloko, (2019).) carried out a research on the competitive strategies of SMEs in Israel; also Following this same science of sustainability logic, it implies that, possessing a competitive advantage is related to achieving above-average (marketing) performance (Talaja & Ercegovic, 2012). This helps to analyze the relationship between market focus strategies and sales performance of SMEs in Nigeria. The study adopted this approach, and thus identified, studied and specified the variables of sales performance. This is the gap this research is motivated to close in marketing, business, management and economics literature.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the effect of market focus strategies on the sales volume of selected Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀: Market focus has no significant effect on the sales volume of selected SMEs in Imo and Abia State.

Market Focus

Market focus strategy concentrates on a narrow segment and within that segment attempts to achieve either cost advantage or differentiation. The premise is that the needs of the target market can be better serviced by focusing entirely on it to gain market advantage (Rober, 2024). An enterprise using focus strategy often enjoys a high degree of customer loyalty and this enhanced loyalty discourages other firms from competing directly. Market focus can be either by geographical limit or by customer group. And whichever way it is and because of their narrow market focus, firms pursuing a focus strategy have lower volumes and therefore less bargaining power with their suppliers (Subbiah, R.ao & Acharyulu, 2015).). However, firms pursuing the combination of focus and

differentiation strategy called focus-differentiation may be able to pass higher costs onto customer's service, when close substitute products do not exist (Robert, 2024).

Geographical Focus.

Successful focus enterprise are the ones that are able to tailor a broad range of product development strengths to a relatively narrow market segment that they know very well. Further, it may be fairly easy for a broad-market cost leader to adapt its product in order to compete directly. This can be possible because some risks of focus strategies like imitation and changes in the target market segments will be leveraged by minor differentiation. This will make easier for enterprises adopting focus strategies to be able to carry out sub-segments that they can serve even better (Ghemawat, 2020). In the focus strategy, small scale enterprises target specific segments of the market (Davidson, 2021). The firm can choose to focus on a selected group, product range, geographical area or service line. This is for the purpose of adopting a narrow competitive scope within an industry. Therefore, a successful focus strategy depends upon industry segment that is large enough to have good growth potential but not of key importance to other major competitors (Porter, 2012).

Product and Service Focus

In the adoption of differentiation strategy for competitive advantage in market focus, an enterprise focuses its efforts on providing a unique product or service (Gakuya & Xljue, 2022). Since the product or service is unique, the strategy provides high customer and brand loyalty (Robert, 2024). Differentiation strategy can be bifurcated into two categories; which are market differentiation and product differentiation (Robert, 2024). Market differentiation refers to market segmentation which involves the dividing of the total heterogeneous market into distinct and homogenous markets so as to develop specific marketing programme to satisfy each of these segments at least cost to the customer and at profit to the enterprise (Kotler & Amstrong, 2021; Inyanga, 2024). Product differentiation fulfills a customer need and involves tailoring the product or service to the customer in a particular target market (segment). This allows the enterprise to charge premium price to capture market share (Robert, 2214). The differentiation strategy is effectively implemented when the enterprise provides unique or superior value to the customer and positions itself through product quality, features, aftersales supports, all geared to gain market advantage (Robert, 2024).

Sales Volume

Sales volume is the quantity of sales made by an enterprise over a specific time period. This comes from customer patronage; and can be quantified into monetary terms like naira, dollar or in other units like cartons, cans, crates, liters etc. (Best, 2024). Sales volume is the multiplication of the unit sales to the prices of the goods sold (Robert, 2024). Some enterprises design some strategies to achieve immediate sales. This they easily do through some aggressive selling strategies which are (easily) adopted to track unprecedented marketing opportunities to achieve return on investment (ROI) at the expense of long-term market share and sustainable profitability. This has affected the long-run growth and survival of these firms (Sherpherd, 2021; Best, 2024).

Theoretical Review

Structure-Conduct-Performance Framework (Bain, 1968 in Porter, 2012)

The Structure- Conduct-Performance, as a model was developed by Bain in 1968. This theory proposes that a firm's performance, especially in terms of profitability is determined solely by the structure and competitive dynamics of the industry within which it operates. The source of values for the firms to create profitability is embedded in the end-product strategic position. And the strategic position is the set of unique values creation activities that differentiate a firm from its competitors in any industry (Robert, 2024; Sherperd *et al.*, 2024). The essence of discussing this theory is its relevance in explaining the market based view of strategy (Warinach,, Wariach, & Asif, 2023). This can be explained with the aid of *Porter's Five Forces Model* discussed below.

Porters Five Forces Model (Porter, 1980)

This model was developed by Michael Eugene Porter of Harvard Business School in 1980. In his book, "Competitive Advantage", Porter (1980) claims that companies competing in a given industry must fulfill many different activities that form cost, create value and grow profit. By using the competitive framework, a firm target to position itself in a sustainable and profitable position against the forces shaping and reshaping the industry. These forces are the suppliers bargaining power, the buyer bargaining power, pressure from substitutes, potential entrants and intensity of rivalry in the industry (Porter, 1980, 1985, 2012). The essence of this model is to expatiate the concept of five forces model of Porter (1980) afore-discussed in this framework.

Sales and Profit Maximization Model (Semion, 1980)

Sales and profit maximization model, commonly called “profit-Sacrificers” model was developed by Nobel Laureate Herbert Semion in 1980. This economist believed that though the major objective of an enterprise is profit maximization, there is also the need to sacrifice part of this profit to achieve increase in sales volume. Those firms that adopt this profit sacrifice instead of profit maximization are called “Profit-Sacrifices”. The essence of the model is that when part of the profit is sacrificed, it leads to increase in sales volume through price cut and penetration pricing (reduction in price); or using low-price for the firms output. Such strategy will lead to market share increase and sustainable superior performance with competitive advantage (Tresh, 2021). This model was discussed to explain sales volume and market share as some of the indicators of marketing performance (as one of the dependent variables of the conceptual framework).

Empirical Review

Dess, & Davis, (1984), in Davidson (2018). carried out a research on *Porter’s Generic Strategies as Determinant of Strategic Membership and Organizational Performance*”. They adopted purposive sampling plan of non-diversified manufacturing firms. Correlation was adopted for the analysis of data collected during the course of the study. They found out that those firms can be classified into four clusters based on the strategies they adopted: cost-leadership, differentiation, market focus and stuck-in-the middle. In terms of sales growth, the four groups were found to be significantly different from one another. The focus cluster was found to have the highest sales growth, followed by cost leadership, differentiation and stuck-in-the-middle. They therefore recommended the adoption of market focus strategy among diversified firms.

Powers. & Hatin (2013), in Panel & Wright (2019). examined the *“Performance Input of Competitive Strategies in the banking Sectors in Kenya”*. They adopted stratified sampling method for the selection of banks in the study area. Correlation and simple regression models were adopted for the analysis of data collected in the course of the study. Their study indicated that banks fall into five clusters, based on the type of competitive strategy, cost-leadership, stuck-in-the-middle and customer service differentiation. They found out that over all firms employing a strategy perform better than ones stuck-in-the middle (especially in terms of return to assets). They recommended the choice and adoption of a particular type of competitive strategy and to follow it.

Afande, (2023), carried out a study on *Competitive Strategies and firms Performance in the Mobile Telecommunication Service Industry, a study of Safaricom in Kenya*. They adopted stratified sampling method correlation and simple regression models were adopted for data analysis collected through a well-structured questionnaire. They found out the strategies adopted by Safaricom was combination strategies, were all the three strategies were adopted at the same time. This led to the competitive synergy in the form of total revenue growth, total assets growth, net income growth, market share growth and over-all performance growth. The competitive strategies combined in the course of the firm's business include cost-leadership, differentiation and strategic alliance. These were directed toward vigorous pursuit of cost reduction, providing outstanding customer service, intensive supervision of front-line personnel, improving operational efficiency, among others.

Warnach, Warnach, & Asif (2023), carried out a research on "*Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage through Service Quality in Pakistan Telecom Sector*". They adopted cross-sectional study design with a sample size of four-hundred, determined through purposive sampling method. They used ANOVA as the model to analyze the primary data collected through a Likert Structured form of questionnaire used to collect data for the study. They found out that Telecom Industry in the study area received excellent rating on tangibility, particularly on equipment, and customer service staffs' dress, and allow rating on empathy, particularly not knowing customers' needs and not giving individual and personal attention to customers. And recommended the market focus strategy, especially customization in which every individual customer should be targeted as a single market in the telecom industry in the study area.

Sije, & Oloko, (2019), examined the "*Performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Kenya through Penetration Pricing Strategy*". The population of their study consisted of members of staff of selected SMEs in Kenya. Stratified random sampling was used in the study where members of staff from various SMEs were selected and issued with copies of questionnaire for primary data collection. Correlation models were adopted to analyze the data collected for the study. They concluded that there is strong and positive relationship between penetration pricing and performance of small scale enterprises. And therefore recommended the adoption of penetration pricing by SMEs in the study area.

Research Methodology

I adopted the descriptive research. Multi-stage probability sampling method was adopted for the study. Here the state was divided into three educational zones namely Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South. From each of these zones, 50 respondents were selected which gave us a sample size of 150. From here, 150 copies of questionnaire were designed for collection of primary data for the study. Cronbach Alpha model was computed to determine the reliability of the research instrument. And a result of 0.76 and 0.74 were adopted for reliability of the instrument. A 5-point likert scale questionnaire designed for the study was cross-checked whether the contents correspond to the topic under study. The reliability of the research instrument was done through a test-retest content reliability. Ten (10) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to generate data for the study. The test-retest results were presented herein. And the decision was based on Cronbach Alpha Model. The formular for the Cronbach Alpha Model is stated thus:

$$\alpha = \frac{N * \bar{C}}{\bar{V} + (N - 1) * \bar{C}}$$

Where:

- N = Number of Items.
- \bar{C} = Average co-variance between pairs.
- \bar{V} = Average Variance.

The results of the pre-test and post-test were presented in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Pre-test results of Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items
.74	10

At 95 confidence level (5% significant level)

Source: Researcher, 2023.

Table 2: Post-test results of Cronbach Alpha Reliability Test

Cronbach Alpha	No. of Items
.76	10

At 95 confidence level (5% significant level).

Source: Researcher, 2026.

Table 2 and 3 indicate that the results of our test-retest of 0.74 and 0.76 which were above 0.70 (as the bench mark, criterion). We therefore accepted the research instrument as reliable for data

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collection for the study. However, using the Crombach Alpha Model adopted, and the result of not less than 0.75, reliability test was judged as accepted for the instrument reliability Onyedinho A. (2023).

Analysis and Presentation of Results

Effect of market focus on sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria

The analysis of the effect of market focus strategy on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo State were presented in Table 4.3.

Table 3: Analysis of the Effect of Market Focus Strategy on the Sales Volume of the Selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria

S/N.	Question Item	SA	A	D	SD	U	(\bar{x})	Remark
A	Geographical focus has effect on the sales volume of your enterprise	23	14	6	3	3	4.0	Accept
B	Customer group focus has effect on the sales volume of your enterprise	18	21	3	5	2	3.9	Accept
C	Cost-oriented pricing strategies has effect on the sales volume of your enterprises	21	18	3	5	2	3.8	Accept
D	Differentiation oriented type of business strategy has effect on the sales volume of your enterprise	13	24	6	3	3	3.7	Accept
E	Product and service innovations has effect on the sales volume of your enterprise	11	18	13	4	3	3.9	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Key:

(\bar{x}) = Mean

The analysis of the effect of market focus on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria was done with a mean criterion of 3.0. The five (5) item statements on the effect of market focus strategy on the sales volume of the selected SMEs were accepted by the

researcher. This was based on the fact that their respective mean scores were greater than the mean criterion. Respondents on the effect of geographical focus on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in the study area had a mean score of 4.0 and was therefore accepted. Respondents on the effect of customer group focus on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in the study area had a mean score of 3.9, and was therefore accepted. Also, the respondents on the effect of cost-oriented pricing strategy has effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs had a mean score of 3.8, and was therefore accepted. Furthermore, the effect of differentiation strategy on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in the study area had a mean score of 3.7, and was therefore accepted. Lastly, the effect of product and service innovation on the sales volume of the SMEs in the study area had a mean score of 3.9, and was therefore accepted. These findings of the study conform to the findings of Robert (2024) that market focus attracts increase in sales volume especially when combined with differentiation.

Testing of Hypothesis for the Study.

Market focus strategy has no significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in the study area. This hypothesis was tested using simple regression model. And the model summary of the results of the simple regression for the effect of market focus strategy on sales volume was presented in Table 4.4

Table 4: Model Summary Results of the Simple Regression of the effect of Market Focus on Sales Volume

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of Estimates	Durbin Waston
1	.938 ^a	.617	.518	.454	.034

a.: Predictor (Constant), Market Focus

b.: Dependent variable: Sales Volume

The model summary results in Table 4.4 provides useful information about the regression analysis for the second hypothesis. First, the “simple r” column is the coefficient of correlation between the actually observed independent variable and the predicted variable (the one predicted by the regression equation). r^2 is the square of “r” and also is known as the “coefficient of determination”. It states the proportion (percentage) of the (sample) variation in the dependent variables that can be attributed to the independent variables. The correlation (r) value of 0.938 indicates the existence of strong and positive relationship between market focus strategy and sales volume. The coefficient of

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determination (r^2) value of 0.617 explains the proportion of variation in sales volume that are attributed to market focus strategies. This value of 0.617 shows that market focus is a good predictor of sales volume, but r^2 often overstates the true value of explanations due to the unadjusted degrees of freedom and to eliminate such, the adjusted r^2 value of 0.617 shows the actual variations in the sales volume attributed to market focus strategies. The “standard error of estimates” indicates that, on average, observed sales volume deviates from the predicted regression line by a score of 0.454. The value of the intercept and the degree of variation between market focus and sales volume were presented in Table 4.5 showing the coefficient of regression results of the effect of market focus and sales volume.

Table 4.5: Coefficient of Regression Results of the effect of Market Focus on Sales Volume

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized co-efficient	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 constant	1.862	.080			
Market focus	.785	.005	.869	241.400	000

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Volume

The value of the intercept (β_0) in Table 4.5 indicates that the value of sales volume, when all the explanatory variables were zero is 1.662. Specifically, one percent (1%) improvement in market focus strategy leads to 78.5% increase in sales volume. Considering the statistical significance, we observed that the sig. value of regression is 0.001, which is lower than the acceptable 0.005 significance. Hence, market focus strategy is statically significant in explaining changes in sales volume at the 5% level of significance. Therefore, we reject the hypothesis (H_{02}) which states that market focus has no significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo State. And rather accept the alternate hypothesis that market focus has significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States. This conclusion is in support Malburg, (2020) that market focus strategies helps small and medium small enterprises to survive in a hostile business environment. Such will increase their sales volume in such garmented industries. And further research on this study revealed that majority of the selected SMEs adopted this market focus strategy, because of limited resources globalization and stiff competition.

Summary of Findings

After the research, some major findings were made. These findings are listed below.

- i. The study revealed that market focus strategy has significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States.
- ii. Geographical market focus strategy has significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States
- iii. The study also revealed that differentiation strategy has significant effect on the sales volume of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States

Conclusion

Based on findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

- i. That majority of the selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States adopted market focus by concentrating their limited resources to small customer group they can control. This led to increase in their sales volume over time.
- ii. Differentiation strategy was also adopted by the SMEs studied. This granted them the opportunity to distinguish their goods and, or services from their competitors in order to attract preferences from their target customers. This increased the rate of customer patronage of their products.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the conclusions drawn from the study.

- i. The selected SMEs in Abia and Imo States should adopt market focus strategies by focusing on specific group of customers in a particular market segment; especially by those ones in table water who have little resources to compete with larger firms like Coca-Cola that and Pepsi that produce Eva Water and Aquafina respectively.
- ii. Differentiation strategy should be adopted to attract preferences through incorporating product attributes and service attributes that will enhance performance, lower buyer's overall cost and improve quality customer services; especially by those in the eatery and hotel services where competition is too stiff with high proportion of sunk costs.

- iii. It is recommended that SMEs managers in Abia and Imo States need to design short business by focusing on geographical areas and services because of their limited resources. This enhance cost efficiency and market power in their relative target markets.

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