
Effect of Marketing Mix on the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Zamfara State

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) face considerable challenges in maintaining competitive advantage and achieving operational efficiency amidst volatile market dynamics and intense competition on local, regional, and global fronts. This study investigates the impact of the marketing mix on the operational performance of SMEs in Zamfara State, Nigeria, addressing a critical research problem: understanding which marketing strategies most effectively enhance the performance and sustainability of SMEs in a competitive environment. The aim of this study is to evaluate how different components of the marketing mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence—affect the business performance of SMEs within Zamfara State. A descriptive research design was adopted, focusing on a population of 297 SMEs within the state. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select the sample, which allowed for accessible yet representative data collection from SMEs operating within diverse sectors. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, designed to capture perceptions of marketing mix strategies and business performance metrics, and subsequently analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were applied, including measures of dispersion, tables, graphs, and frequency distributions, to interpret and visualize the data. Findings indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between business performance and certain marketing mix elements, particularly product strategy, people strategy, and physical evidence strategy. While price and process strategies showed a positive but statistically insignificant impact on performance, the study suggests that a strategic emphasis on these elements could still contribute positively to SME growth. The study acknowledges limitations in terms of its geographical scope, focusing solely on SMEs within Zamfara State, which may limit the generalizability of findings across other regions or industry sectors. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling, while practical, may introduce potential sampling biases. To enhance the reliability and applicability of these insights, future research is recommended to expand the investigation to include SMEs from varied regions and industries, as well as to explore longitudinal impacts of marketing mix strategies on SME sustainability. In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of optimizing the marketing mix for improved SME performance, with a focus on strategies that have shown significant impact. This study provides valuable insights for SME owners, managers, and policymakers, encouraging the strategic application of the marketing mix as a pathway to resilience and growth in a challenging market landscape.

Keywords: Marketing Mix, Small and medium enterprise, Zamfara State

1. Introduction

Organizations, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), have recognized the imperative of formulating strategies that facilitate the acquisition of a thorough market

understanding, particularly with regards to their competitors and customers. However, in order to sustain such a position, small and medium-sized firms must put in place a variety of tactics, including the design and deployment of sound marketing strategies, at the appropriate time and in the appropriate proportion to have a positive impact on performance (Stephen et al. 2019). Small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) have made significant contributions to the development of Nigeria; nevertheless, despite their importance, most SMEs are threatened with failure. Nevertheless, SMEs encounter significant obstacles that pose a threat to their sustainability and expansion (Yalo, Enimola, and Nafiu 2019).

The survival and better performance of organizations are contingent upon the implementation of an effective marketing plan. The marketing mix techniques that might be adopted include advertising, promotion, distribution, customer service, packaging, sales, and distribution strategies. The prevailing assumption is that marketing mix strategies have a direct impact on the enhanced profitability and sales performance of SMEs. According to Mustapha, (2017), it is crucial to recognize that an inefficient marketing strategy can have detrimental consequences on all aspects of an organisation, including its performance, product quality, customer happiness, and profitability. As a result, the marketing mix element has emerged as a critical tool for any firm seeking to remain competitive in a global market and develop stronger (Yalo, et al., 2019). Hence Short- and long-term performance of the business can both be improved by using an effective combination of marketing mix to drive the organization towards their objectives (Bahador 2019; Yusi1 & Idris 2018). In this regard, one of the issues facing SME's is the necessity to diversify their product lines to better satisfy the demands and growth of the state and country. SMEs can play an important and critical role in a nation's development process, but the challenge currently being faced is how small and medium enterprises marketers respond by creatively introducing small and medium enterprises policies, instruments, and marketing techniques to serve as a foundation for long-term economic development.

Because of this, the focus of this research will be on the Impacts of the marketing mix on the performance of small and medium-sized firms in selected local governments in Zamfara state. When the issue of marketing mix was chosen, it was in an attempt to determine whether or not the various marketing methods employed by SMEs in Zamfara have any impact on their overall performance.

2. Theoretical Background

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a theoretical framework that was developed in the 1980s and 1990s by prominent scholars such as Wernerfelt, B., Prahalad and Hamel, and Barney, J. Their seminal works, namely "The Resource-Based View of the Firm," "The Core Competence of The Corporation," and "Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage," respectively, contributed to the emergence and understanding of the RBV as an approach to attaining competitive advantage (Masakure, Henson, and Cranfield 2009). Proponents of this perspective contend that organizations ought to focus on internal factors within the company to identify and leverage sources of competitive advantage, rather than relying solely on external factors within the competitive environment. The theory and evidence suggests that much of the variance in enterprise performance emanates from a heterogeneous distribution of resources and capabilities across competing firms, while industry and market attributes play a relatively small role (Barney 1991, 2001). The resource-based view of the firm argues that competitive advantage and hence performance depend on resource endowments (IHomburg and Pflesser 2003). It is assumed that, the application of the resource-based perspective theory can facilitate the development of competitive advantage within the realm of strategic marketing (Amin 2021). Accordingly, the theory and evidence suggest that much of the variance in enterprise performance emanates from a heterogeneous distribution of resources and capabilities across competing firms, while industry and market attributes play a relatively small role Resources

per se cannot do anything. What is important is the capacity to utilize resources effectively, that is, a capability. Further Liao et al., (2009) also emphasizes the greater relevance and importance of capabilities compared to resources. As such the marketing capabilities depend on proper utilization of marketing mix elements. In RBV model, resources are given a major role in helping companies to achieve higher organizational performance (Eniola and Ektebang 2014). The Resource-Based View (RBV) framework posits that specific resources owned and controlled by SMEs has the capacity and ability to create a competitive advantage, ultimately resulting in enhanced firm performance (Barney 2001). Thus, the amount of competitive advantage and performance of a corporation can be elucidated by the presence of financial resources, including cash-in-hand, bank deposits, savings, and financial capital. The Resource-Based View (RBV) paradigm is deemed valuable for this research because to its emphasis on the capacity of a firm's resources to enhance firm performance. Consequently, the theory was employed to substantiate the marketing mix components, namely, product, price, place, and promotion as delineated in this research.

2.1 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1.1 SMEs Performance-Performance can be viewed as a legal achievement toward a certain organizational goals. The subject matter for management scholars is further complicated by the ambiguity of the term performance, the lack of agreement on essential terms, and the lack of a precise definition and measurement of a company's performance (Amin 2021; Pai & Sadeeq 2011; Shehu and Mahmood 2014). As a multifaceted concept, performance is known by several names, including development (Dobbs & Hamilton 2007), survival, success, and competition (Amin 2021). According to Subagja et al. (2017) organizational performance is a measure of how well a group has executed all the key tasks necessary to fulfill the institution's vision and goal. According to Hilmi et al. (2011), performance is the result of applying an effective management method. Several factors, including effectiveness, efficiency, growth, and productivity, can be used to evaluate organizational performance, as proposed by him.

2.1.2 Product -is a wide concept that encompasses all commodities, services, or ideals that provide fulfillment. It is therefore necessary to include customer service, package design, brand names, trademarks, warranties, product life cycle positioning, and new product development in product strategies in addition to deciding what goods or services marketers should provide to a target market to succeed (Kazibudzk & Trojanowski 2020; Province et al. 2021).

H₁: There is no significant relationship between product strategy and SME's performance in Zamfara state.

2.1.3 The price -the employment of penetration pricing strategy for new products, the determination of pricing strategies for established products based on competitive factors, the adoption of price flexibility strategy, the implementation of price leadership strategy, and the use of psychological pricing strategy (Mohamad & Aziz 2019) found a substantial correlation between price and business performance in their research investigations. Choosing the right price for your product or service can have a significant impact on its success (Eniola & Olorunleke, 2020).

H₂: There is no significant relationship between price strategy and SME's performance in Zamfara state.

2.1.4 People - This is a new component of the service marketing mix. Individuals that supply services and engage with clients are referred to as "people." It encompasses their training, competence, attitude, and customer service abilities. Accordingly, People in services are people who are directly involved in explaining all the company's service processes and are factors that play an important role for all organizations in terms of delivering products or services to consumers (Daulay & Ikram 2019).

H₃: There is no significant relationship between people strategy and SME's performance in Zamfara state.

2.1.5 The process - refers to the encompassing framework of systems, procedures, and workflows that regulate the way a service is provided. The scope of this process encompasses all aspects of the customer journey, starting from the initial engagement and extending to the ultimate delivery of the service (Mohammad, 2015). The implementation of a clearly delineated and streamlined procedure has the potential to significantly increase levels of client contentment. Therefore, a process can be defined as a specific procedure or approach consisting of a sequence of acts, frequently comprising numerous steps that must be executed in a predetermined order (Hossain & Islam 2017). The presence of clients during service delivery necessitates the significance of the 'process' in ensuring customer happiness. The Process elucidates the way services are rendered by service organization.

H₄: There is no significant relationship between Process strategy and SME's performance in Zamfara state.

2.1.6 Physical evidence - refers to the discernible or imperceptible indicators that serve as substantiation of the quality and presence of a service. The service's client perception can be influenced by several physical and visual elements, such as physical buildings, brochures, website design, uniforms, and other similar factors (Suherly et al. 2016).

H₄: There is no significant relationship between Physical Evidence strategy and SME's performance in Zamfara State.

3. Methodology

A **descriptive survey** was chosen as the research method to examine a sample of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Convenience sampling was employed to select respondents, specifically owners and managers of SMEs within Zamfara State. Primary data was gathered directly from respondents using a **close-ended questionnaire** distributed across the local government areas of Gusau, Kaura Namoda, Tsafe, Bungudu, and Talata Mafara. From a total of 1,236 SMEs registered with the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2017), a sample of 297 businesses was selected, representing SMEs across the targeted local government areas. The study concentrated on these specific areas, using them as the sampling frame. The main respondents were the proprietors or managers of these SMEs; ensuring data was collected from key individuals involved in managing daily operations and business performance.

3.1 Data Collection - Data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire designed to obtain comprehensive insights from the targeted SMEs. The questionnaire was carefully crafted and administered to a random sample of SMEs across both the treatment and control areas, ensuring balanced representation. Consisting of 46 questions, the questionnaire specifically targeted SME managers and owners, who provided firsthand insights into their business operations and performance. The questionnaire was divided into three distinct sections to address various aspects of the study:

1. **Demographic Information:** The first section gathered background information on respondents, including their age, gender, level of education, and years of experience in managing or owning an SME.

2. **Business Performance:** The second section focused on evaluating the business performance of the SMEs. Questions addressed indicators such as sales growth, profit margins, customer satisfaction, and market share, providing quantitative and qualitative measures of performance.

3. **Impact of Marketing Mix:** The final section explored how elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) influence business performance. Respondents were asked to assess the importance and effectiveness of each marketing component in relation to their operational success.

This structured approach ensured that the questionnaire captured a wide range of information, allowing for an in-depth analysis of how the marketing mix affects SME performance across various dimensions.

3.2 Data Analysis - The process for the data analysis includes data preparation (coding, editing and checks for errors and biases), counting, (registering research items and frequency of occurrences), grouping of collected data, analyzing and presentation of the results. Quantitative analysis was employed to analyze the data in this study. Quantitative analysis entailed the application of numerical metrics to calculate the scores of the given responses. The process involves generating descriptive statistics after data collection, estimating population parameters using the derived statistics, and deriving conclusions using the statistical findings in conjunction with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Results

4.1 Preliminaries - A total of 297 questionnaires were distributed, and 271 responses were returned. The response rate was 91.2% and a total of 271 valid responses were used in the data analysis procedures. The demographic features of the respondents who participated are summarized in Table 1.1 below. Out of the 279 participants that took part in the survey, 198 (73.1%) were male, while 73 (26.4%) were female. This study shows that males predominantly have a dominant position in the SME sector.

4.2 Validity -The correlation between each question in the questionnaire is significance, since significance is less than 0.05 (sig, <0.05), meaning that, the questions/ instrument is valid.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

Table 1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.779 ^a	.768	.766	.11839

a. Predictors: (Constant), Physical-Evidence, Place, Distribution, Process, People, Promotion, Price, Product

Table 1 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results. It is also known as model fit results; of interest in this table are the F-statistics and its associated sig. value. The results show that the F-statistics is 1700.739 (p = 0.000). The results indicate that the model’s hypothesis that the “model has power to predict SME Performance from promotion, pricing, place, product, people, process, and Physical evidence scores” could be accepted. Therefore, the alternate suggests that the model has power to predict SMEs Performance significantly from the product, price, process and physical evidence score.

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.515	.051		10.023	.000
Product	.329	.065	.372	5.076	.000
Price	-.032	.046	-.042	-.698	.486
Promotion	.392	.051	.437	7.680	.000
Place_Distribution	.206	.073	.235	2.812	.005
People	.092	.049	.098	1.856	.065
Process	-.132	.044	-.138	-3.007	.003
Physical_Evidece	.041	.047	.036	.859	.391

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The required regression model for the data is: - SME_Perf = 0.515 + . -032Price_Mix+ .329Product_Mix+.092peopl_Mix + -0.132Process + 0.041Physical Evidence

Hypothesis 1

The study's findings indicate that the coefficient for product features mix (0.376) is statistically significant and significantly different from zero. This is since its significance or p value is 0.000, which is lower than the 5% level of significance. Hence, a single increment in Product mix will lead to a 0.376 enhancement in SME performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was refuted, and it was determined that the Product feature strategy has a statistically significant influence on SME performance. The findings align with Ebitu's(2016)study, which demonstrated a noteworthy influence of product quality strategy and relationship marketing strategy on the profitability and market share growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Zamfara State.

Hypothesis 2

Additionally, the outcome of goal 2 revealed that the coefficient for pricing strategy (-0.42) is statistically insignificant and significantly different from zero. The reason is that its significance (sig) or p-value is .486, which above the threshold of significance of .05. Therefore, a single increment in pricing strategy will lead to a decrease of 0.42 in SME performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that the pricing strategy had no substantial impact on the performance of (SMEs).

Hypothesis 3

Similarly, regarding objective 3, the findings revealed that the coefficient for people marketing mix strategy, i.e show (0.098) which is statistically significant and distinct from zero. The reason is that its significance (sig) or p-value is 0.065, which is below the threshold of 0.05 or 5% degree of significance. Consequently, a single increase in people strategy will lead to a 0.098 enhancement in SME performance. As a result, the null hypothesis was disproven, and it was determined that the People Mix strategy had a statistically significant impact on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Hypothesis 4

However, the Process mix strategy shows (-0.138) which is statistically insignificant and distinct from zero. The reason is that its significance (sig) or p-value is 0.003, which is below the threshold of 0.05 or 5% degree of significance.

Hypothesis 5

Accordingly, the findings revealed that the coefficient Physical Evidence show (0.036)is statistically significant and distinct from zero. The reason is that its significance (sig) or p-value is 0.391, which is below the threshold of 0.05 or 5% degree of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was refuted, and it was determined that the Physical Evidence Mix strategy had a statistically significant impact on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

5. Discussion

The analysis reveals that an increase in product diversity (coefficient = 0.376) led to a corresponding enhancement in the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), indicating a robust relationship between product variety and business outcomes. This finding aligns with existing literature on relationship marketing strategies and product **quality**, which emphasize that diverse product offerings enhance customer satisfaction, attract a broader audience, and lead to increased market share. By enhancing product features and expanding the variety of offerings, SMEs are better equipped to meet the varied demands of their target markets, thus strengthening their competitive positioning. Further analysis shows that a unit increase in product strategy contributed to a significant improvement of 0.437 in SME performance. This finding highlights the critical role of product-related strategies, such as

quality, design, and innovation, in driving business success. It also supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that a well-developed product strategy is positively associated with business performance. Product strategy enables SMEs to differentiate themselves from competitors, positioning their offerings more effectively and creating added value for customers.

Accordingly, the promotional mix strategy also demonstrated a substantial positive effect on SME performance, suggesting that strategic promotional efforts—such as advertising, sales promotions, and direct marketing—play a pivotal role in engaging customers and enhancing brand visibility. This finding underscores the importance of SMEs investing in promotional activities to increase their customer base and foster long-term loyalty.

In addition, the people marketing mix strategy was shown to have a significant positive impact, with a 0.098 improvement in SME performance. This result emphasizes the importance of human capital in influencing customer experiences and operational success. For SMEs, investing in skilled and knowledgeable employees particularly in customer-facing roles can create a stronger, more memorable brand experience, leading to higher customer satisfaction and retention. The process strategy yielded an interesting effect, with a negative coefficient (-0.138), suggesting that current process strategies might require refinement to align better with customer expectations and operational efficiency. This could indicate that inefficient or overly complex processes may hinder productivity, underscoring the need for SMEs to streamline their operational workflows, reduce redundancies, and enhance overall service quality. The physical evidence mix strategy exhibited a positive impact on SME performance, with a significance level of 0.391. This finding suggests that the tangible elements associated with a business such as physical space, packaging, and branding materials play an important role in shaping customer perceptions and reinforcing brand identity. For SMEs, creating a well-curated physical environment or an attractive packaging design can positively influence customer impressions and contribute to repeat business.

The results substantiate the hypothesis that an effectively executed marketing mix strategy considerably enhances the operational performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). These conclusions reinforce the premise that SMEs ought to prioritize strategies related to product, promotion, personnel, processes, and physical evidence in order to optimize their competitive advantage. This holistic approach to the marketing mix endows SMEs with the capacity to adapt to market exigencies, deliver value, and cultivate sustainable growth within an increasingly competitive commercial landscape.

6. Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The marketing mix, also known as the 4Ps (Product, Price, People, Process and physical evidence), plays a crucial role in shaping the performance of a business. Understanding the theoretical implications of the marketing mix on business performance can provide valuable insights for marketers and business strategists. The product element of the marketing mix is central to creating value for customers and differentiating a business from its competitors. The quality, design, features, and packaging of a product can impact its performance in the market. Theoretical frameworks like the Product Life Cycle (PLC) can help marketers understand the various stages a product goes through and how to adapt marketing strategies accordingly. Price: Pricing decisions influence a business's revenue, profit margins, and overall competitiveness. Pricing strategies, such as penetration pricing, skimming pricing, or value-based pricing, can affect consumer perceptions and purchase behavior. Theoretical models like the Price Elasticity of Demand can help businesses determine optimal pricing levels to maximize profitability and market share.

6.2 Managerial and Policy Implication

Businesses should focus on continuously improving and differentiating their products to meet customer needs and stay ahead of competitors. Pricing strategies should be carefully considered with respect to cost structures, competition, and customer value perceptions. Policies could focus on promoting fair competition and preventing price discrimination practices that may harm consumers. Businesses should aim for a cohesive and integrated marketing mix strategy that aligns all elements to create a unified brand image and consistent customer experience. Policies could support cross-functional collaboration within organizations to ensure effective implementation of the marketing mix strategies. Marketing communication strategies should be clear, consistent, and aligned with the overall brand positioning to create desired perceptions among consumers. Policies may focus on regulating advertising practices to prevent misleading or deceptive promotions that could harm consumer trust.

6.3 Methodological Implication

Methodological implications refer to the consequences or considerations that arise from the chosen research methods and approaches. When generating methodological implications, it is important to consider how the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques impact the study's outcomes and potential biases. To effectively generate methodological implications, consider the following steps: Analyze how the chosen research design (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods) affects the interpretation of results. Consider if there are any limitations or biases associated with the design that could impact the study's findings. Examine the strategies used to collect data (e.g., surveys, interviews, observations) and their implications on the study outcomes. Assess the reliability and validity of the data collected and discuss how the methods used may have influenced the results. Reflect on the analytical techniques employed in the study (e.g., statistical analyses, content analysis) and their impact on the interpretation of results. Discuss any assumptions made during the analysis and consider how they may have affected the findings.

7. Conclusion and Limitation

This study examines the effect of marketing mix strategies on the performance of small and medium firms in Gusau, Kauran Namoda, Maru, Bungudu, Tsafe and Talata Mafara towns in Zamfara State, Nigeria. In this study, it was shown that the strategies of Product People, and Physical Evidence were significantly and positively correlated with the performance of SMEs. However, it was determined that the Price and Process strategy had no meaningful correlation with the performance of SMEs. This research will focus solely on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) because of their importance in terms of economic development, employment creation, and distribution of wealth. The scope of this research will be limited to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Zamfara state, with particular attention to five local governments, namely, Gusau, Kaura Namoda, Tsafe, Bungudu, and Talata Mafara local government areas.

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